



**Leader's Note:** At this point all of your group members should have presented and discussed their Life Graphs to the entire group.

### Objectives

- Open your time with Prayer. Ask Jesus to touch your hearts through the duration of being together and ask that He open your eyes, ears, and hearts to Him in a way that you've never known. Encourage each person to pray.
- Teach and focus on developing a structure for an individual quiet time/devotional, prayer life.

It is helpful to read through the entire lesson in preparation. This allows you to map out your own time line for each curriculum. Knowing your transitions will help guide your group from section to section.



Some of the most memorable teaching times are connected to stories. The people in your group want to know you. Not as your own personal lecture...but how you as a real person relate to Christ...and how Christ uses ordinary days to provide extraordinary opportunities to see Him and be taught by Him in everyday life. Here's a story to help you think through the focus of this lesson...

**Story:** The job that I had when I was pastoring was obviously centered on people. I'd be calling them on the phone, meeting with them and even visiting them in the hospital. As much as I love being with people it can be rather draining as well.

On top of that I have my family, a service to organize, a band to baby (to make sure that they were going to be there that night), a sermon to prepare and I'm leading worship on the same night. "Whoa, Bessie!"

There were times when my wife would call me at work just to talk, and to be honest I'd be ticked. "Doesn't she know that today is Wednesday and that we've got our mid week service tonight". Needless to say she'd get off the phone even more angry than I was at my 'less than fabulous' attitude. Without fail I would be forced to stop and consider my attitude. Where did that come from? That's not really me! Well, the fact of the matter is, it is most definitely me and that was the point.

How could I be like Jesus if I had not been with Him? It was inevitable that when my actions and my mouth weren't glorifying to Jesus, I had not been with Him.

### Prayer

Without a doubt the practice of prayer in a believers life varies to many degrees. It is one area that most people struggle with. They struggle with the desire to pray, the understanding of what prayer is and what it is not, and they struggle with whether it makes a difference. There is one other area that is significant and that is, **how to pray**. This is not an extensive study on prayer but an opportunity to express what each group member is struggling with specifically. This is an incredible opportunity to listen to their needs and decide how you are going to address those needs throughout your remaining months together.

**A great way to introduce prayer is to ask your people, "What do you know about prayer?"**

**You can use the following to help guide them in their discussion .**

The essence of prayer embodies several aspects...

- **Preparing our hearts**— reading scripture and focusing on His attributes.
- **Communicating** what is on our hearts and minds and communicating it in a way that is our own expression—not someone else's.
- **Confessing** what it is that I have been in rebellion about
- **Listening** for the Lord's voice and His prompting. We may not be familiar with it yet but the goal is to practice listening so that we become familiar with it.

Have your group practice preparing to pray by looking up the verses from the "**Heart Check**" **Label (on page 2.6)** and writing them down in their journal. As they complete the writing of these verses spend a few minutes in prayer, specifically focusing on the idea of preparing to speak to God in a way that honors Him.



journal

copy and cut  
"heart check"  
label for  
journal entry

You may want your group to explore those things that compete for our time and attention in our prayer life.

Jesus knew well the importance of being with the Father and made it a point to steal away and spend time with Him. How could He know the will of His Father if he'd not withdrawn from the many distractions to hear His voice? He said that all He did and said was a directive from the Father. Important, eternal decisions were made during those times.

Begin with the following sections of scripture that speaks about what it means to have alone time with God...turn to... (Leader: Read these Scriptures to your group)

### **Luke 6:12-16**

<sup>12</sup>One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. <sup>13</sup>When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: <sup>14</sup>Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup>Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, <sup>16</sup>Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Discuss other passages in scripture where we see Jesus withdrawing from the crowds to pray and be with the Father.

### **Mark 1:35**

<sup>35</sup>Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

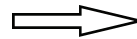
### **Luke 5:15-16**

<sup>15</sup>Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. <sup>16</sup>But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Involve your group.

Here are some leading questions to ask them...

- What did they observe in scripture?
- Why would time alone with God be important?
- What values did Christ demonstrate to his disciples?
- What did Jesus do during that alone time?



