

# Inner Mission: Prayer

September 24, 2006

6:00 – 6:30 Eat

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6:30 – 7:00 Small Groups

As always, these questions are guidelines. You don't have to ask these questions word for word. Hopefully you can sort of feel what we're trying to get at by what I wrote here. But, the reason I give this to you in Word format is so you can tweak and change and makes notes as you see appropriate for your group. Italics are the things that you should say or ask, things in normal font are instructions or guidance for you as you lead. Bold distinguishes between different "sections" and lets you know to transition the group into another direction.

Open your group's meeting with prayer. You can lead or you can ask a student to lead.

Ask everyone about how things are going: school, band, sports, life, etc.

**Begin the discussion by talking about communication.** As you discuss these questions, make mental (or literal) notes about the answers they give that you can apply to the practice of prayer when you get to that point in the discussion.

*What are some words that describe what communication is?* Talking, speaking, gesturing, listening, writing, etc.

*Given that communication is all of those things, lets try to come up with a definition of communication.* Work with your group to come up with a definition of communication that will apply to communication in all of its various forms.

*What elements are required for good communication to happen?*

*What can quickly destroy communication between people?*

*How are communication and relationships related? What role does communication play in relationships?*

**Now transition from communication to prayer.**

*Good communication is one of the most important elements of a strong relationship. This month, we are focusing on communicating with God through prayer.*

Your group will be given one or two objects. The objects could be: a cell phone, a picture of praying hands, an invitation, a hammer, or a piece of bread. With your group,

talk about how that object could symbolize prayer and what that symbol can teach us about prayer. As an added bonus, see if your group can come up with a Bible story or verse that corresponds to your object. Maybe throughout Inner Mission our groups can compete for bonus points and we can have a chart and you could get a gold star for every bonus point and then you'd get a special treat after so many stars like a Ring-Pop™ or something neat. (Disclaimer: the previous sentence was inserted for your pure enjoyment and laughing pleasure. It in no way accurately describes the values, theology, or philosophy of the youth ministry of Hope Lutheran Church or its employees. It is also not a reflection of the writing and grammar skills of the composer of said sentence). But seriously, see if you can find a biblical basis for your symbol.

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7:00 – 7:20 Large group

We will share some of the things we talked about in our groups.

*Putting all of these different things together, what do we learn about prayer?*

*How does prayer help us to know God?*

*How can we make sure that prayer is communication and not us dictating to God?*

*How does prayer help us express dependence upon God?*

*Does prayer change us or God?*

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7:20 – 7:50 Small Groups Part 2: Scripture Study

The curriculum that I am drawing most of this lesson from has Philippians 4:6-7 listed as the scripture for study. But, after reading through the verses, it appears to me that Philippians 4:4-9 provides a better context for understanding verses 6 and 7. So, I have reproduced all of those verses below (although I would appreciate it if you brought your own Bibles). So, these questions will focus in on verses 6 and 7, but use the surrounding verses to help shape your understanding of those verses.

Read the Philippians 4:4-9 with your group:

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** <sup>7</sup>**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about

such things. <sup>9</sup>Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Focus in on Philippians 4:6-7 for these following questions:

*We are going to look closely at verses 6 and 7 from this passage. First, we need to clarify a few terms.* Talk with your groups about words that may need defining, like anxious, petition, and transcend.

*According to these verses, why should we pray?*

*What effect does prayer have on us? How does prayer change us?* The verse talks about having the “peace of God.” It is through prayer that we turn our lives over to God and allow him to have control. We are no longer burdened with the weight of responsibility when we turn things over to God. Additionally, it is difficult to be hateful and harsh with other people when we pray for them (“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” Matthew 5:44). When we pray for other people, our hearts and attitudes towards them are changed. We literally become a more peaceful person.

*What do these verses say about prayer and our relationships with God?*

*The analogy Matt used last time we met dealt with trying vs. training. Oftentimes, we just try to be better people in order to be a “good Christian” and skip over training ourselves in the things that God prescribes. So, instead of talking more about prayer, we are going to take our first step in training ourselves and actually pray.* Tell the students you are going to lead them in silent prayer, that you will prompt them with things to pray for and then give them time to pray silently.

Open with a short word of prayer over your whole group and then give them about 15-20 seconds of silence to calm and focus.

*Spend some time praising God for who he is, for his power, for his love, for his grace, for his unpredictability.* Give the students 30-60 seconds.

*Now thank God for the great things that he has done for you, specifically.* Give the students 30-60 seconds.

*Confess to God where you’ve messed up recently. Ask his forgiveness and for his strength to live the life that he designed you to live.* Give the students 30-60 seconds.

*Now, we’ll spend a few moments in silence. Just sit and listen for God and experience the peace that the scripture speaks of.* Give the students 30-60 seconds.

*Pray for the needs of people other than yourself. Maybe your parents or friends or siblings have specific things that need prayed for.* Give the students 30-60 seconds.

*Go to God with your own personal needs. Ask him to take over in areas of your life that you are holding on to. Bring your struggles and fears to him. Give the students 30-60 seconds. After time is up, you can close in an audible prayer or simply say "amen."*

Let the students in your group know that we really want them to try these disciplines out as we discuss them. So ask them for at least the next few weeks to really focus on prayer and try to pray in ways that are new and different than they are used to. Also tell them that you will be praying for them throughout this year (and then do it!).

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7:50 – 8:00 Close in large group.

I will be giving the kids an index card or something that will give them ideas about how to pray. I will also be posting it on the website. Again, the idea here is for the students to actually practice these disciplines and cultivate them within their lives.