

Session 1:

Why Pray?

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“Lord, teach us to pray” – Luke 11:1

- In this first session of The Prayer Course, we’ll unpack the importance of prayer and the different topics covered across the course.
- Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

20 minutes

Bible passages

Luke 11:1-4, Matthew 6:6-8 - Message translation, Romans 8:26-28

Summary points

- We can ask Jesus to help teach us to pray.
- Prayer is like a toolbox - there are lots of different ways of praying.
- Keep it simple. Keep it real. Keep it up.

3. Discussion Questions

20 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
- Q. What do you find difficult about prayer? What do you find easy? Why do you think prayer can often feel hard?

Pete says the best piece of advice is to **“Keep it simple, keep it real and keep it up.”**

Keep it simple: “your prayer life is at its best at its simplest”

- Q. What do you mostly talk to God about?

Keep it real: “Don’t role-play before God”

- Q. Do you feel like you have to act a certain way before God when you pray? Why or why not?

Keep it up: “Don’t give up praying too soon”

- Q. Do you find it challenging to persevere in prayer? How can we be encouraged to keep going?

4. Do it

15 minutes

Split into small groups, and share one way you’d like to grow in prayer and your relationship with God over the course.

Leader’s note

You also might like to write down your goals, so that you can revisit them at the end of the course.

Toolshed resources: Why pray?

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- How to pray the Lord’s prayer
- How To have a Quiet Time
- How to pray The Examen

Session 2:

Adoration

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” – Matthew 6:9

- In this session we'll explore how we can enjoy God's presence in praise and worship.
- Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

20 minutes

Bible passages

Acts 4:24-31

Summary points

- Start by recognising God is God.
- Worship puts things back into perspective.
- Use P.R.A.Y - Pause, Rejoice, Ask, Yield.

3. Discussion Questions

20 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
- Q. Why do you think that we most often associate prayer with asking, rather than worship and adoration?

“In commanding us to glorify him, God is inviting us to enjoy him” – C.S.Lewis

- Q. Do you enjoy spending time with God? When are the times that prayer feels most enjoyable?
- Q. Pete says that prayer is primarily about relationship with God: **“It’s relational, not transactional”**. How does this change your perspective of coming to God in prayer?
- Q. In the Acts passage, the early church put their own crisis into perspective by worshipping. What are the practical things you could do this week to foster an attitude of worship in your daily routine?

4. Do it

15 minutes

Practise thanksgiving and praise by reflecting on Psalm 8.

As a group, read Psalm 8 out loud together. You might like to delegate different verses to different people, or encourage just one person to read it out. Then, take time to

Pause and Rejoice:

Pause: Take a moment in silence and invite the Holy Spirit to help you reflect on what you’ve just read.

Rejoice: Encourage group members to speak out prayers of adoration. Invite everyone to reflect and to thank God for one or two things in their lives. They might like to use the Psalm as inspiration, too.

Leader’s note

If you have time and it feels appropriate for your group, you might like to continue the PRAY steps by **asking** and **yielding**.

Toolshed resources: Adoration

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- How to pray the Psalms
- How to practise Christian meditation
- How to pray Creatively
- How to practise the Presence of God

Session 3:

Petition

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“Give us this day our daily bread” – Matthew 6:11

- In this session we’ll unpack the significance of asking God in prayer.
- Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

20 minutes

Bible passages

Matthew 7:7-11, Matthew 18:19

Summary points

- The Father loves to give good gifts.
- Traffic lights: Yes, Wait, No.
- Sometimes we need to “stack dominoes” and persevere in prayer

3. Discussion Questions

20 minutes

Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?

“Although God knows our need, he does still want us to articulate it to him”

Q. Poppy pointed out that it's often easier to believe God can change things in our hearts rather than believing in things we can see in the world. Do you agree?

Q. How often do you ask God for what you want as well as what you need?

Pete uses the traffic light analogy to describe different ways God responds to our prayers:

Green: Yes

Amber: Wait / Persevere

Red: No

Q. Are you experiencing a “green”, “amber” or “red” response to any specific prayers at the moment? Share your experiences together.

Leader's note

You might like to split into smaller groups at this stage so that everyone has a chance to respond honestly.

