

TEACH US TO PRAY ... WITH JESUS

Week 1: Declaring Dependence

REPORT

How did you go with the last lot of weekly challenges? How is your prayer life different now than it was a month or two ago?

INTRO

This series of house church notes makes use of a video teaching series called "Praying with Jesus" by James Banks. You will need someone in your house church who is able to access RightNow Media on a device that can then project on a TV or screen using Apple TV, Chromecast or a direct connection from PC.

We have prepared notes for 5 of the 6 sessions in the series, although not all house churches will do all 5 weeks of teaching. Using RightNow media, individuals can view the video of missed sessions in their own time.

Weekly Challenges will continue! As we said last series, if Jesus is teaching us to pray, then we learn by doing. Take the Weekly Challenges at the end of this study seriously and you will grow in your prayer life this year AND encourage others as you report on your progress each week.

READ Mark 9: 14 - 29

(Don't discuss it now, just let it sink in. The video will make reference to this story.)

WATCH Session 2 "Declaring Dependence" from the Praying With Jesus series by James Banks. (On the Ruach channel of RightNow Media, library "House Church Teaching Resource Mar/Apr 2018")

DISCUSSION

James Banks reminds us that just as Jesus could do nothing apart from the Father (John 5:19), neither can we be fruitful apart from Jesus (John 15:5). He said "prayer is one of the most practical things we can do because it brings God's power and presence into the moments of our lives in fresh new ways."

- Do you tend to think of prayer as a very practical thing to do? Do you go to prayer as a first resort? If not, why do you think that is?
- In the Mark 9 story of the healing of the boy with an impure spirit (which we read earlier and was referred to in the video), there is what James Banks called a humble prayer for worriers: "I do believe, help my unbelief!" (v24). Have you ever prayed such a prayer? What were the circumstances and result?
- Share a prayer experience that has stayed with you.

PRAYER ACTIVITY

"Because you have prayed ... the Lord has ..."

In the video James mentions an Old Testament incident from Isaiah 37:21-22 where because Hezekiah prayed to him concerning the ungodly actions of Sennacherib, the Lord clearly spoke and moved.

In small groups share a current situation where you would like to be able to testify that "because I/we have prayed to God concerning xxx, the Lord has acted." This might be something personal or for our community or nation. Pray for those situations now, with humble and heartfelt declarations of dependence on God.

WEEK 1 CHALLENGES (check when completed. Try to do 3 out of the 5).

If Jesus is teaching us to pray, then we learn by doing. Take the “weekly challenges” seriously and you will grow in your prayer life AND encourage others as you report on your progress each week.

- Hand over a particular situation or worry to God with a humble, passionate “I do believe, help my unbelief!” prayer.
- Write a personal Declaration of Dependence on Jesus. (Mention specific areas in which you want to be sure to be depending on God.)
- Read Psalm 25 out loud and/or write it out.
- Start each day by specifically inviting Jesus’ presence and power into what you are going to be doing that day.
- Continue with (or begin) your gratitude journal. On at least 3 evenings before sleep spend 10 minutes writing down the blessings you experienced from God during that day. (If married, swap notes with your partner). Finish with a prayer.

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Week 2: Praying the Prayers of the Bible

This series of house church notes includes use of a video teaching series called "Praying with Jesus" by James Banks. You will need someone in your house church who is able to access RightNow Media on a device that can then project on to a TV or screen using Apple TV, Chromecast or a direct connection from PC.

REPORT

How did you go with the last lot of weekly challenges? What had the biggest impact on you?

INTRO

This week we will look at another video in the "Praying with Jesus" series. This week focuses on praying the prayers of the Bible.

READ Matthew 6:9-14, and 1 Chronicles 29:10 -13 (Don't discuss it now, just let it sink in.)

