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## FOREWORD

Back in the late 90's, Paul Miller came to the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois to share the rudiments of a seminar on prayer that he had recently written. A handful of us gathered in a friend's basement to see and experience the very earliest layout of the seminar that is now known to thousands of people simply as *A Praying Life*. It was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my entire Christian life. I knew from that Saturday forward, I would never be the same.

I was not disappointed. Up until that time, prayer was simply one of many important disciplines in the life of the Christian—but I was not very good at it. My struggles with prayer won the day and I fell, as so many do, into a busy life that was essentially prayerless. And I felt it; the Christian life had become a chore rather than a vital relationship. After going through the course and incorporating the ideas, I have found the surprising wonder of doing life the way Jesus did, by constant prayer with the Father. Jesus really did live his earthly life by constantly interrupting his Father, knowing his Father delighted in his doing so. Following this same pattern has made the Christian life thrilling for me and many of those who have gone through the *A Praying Life* course.

Since that time in the basement many years ago, Paul and I have presented the *A Praying Life* Seminar in a variety of conferences, seminars, and retreats, to thousands of people both in the United States and abroad. When one gives a seminar many times, opportunities for refinement abound. After times of constant refining, often after each seminar, the book *A Praying Life* was ready to be born.

It became obvious that God was going to bless the book the way he had been blessing the *A Praying Life* Seminar these many years. Within hours, the entire first printing of the book had sold out. As word of mouth about the book spread throughout different faith group networks, calls to our seeJesus ministry office began to multiply quickly. People were asking for a Discussion Guide/ Leader's Guide so groups of friends could go through the book together. Courtney Miller Sneed, with the help of Cyndi Anderson,

worked tirelessly to produce this invaluable resource that you now have in your hands. The church will forever be indebted to the two of them for bringing together such a great tool.

Whether you have read *A Praying Life* and now want to go through it with a group of friends, or you have been through the *A Praying Life* course and want to follow it up with the book and this Discussion/Leader's Guide, we wish you the same exhilaration as you learn to pray.

—Bob Allums, Director of *A Praying Life* Seminars, see Jesus

# INTRODUCTION

Paul Miller writes in *A Praying Life*, “When Jesus describes the intimacy he wants with us, he talks about joining us for dinner” (p. 8). A companion to *A Praying Life*, this discussion guide is meant to help you set aside your distractions, and show up for dinner excited. We know that doesn't all happen at once, and we mean to walk with you in the process. Each chapter in this guide corresponds with a chapter from *A Praying Life*. Through asking questions this guide compels you to flesh out Paul's teaching into the nitty-gritty of your life, freeing the real you to meet with your Father who loves you.

While *A Praying Life* can be personally applied, we believe it was made to study with others. The value of wrestling with it alongside other struggling “pray-ers” cannot be overstated. You will find yourself reaping benefits as you give yourself to the process. Studying it in community will open up new insights, and help you to grow integrity and joy as you (re)learn to pray.

A Leader's Guide is included at the end with further questions and prayer suggestions.

Enjoy the feast before you. He is waiting!

—Courtney Miller Sneed & Cyndi Anderson

## 18 WEEK READING SCHEDULE

|              |                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Week 1.....  | Chapters 1-2                |
| Week 2.....  | Chapters 3-4                |
| Week 3.....  | Chapters 5-6                |
| Week 4.....  | Chapters 7-8                |
| Week 5.....  | Chapter 9                   |
| Week 6.....  | Chapters 10-11              |
| Week 7.....  | Chapter 12                  |
| Week 8.....  | Chapters 13-14              |
| Week 9.....  | Chapters 15-16              |
| Week 10..... | Chapters 17-18              |
| Week 11..... | Chapters 19-20              |
| Week 12..... | Chapter 21                  |
| Week 13..... | Chapter 22-23               |
| Week 14..... | Chapters 24-25              |
| Week 15..... | Chapters 26-27              |
| Week 16..... | Chapters 28-29              |
| Week 17..... | Chapters 30-31              |
| Week 18..... | Chapters 32-34 and Appendix |

## CHAPTER 1 – “WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO?”

Please note that all parenthetical notes refer to *A Praying Life* by Paul Miller.

1. Paul writes, “Kim’s muteness was testimony to a silent God. Prayer, it seemed, doesn’t work.” When in your life has prayer not seemed to work? Tell your story (or stories) below (p. 2, first paragraph).

2. Paul writes of quiet cynicism, spiritual weariness and doubts that grow in us. Which of these do you relate most easily to? How do you see that (p. 2, second paragraph)?

3. Think about how you pray now. What is frustrating to you about prayer (pp. 2-3)?

4. Paul writes, “Praying exposes how self-preoccupied we are and uncovers our doubts. It was easier on our faith *not* to pray.” Why is it easier on our faith *not* to pray? What does Paul mean by this (p. 3)?

5. What is it about American culture that makes it particularly difficult for you to pray (pp. 3-4)?

6. Imagine that prayer is like being on the phone with your earthly father. What is it like to talk with your heavenly Father?

- a. Dry (“What do I say?”)
- b. Desperate (“I’m calling because I’m really in trouble and I don’t know who else to call.”)
- c. Dutiful (“I’m calling because it’s a special day or scheduled time.”)
- d. Drowsy (“I just can’t keep my eyes open—gonna need some coffee...”)
- e. Disconnected (“Hello? Is anybody there?”)
- f. Distracted (“Uh, sorry, Dad, I gotta run...gotta get to work.”)
- g. Distant (“Do you even care what’s going on with me?”)
- h. Dependent (“I can’t make it through the day without talking to you.”)
- i. Delightful (“Can you believe we’ve been on the phone for a whole hour already?”)
- j. All of the above, at different times.

7. In Paul’s story about Ashley’s contact, what parts do you connect with? Recall an experience when God specifically answered a prayer (pp. 5-6).



## CHAPTER 2 – WHERE WE ARE HEADED

1. How is prayer like having a good meal with friends (pp. 7-8)?
2. Read Revelation 3:20. What kind of God would describe prayer as a meal? What does this tell you about what Jesus is like?
3. What happens when we make prayer the center, our focus (p. 8)?
4. Describe the differences between an isolated prayer life and a prayer-intertwined life (p. 9).
5. After reading Paul's examples, what good things can come out of a prayer-intertwined life (p. 9, second paragraph)?

6. In what ways is learning to pray similar to growing up (p. 9)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How is prayer a window into God's story for you (p. 10)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does prayer give birth to hope (pp. 10-11)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How does a praying life affect a busy life (pp. 11-12)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How does the prospect of having a vibrant, powerful praying life make you feel?
  - a. Anxiety ("What if something—or nothing—happens?")
  - b. Anticipation ("I can't wait—let's go!")
  - c. Awe ("Who me, have that kind of relationship with God?")
  - d. Apathy ("Who cares? It's not that important in my life.")
  - e. Arrogance ("I don't need God's help—I can do life myself.")
  - f. Alienation ("He probably won't listen to MY prayers.")
  - g. A combination of more than one.