

Chapter 6 - Pray

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on the story.
 - A) Hezekiah had a unique set of circumstances in that he had a word from the Lord through Isaiah that he was going to die, but when he begged for more time, God granted him 15 additional years. Have you ever experienced such a clear answer to your prayer?
 - B) At first, 15 years must have seemed like a total reprieve. How do you think Hezekiah would have felt as he approached the end of his life for the second time? For many Christians, the joy of answered prayer fades with time. Remember a time when you were particularly close to God.
 - C) We are often reminded that the things that happen to us are not necessarily all about us. Yet, in spite of what God may intend for other people to learn through our experiences, we have to respond to them too. Think of a time when God spoke powerfully through a negative situation.

2. Prayer is one of those things that many Christians spend more time talking about than doing. Most of us go through times when our prayer life is quite intense and fulfilling and others when it seems to be little more than an obligation. Make a few notes about some of the times when your prayer life was particularly rich, including the circumstances and the outcomes.

3. Briefly describe how your perception of prayer has changed (if at all) after reading the chapter on prayer in *Refresh*.

4. a) Most Christians develop a considerable degree of routine when it comes to prayer, even extending to our vocabulary and phraseology. What are some of the characteristics of your prayer life which are highly predictable?

- b) After having read and thought about prayer, what are some things you can commit to doing to enrich your prayer life?

5. We typically measure our “success” in prayer by “results.” What are some benefits of prayer which we might experience whether or not we get the outcomes we prayed for?

6. Using a concordance or Bible software, look up some of the prayers recorded in Scripture. (Hint: Look in Ephesians 1 and 3, Philippians 1, Colossians 1, 2Thessalonians 1.) You’ll notice that they are quite different from what most of us are used to in both our churches and in our personal prayer life. Make a few notes about these differences.

7. You've likely observed that Paul's prayers could be described as "prophetic," that is, the majority of what he prays for are clearly within the realm of God's clearly stated will, particularly regarding the spiritual growth of his friends. Jot down some "spiritual requests" for yourself and your friends.

8. Read James 5:13-16. Seek out someone who is open to having you pray for him or her. Learn as much as you can about the situation, so you can pray with your understanding (as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 14). Engage in "serious prayer" for a period of time using the tips on page 57 of *Refresh* and record what you learn from the experience.

For Group Leaders:

Prayer is one of the fundamental disciplines of the Christian life, one of the most rewarding and one of the most difficult. People beat themselves up about this (and sometimes are beaten up about it) occasionally with some justification. However, negative motivations are seldom as effective as positive ones. Keep the tone positive, pray lots, help your people to see it as a joy and a privilege rather than a chore and an obligation.

This session will be an opportunity to spend time in prayer as a group, in pairs, alone, as you see fit, with the members of your group. This is something in which you are not limited to discussion. You can actually do it together!

Remember to not leave your group prayer time to the end when it is often rushed through or missed entirely.