Some of the best ideas come from group discussion. **Learn to learn from each other.** Explore & design a potential model for a spending time with God...be creative. Note what Christ modeled in scripture. How do you best express yourself in a relationship. By talking by listening? By writing a letter? By reading together?

- How long was it?
- What can we learn from these passages without imposing our own ideas on it?
- Can someone share what they do during their quiet time with God?
- Is it ok to have structure?
- Is it ok just to listen?
- What does it mean to spend time with someone?

If you feel that your group is interested in pursuing other scripture regarding time with God/quiet times/devotional times consider having them look up some of the following verses then ask the questions below:

- Exodus 33:11
- Psalm 5:1-3
- Psalm 16:11
- Psalm 27:4
- Psalm 73:25-28
- Psalm 143:8
- Jeremiah 2:32
- Matthew 4:4
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Luke 10:38-42
- Hebrews 4:14-15

- 1) What is a quiet time?
- 2) How often would it be good for you to spend time alone with God?
- 3) When during the day did people in The Bible spend time with God?
- 4) What might be my purpose when I have a quiet time?
- 5) What is God's desire when I meet with Him?
- 6) What might I hope to gain by having quiet times regularly?

Invite questions from your group members into the discussion.

Once you have spent some time with these questions, choose one form of a structured quiet time. The following is a common one and you may have one to share in place of this. The point is to give a model that they can use and continue to develop.

**Pass out the “growing a relationship.../ACTS” label on page 2.7.** Spend a few minutes explaining this model then practice it as a group.



prayer

A—Adoration—Jesus you are \_\_\_\_\_.  
 C—Confession—of doing the opposite of God  
 T—Thanksgiving—giving thanks to God.  
 S—Supplication—Asking God for your needs.

**Challenge:** Encourage each person to commit to setting aside 4 times this next week to spend time with this model we have learned today. Be intentional in spending time alone with the Father.



memorize

**Also, in that quiet time, memorize Romans 12:1-2. Pass out label on page 2.7 for their journal.** Ask often how their quiet times have been. Ask a member to share some significant moments in their quiet times with the group in the coming weeks.



journal

Copy & Cut  
 “growing a  
 relationship...”  
 label for journal  
 entry



journal

Copy & Cut  
 Romans 12:1-2  
 Label for journal  
 entry

### Conclusion:

- Remind your group to be on time for next week.
- Encourage your group to take at least 4 times alone with God this week.
- Memorize Romans 12:1-2
- Close in prayer



resource

**The Only Necessary Thing:  
 Living a Prayerful Life**  
 by Henri J.M. Nouwen



# heart check

These things can compete with your prayer life...

- Willingly hiding personal sin...Psalms 66:18*
- Wrong motives...James 4:3*
- Treating one's wife badly...1 Peter 3:7*
- Lack of trust in God...James 1:6-7*
- Rejection of God's Word...Proverbs 28:9*



# heart check

These things can compete with your prayer life...

- Willingly hiding personal sin...Psalms 66:18*
- Wrong motives...James 4:3*
- Treating one's wife badly...1 Peter 3:7*
- Lack of trust in God...James 1:6-7*
- Rejection of God's Word...Proverbs 28:9*



# heart check

These things can compete with your prayer life...


- Willingly hiding personal sin...Psalms 66:18*
- Wrong motives...James 4:3*
- Treating one's wife badly...1 Peter 3:7*
- Lack of trust in God...James 1:6-7*
- Rejection of God's Word...Proverbs 28:9*




# heart check


These things can compete with your prayer life...


- Willingly hiding personal sin...Psalms 66:18*
- Wrong motives...James 4:3*
- Treating one's wife badly...1 Peter 3:7*
- Lack of trust in God...James 1:6-7*
- Rejection of God's Word...Proverbs 28:9*

 rh discipleship


 <sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual<sup>1</sup> act of worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.


