

40 Days OF PRAYER

SESSION FIVE “The Power of Connection”

OPENING

Have you experienced your prayer life changing as a result of the 40 Days of Prayer? Share a story of how this focus on prayer has impacted you.

MEMORY VERSE

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the following Bible passages and then discuss what lessons about praying together can be learned from them.
 - 2 Chronicles 20:1-15, 24
 - Acts 1:14, 2:1-4,41
 - Acts 3:1, 4:1-4, 4:23-31
 - Acts 16:14-30

You can use the following questions to aid your discovery.

- a) In each instance, what was the reason for gathering together in prayer?
- b) Were these special events or regular habits?
- c) What was included in their prayers? What about these prayers stand out to you? What can you learn from what they prayed?
- d) Were these prayers demanding, expectantly waiting or wishful? What is the difference?
- e) What were the results of praying together?

Now, summarize your findings.

- Why do we pray together?
 - When do we pray together?
 - What do we pray about?
2. Read Matthew 18:19-20. What does this passage teach us about what makes praying together powerful? What is required for this kind of prayer?

3. Read James 4:1-3. What are we taught to do and not do in prayer? How does this complement your understanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 18:19-20?
4. Read the "Five Reasons That Make Praying Together Powerful" which comes from Day 29 of the 40 Days of Prayer. Which reasons have you personally experienced? Which ones are the most compelling to you?

Five Reasons That Make Praying Together Powerful

1. *Personal agendas are set aside.* When we pray alone, there's a danger of our prayers unintentionally becoming focused on selfish desires. However, when we pray with a group, our selfish desires begin to melt away and are replaced with the desires God impresses on the group as a whole.
2. *We gain a broader perspective of God and are encouraged.* When we pray on our own, we bring the perspective of one: ourselves. When we join a group in prayer we begin to hear the prayers and perspectives of others and they hear ours. Together, as we pray, our perspective of God and how God is moving expands and grows richer. As we hear the prayers of others, God uses them to encourage and prompt our own praying. We find ourselves praying for things we would not have thought to pray for until we heard the prayer of another. God can use the prayers of others to say to our spirit, "I want you to pray for this, too."
3. *We experience the presence of Christ.* When people are praying together, God isn't just present and working in one person's life but in each person's life. We begin to sense and see God's presence in each other as we pray together.
4. *Our prayer is focused.* When we join together in prayer, people are not just praying for whatever they want, whenever they want. Instead, we're praying for the same thing at the same time. There is a focus and purpose to our prayers that God responds to. In the story above, the women used a scripture passage to give their prayers focus.
5. *We gain unity.* When we pray together we gain a tangible sense that we are in this together, we have a shared experience, and a shared purpose in prayer. Together we call out to God, and together we see God at work in each other.

PRAYER

After learning about the power of praying together, we now want to put the lessons learned into practice. You are encouraged to pray out loud. Praying out loud helps to accomplish the five things that make praying together powerful. If you've never prayed out loud before, this is a safe setting and opportunity to at least try it. However, no one will force you to pray out loud nor will they think badly of you if you choose not to. If you do not choose to pray out loud, follow along and participate in silent prayer. The instructions for this prayer time are on the next page.

PRAYER INSTRUCTIONS

If your group is larger than 12, it is recommended that you break into groups of 6-8 for this prayer exercise.

1. Together as a group you will make a list of things that you could pray for in several different areas.
After making the list, you will seek to find agreement (Matthew 18:19) on just a few things to pray about.

Prayer requests for ourselves

Does anyone have a need they would like prayer for? Does anyone need God's guidance on an specific situation? Make a list of these things.

Prayer requests for our group

What do we want to see happen to us as a group?

Prayer requests for the church

What should we pray for the church? Are you aware of specific needs? Is a specific ministry or staff person on your heart?

Prayer requests for our community, state, nation or world

What needs are on your heart in any of these areas?

2. Go back through each list. The goal is to find agreement on no more than two items in each category that you sense God wants you to pray for as a group. This does not mean that the other requests have less value or are less important. You are encouraged to pray for all the requests on your own during the week. What this means is that at this moment these are the things that God wants the whole group to pray about *as a group*.

Before you start this step, take some time to pray. First, spend time praising God. Praise God for His attributes that are most meaningful to you at the moment. Next allow a time of silence for confession. Clear away any sin that would hinder your communication with God. Ask God to reveal to you any sin that needs to be confessed. Now, ask God to give the group discernment over what to pray for. Remain silent for a minute to allow God to impress His thoughts upon you.

After praying, begin to share which requests stand out to you in the first category. Have a friendly and loving discussion. Work to set aside personal passions and agendas in order to reach agreement as a group. After settling on one or two requests for the first category, repeat the process for each of the other categories.

3. Next go back to prayer and pray for each item you have agreed upon. Give as much time as needed for as many people as possible to pray for each agreed upon request.

Follow-up Question

What did you experience through this process? Did you enjoy it? Were you surprised?