WATCH: Session 3 "Praying the Prayers of the Bible" from the Praying With Jesus series by James Banks. (On the Ruach channel of RightNow Media, library "House Church Teaching Resource Mar/Apr 2018")

DISCUSSION

Jesus drew strength from the Word of God. He sang it and prayed it. We too will meet God in fresh and vital ways as we not only read the Bible, but also use it to guide our prayers.

- What was one thing from the video that encouraged, challenged or interested you?
- What has your experience been of praying and/or singing the Word of God? How has it helped or influenced your Christian growth and relationship with God?

PRAYER ACTIVITY

Adapted from "The Workbook of Living Prayer" by Maxie Dunnam.

Read Matthew 6:9-13 through slowly, perhaps in a different translation to what was read previously. Pause between each thought. Individually, choose two of the thoughts from the Lord's Prayer that mean the most to you today. Write them down and write a personal prayer that expands on their meaning to you.

Eg. "Give us this day our daily bread" – Lord so many people I know are suffering from anxiety due to financial stress or worry about their future. I get anxious myself about what's around the corner. Lord help me to trust in your daily provision for me and for those I love. I pray for your provision for Sarah and her family, and for the guy I met at the service station who is working 3 jobs.

Give opportunity to share some of these prayers with the group. Finish by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father in heaven
Holy is your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
Now and forever, AMEN.

WEEK 2 CHALLENGES (check when completed. Try to do 3 out of the 5).

If Jesus is teaching us to pray, then we learn by doing. Take the “weekly challenges” seriously and you will grow in your prayer life AND encourage others as you report on your progress each week.

- Focus on one or two phrases of the Lord’s Prayer each day. Pray the words, savour the essence of the phrase, and use that to guide your prayer time. (You may like to use “The Lord’s Prayer as a Daily Meditation” outline on the next page to assist you.)
- Pray for specific house church and family members in the way Jesus prayed for his disciples and all believers in John 17. (eg. v15-17, 20-23)
- Pray 1 Chronicles 29: 10 -13 out loud.
- Choose a song with words that are taken straight from Scripture and sing it as a prayer. eg. a psalm by Sons of Korah, Seeds Family Worship (check it out on RightNow Media), Colin Buchannan classics, vintage Scripture in Song...
- Continue with (or begin) your gratitude journal.

The Lord's Prayer As a Daily Meditation

Our Father in Heaven: Love and Relationship

He is your father, you are his child.

Hallowed be your name: Adoration

Bless His holy name. Encountering Him changes things.

Your kingdom come: Declaration

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, he will reign.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven: Surrender

Giving up everything that keeps us from wanting God's way first.

Give us today our daily bread: Provision

Abundant provision. Enough for us and enough to share.

Forgive us our Debts: Forgiveness

Confess, knowing that God completely forgives you of your sins (debts).

As we also have forgiven our debtors: Freedom

Freedom in & through your heavenly Father, so you can forgive others.

And lead us not into temptation: Protection

Depend on God to keep you from sin and for help and victory over temptation.

But deliver us from the evil one: Warfare

Awareness that you are engaged in a spiritual battle.

For Yours is the Kingdom: Kingdom Living

God's eternal Kingdom cannot be shaken. You are a citizen of this Kingdom.

And the power: Power

An infilling of the Holy Spirit

And the glory forever: Exaltation

Worship for God alone, the Lord of all Lord's and the King of all Kings.

Amen: Certainty of Truth

Martin Luther said, "Do not leave your prayer without having said or thought, 'Very well, God has heard my prayer, this I know as a certainty and a truth.' This is what "Amen" means."

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Week 3: Sit, Stay, Pray

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REPORT

How did you go with the last lot of weekly challenges? What are you finding most encouraging in your prayer life at the moment?

INTRO

This week we will look at another video in the "Praying with Jesus" series. This week focuses on waiting and perseverance as important aspects of prayer.

READ Matthew 15:21-28

(Don't discuss it now, just let it sink in. The video will make reference to this story.)

