

# Way of Discipleship Small Groups

## Can praying for others really make a difference? 3: Some good principles



### Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.

Introduction: In this third session, having looked at questions of God's will and the role of faith, we will focus on some good principles when praying for others.



### Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What make for good intercessions?



### Understanding the information (20 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

Praying for others is “joining in a battle” and affected by many things we cannot fully see – laws of nature, human and spiritual free will, and faith. While it is true that God always wants our healing there may be one further factor of which we might not be fully aware - our understanding of what God wants.



Whatever our prayer for others and the world, seeking God's will is at the heart of it. Our central purpose is to see God's will on earth as it is in heaven. As John writes, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.” (1 John 5: 14-15)

While we can have confidence that God hears us praying, no one can claim to have complete understanding of what God wants or see every aspect of the universe in the way God does. All these factors mean that when we pray, we see “through a glass darkly” and cannot see intercession as a formula (the book of Job has this as its central idea).

Rather than undermining our trust in prayer, understanding these factors will help us to avoid becoming discouraged in the midst of the battle, and help us to persevere.

As we pray Jesus reassures us that God’s goodness cannot be outdone – He gives fish, not stones and eggs, not scorpions and Scripture encourages us that prayer is powerful and effective. In the light of this complex picture, the Bible gives us several principles to help us pray:

**Being persistent and expectant.** When we pray it is not just about God saying yes or no, but we might be coming up against the will of people or forces that have genuine freedom and impact. So it is not surprising that Jesus spoke of the need for persistent prayer.

Having driven out a demon the disciples asked Him why they had been unable to do it. He replied, “This only comes out through prayer and fasting.” (Matthew 17: 19-21) The disciples may well have said, “Well, what do you think we were doing?” Jesus was demonstrating that sometimes there is a necessity for persistent, repeated prayer in seeing change happen.

In Luke 11, having taught the Lord’s Prayer, He then tells another story to show the attitude needed in prayer in which a friend wakes up another friend late at night for bread with “shameless audacity” (Luke 11:8). He also tells His disciples the parable of the persistent widow, who won’t stop petitioning a corrupt judge “to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” (Luke 18). In these two stories the encouragement is to know that God wants to answer our prayers and that we should pray expecting to be answered.

**Praying with others.** Early Christians were acutely aware that, although it is impossible to see the full picture when we pray, the strength and number of people praying together is also an important factor. In Acts we read, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken.” (Acts 4:31) Asking others to pray with us is an instinct, but also rooted in Jesus’ words, “Where two or three are gathered I am there with you.” (Matthew 18:20)

**Being specific and general:** We can be hesitant to ask for specific things for individuals, yet Jesus prayed particularly for Simon, “that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:32). On the other hand, Paul wrote to Timothy, encouraging him to continue in general intercession: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions...” (1 Timothy 2: 1-2). To pray for others is to join with God in taking responsibility and to use what God has given you.

Discuss: What attitude of heart does God look for when we pray for others?

## Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read 1 Timothy 2: 1-7 in which Paul encourages us to pray for the world.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:  
What does this passage teach me about God?  
What does this passage teach me about people?  
How does this passage call me to obey God?  
What might I do in response to this this week?

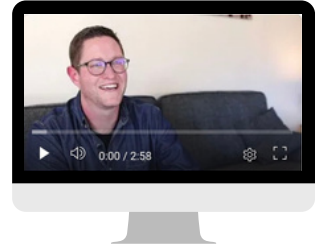


## Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://youtu.be/2S5ATmxORLg>

What struck you as important in the video?



## Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



## Group prayer (10 minutes)

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.  
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;  
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.  
Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus,  
through you all things were made.  
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,  
you became part of this earth,  
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.  
Today you are alive in every creature  
in your risen glory.  
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light  
you guide this world towards the Father's love  
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.  
You also dwell in our hearts  
and you inspire us to do what is good.  
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,  
teach us to contemplate you  
in the beauty of the universe,  
for all things speak of you.



## Group prayer continued (10 minutes)

Awaken our praise and thankfulness  
for every being that you have made.  
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined  
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love  
for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,  
and care for this world in which we live.  
The poor and the earth are crying out.

O Lord, seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life,  
to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you!  
Amen.

'A Christian prayer for union with creation' was published in Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.



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