

# PRAY FIRST = DISCUSSION GUIDE =



# PRAY FIRST

## How to use this guide

This study guide is designed to engage your group in deep and meaningful conversation.

In this series, we are starting with **Praise & Prayer Points**. Take notes and write down the praise and prayer requests of your group. Use this time to share what God is doing in your lives.

**Conversation Starter** is designed to break the ice and allow for group members to engage in opening conversation. The questions are usually fairly simple so anyone can participate. Feel free to come up with your own questions to break the ice too.

**Digging Deeper** is designed to take the group through the text and engage the group in a more robust conversation. The questions in this section will hopefully engage group members from all walks of life. You don't have to work through all the questions. As a leader, pick the ones that you think would best suit your group needs.

Be sure to download or pick up a copy of the **Pray First Personal Prayer Guide** to enrich your prayer life. You can find a hardcopy at the Information Desk or a digital copy through [facthisweek.com](http://facthisweek.com) or on our FAC Experience App under 'Resources.'

We hope that through this study your prayer life will be greatly enriched.

# CONTENTS

Session 1 – **“Getting Results”** (*Luke 11:1-13*)

Session 2 – **“Transfixed and Transformed”** (*Ephesians 1:15-23*)

Session 3 – **“Dancing in the Streets”** (*Acts 3:1-20*)

Session 4 – **“Trouble Everywhere”** (*Hosea 2:14-15*)

***\*Please note that this discussion guide is also available through our FAC Experience App under the ‘Resources’ tab.***



## PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

Spend some time praying for each other's prayer requests and share what God is doing in your life before you begin.

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# CONVERSATION STARTER

***To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:***

- What do you find easy or difficult about praying?

## DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from the weekend service?

***Together, open your Bibles and read from Luke 11:1-13.***

How should we pray? Wait. Don't give an answer. Have you ever asked God how you should pray? Let's start by asking God, "How should we pray?" Perhaps there are ways of praying we have never thought to try because we have never asked that question. So how do we pray?

- What is your personal experience with prayer?
- What are the different areas of prayer that are listed in this passage?
- How are these elements of prayer connected to each other? For example, can we ask for God to forgive us if we do not spend time in prayer forgiving others?
- How can we intentionally use this passage as a guideline for our prayer times?

What do we learn about the character of God in this passage? Jesus teaches us that God is a good Father. If even in our experience which is tainted by sin we can recognize qualities of a good earthly father, how much more wonderful must our

heavenly father be? He does not trick us, manipulate us, or wrap up something dangerous in pretty packaging only to laugh when we get hurt. God is not malicious. He loves to lavish good gifts upon His children. Perhaps before we can pray “Our Father” we must first ask God to reveal himself as our Father and as a good Father so we can actually call Him by that name.

- Have you ever been angry for something in your life where it seemed like God tricked you and you ended up hurt? How has this impacted your prayer life?
- Do you call God ‘Father?’ Why or why not? What meaning does this hold for you?
- Would you be willing to ask God to reveal himself as a good Father today? What do you think that would look like?
- Share a story that established for you a firm belief that God is truly good.

In light of the prayer Jesus teaches us and our understanding that God is a good Father, let’s look at the promise. This is a bold passage. “Ask and you *will* receive.”

- How do you initially respond to this call to boldness and persistence with the promise of receiving from God? Why might we be afraid to engage in this?
- The promise comes after we are taught how to pray. Do you think these have a connection?
- What other things might be significant in our spiritual life in order for us to see results in prayer?

Together, as we close, let's read the Lord's Prayer from *Matthew 6:9-13*.

*Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
And do not lead us into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory  
forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13, NKJV)*

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# CONVERSATION STARTER

**To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:**

- What are some of your favourite summer activities?

## DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

***Together, open your Bibles and read from Ephesians 1:15-23.***

In this prayer of thanksgiving and intercession, Paul expresses his gratitude to God for the believers in Ephesus, and he prays that they would grow in their knowledge of God and in their awareness of all that they have in Christ.

- Paul prayed that his readers would know God better. What does knowing God involve? How can we know God better?

As we read through this section of Scripture, we learn that we need the Spirit's help to understand the greatness of God, the supremacy of Christ and the rich benefits of the gospel. It is through understanding who God is and what He has done for us that changes our lives.

- Why do we need God's power to be transformed? How has God transformed your life?
- What would you describe as some of the rich benefits of the gospel?

In verses 17-18, we read how Paul prays that the, "eyes of your

heart may be enlightened.” Our prayers need to move beyond the physical and they need to engage the spiritual conditions of our hearts. Paul is concerned about the people’s heart. He’s concerned about the transformation of their heart. Our prayers need to move beyond the physical and engage our spiritual needs as well. Examine your own prayer life.

