

**EFFECTIVE  
PRAYER  
LIFE**

**ARE YOU READY FOR AN ADVENTURE?** ARE YOU READY TO EXPERIENCE JESUS IN WHOLE A NEW WAY? IN THIS STUDY YOU WILL LEARN THINGS THAT CAN TOTALLY ALTER YOUR MIND AND YOUR HEART. ULTIMATELY, WHAT YOU WILL LEARN CAN CHANGE EVERY RELATIONSHIP YOU HAVE AND ALTER THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE. IN THIS EXCITING SESSION WE WILL BE LEARNING ABOUT PRAYER.

## **AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER LIFE**

### **INTIMATE CONVERSATION**

Are you ready for an adventure? Are you ready to experience Jesus in whole a new way? In this study you will learn things that can totally alter your mind and your heart. Ultimately, what you will learn can change every relationship you have and alter the course of your life. In this exciting session we will be learning about prayer.

Be honest for a moment. Did you cringe a little when you realized we were going to be talking about prayer? Just relax.

You have probably heard a lot about prayer before, but you will be learning about prayer in a way you may not have experienced before. We will learn about different ways to pray, and we will also confront every stronghold in our lives that makes us want to fall asleep while we pray. Prayer is one of the most radical heart changers in

the “tool belt” of Christian growth. In fact, the enemy will try every trick possible in order to keep you from hitting your knees.

Why is prayer so life altering? It can be explained this way. Have you ever had a new friend in your life who left a huge impression on you? Maybe you listened to a new kind of music because of him, or maybe you followed a dream because of her.

In a similar way, prayer puts us in touch with the best friend we will ever have. Jesus desires to not only be our Lord, but also our friend. The King of the Universe wants to spend time with us and show himself to us. And prayer is the basic building block of this friendship. It is intimate conversation with Christ. When you spend quality time with Jesus, you naturally start picking up some good habits from him. You begin to see circumstances and people the same way he does.

Prayer does not just bring a general change to our lives. Rather, it moves us toward the original design God has for us. God made us on purpose and for a purpose. The best way to discover that purpose, and to live it, is to have a relationship with the Lord—the one who created

that purpose. Daily conversation with the Lord moves us into God's original design for our lives.

A friendship with Jesus is definitely good for us. But what is surprising is that it is good for him too. Scripture says we can please God by faith (Hebrews 11:6). This means we can touch the heart of God through our intimacy with him. What better way to learn how to bless a friend than to talk to him or her?

**Ask yourself these questions and check all that apply to you:**

- *Do I have a difficult time staying awake when I pray?*
- *Does my mind wander when I try to pray?*
- *Do I look forward to praying, or is it something that I know I should do but have a hard time doing?*
- *When I pray, do I sometimes feel like he is disappointed with me? In other words, do I think that I have not prayed enough, so I start my prayer times already defeated?*

If you checked any of those boxes, then know that you are in good company. The disciples also had similar problems and asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

**Break up into your small groups:**

- *Tell the Lord that you want to learn how to pray.*
- *Ask the Lord to show up in the class and help everyone grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus.*

## UNDERSTANDING DAVID: WORSHIP AND WARFARE

Before we delve into the different types of prayer, it is important to first engage the heart of prayer. When you think of prayer, what are the images that immediately come to mind? Do you think of being at church and praying for someone's second cousin's gall bladder? Do you think of bowing your head before you eat? Kneeling beside your bed before going to sleep? Is it an image of quiet and stillness? Yes, these are all types of prayer, but the time has come to shatter the powerlessness of how you actually see prayer.

There is only one man in Scripture whom God describes as "a man after my own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). The man is David, and he is our example of what conversation with the King should look like. There are four attributes of David that shape our understanding of the heart of prayer.

### 1. THE MAN WHO CARRIED THE HARP AND SANG THE SONGS IS THE SAME MAN WHO DREW HIS SWORD IN BATTLE.

David's ability to write psalms and worship God almost seems in contradiction to the rock-slinging, sword-wielding warrior who also emerges in battle. However, the faith and fierceness necessary to battle the enemies of God are the direct result of worship. As David's heart dwelled on the character of God Almighty, it became rooted in his heart. As a result, David's own heart was transformed. Worship became the perfect preparation for battle.