WATCH: Session 4 "Sit, Stay, Pray" from the Praying With Jesus series by James Banks. (On the Ruach channel of RightNow Media, library "House Church Teaching Resource Mar/Apr 2018")

DISCUSSION

One of the most difficult aspects of prayer can be taking time and just waiting with God. But as James Banks says "something is won in the waiting". We learn to persist in prayer and our faith is forged. Simply being in God's presence changes us and helps us realise he is enough to meet our deepest needs.

- What was one thing from the video that encouraged, challenged or interested you?
- When you don't experience an answer to prayer, what is your typical reaction or thought pattern?
- What is something you can (and will) do to help you wait with God and persist in prayer so this becomes a more natural part of your prayer life? It may be something like choosing a bible verse or promise to hold on to, and/or cultivating a particular prayer habit such as committing to pray daily for a particular person or thing.

PRAYER ACTIVITY

Praying God's promises back to him

Brainstorm some of the promises of God, including those that come specifically from Jesus and through the Holy Spirit.

Have a time of prayer together praying these promises back to God, coupling them with specific known prayer needs. Give thanks that the Lord is trustworthy, loving and reliable in fulfilling these promises.

WEEK 3 CHALLENGES (check when completed. Try to do 3 out of the 5).

If Jesus is teaching us to pray, then we learn by doing. Take the “weekly challenges” seriously and you will grow in your prayer life AND encourage others as you report on your progress each week.

- Is there a prayer request you’ve given up on? Put it back on your prayer agenda and commit to keep asking, seeking, and knocking on God’s door about it each day.
- Pray Isaiah 40:28-31 for yourself; that as you wait and hope upon the Lord because of who he is, your strength will be renewed.
- Pray Ephesians 3:14-21 for someone else. If possible, do it in person and lay hands on them.
- Choose something you would like to be more consistent and persistent in prayer about at the moment. Set an alarm on your phone or allocate a specific time of day to stop and spend time with God talking about this specific thing.
- Start a prayer journal to record prayer requests and keep note of when and how God is answering those prayers. Include notes about how God is changing you and deepening your relationship with him as you “sit, stay, pray”.

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Week 4: Giving the Gift of Prayer

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REPORT

How did you go with the last lot of weekly challenges? Which ones did you try?

INTRO

This week we will look at another video in the "Praying with Jesus" series. This week focuses on praying for others, especially that they will know Jesus and his saving grace, power and presence.

READ John 17: 20-26 (Don't discuss it now, just let it sink in.)

WATCH: Session 5 "Giving the Gift of Prayer" from the Praying With Jesus series by James Banks. (On the Ruach channel of RightNow Media, library "House Church Teaching Resource Mar/Apr 2018")

DISCUSSION

Jesus shows us that one of the best ways to love someone is to pray for them. When we pray for them it invites God's power and presence into their lives. When we pray for others to know him, we're praying for the very thing Jesus lived, died and rose for. And we can be assured that those prayers matter to him.

- What was one thing from the video that encouraged, challenged or interested you?
- As well as family and friends, who else can we give the gift of prayer to, inviting God's power and presence into their lives? (Consider "if we don't pray for them, who will?" and that "Jesus is still the friend of sinners.")
- Do you have a story to share about how a hard circumstance in life became what James Bank's calls "fertile ground for growth we never expected and fruit we never expected"? Or about how God has worked through the prayers of you or others to accomplish what only he can do?

PRAYER ACTIVITY

"[People] may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers." J Sidlow Baxter

Taking inspiration from the quote above, pray together in small groups for people you know who are yet to accept Jesus gift of salvation, take up their cross and follow him. As suggested in the video, pray in Jesus name for the very things he came for: that they will have relationship with Jesus and that the Kingdom of God will break into their lives.

You can get creative about how you do this if you like. Eg. write names on individual cards and physically lift them up before the Lord. Or symbolically move them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:9-14) as you pray for them.

