

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership  
Leader's Guide

## LEADING SMALL GROUPS LESSON 5: PRAYER IN SMALL GROUPS

### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Leading Small Groups. The purpose of these lessons is to equip the developing leader with skills and understanding in order to successfully lead a small group. A small group may be a Bible Study or Discipleship group, or any other small group used for discipleship and ministry. The focus is on building strong communication skills and positive relationships, accompanied by an attitude of love and service. Equipping yourself to be a better small group leader will enhance your ability to disciple and teach others, and at the same time, create a more enjoyable experience for everyone. This module is designed for those who are currently in church leadership, small group leadership, or a member of a small group. Hopefully members of a small group will one day take on leadership responsibility of such a group.

### INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is emerging leaders who are preparing for specific ministry within the Church.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# LEADING SMALL GROUPS

## LESSON 5: PRAYER IN SMALL GROUPS

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to discover the reasons for praying in small groups, to inspire renewed commitment to prayer, and to suggest different methods of prayer that can be employed by the small group.

### LEADER'S NOTE

The best way to learn to pray is by praying. There are no shortcuts, no books that will make it easier, no secret method. There is no one way of praying, just as there is no one way of talking to one another. Nevertheless, we can grow in our ability to pray by praying with one another. It might be helpful to schedule a group meeting after this one for the purpose of praying together, as this lesson is more theoretical than practical. When you meet together to pray, participants should be expected to joyfully and actively participate. Intercessory prayer is a very high calling. Model a reverence and appropriate heart attitude to your participants. And don't forget to spend time praying in advance of this lesson!

## INTRODUCTION

*Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.*

- ❖ What is your prayer life like? How often, when, and where do you pray?
- ❖ Why does God ask us to pray? What is the purpose of prayer?
- ❖ Do you have others with whom you can regularly meet for prayer? Do you have a particular routine or reason to meet together? If not, do you know of prayer meetings that are available to you?
- ❖ Have you had times in your life when you were more motivated to pray than at other times? What was your motivation and what kept you going?
- ❖ How would ministries you are involved in, or the people to whom you minister, change if there were many intercessors praying for them?



## STUDY

*Instruct the group on the following points.*

### TEACH

- ❖ **Why Pray?** In the Bible Jesus told us to pray. We also learn that every godly man and woman in the Bible were people who prayed. But we might wonder why God would need us if He is so powerful. Why should I pray and what can my prayers accomplish? This is a complex question. Here are a few answers, but this is just the beginning of the conversation:
  - As an act of obedience (Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
  - To join in God's work (John 15:15-16, 1 Timothy 2:1-4)
  - To stay close to God (John 15:4, James 4:8)
  - To build faith through answers to prayer (Psalms 34:17, John 15:7)
  
- ❖ **What We Experience Through Prayer:** The Disciples were taught by Jesus how to pray in Matthew 6. Read the verses together: Matthew 6:5-14. The Disciples needed God's power for the task at hand, and that power would be given to them when they asked for it through prayer. Just like the Disciples, we need to wait on God and pray for His guidance and wisdom as we live our Christian life, and evangelise those of other worldviews. We must tell God about our neighbour before we tell our neighbour about God! When we pray, we experience:
  - **Fellowship** –Through fellowship with God, He allows us to become His workers.
  - **Development** –When we pray as God intended, we experience a partnership with God. We will become more like Christ and more mature in our faith.
  - **Dependency** –When we pray, we humble ourselves before God and show reliance on His great power and authority.
  - **Miracles** –We will see God do impossible things when we pray! God will change the hardest of hearts and bring people into His Kingdom when we ask. We will see circumstances change and the miraculous take place.
  
- ❖ **Corporate Prayer:** Praying with others is referred to as corporate prayer. Prayer is an integral part of a Small Group (whether the group has assembled for Bible Study, fellowship, discipleship, and especially for prayer). At its heart, corporate prayer is about agreeing together on what should be prayed for, and coming together in unity before God. The Biblical examples of groups assembled in prayer show how they experienced great things together.
  - **The Early Church met as a Prayer Group:** At its core, the early church was a group of people who met regularly to pray. When Jesus left earth, a mere 120 people remained and they met together to pray! As a result of their prayers, the Gospel spread to Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Jerusalem, Lydda and Iconium! The people were being used



by God and had the privilege of seeing Him work. They prayed with boldness, and God boldly responded! Consider these passages:

- o [Acts 1:14-26](#)
  - o [Acts 4:1-31](#)
  - o [Acts 12:5-12](#)
- **Our Work is Prayer:** Our individual spiritual life should be marked by regular prayer and close communion with God. However, we must not neglect prayer with others! It is important to God that we come together in agreement and community.
- o Discuss what [Matthew 18:19-20](#) tells us about praying together.
- ❖ **What We Pray:** When we think of the word 'prayer', we might see ourselves asking God to give us something specific or to make something happen. We must keep in mind that prayer is not about asking for things, but rather about being in relationship with God.
- When we spend time reading God's Word and praying, we begin to understand what we should be asking for. As we seek God, He will change our desires so they are in line with His will.
  - Our prayers should be more than a list of things we are asking God to do. They can also be full of Scripture, especially verses that praise God for who He is. They can be prayers of thanksgiving and giving glory to God. They can ask God for wisdom, knowledge, protection, and intervention. In our private time with God, we must also remember to offer prayers of repentance and ask for forgiveness.

