

Session 4

'Act in accord with your prayers'

Gathering

Let's Get Acquainted

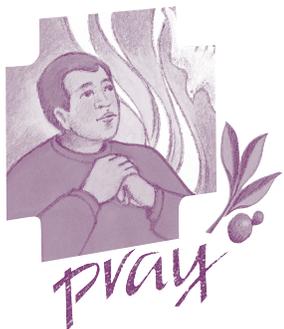
Talk about these questions as you gather.

1. Share any insights gained this week as you prayed about the Revelation 3:20 image of Jesus standing and knocking at the door.
2. Because a doorway marks a passage from one place to another, explore together the picture of your church's front door being a portal of prayer where people pass from the community into the presence of God. What are your thoughts?
3. If each one of us as a Christian represents Christ wherever we are in the world, can you imagine a portal of prayer as you look at a stranger and pray them into God's presence? Visualize flooding that person with the light of Christ. Could that idea work for you as you go about your day? If not, what might work for you?

LET'S PRAY

Pray this prayer or speak your own petitions.

We give you thanks, gracious Lord, for the gift of life. As we gather for this last session, open the doors of our hearts and minds to hear and do what you are calling us to be and do. You are the solid rock upon which our faith is built. Stir our faith today to follow as you lead. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Growing

BIBLE FOCUS: Matthew 7:21-27-8

Jesus said, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock..." (7:24).

There was a time when the social/justice-minded person was perceived as being disinterested in spiritual things. At the same time, people who were involved in prayer groups were seen as disengaged from the real issues affecting people's lives. This is a new day! Prayer and action go hand in hand.

Read and discuss the following taken from Jane Vennard, *Intercessory Prayer: Praying for Friends and Enemies*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995, pp. 60-61.

Praying and Acting

"Intercessory prayers are the expression of loving relationships. Paul told the faithful in Corinth that love is patient, love is kind. He told them that love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7). When this love motivates service in the world, our actions are filled with compassion, hope, and a deep respect for those we serve. With this love, our actions become the very beat of the compassionate heart.

Sometimes we are called to action before we are called to prayer. We are hard at work before we recognize the gifts of intercessory prayer. When this occurs, we are not out of order. We have simply entered the cyclical process of prayer and action at a different point. A committed life of service will lead us into intercessory prayer; just as a deep and faithful prayer life will lead us into action.

God calls us into relationship with God and with neighbor. Whether we respond to this call by prayer or by action is of little importance. Prayer and action go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other. God calls us out of God's own need for us to

be active participants in creation. Responding, however, lowers thresholds and opens our ears to God's transforming grace. To intercede for others through prayer and action immerses us in the process of conversion. It turns our lives around and we will never be the same."

JOURNAL TIME

Ask participants to reflect in their journals on the "Preferred Passion for Prayer," found on page 12. Do any of these categories describe your passion for prayer better than the others? Which one and why?

Going

Final thoughts:

Jesus is clear about the relationship of hearing and doing. It is all a part of discipleship. It flows out of our loving relationship with God, and begins to flow to others. What is God bringing to mind for you now? What will you do with that thought? Spend time journaling on that this week.

Closing Prayer

All may pray aloud, bringing before God persons who need special care. Seek God's guidance in responding to these needs. Close this time in prayer by blessing the person to your right in a brief sentence or two. End with the Lord's Prayer.

Psalms to Guide Your Times of Prayer



1. Adoration, Praise and Worship:

105
135
136
146
147-150

2. Confession of Sin:

6
32
38
51
85
103

3. Thanks be to God:

66
92
100
103
118

4. Supplication (prayers for yourself and intercession for others)

25
28
35
42
44

5. Life's Challenges:

55
57
61
71
86

6. Psalms for Meditation:

77
62
63
84
91