

# Embarking on the 'Year of Prayer'

## Introduction

As part of this year focussed on prayer, our opening series will be looking at aspects of prayer from the New Testament. Some of us have been praying for a long time and feel comfortable in our own prayers and with others. For some of us, prayer is a new thing and we don't yet feel confident. I hope that through this study we will feel closer to God and able to share our honest requests, thanks and praise with the Lord. Hopefully this year's focus will be good for our walk with God well beyond 2018!

## Week 1—Prayer in Jesus' Name

### Opening Prayer (can be said together)

Lord, we come in your name to our heavenly Father.

In your name we give thanks for your presence with us. In your name we ask for your grace as we meet. In your name we praise you that we can come to you. And in your name we ask that our time together would deepen and enrich our life with you. Amen.

### Passage - John 14:11-14

### Discussion Starters

What was your first reaction when hearing we'd be looking at prayer?

What was your first experience of prayer?

How does the unity of the Trinity help us when we pray in Jesus name?

Have you thought much about what it means to pray in Jesus' name?

What do you make of Jesus' promise in verses 13&14?

Does that mean we should expect all of our wishes to come true?

Would prayer feel different if we began with 'In Jesus' name'?

### Focus on Prayer

We've seen how we can come to God in Jesus' name. You could write a short prayer on paper, perhaps with music playing, bring them to a central place to symbolise this. We can approach God because we come in the name of Jesus.

## Week 2—Prayer for God’s Will

### Opening Prayer

Lord God, in the name of Jesus we bring our requests to you. May we lay our hearts and desires before you. May your Holy Spirit give us a longing to do your will and see your will done in our world. Help us to lay down our agenda when it is not yours, and to fulfil our plans when they align with your will for us. Please give us wisdom, faith and a trust in your living word. Amen.

**Passage - Matthew 26:36-44**

### Discussion Starters

- Is it easy for our minds to wander during prayer, even to doze...?!
- How do we discover Jesus’ reliance on prayer in this passage?
- Would Jesus have known that there was no other way but ‘the cup’?
- What do we learn about prayer and following God’s will?
- Do you see similarities for yourself with the disciples? (I know I do!)
- How does Jesus prayer change slightly by v42?
- Is there something to learn here about persisting in prayer?
- How can we discern what God’s will is?

### Focus on Prayer

It would be good to pray for God’s guidance, and to know and follow his will for our lives. Perhaps this week break into smaller groups. Each share something you’d like God’s guidance/will for. Then say short prayers, perhaps repeating them as Jesus did in the garden.

## Week 3—Prayer in the Spirit

### Opening Prayer

God, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. As we share time with you, we also know your presence amongst us. In our weakness, bring strength. Where we struggle for the right words, would you intercede for us. You search our hearts, you know us and you hear our prayers. We praise you and thank you. Amen.

**Passage - Romans 8:26-29**

### Discussion Questions

How would you love to grow in your prayer over this year?

Are there times when you know you want to pray, but can't find the words?

Have you experienced the Holy Spirit interceding for you in those moments?

Does the idea of Spiritually-spoken prayer excite or worry you?

Is it helpful to think of God who knows our hearts, sharing in our prayers?

### **Focus on Prayer**

Some Christians find praying in the Spirit comes naturally. Some have the gift of speaking in tongues, some have a gift of insight in prayer & words of knowledge. There is no spiritual hierarchy with God, but there is an opportunity in the quiet to ask him to gently pray with us—in silence, in English or in the wordless way Paul refers to. No hype, just open hearts to the Lord.

## **Week 4—Prayer after Jesus' Example**

### **Opening Prayer**

Loving Father, we thank you that it is not the eloquence or length of our prayers that matters to you. That you love to hear honest and humble words, however they come. Thank you that you know our hearts even before we speak, and as we pray we're reminded of your love. Amen.

### **Passage - Matthew 6:5-8**

### **Discussion Questions**

Can you think of a modern equivalent of the hypocrites 'show-off' prayers?

What is the limited reward that fancy but false prayers might bring?

How does God's reward for honest, personal prayer differ?

Is it helpful to have a regular space & time for prayer?

How do we know that we don't need to babble to impress God?

If God already knows our hearts, then what's the point in praying..?!

Are there things that you can put into practice for your own daily prayer?

### **Focus on Prayer**

This might be a good week for silent prayer, in the secret of our hearts.

Perhaps the leader could use music, images, candle, cross or some other point of focus.

## Week 5—A Life of Prayer

### Opening Prayer

Jesus, we praise you for your life and example to us of prayer. Help us to know the daily lift of coming to you, trusting you and laying our thoughts before you. May we increasingly learn to depend on you and to live a life full of prayer and closeness with you. Amen.

### Passage - Mark 1:35-39

### Discussion Questions

Have you ever wondered why Jesus prays so often, after all - he is God?

If Jesus needed a life of prayer, what does that tell us?

Do you have a regular time to talk to God?

Is there a connection between Jesus' prayer life and his busyness?

How does prayer connect with the rest of our lives?

What has been most helpful for your prayers over these 5 weeks?

Where would you still like to grow in your life of prayer?

### Focus on Prayer

It would be good to finish with a time of open prayer. Simple, honest talking to God. Perhaps those who've never done that could ask for the courage to pray out loud. Remember, there's no qualification—just an open heart to God. In Jesus, our holy God has drawn near that we can speak with him.

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### A Praying Life—Paul Miller

I've read quite a few books on prayer and I found this one to be so helpful. Of course, that is a personal thing and you may have your own recommendation. What I loved about Paul Miller's book was his honesty about prayer and the challenges we often find. But the best part was that as I read it, and he took me back to the God we can talk to, I just found myself praying more. Not necessarily longer, but more often. I would recommend this book as something to read this year alongside the year of prayer.

### Sermons

Talks from this series will go online shortly after the Sunday they're preached. You can listen online or download at:

[www.allsaintswick.org.uk/talks](http://www.allsaintswick.org.uk/talks)