



SESSION 1 PRAYING FOR THE RIGHT REASON

A 10 Session Study based around the Lord's Prayer

Drawn from material prepared by J John and the Life Builder Study series of booklets (Douglas Connelly)

All bible verses quoted are from Matthew Chapter 6 NLT

⁵ "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Looking at that portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1 – 7:27) where Jesus specifically teaches His disciples on prayer, in answer to their request for Him to do so.

Opening Activity (Welcome)

- ❖ Why do you pray?
- ❖ If you could have a day's free coaching by an expert in some sport, hobby, interest or skill what would you choose and why.
- ❖ Have you done something you really didn't want to just to impress or please someone?

Exploration

- ❖ Have you ever admired someone else's prayers? Why?
- ❖ In church – do you prefer written/read or spontaneous prayers? Why?
- ❖ What one word or short phrase could best describe your prayer life? Is it satisfactory or like the school report do you feel you could do better?

Study (Word)

Old Testament Prayers (the prayers that Jesus and His followers knew)

- ❖ Psalm 13
 - What is Davids reason for praying?
 - How do you think he was feeling (at the beginning and at the end)
 - Why did David have a hope that the Lord would answer?
 - Can we deduce anything from the prayer of Davids relationship with God
 - Is this really a public or a private prayer?
 - What can we learn from this prayer?
- ❖ Daniel 6: 1-16
 - Did Daniel need to pray with the shutters open? Why do you think he did?
 - If Daniel was only a "play actor" (the literal meaning of hypocrite) what might he have done when ordered to stop praying – why?
 - What does this account tell us about Daniel, the importance of prayer to him and the reaction that serious prayer can prompt?

- ❖ Matthew 6: 1-18 warnings around praying for the wrong reasons
 - What aspects of being religious is Jesus addressing (see v 2, 5, 16)
 - Where are the places where hypocrites carry out their religion
 - What are their motives?
 - What is their reward (from other people and from God)?
- By comparison what does Jesus say His followers should do?

We would probably never describe ourselves as hypocrites but do we ever do things for effect, for an audience, for approval from other people or to gain respect or feel like we fit in? It is possible that this is not even done consciously or intentionally.

- ❖ How do the prayers of the hypocrites compare to the prayers of David (or Daniel)?
- ❖ Why do you think Jesus was so concerned about this kind of “play acting” as to warn His followers?
- ❖ According to verse 6 who does Jesus say should be involved in prayer?
- ❖ Does this rule out any kind of public prayer? If not, why not?
- ❖ Is all of our religious activity to be secret? Should some of it

Think point – prayer is a part of relationship.

- ❖ What things are needed for a relationship to exist between two people?
- ❖ What things would help that relationship grow and develop into closeness?
- ❖ What would happen if one person started to pretend and “play act”?
- ❖ What promises does Jesus make to those who pray privately to the Father?

What next? (Witness)

- ❖ How can we change our motives for praying where these are wrong?
- ❖ How can we be more real with God? (and each other?)
- ❖ Do your prayers reflect the fact that God is listening?
- ❖ How can you make space for God to speak?
- ❖ Should we ever be concerned about what others think of our prayers?
- ❖ If God was a cosmic force rather than personal, how would that affect our prayers?
- ❖ In what ways is our relationship with God different to that with people, in what ways is it similar?
- ❖ How do we remember that prayer is a relationship not a religious ritual?
- ❖ How do we pray so that it is for Gods glory not our benefit?

Praise, prayer and worship (Worship)

Focusing on the matters considered during this session and the matters before us in the coming week.