4. Do it

15 minutes

In smaller groups, take time to pray for one another's prayer requests. Remember the following as you pray:

Pray incrementally: Pray for a specific next step, rather than jumping to the top of the staircase

Pray the promises of God: Is there a specific promise that relates to the situation?

You also might like to follow the **P.R.A.Y** model – start by **pausing** and welcome the Holy Spirit, then **rejoice** and give thanks before **asking**. Remember to **yield** and surrender everything back to God as you finish.

Toolshed resources: Petition

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- Palms up, Palms down
- How to Maintain a Prayer List
- How to Pray the Promises of God

Session 4:

Intercession

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“Your kingdom come” – Matthew 6:10

- In this session, we’ll explore the power and importance of praying on behalf of others.
- Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

20 minutes

Bible passages

2 Chronicles 7:13-14, Exodus 17:8-13, Genesis 18:22-33

Summary points

- When God’s people intercede, God intervenes.
- There is power in our free will.
- 4 steps of intercession: get informed, get inspired, get indignant, get in synch.

3. Discussion Questions

20 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
- Q. How do you feel about intercessory prayer – do you find it's something that comes naturally or is it more of a challenge?

“Our free wills are powerful; they can release or restrict the purposes of God.”

- Q. How does this affect the way that we come to God in intercessory prayer?
- Q. Have you ever had a feeling that you needed to pray for something or someone? What happened?

“Prayer isn't about trying to get God to say amen to what I want; prayer is about me saying amen to God's will for my life”

- Q. What would it look like for you to pray this week with this perspective?

4. Do it

15 minutes

As a group, spend some time interceding for your community, town or nation. Follow the 4 steps Pete outlined:

1. **Get informed:** learn the facts by checking the news, or updates about the people you're praying for.

Leader's note

You might like to find some facts, prayer points or updates ahead of this session.

2. **Get inspired:** What is God saying about this? Invite the Holy Spirit to speak into the situations you're interceding for.
3. **Get indignant:** Engage your own heart and allow yourself to think and feel honestly as you pray.
4. **Get in synch:** engage together. You might like to all pray out loud at once, or pray in a circle so that everyone has a chance to pray and be heard.

Toolshed resources: Intersession

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- How to run a Non-boring Prayer Meeting
- How to Intercede for a Large Scale Crisis (the Three Ps)
- A Circle prayer

Session 5:

Unanswered Prayer

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“Your will be done” – Matthew 6:10

- * In this session we'll be tackling the challenges and realities when our prayers aren't answered.
- * Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

25 minutes

Bible passages

Mark 14:32-36, Daniel 3, Romans 5:3-5

Summary points

- * The Bible is honest about unanswered prayer – we are part of a faith that is all about wrestling.
- * God's world, God's war, God's will.
- * God's silence is not the same as his absence.

3. Discussion Questions

20 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
- Q. How has the reality of unanswered prayer affected your relationship with God?
- Q. Have you ever felt God's silence/absence in seasons of your life and faith? How did you respond?

Pete says, **"We are part of a faith that is all about wrestling"**.

- Q. How do you think we can get better, as communities, at dealing with the realities and challenges of unanswered prayer?
- Q. How can we encourage one another in "faithfulness" as well as "faith"?

4. Do it

10 minutes

Pete says that, **"Even when we don't understand, we can still trust"**. Take time to stop, pause and recommit to trusting God together as a group. You might like to play some worship music and spend time sitting and reflecting.

Leader's note

If this is a difficult step for members of your group, you might like to pray specifically into their situation, or you might like to read a Psalm of Lament together (see the Toolshed for instructions and directions on this).

Toolshed resources: Unanswered Prayer

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- * The Prayer of Relinquishment
- * How to Lament

Session 6:

Contemplation

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“On earth as it is in heaven” – Matthew 6:10

- In this session, we’ll discover how spending time with God in silence can enrich our relationship with Him.
- Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

25 minutes

Bible passages

Psalms 19, 62, 46, 1 Thessalonians 5, Matthew 6:6, Isaiah 6, Psalm 1

Summary points

- Contemplative prayer is silent enjoyment of God’s loving presence.
- The contemplation journey has 3 stages:
 - Meditation: “Me and God”
 - Contemplation: “God and me”
 - Communion: “only God”

3. Discussion Questions

15 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
- Q. What is your initial reaction to the practice of contemplation? Does it excite you, scare you or bore you?