David was convinced of God's sovereignty and of God's indignation over sin. The more David knew God, the more he recognized that warfare was in the very nature of God.

THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG; HE HAS BECOME MY SALVATION. HE IS MY GOD, AND I WILL PRAISE HIM, MY FATHER'S GOD, AND I WILL EXALT HIM. THE LORD IS A WARRIOR; THE LORD IS HIS NAME. *\_EXODUS 15:2-3 (NIV)*

Not only did David know that warfare was in God's character, but he also understood that victory in battle gave glory to God—especially when the odds were against him. Therefore, wielding his sword became a natural extension of strumming his harp. They were forms of worship, and they both gave glory to God.

DAVID SAID TO THE PHILISTINE, "YOU COME AGAINST ME WITH SWORD AND SPEAR AND JAVELIN, BUT I COME AGAINST YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LORD ALMIGHTY, THE GOD OF THE ARMIES OF ISRAEL, WHOM YOU HAVE DEFIED. THIS DAY THE LORD WILL HAND YOU OVER TO ME, AND I'LL STRIKE YOU DOWN AND

OFF YOUR HEAD. TODAY I WILL GIVE THE CARCASSES OF THE PHILISTINE ARMY TO THE BIRDS OF THE AIR AND THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH, AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW THAT THERE IS A GOD IN ISRAEL. ALL THOSE GATHERED HERE WILL KNOW THAT IT IS NOT BY SWORD OR SPEAR THAT THE LORD SAVES; FOR THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S, AND HE WILL GIVE ALL OF YOU INTO OUR HANDS."

*\_1 SAMUEL 17:45-47 (NIV)*

Like the images of David strumming his harp, our understanding of worship is often limited to the warm and peaceful emotions of singing in church. However, David's leadership in some fierce and bloody battles made the name of the Lord known throughout the whole world. Warfare is worship. It is the natural result of beholding the character of God.

Ask yourself these questions: What is the Goliath in my life? Are there circumstances that mock the power of God in my life? Do I have the faith to fight the battle? Am I ready for the fierce and bloody war?

As a boy, David knew the character of God well enough to know that if Goliath mocked the Lord Almighty, then the Lord himself would win the battle. Since we were created to worship God, it is in our nature to wield the sword as well. It says in Exodus that the "Lord is a warrior." In addition to warfare as worship, warfare is in God's nature. Since we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), being a warrior is a part of our identity too. It is part of who God created us to be. Any way in which we have labeled ourselves differently than a "fierce warrior" is a lie—shyness and hesitancy are lies. We are warriors.

Do you see how a religious understanding of worship and prayer robs us of our true identity in God? We are warriors by nature. Fear of what others might think about us completely shuts down the warrior within us. Would David have challenged Goliath if he was worried what his brothers might think of him? Inhibition is a thief, robbing us of our true identity in Christ.

## 2. WORSHIP WAS A CONSTANT PART OF DAVID'S LIFE.

Just as worship was an integral part of David's life, it should be a driving force in our everyday lives too. Worship should not be limited to singing at church or listening to praise music while in our cars. What might begin as forty-five seconds of thanking God for what he has done in our lives needs to explode and become all-consuming. Our days should be filled with an attitude of thanksgiving. Our entire day can be marked by thanking God for all that he does for us.

EXALT THE LORD OUR GOD AND WORSHIP AT HIS FOOTSTOOL—HE IS HOLY.

*\_PSALM 99:5 (NIV)*

There is urgency and desperation in this command. Our knowledge and conviction that God is holy should drive us to continuously praise and give him thanks.

## 3. DAVID REMEMBERED WHAT GOD HAD DONE FOR HIM.

I WILL PRAISE YOU, O LORD, WITH ALL MY HEART; I WILL TELL OF ALL YOUR WONDERS. *\_PSALM 9:1 (NIV)*

Like Moses's song in Exodus 15, David's psalms are filled with a recollection of God's work in his life. Remembering what God has done in our lives is a crucial form of worship. It builds faith by reminding us that God has already moved on our behalf; it helps us to believe that he will do it again. Declaring God's wonderful works keeps our hearts in a state of gratitude and determined faith. As we converse with our King, much of our conversation will start with "Remember when you did \_\_\_\_\_?" and end with, "Thanks! That was awesome. You are beyond amazing." Gratitude naturally leads us into simple adoration of our Savior.

