

PRAY

Living Faith in Daily Life

A small group study on prayer

Prayer is a mark of discipleship; the first of the seven disciplines highlighted in the ELCA-wide *Call to Discipleship*:

Prayer is the way a disciple enjoys an intimate relationship with God. Prayer can be private or public, ritualized or conversational, silent or out loud, spoken or sung, words or action, simple or profound. Through prayer God's will is discerned and greater clarity is gained for our journey. Prayer is powerful. God's creative, redeeming and healing power is often directed through prayer. . .

Prayer is Adoration (praise, honoring God), Confession (saying "I'm sorry," acknowledging sin, that "I can't do it on my own"), Thanksgiving (saying thanks, counting blessings, allowing God's perspective to shape life) and Supplication (asking for, praying for others, petitionary in character) - ACTS. The Lord's Prayer and Luther's interpretation in the Small Catechism provide ample instruction for the content and elements of prayer and a prayerful life. Part of a disciple's job description is to pray frequently. (Excerpt from "Faith Practices: Assessing Their Place in Your Life," Living Faith Congregation Guide, 2000).

When it comes to a study on prayer, there is always a need to be attentive to both the individual's personal prayer life and the prayer life of the local congregation. We are all called to develop our relationship with God through prayer, study, worship, etc. We are also called to be an active part of the community of faith, the body of Christ and his Church.

Despite the simplicity of the discipline of prayer, many of us find it confusing or difficult to pray. Even if we do pray regularly, we still have many questions about it. This four-session study has been designed to engage a group in the practice of prayer and to raise questions with the intention of gaining a better understanding about prayer. Participants will grow in their confidence in prayer through study of select Bible references, by exploring personal preferred styles of praying, through journaling, and by experiencing varied prayer opportunities.

How to use this study

This study has been designed for a small group of 5 to 12 people eager to grow in their life of prayer. Although shared leadership can be an excellent gift to advance confidence and skill within the group, a single leader can also serve the group well. Instructions for the leader are found in boxes throughout this resource. The space for the study should include a small prayer focal point; for example, a small table to hold a candle, an icon or picture of Jesus, and/or a hand-sized cross or crucifix. The goal is to create an open atmosphere where each person can share fears, questions, and insights regarding prayer. Time for praying together is important to widen the experience and confidence in praying. Each session is divided into three sections:

Gathering A time to transition from all other activities of the day to begin focusing on the reason for gathering. Introductory questions and prayer assist in building the group's identity and cohesiveness. Allow time for laughter and genuine community building.

Growing A time to reflect on the Bible, stories and personal journaling time.

Going A time to consider how the discipline of daily prayer will be lived out in the coming week. These closing prayer activities are important to widen the experience of prayer.

Suggested time for each session is 60-90 minutes.

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