Romans 12:1-2

 rh discipleship

 <sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual<sup>1</sup> act of worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

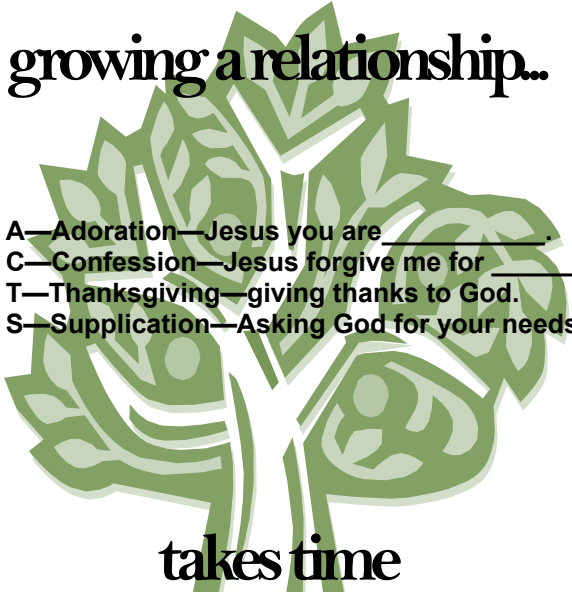
Romans 12:1-2

 rh discipleship

 <sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual<sup>1</sup> act of worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2

**growing a relationship...**



A—Adoration—Jesus you are \_\_\_\_\_.

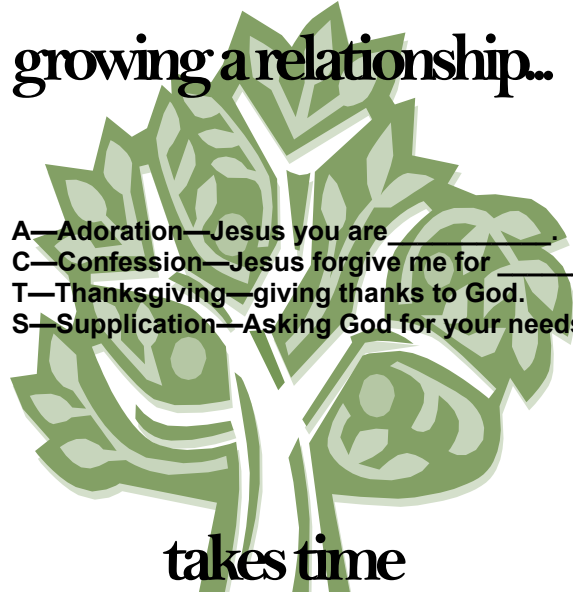
C—Confession—Jesus forgive me for \_\_\_\_\_.

T—Thanksgiving—giving thanks to God.

S—Supplication—Asking God for your needs.

**takes time**

**growing a relationship...**



A—Adoration—Jesus you are \_\_\_\_\_.

C—Confession—Jesus forgive me for \_\_\_\_\_.

T—Thanksgiving—giving thanks to God.

S—Supplication—Asking God for your needs.

**takes time**

\*Discipler can reproduce, cut and distribute to disciples. Have disciples affix to their journals.



### Prayer As A Discipline

Prayer is one of many spiritual disciplines that plays a vital role in spiritual formation or growth. In The Celebration Of Discipline, Richard Foster states:

*"...(prayer) brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit."*

- Read this quote to your group and ask what they think this quote means.
- God uses prayer to transform us and our hearts.
  - See James 4:3
- Foster goes on to add:

*"In prayer, real prayer, we begin to think God's thoughts after him: to desire the things He desires, to love the things He loves, to will the things He wills. Progressively, we are taught to see things from His point of view." (Foster, p. 33-34)*

- Reflect and discuss this quote with your group.

Henry Nouwen wrote:

*"Prayer is the way to both the heart of God and the heart of the world— precisely because they have been joined through the suffering of Christ.... Praying is letting one's own heart become the place where the tears of God's children merge and become tears of hope."*

Nouwen also quoted Theophan the Recluse:

*"To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all seeing, within you."*

- What do you think is meant by both of these quotes?
- How would you re-word the above quotes in non-Christian terms?
- Can you describe your prayer life as such? Why or why not?

## CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER & DEVOTIONAL READING: EXPLORING DEEPER

A synonymous term with “quiet times” are “devotional times.” As we have discovered in the first part of this curriculum (two. be still) we have generally discussed prayer and the “ACTS” (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) model. In this section we will discuss a specific kind of prayer and devotional reading as other vehicles to do quiet/devotional times.

### CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Start by asking your group the following questions below.

1. Is your prayer mostly a one-sided monologue with God?
2. Do your prayers tend to dictate to God what you would like to see happen?
3. Do you feel that being in the presence of God is not the same thing as prayer?
4. Does sitting and waiting on God seem like a waste of time?
5. What do you think God thinks of your wasting time with Him?

Contemplative prayer is a way of being with God that does not depend on giving God information on what we would like Him to do for us. Instead, it is a way of quieting our agendas/plans/desires and just being with God (saying very little). In contemplative prayer we rest and wait on the Lord.

Contemplative prayer is a posture of openness toward God. It is a form of waiting with an open heart to God’s presence and words He may have for us. It is a type of prayer that wholly depends on the Holy Spirit to deepen within our own spirit. Contemplative prayer helps us to develop an open, restful receptivity to the Trinity that enables us to always be with God just as we are without forcing our will upon Him.

Discuss the following scriptures with your group:

- Romans 8:26-27
- 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
- Colossians 1:26-27

The fruits of contemplative prayer are:

- 1) The development of prayer that depends on trusting God (instead of prescribing to God as to what He should do).
- 2) Living in awareness of God's presence within us.
- 3) The movement out of "doing" prayer into "being" prayer.
- 4) The letting go of distractions in prayer.
- 5) Allowing of God to love you through His "speaking" to you.

In essence, contemplative prayer is sitting, resting, and waiting on God to communicate to you.

Read and discuss Psalm 46:10:

- What do you think God is trying to communicate in this Scripture about "being still?"
- How can living in this way enhance, nourish, and/or develop our relationship with Him?



prayer

**Exercise to Practice CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER**  
(adapted from [Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us](#), by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun).

- Settle into a time of quietness with God.
- Say to God, "Here I am. I am with You."
- Just sit and be with God. Welcome Him with open arms.
- Be in the moment without controlling or influencing it. Give God the gift of your love and presence.
- Do not strive— there is nothing to achieve.
- Be with God in loving attentiveness.
- Leave God's presence gently when you sense you are to go.
- Journal your time in contemplative prayer.



journal

## DEVOTIONAL READING

Devotional reading is the reading or hearing of Scripture that requires an open, reflective, and/or listening posture receptive to the voice of God. It is aimed at reading the Word in a way that deepens your relationship with God (not just gathering information about Him!).

Read and discuss the following verses:

- Psalm 119: 9, 11
- Psalm 119:36, 97, 103, 111
- Hebrews 4:12-13
- Deuteronomy 30:14

In devotional reading we prayerfully dwell on a passage of Scripture, listen deeply for God's word to you, and live according to our revelation in it.

In addition, we stay reading the text until the Lord moves us onto another, and we read for depth, not breadth.

By practicing devotional reading we will:

- Keep company with Jesus
- Seek and listen for a personal word from God.
- Respond to God's Word with our hearts and spirits (not just rational, cognitive and intellectual prowess).
- Soften our hearts so that we may live out of a heart to love
- Have Scripture guide our conversations with God
- Increase our receptivity and submission to the Word of God.

### Exercise to Practice DEVOTIONAL READING

(adapted from [Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us](#), by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun).

- Before reading Scripture open yourself up to the presence of God. Say something like, "Here I am, Lord," or "Open my eyes to see wonderful things in your Word."
- Read slowly until a word or phrase lights up for you.
- When you sense a word or phrase STOP READING



journal

and listen to your feelings and God's prompting(s) around this word/phrase.

- Let this word/phrase draw you into prayer.
- Reflect on this word/phrase the entire day.
- Journal your time in devotional reading.

Keep in mind that contemplative prayer and devotional reading are just two of many methods of doing quiet/devotional times. It may be a great opportunity to have your group investigate other methods if they desire. Encourage their pursuit by recommending resources and/or directing them to RHD Lead Team or pastoral staff for more information.

### **Addendum Challenges:**

- Challenge your group to look up Scripture related to prayer to share at next week's meeting using any of the following:
  - Bible Concordance
  - Chain Reference Bibles
  - Expository Dictionary.
- Challenge your group to do contemplative prayer and/or devotional reading times at least two times this week.
- Close in prayer