

# Session 2

## Search and you will find'

### Gathering

#### Let's Get Acquainted

Take time to allow those who are willing, to share some of their prayer or journaling experiences since the last session. Encourage each person to answer the following questions. You might start with your own sharing.

1. Were there any new insights that came to you as you prayed and journaled this week?
2. How did you do in keeping your covenant?
3. Are there any changes that you want to make this week to improve your prayer time?

#### Let's Pray

Pray, or ask a volunteer to pray the following prayer aloud or speak another prayer of your choosing.

Loving Lord, thank you for each person present at this moment. Thank you for your presence with us throughout this week. Be present now in our small group time together. Open our minds and hearts to learn from you through one another. Draw us closer into your presence and teach us how to pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### Growing

Read, or ask a volunteer to read the following aloud. You might read this material ahead of time and simply share it with the group. Discuss your impressions and reactions to the story.

"My name is Rick, I am 36 years old, single, and living alone in my apartment. My two part-time jobs and food stamps help me to make it in this world. A few good friends and my church family care about me. Mean people have made fun of me all my life because I have trouble reading and it takes me a little longer to catch onto things. This has often left me feeling hurt and lonely. I met a pastor who taught about prayer. I told her that my prayer has always been to meet my

real family because I have been raised by foster families with many foster children over time. What's funny is that after we prayed together about my desire to meet my family—about nine months later—the pastor told me that she had met a man who discovered with her that he was my uncle. When I met him, he gave me some photographs and a phone number of one of my sisters (it turned out that I have three sisters)! I was so nervous calling her that first time. After several phone calls and letters, she invited me to visit her for Christmas. My best Christmas ever was the answer to my prayer, as I sat in my sister's apartment with all three of my sisters there."

#### BIBLE FOCUS: Matthew 7:7-8

"Search and you will find. . . everyone who searches finds."

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 or reactions as they arise.

In session one, we discussed how the good gifts (answers to prayer) God wants to give, come out of the loving relationship that God desires for each of us. Prayer flows out of our relationship with God and out of our heart for other people. As the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) summarizes the focus for evangelism, the Great Commandment (Luke 10:27) summarizes the focus for prayer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart; and with all your soul; and with all your strength; and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

The more we seek and search out God, the more we discover that prayer is about relationships and less about spoken words crafted into some prayer formula. The key word that we will be discussing today is love.

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Discuss the following questions. Encourage participants to make notes in their journals.

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1. Who stands out for you as a model of one who has lived or is living a life that reflects the Great Commandment? What do you see in his or her life that demonstrates love toward God and others?
  2. Read John 3:16-17. What discoveries emerge regarding God's desire for relationship with people?
  3. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). What does this text say about the decision that was made by Jesus for us? What new insights can you gain from the reading and reflection?
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End your discussion with this exercise.

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Slowly, read together the Great Commandment quoted above. Focusing our love on God with our whole being is a challenge. Eliminate possible distractions as you prepare to express your love to God with your whole self. Repeating a Bible passage like John 15:13 over and over can help to focus you. God loves you and desires that you seek God's heart, God's presence. Allow time to silently seek the heart of God.

## JOURNAL TIME

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

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One of the challenges to prayer may be some misconceptions about God that you have learned. We may need "inner healing" offered by a spiritual director or pastor if we see God as angry with us, or if we think that God offers conditional love based on how good we are. Take time to reflect and record in your journal your thoughts on this Bible passage: "But strive (seek) first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things (your daily needs like food, drink and clothing) will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). What comes to mind as you pray about this passage? How will you implement these thoughts this week?

## Going

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Read the following aloud and share your reactions.

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Rick's quest to get connected with his biological family had been underway for over ten years. We rarely understand why some prayers are answered, especially the time line involved. In actuality, Rick had pretty much given up hope of ever meeting his family at the point when this pastor asked him about his prayer request. There are no magic formula's because prayer is about relationships. What is certain is that God both loves us and listens to our prayers.

## CLOSING PRAYER

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Light a candle and pray this prayer. All may offer petitions aloud if they wish.

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Loving God, you continue to seek us out, offering us another opportunity to enter into a relationship with you. We praise you for your loving and caring nature. We thank you for Jesus, who offered his life for us, to open the door to you. Your forgiveness truly sets us free! Empower our witness to you and our service for you this week. Draw us to you once again. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*