

'Knock and the door will be opened for you'

Gathering

Let's Get Acquainted

As the group gathers, invite each person to pair up with another person whom they do not know well. Ask one person to share a prayer concern for him/herself, The other person prays for that request. Have them switch roles. This exercise provides an opportunity to get to know others better and to build confidence in praying for others. Discuss the following questions.

- **I.** How did it feel for you to have someone listening to you and offering prayer for your request?
- **2.** How was your experience in praying out loud for someone else? In what way did you feel your prayer reflected the concern of the other person?
- **3.** What ideas come to mind that might make opportunities to offer prayer for others in our congregation? What steps would we need to take to offer this ministry?

Let's Pray

Pray this prayer or speak your own prayers aloud.

O God, your Holy Spirit has knocked at the door of our lives at various points in our journey through life. Thank you for your faithfulness and persistence in seeking us out. Your forgiving grace renews us each day. Come into our midst now as we gather. Fill this time with your loving presence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Growing

The setting is a debate class. Each person is to select a topic and present a 60 second argument.

- I. "Why bother praying when God knows every thing?"
- 2. "I pray because I need to pray."
- "Jesus said that we are to pray...so we pray out of obedience."
- 4. "I've prayed and nothing happened."
- 5. "God's going to do what God's going to do, no matter what I pray."
- 6. "God answers prayer."
- 7. "Prayer is for the weak and lazy."
- 8. "We must pray in faith and God will answer."
- 9. "Prayer is simply talking to yourself."
- **10.** "At certain points in my life, prayer is the only thing that sustains me."

After your arguments, discuss the following questions:

- How easy was it for you to speak convincingly about your topic?
- Have you or others you know used this argument before?
- How can we give a positive witness for prayer in the face of negative experiences?

BIBLE FOCUS: Matthew 7:7-8

Jesus said, "Knock, and the door will be opened to you...for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Read, or ask a volunteer to read the Scripture text and the following aloud. You might read this material ahead of time and simply share it with the group. Discuss questions and reactions as they arise.

It is interesting that of the three words, ask, search and knock, it is this third word that has been captured in the famous picture of Jesus' standing at the door knocking. Although this word appears only four times in the Old Testament and nine times in the New

Testament, it is this final appearance in Reve-lation 3:20 that is popularized in that picture of Jesus.

Read Revelation 3:14-22. This is the seventh and final church being addressed in chapters two and three of Revelation. Like each church before it, this word is addressed to the "angel" of that congregation (3:14). Another repeated pattern in these addresses is that those who have ears to hear are to listen (3:22). Other than these patterns, each church has a unique situation, and even the unhealthiest church is offered an opportunity to change. In this particular word to the angel of the church of Laodicea, the criticism is that they are lukewarm, not hot or cold (3:15-19). The word of hope is held in 3:20.

Discuss the following questions.

- I. Why do you think that each word was directed to the "angel" of that particular congregation? Does your congregation have an angel? What might that angel have to do with the spirit or nature of your congregation?
- **2.** The Gospels record Jesus' using the similar saying about "having ears to hear." What is the distinction between the words, listen and hear?
- **3.** Share times when you have prayed and saw a door that was closed or open. What was the door like? What did the experience mean to you and your prayer life?

Journal Time

Journal work may be started during class time and completed later at home. It may be helpful to share some of your journal reflections.

Take a few minutes to reflect on Revelation 3:20 in your journal. How do you hear the voice of God in your life? You may hear God in a number of ways. Ways that people have heard the Lord include thoughts, dreams, visions, audibly, through other people, the Bible or sermons. If you are saying to yourself, "I've never heard God," consider those coinci-

dences in your life when you broke out of your schedule and called or visited someone who needed you at that very moment. Why did you do that? Was it odd or was it God? What might God be saying to you as you prayerfully reflect on this verse? Read it three times and then sit quietly with it. What bubbles up into your mind? Write your thoughts in your journal.

Going

Read the following aloud. Discuss the questions or other questions and insights.

Let's think about doors. They can be open, closed, locked or ajar. Jesus referred to himself as the door (KJV) or gate (NRSV) in John 10:7. In this metaphor, Jesus speaks of himself as the door that protects you from harm. The missionary Paul wrote using the imagery of a door to represent new opportunities for ministry: "When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord..." (2 Corinthians 2:12). Read aloud these passages of Scripture:

Acts 14:27 Colossians 4:2-4 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 Revelation 3:7-8

What doors are closed for you that our Lord may want opened? What doors in your congregation hang open that may need to be closed at this time? What doors may God want you to open? How about in your community?

For the closing prayer time, light the candle, soften the lights. Ask participants to sit comfortably and image the picture of Jesus knocking on the door. Ask "What comes to mind? You, your church, your neighborhood, someone who you know who does not believe and worship Jesus, or your community? Pray about this door right now and this week."

After 10 to 15 minutes, close in a shared prayer time. Ask for a volunteer to open with prayer. Invite everyone to participate in praying about opening doors into the community. Seek another volunteer to close the prayer time.