WEEK 4 CHALLENGES (check when completed. Try to do 3 out of the 5).

If Jesus is teaching us to pray, then we learn by doing. Take the “weekly challenges” seriously and you will grow in your prayer life AND encourage others as you report on your progress each week.

- Each day this week pray for a work colleague, neighbour or classmate who isn't a Christian yet. (Could be the same person all week, or a different one each day.)
- Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and remember as you pray today that you are part of a spiritual battle. Prayerfully put on the armour of God then pray as he leads.
- Draw a picture depicting the Kingdom of Heaven, with people you know gathered around the throne of God, Jesus at his right hand. As a prophetic act, include those who are not yet Christians. Pray for the people you include as you are drawing. Pray that the Kingdom will break into your life and those of others.
- Each day this week pray for a stranger you notice as you go about your day to day activities. Ask God how to pray for them. You can do this quietly without them knowing, but if you are feeling bold to approach them and ask if you can pray for them, go for it!
- Keep going with your prayer request and/or gratitude journals, or start one if you haven't yet.

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Week 5: Praying with Jesus

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REPORT

How did you go with the last lot of weekly challenges? Will you keep going with any of them?

INTRO

This week we will look at another video in the "Praying with Jesus" series. This week focuses on praying in unity. (This would be a good week to also share the Lord's Supper together.)

READ Matthew 18:18-19 (Don't discuss it now, just let it sink in.)

WATCH: Session 6 "Praying with Jesus" from the Praying With Jesus series by James Banks. (On the Ruach channel of RightNow Media, library "House Church Teaching Resource Mar/Apr 2018")

DISCUSSION

We may not have our act together, we may not have our words just right or feel like anything is happening when we pray, but it is about so much more than that. God is with us in a unique and powerful way when we pray together. When we pray with Jesus anything is possible.

- What was one thing from the video that encouraged, challenged or interested you?
- Why do you think that us praying together is important to God?
- Name two things that inspire you to pray with others and two things that hold you back from praying with others.

PRAYER ACTIVITY

Taken from "Creative Worship Ideas for Small Groups" by Yvonne Morey.

If your group is large, split into smaller groups for this activity to allow everyone to participate without it taking too long.

Spend a couple of minutes individually thinking about a current need to bring to God in prayer. It might be a personal need or something for the group/church, or for others.

We will now pray aloud about our own current need. After the first person has prayed about his or her need, the next person to pray will support the previous person in their need before praying about their own. We will continue in this way until everyone has prayed. (Unless you have a very small group and a lot of time, prayers will need to be brief.)

At the end, the first person will pray in support of the last person's need and finish with a final prayer:

Father God, as we have expressed our supportive love for each other, so we are united in you and happy that our worship is pleasing to you. We rejoice in your and we worship you for the ways in which you will answer our prayers. Let us all say 'Amen'.

WEEK 5 CHALLENGES (check when completed. Try to do 3 out of the 5).

If Jesus is teaching us to pray, then we learn by doing. Take the “weekly challenges” seriously and you will grow in your prayer life AND encourage others as you report on your progress each week.

- Invite others to join you to pray together for Ruach at a time apart from your normal house church meeting. (Or go along to a scheduled combined prayer time.)
- Pray the Apostle’s Creed or the Nicene Creed out loud. As you pray, be conscious that you are joining in prayer with fellow Christians who have and will continue to declare this prayer across time, church traditions, and throughout the world.
- Spend some dedicated time praying for the persecuted church and those who are suffering for their faith. Inform your prayers by visiting a site such as Open Doors (www.opendoors.org.au) or Voice of the Martyrs (www.vom.com.au)
- Read Psalm 133. Pray for unity, especially among God’s people. Ask God if there is anyone you need to forgive or ask for forgiveness from. Spend some time in confession and repentance as required.
- Keep going with your prayer request and/or gratitude journals, or start one if you haven’t yet.