#### 4. NOTHING RESTRAINED DAVID'S EXPRESSIONS OF THANKSGIVING AND ADORATION TO THE LORD.

In 1 Chronicles 15, David moved the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. All of Israel brought the ark into Jerusalem with music, cymbals, and singing. David led the procession by dancing and leaping with joy. There was no inhibition in David's worship of the Lord. He threw all of his passion into celebrating what the Lord had done for them—so much so that his wife despised him for it.

What marks your life of worship? Do you sing with all your heart only when you are in the car? If you felt the Spirit moving you, would you leap for joy? Would you dance? What marks your life of prayer? Is it kind of boring? Does it feel mechanical? Could you describe it as passionate?

Before the different types of prayer are described, we must attack everything that might limit our conversations with the Lord. We want to clear the way for passion to arise in us when it comes to prayer.

As we move forward and begin to learn about the different kinds of prayer, keep the image of David—the worshiping warrior—in mind. Prayer is truly an intimate conversation with our loving King. It should be filled with emotion and passion. Often it will include fierce battles and action steps; at other times it will sound like a tender love song. Our prayer lives, including our worship, will reflect intimacy with Jesus. We can give our hearts to our King. He is so trustworthy. This journey will be more satisfying than anything else in our lives.

#### LEADER NOTE:

As a group, take time to confess inhibition and religion. (Do the work thoroughly. Work through the four Rs for both passivity and religion. Ask the Lord for some action steps for the group in order to clearly walk out of inhibition and religion in this area.)

## WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF PRAYER?

When learning how to pray, there is a helpful tool to remember how to keep our conversation with Jesus both intimate and healthy. The acronym is **TACIS** (pronounced “TACK-iss”), and it can help us remember the five types of prayer.

T is \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>1</sup>

Thanking God for what he has done in our lives.

A is \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>2</sup>

Praising God for who he is.

C is \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>3</sup>

Acknowledging our sin while praying.

I is \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>4</sup>

Praying for others.

S is \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>5</sup>

Praying for ourselves.

### 1. PRAISE

Adoration and thanksgiving are the pediatrics of prayer. This means that the life of worship and thanksgiving is the foundation of our prayer life, the very foundation of our relationship with Christ. When our mind is focused on all that we are thankful for, then our day will be radically different. Praise and thanksgiving open our hearts to the Lord through prayer. They are like keys to open the door to the courts of the Almighty, allowing us to enter into his presence with joyful hearts.

ENTER HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING AND HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE; GIVE THANKS TO HIM AND PRAISE HIS NAME. FOR THE LORD IS GOOD AND HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER; HIS FAITHFULNESS CONTINUES THROUGH ALL GENERATIONS. *\_PSALM 11:4-5 (NIV)*

### A. PRAYER IS ABOUT \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>6</sup>

Let us not be confused by thinking that God is forcing us to say nice things about him before he will listen to us. God desires to be praised; however, praise aids us as well. Adoration and thanksgiving actually prepare our hearts to receive from him.

Think about any relationship you have for a moment. What happens when you start a conversation with a friend by thanking him for something he has done for you? How about when you praise your friend for specific things that she has done? How does this change your heart toward that individual? Your heart is more open and softened, and your relationship grows deeper.

## B. BEGIN WITH \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>1</sup>

Start prayer times by thanking the Lord for what he has done for you. Also thank him for what he will continue to do on your behalf. Thanksgiving will always awaken your love toward God and fill your heart with joy. An attitude of gratitude washes away negative thoughts, hardness, and distance, thus opening the door for great intimacy with Jesus.

HOW CAN I REPAY THE LORD FOR ALL HIS GOODNESS TO ME? ...I WILL SACRIFICE A THANK OFFERING TO YOU AND CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.

*\_PSALM 116:12, 17 (NIV)*

## C. PRAISE INCLUDES THANKSGIVING AND \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>7</sup>

If thanksgiving is praising God for what he has done, then adoration is praising God for who he is.