## TASK

*Look together at the following verses about what we ought to pray for. You can divide the group and give each group a column of verses to look up and explore. Have each group list the things we must remember when deciding what we should pray for? What should we pray for?*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| o <a href="#"><u>John 14: 13-14</u></a>  | o <a href="#"><u>Romans 10:1</u></a>     |
| o <a href="#"><u>1 John 5:14-15</u></a>  | o <a href="#"><u>1 Timothy 2:1-2</u></a> |
| o <a href="#"><u>James 4:3</u></a>       | o <a href="#"><u>James 5:13-14</u></a>   |
| o <a href="#"><u>Philippians 4:6</u></a> | o <a href="#"><u>Matthew 5:44</u></a>    |

## TEACH

- ❖ **Our Attitude in Prayer:** The Bible tells us that our attitude in prayer is important. We must pray believing that God hears us and will answer us. We must pray humbly, knowing that God may have a better plan than what we asked for. We must pray not to show others how holy we are, but to commune with our heavenly Father. Consider what these verses tells us about our attitude in prayer:
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| o <a href="#"><u>James 1:6</u></a>            | o <a href="#"><u>Matthew 21:22</u></a>  |
| o <a href="#"><u>1 Thessalonians 5:17</u></a> | o <a href="#"><u>Proverbs 15:29</u></a> |
| o <a href="#"><u>Colossians 4:2</u></a>       |   |



- ❖ **Types of Prayer in Small Groups:** When we get together with others to pray, there are different ways we can organize ourselves. Your group can try different methods to see which works best for them. Someone should be designated to lead the prayer meeting (to begin and end it), and to direct people to specific requests. Everyone in attendance should participate in prayer whether silently or out loud.

Mass Prayer	Participants should review a list of prayer request, then the leader begins the prayer time with an opening statement such as, "Let us pray..." Each participant will then pray out loud for the request, all at the same time. When the leader hears that people have stopped praying, he or she may close with 'amen'. You may pray through a series of requests this way at the close of a meeting, or meet for an evening of prayer.
One at a Time Prayer	Participants should review a list of prayer requests, then the leader begins to pray. When they finish, someone else should begin. Each person takes their own turn to pray. The last person to pray should make sure that all requests have been prayed for, and close with an Amen.
Responsive Prayer	Read through a passage of Scripture, such as a Psalm, and after each verse or short section, everyone prays in response (either all at once or one at a time). This can also work for reading through a list of prayer requests, a prayer calendar, a letter from a fellow believer, etc.
Circle Prayer	Sit with a small number of people in a circle. Each person shares a few prayer requests with the group. The leader begins to pray, and others take turns around the circle. Each person prays for the needs of the person on their right, to ensure that all needs are prayed for.
Targeted Prayer	A group may come together for targeted prayer regarding a particular need, a ministry, a revival or evangelistic effort, their community, missions, etc. In this case, make a list of specific requests and keep it in a visible place. Meet regularly to pray for these needs. Keep track of answers to prayer so that the group can celebrate God's work.
Intercessory Prayer	Have each member of the group verbalize their prayer request; every member of the group, or one or two individuals will then immediately pray for them. Then allow the next person to voice his or her prayer request. As with other methods, a leader should guide this meeting and close when completed.
Praying Scripture	When meeting for a specific need, have members prepare Scripture that speaks to that need. Each person can then read the passage of Scripture as a prayer, one at a time, while the others listen and agree with the prayer with their own 'amen'.
Celebratory Prayer	When celebrating answered prayer, or simply meeting for the occasion of praise and worship, we can praise God for His work, faithfulness, and goodness to us. Participants may be invited to share testimonies of recently answered prayers to which others respond with praise to God. This may be accompanied by singing of hymns and worship songs.

- ❖ **Celebration:** When we pray together we should not neglect celebration of answered prayer and God's presence with us! If you regularly pray for specific requests as a group, set aside time for celebration and praise.



- **Celebration is a Privilege:** We should make time to celebrate with those we are in fellowship with! It might be praise items, answered prayer, or celebrating the lives of fellow Christians. How would it change your small group to have regular celebratory prayer times? Consider the following verses:
  - o [Psalm 150:1-6](#)
  - o [1 Corinthians 10:31](#)
  - o [Psalm 100:1-5](#)
  - o [Jude 1:25](#)
  - o [Psalm 71:8](#)
- **Celebration is a Discipline:** The feasts and festivals of the Old Testament were mandated by God to give the people of God time to praise Him and remember all He had done for them. In Nehemiah's day we see that after the Word of God was read to the people, Nehemiah proclaimed a day of celebration. Read [Nehemiah 8:10](#). Even in the midst of troubles, we must remember what God has done – He is stronger than our greatest fears and He has proven Himself to be faithful!
- **Celebration is a Lifestyle:** [Philippians 4:4](#) says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Rejoicing in the Lord should play a major part in the prayer life of every church. Let celebration be a part of the life of your small group!

## DISCUSSION

- ❖ What happens to a group or meeting when it loses its purpose for getting together? Have you ever been a part of such a group? What happened?
- ❖ Do you pray for churches or people groups around the world? Where could you find specific prayer requests or information to help you pray for them?
- ❖ If believers in another area asked you how they could pray for your community, what would you tell them?
- ❖ How has God worked in your life through prayer?
- ❖ What are some of the things you want to celebrate? How can you make praise a lifestyle?

## PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that the participants would have a renewed vision for prayer times in their small groups. Pray that they would be focused on the work of prayer, which is a privilege given to each of us. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever!