

# INTRODUCTION

Discipleship Series by Richard Lieske

3 lessons on Prayer

1 – The Power to Pray

2 - Trusting His Answer

3 – Praying With One Will

Need good group interaction - Stories

A TEST to Start

## GETTING STARTED

Look over the following list of prayer situations. What might prevent you from approaching God in prayer in these settings? What factors might encourage you to pray?

### PRAYER SITUATIONS

1. After the death of a loved one.
2. Just after losing your job.
3. After scoring the winning touchdown.
4. When you don't get the job you wanted.
5. When you learn that you will never be able to have a child naturally.
6. After winning the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes.

In difficulty times was it a natural thing or a hard thing for you to pray?

### THINGS IN THE WAY

What are the most common barriers to prayer? What things keep people from praying more often, more confidently, more fervently? As a group, brainstorm a list of the most common obstacles to prayer.

#### COMMON BARRIERS TO PRAYER

Martin Luther knew more than a little about the difficulties that stand in the way of vital prayer. Listen to his words, recorded nearly five hundred years ago but just as true and meaningful today:

The first thing that hinders and delays us is the thought, inspired by the devil: Why, at present you are really not yet fit for praying; wait another half hour or day, until you become better prepared or have done this or that. Meanwhile the devil is there to lead you away for the half hour. Accordingly, you think no more of praying throughout the day, and so you go on from one day to another, rushed and hindered by other business. . . . Besides [this], he finds his advantage in our flesh and blood, because these are lazy and cold to begin with. Therefore we cannot pray as we ourselves should like to, and though we may begin, we soon flutter away with foreign, worthless thoughts and so lose the prayer.

Compare Luther's words to the list of prayer barriers. How are these barriers the same as in Luther's day? How are they different? What has changed? What has not?

### TONGUE TIED

In biblical times, many people also had trouble approaching God in prayer. Look up the following texts, and summarize the barriers between God and the people mentioned in these texts.

1. Genesis 3: 1-10

2. Job 9: 1-20

3. Proverbs 1:28-33

4. Hebrews 12: 18-21

5. Read Hebrews 12:22-24. How does this section begin to reveal the solution to the problem?

In the meaning of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed from the Small Catechism, Luther said:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him

### **CROSSING THE BARRIERS**

Crossing the barriers to prayer can be compared to the experience of a man who once had a great obstacle before him: a jammed city street at rush hour. He had parked in a parking garage opposite the downtown post office. He needed to pick up a package and return to his office. But each time he tried to cross the stream of traffic, honking horns and rushing vehicles beat him back.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity, he spotted a fellow on the other side of the street. Through the traffic whizzing by, he could see that the fellow held a package. He seemed just as frustrated, and it appeared that he wanted to cross over to the parking garage. "Hey," the first man called over to the fellow with the package, "how did you get across?"

Above the noise of the street, the reply came back, "I was born over here!"

The humorous answer of the second man is actually right on the mark. We cannot cross over the barriers between us and God by ourselves. We cannot do this in the area of prayer any more than we can cross over from sin to holiness, from death to life, or from condemnation to salvation.

I. Read the following two texts, and share how each describes how this "crossing" takes place.

a. John 3:3-7

b. Romans 5: 1-2

Almost everyone has at least heard the first line (or petition) of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven. " In the Small Catechism, Luther writes about this petition:

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

The words of the Catechism are based upon solid truth from Scripture. Consider the following Scripture texts. That tell us that God is our Father and that we can approach Him in prayer.

1 John 3:1

Romans 8: 14-16

Galatians 4:4-7

### **CONSTANT POWER SOURCE**

We have both the right and privilege of approaching God in prayer because of our standing in Christ. We are forgiven and as forgiven children of God we can pray to Him as "our Father."

But what about all the times we don't feel forgiven, don't feel like praying to the Lord? What if our hearts have been overwhelmed, our minds just don't work, and our mouths can't form the words we know we need to say? What if we can't even seem to get a handle on the problems facing us? What then?

Good news ! God has provided for our needs!

Read Romans 8:26-34, and respond to the following questions. Who prays and pleads for us?

Verse 26 tells us that the Spirit "helps us in our weakness." What are some weaknesses we have, and how might they hinder Our prayer?

What are some examples of times when we want to pray, need to pray, and know we should pray, but cannot find the words?

At those times when the words won't come, what comfort does the promise in verses 26-27 offer us?

### **BEING PLUGGED IN**

"When all else fails, read the directions." Often the manuals for appliances have a section called "troubleshooting" that suggests solutions when a problem pops up . A common suggestion in almost every appliance manual is "Check to see that the power cord is plugged in."

We may even know where power may be obtained and yet still be powerless. We lack power, not because it is unavailable, but because we fail to stay "plugged in."

Just as with any holy desire, we are not the initiators of our impulses to pray . God is.

How does God prompt us to seek Him in prayer?

What are the consequences of not responding to God's invitation to approach Him in prayer?

IN CLOSING

Read 1 John 5:14-15

# QUESTIONS