O LORD, OPEN MY LIPS, AND MY MOUTH WILL DECLARE YOUR PRAISE.

*\_PSALM 51:15 (NIV)*

Think about his attributes, or list the qualities you have discovered about God (for example, his love, forgiveness, or his mercy). As you begin to praise the Lord for these attributes, you will become strengthened and your heart will become awakened and alive. You will suddenly realize that nothing is too difficult for God.

AH, SOVEREIGN LORD, YOU HAVE MADE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH BY YOUR GREAT POWER AND OUTSTRETCHED ARM. NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR YOU.

*\_JEREMIAH 32:1 (NIV)*

## D. THE TRAPS

The \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> is always a trap. It always gets in the way of our relationship with Jesus. If we worry about what everyone around us thinks, we will never be able to truly enter the courts of praise. Remember, prayer is all about relationship. When a couple are in love, are they ashamed to let others know? No, of course they are not. In the same way, there is no reason to be ashamed of your relationship with Christ. It is a good thing to know the Creator of the Universe and to experience intimacy with him every day.

We will practice thanking the Lord and praising him out loud in class.

### LEADER NOTE:

- Sing two songs as a class. Give everyone the words and arrange for a guitar player to come to class to lead worship.
- In small groups, have participants practice thanking God out loud for something he did this week.

***It is important to stop the class for another special warning about a potential trap:***

\_\_\_\_\_ <sup>9</sup> stops us from having true intimacy with God. Do you remember what religion is? Religion is a \_\_\_\_\_ <sup>10</sup> without \_\_\_\_\_ <sup>11</sup> or \_\_\_\_\_ <sup>12</sup>.

We will spend time each week addressing what religion looks like. The first aspect of religion we will cover is having our eyes focused on people instead of on God. The religious person is concerned with how he or she appears to others. How do others see me? There is a tremendous amount of fear of people in religion because it causes us to be concerned with how other people view us. Even when we worship God, we can become concerned with those around us; we can become afraid to pray out loud or even raise our voice in prayer.

In addition to religion, passivity is a huge prayer blocker. The passive person never seems to get around to praying. This week our homework is to work through the passivity stronghold worksheet (as a review from the Freedom Class). Passivity is a strong form of rebellion.

# SUMMARY

1. It is all about \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>6</sup>
2. Prayer is an intimate \_\_\_\_\_<sup>13</sup> with Jesus.
3. TACIS stands for:
  - a. T is for \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. A is for \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>2</sup>
  - c. C is for \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>3</sup>
  - d. I is for \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>4</sup>
  - e. S is for \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>5</sup>
4. Thanksgiving praises God for \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>14</sup>
5. Adoration praises God for \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>15</sup>
6. The traps are:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>9</sup>
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>16</sup>
7. It is all about \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>6</sup>

# HOMEWORK

## ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING:

1. Go through the passivity worksheet, which is included at the end of this lesson.

2. Read the following summary from Elizabeth Alves's book *Becoming a Prayer Warrior* (pg. 47, Renew Books, 1998). In her book, Alves summarizes the seven expressions of praise found in the Hebrew language. Look up the verses for each of these seven ways to praise God and begin to practice them in your life:

**a. Sacrifice**—to render, or give back, thanksgiving or praise (Psalm 42:4; 100:4).

**b. Gesture**—to throw hands into the air (Psalm 67:3; 107:8, 15, 21, 31).

**c. Gratitude**—to kneel in gratitude for God's provision (Psalm 31:21; 63:4; 95:6).

**d. Celebrate** (Psalm 56:4; 150:1–2).

**e. Music**—to praise the Lord skillfully on an instrument (Psalm 21:13; 33:2; 98:4).

**f. Corporate**—to praise with others (Psalm 22:3, 25; 33:1; 35:28).

**g. Say it**—to comment on qualities of the Lord. Praise God for his mighty acts and deeds (Psalm 63:3–4; 117:1; 147:12).

3. Practice praising and thanking God by reading the Scriptures out loud. Start by reading a Psalm out loud to God each day. You can begin with Psalm 145:1–7.

4. Search for worship music to play in your home and car. Ask a friend for a favorite if you do not know where to begin. Enjoy some worship alone, just you and him.