“It’s not how much we do but how much love we put into the actions that we do.”

- Q. How does this quote from Mother Teresa challenge our culture’s attitude to social justice or practical action?
- Q. It can be difficult to make time to pause and contemplate God. What rhythms could you put in place to grow this type of prayer in your life?

4. Do it

15 minutes

As a group, stop to practise contemplation:

“We are seeking to focus our minds fully on Jesus”.

Encourage everyone in your group to sit quietly and comfortably and take time to be still. Group members could quietly reflect on a Psalm, such as Psalm 19, if they like.

Leader’s note

Remember, the aim of your time is to individually engage with God in silence, not praying together. Allow enough space and time for this to happen – don’t rush it. At the end of your time together, you might like to share your thoughts and reflections on the time and how it felt.

Toolshed resources: Contemplation

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- Silent Prayer
- How to Take a One Day Retreat
- How to Undertake a Pilgrimage

Session 7:

Listening

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“Give us today our daily bread” – Matthew 6:10

- In this session, we’ll unpack the practical ways we can tune into hearing God’s voice.
- Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

20 minutes

Bible passages

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Summary points

- We are designed to walk and talk with God.
- Slow down, Soften up.
- When listening to God, remember ABC: Advice, Bible, Common Sense.

3. Discussion Questions

20 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
- Q. Do you feel like your connection to God's voice is like "wi-fi", "cell phone" or "snail mail"? Do you find it's obvious when God is speaking to you?

Pete mentioned that we all hear God differently: **"It's okay to hear God the way he's made you."**

- Q. Do you experience hearing God's voice in a specific way? If so, how?

Pete suggested two ways we can tune into God's voice:

"Slow down"

- Q. What practical actions could you take this week to make time for listening to God?

"Soften up"

- Q. How can we encourage one another to "keep our hearts soft" in the busyness of our daily lives?

4. Do it

15 minutes

Practise listening to God together. There are a few different ways you might like to do this, depending on your group:

- Split into small groups of 3 people, and take it in turns listening to God for one person at a time. Remind your group members to apply the "ABC" acronym for anything they think God is saying!
- Practise the Lectio Divina together as a group. You might like to explore the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:13-16

Remember to:

Read it – Familiarisation

Explore it – Imagination

Pray it – Conversation

Enjoy it – Celebration

Leader's note

Check out the Prayer Tool on the Lectio Divina, which includes instructions for groups.

Toolshed resources: Listening

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- How to Speak in Tongues
- How to do the Lectio Divina
- How to Journal
- How to turn Parenting into Prayer

Session 8:

Spiritual Warfare

Small Group Study Guide

1. Introduce the session

5 minutes

Key verse

“Deliver us from the evil one” – Matthew 6:13

- * In this session, we'll look closely at the ways we can pray God's kingdom come in the midst of a spiritual battle.
- * Begin the session by opening in prayer.

2. Watch the Video

25 minutes

Bible passages

Ephesians 6:11-14

Summary points

- * The Bible is clear that we're in a spiritual battle.
- * Jesus was speaking into a culture of different worldviews.
- * Remember the armour of God.
- * Pray it. Practice it. Preach it.

3. Discussion Questions

20 minutes

- Q. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
- Q. How do you find that you approach spiritual warfare: do you relate to any of the worldviews of the Sadducees, Essenes or Pharisees that Pete mentioned?
- Q. How do we get the balance right between the reality of spiritual warfare and focusing on Jesus?

“When we pray for God’s Kingdom come it’s because it’s not automatic... we have to pray it in.”

- Q. How does this reality affect the way that we do spiritual warfare?
- Q. What are the strongholds - greed, arrogance etc - in your home, work or community context? How can you live in the “**equal but opposite spirit**” this week?

4. Do it

10 minutes

In smaller groups, revisit the goals that you set at the beginning of the prayer course to grow in prayer and your relationship with God.

Encourage everyone to share one thing that they’ve learnt and will take away from The Prayer Course into their daily lives.

Toolshed resources: Listening

These can be found at prayercourse.org/toolshed

- Warfare Prayer
- How to Fast
- How to Prayer Walk

