

# Session Five

# 40 Days of Prayer

## Leaders Guide

“ The Power of Connection”

### What Participants will need:

1. Handouts
2. Bible
3. Pens
4. Post-it Notes
5. Tablet of Paper

### PLANNING YOUR TIME

The Prayer Time will be the most important part of this weeks study. **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU ALLOW 40 OR MORE MINUTES FOR THE PRAYER SECTION.** If you need to make adjustments to the study in order to allow for enough time for prayer here are some suggestions. Skip the Old Testament reading in question 1 and/or skip questions 2 & 3.

### OPENING

As you hear good stories, PLEASE pass them on to the pastor and church staff.

### SCRIPTURE MEMORY

### BIBLE STUDY

**Do not just read verbatim the answers written here.** Give people the opportunity to think on their own and interact with the question and the issues it raises. Most questions are open-ended and there are many right answers. Ask the question and give people the opportunity to share what they think. Most times they'll get it right on their own and in the process they'll come up with many additional rich thoughts and ideas as well.

1. This question makes up the bulk of the study. Not only will this question help people learn lessons about corporate prayer, it will begin to teach them how they can discover lessons from their own personal study of scripture.

Have all the passages read out loud. Encourage people to find the passage and read along as one person reads it aloud. Pass out Post-it notes or scraps of paper to people so they can mark the spot before they go on to the next passage. That way they can easily go back to it when you begin your discussion.

Use the questions to help guide the discovery time and then summarize the lessons using the questions provided.

Possible answers include:

- a) 2 Chronicles - a crisis; Acts 1 - the need for unity and guidance; Acts 3 a daily habit; Acts 4 to celebrate, praise God, and ask for boldness; Acts 16 for strength, assurance, focus on God in the midst of circumstances
  - b) Some were special events and some were regular habits
  - c) Praise, claiming God's promises from scripture, explaining the situation and expressing needs, surrender and trust, requesting God to act in specific ways, asking God to give boldness
  - d) The difference is that a demand makes God the servant, wishful prayer lacks faith and trust, expectantly waiting trusts that God will act in ways that are right and best. These prayers were expectant
  - e) An army was defeated, the Holy Spirit came, Jesus was witnessed to and 3,000 people put their faith in Jesus, the room shook and again the Holy Spirit was active and Jesus was boldly proclaimed and thousands continued to be saved
2. What makes prayer together powerful is the fact that Jesus promises to be actively in our midst. What is required is two or more to be gathered, agreement, and prayer in Jesus' name. Some questions may come up about what it means to agree or what it means to pray in Jesus' name. Turn the question back to the group and ask them what they think then move to the next question which will offer some insight.
  3. We are taught to ask God for our needs. However, we are told that selfish requests will not be honored. This gives insight as to what it means to pray in Jesus' name. It means to pray for the things we know God desires and that will bring God honor and pleasure. You can have an interesting discussion about what a selfish prayer is and how we can know if we are praying selfishly or not. My personal approach on this subject is to do the best I can in praying for things I believe God desires but not to shy away from requests for myself and what I perceive as my needs. I pray boldly but not demandingly. I trust God to sort out the good from the bad in my prayers and then to respond in ways that are in my true best interest.
  4. This question is self-explanatory.

## **PRAYER**

**To not leave time for prayer is to miss the point of the whole study!**

Hopefully, the instructions in the hand-out for this prayer exercise are clear and need little further explanation. The purpose is to have people practice what they have learned in this session and experience what it is like to pray in agreement. Here are some additional tips:

- Use a pad of paper or a big sheet on the wall to record all the prayer requests. Consider providing everyone a sheet of paper and encourage them to write all the requests down so they can pray for them through the week. This will help reinforce the point that we are not saying that a request is unimportant because it wasn't one that was chosen to be prayed for as a group.
- Be sure to spend time praying together as outlined before narrowing down the list
- As you work to find agreement, continue to emphasize that this does not mean that other requests are unimportant. Open up the discussion asking people to share if there were one or two requests that just stood out from the rest as they prayed for God's guidance. If there is still wide divergence, be loving and gentle but continue to encourage people to narrow the list down. If there is still some resistance, ignore the instructions and make the list bigger. Prayer is to be a time that unifies not divides.

- When you go back into prayer, ask the group to be attentive to ways in which God might be moving and speaking in them as they pray and hear others pray.

It is our desire that people will begin to sense that while all the requests are important certain ones, for reasons known only to God, are the ones God wants the whole group to unify around and pray for.

If at all possible, take the time to debrief the experience using the follow-up question.

## **SMALL GROUP PLANNING**

An application for week six's lesson is to do a Neighborhood Prayer Walk. You can read about the Prayer Walk on Day 34 of the Devotional Book. Think ahead and consider doing that as a group activity. Or, in addition to everyone doing their own personal neighborhood prayer walks, consider bringing your group to the church campus and doing a prayer walk around the facilities praying specifically for all the ministries that occur in each building or even each room.



The 40 Days of Prayer Study is written by Phil Sommerville & Christie Syftestad and can be reproduced by small group leaders for use in their groups