

"Prayer"

Week 1 – When You Pray

warm-up

Group Ice Breaker: TRUTHS and LIES

Ask each group member to make two different statements about themselves. One will be true, and one will be false, but the rest of the group will not know which is true. Ask group members to write down their "truth" guess. As you go around the group, keep score of who guesses the most truths.

word & application

Ever wonder if what you are praying is actually in accordance with what God wants? How can we be sure that God will answer us when we pray? How will we know if we are hearing from God when we pray? I sometimes ask these questions, and I think we find some of our answers in Paul's letters:

1 Thessalonians 5:9-22

"For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. So, encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other. Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil."

Discussion & Application: Explore these points and questions through in-depth conversation.

Paul isn't giving us a list of "Ought To's." He's giving us context for knowing and embracing the character and purpose of God's plan for us. Think of this as a list of "environmental conditions" that create a confident trust in our relationship and communications with God:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Believe that God is not angry with us | <input type="checkbox"/> Do good to all people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage and build each other up | <input type="checkbox"/> Be joyful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honor our spiritual leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep praying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live peacefully with one another | <input type="checkbox"/> Be thankful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warn against laziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Give the Holy Spirit freedom to work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage those who are timid | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to prophecies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care for those who are weak | <input type="checkbox"/> Hold onto what is good |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be patient with everyone | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid evil |

Group Questions:

- If I embraced these principles, how would my view of my circumstances change?
- How would this enlightened "life-view" affect my prayer life?
- How could this align my heart with God's? What new wisdom could I experience?
- How will this enhance my communications and relationship with God?

prayer

Ask each member to shape their prayer requests to align with the principles above. Agree in prayer together over each request.