- Do you tend to pray for the physical needs of those around you, or the spiritual condition of their hearts?
- What are some ways that we can learn to pray beyond our physical needs?
- What does transformational prayer look like?
- What does it look like for us to pray with hope rather than hopelessness? How will praying with hope impact the way we live?

In verses 18-21 we see that Paul asks God to enlighten our hearts to know God and His glory. The more we look to God and fix our eyes on Him, the more we will be able and learn to trust Him. The more we grow in our knowledge and understanding of His plan for us, the more we will want to know Him and live for Him! Now that’s transformation.

- What has God done for you that has left you in awe and wonder?
- Paul prays in verse 18-19 that we would have “the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know” three things. What are those three things? What do they each mean? Take a moment and reread verse 18-19 slowly, stopping after each phrase.
- How can we incorporate these three things into our daily prayer life?

Paul prays for the people of Ephesus to see the hope they have in Christ. Paul prays for them to see how incredibly rich they are in Christ and the power that we have in him.

- Take a moment as a group and reflect on these phrases. Why are they so significant to you? Work through each one and share what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.
  - \* The hope we have in Christ.
  - \* The riches we have in Christ.
  - \* The power we have in Christ.

May we become followers of Jesus who pray as passionately as Paul did and learn from his example!

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# CONVERSATION STARTER

**To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:**

- What is a time during the week you can relax? What do you do to relax?

## DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

***Together, open your Bibles and read from Acts 3:1-10.***

The first part of Acts 3 begins with the dramatic healing of a lame beggar. Peter and John were on their way to the temple for prayer and they walked through a temple gate called "Beautiful." Now, giving to the poor was a part of their Jewish tradition and beggars would situate themselves in strategic positions to receive hand-outs. This beggar made it a habit to be placed in front of this particular gate. Everyday he was put there to beg. This was how he survived. As Peter and John approached the temple gate, the beggar, as he had every time before, asked them for money.

After hearing the beggar's request (verse 4), we read that Peter looked straight at this man. Let's stop there for a moment. How often do we walk by people without a second glance? It's something to think about. Peter and John stopped and engaged with the beggar. I'm sure the beggar could sense that Peter and John were about to give him something, he probably put out his

cup to receive coins. Peter promptly tells the beggar to look at himself and John. The beggar connected with Peter's eyes and he knew that he was going to get something. This man thought he needed silver and gold but the apostles had something far better to give him. What Peter and John had to offer was far more precious than any amount of money. Through the divine authority given to them and by the power of the name of Jesus Christ, this man was giving physical healing. In verse 6, Jesus is openly acknowledged as the source of healing and salvation. There was dancing in the streets!

- Who do you relate to; the cripple, or the disciples? Why?
- When was the last time you had a conversation with someone who was homeless? What is the appropriate way to respond? Is giving a handout always the most appropriate? What are some practical ways to make time for people who are in need?
- The beggar went into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. Can you relate? How can we become more like the beggar in our attitude and worship?
- Do you have faith in the power of Jesus to meet your deepest need?

God has given us the opportunity to be a part of miracles in the making. Just remember that our focus should be giving Him all the glory. Christ must become greater, we must become less.

***Together, open your Bibles and read from Acts 3:11-26.***

In verse 11 we read about Peter's reaction to a growing crowd. Dancing in the streets will draw a crowd. God on the move will draw a crowd. The healing of the cripple leads to an overwhelming response. From this, Peter begins to address the crowd and everything that they have just witnessed. As he

begins, he notices that people are literally gawking at him as if he's the one who healed the cripple. Right away, Peter shifts their attention away from himself to the one who did the healing, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," God's servant, Jesus. Peter directs the audience to Jesus – He is the one who deserves the attention. Peter isn't looking to be exalted; he wants to exalt the name of Jesus Christ, as should be our desire. God is the one who raised Jesus up from the grave and the apostles are witnesses to this fact. And it is only by faith and by the name of Jesus that this man could get up and walk.

- Often we desire recognition for the work that we do. How can Peter's example challenge us to live differently?

After saying these things, Peter refers his listeners back to an Old Testament promise. "Times of refreshing" refers to a sense of renewal. When the people repent, they will experience a rejuvenation of their soul. Right now, Jesus is in heaven until God decides to restore everything. When Jesus died on the cross, He extended the restoration to include everything in creation. However full and complete restoration will happen at the end of time when He returns.

- Do you need to experience a rejuvenation of your soul?  
What's holding you back from all that God wants for you?

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what's holding you back from experiencing renewal. Share with the group whatever God has placed on your heart and take a few moments to pray for each other.

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# CONVERSATION STARTER

***To get things started, let's go around the group and answer this question:***

- What's the story behind the longest time you've gone without sleep?

## DIGGING DEEPER

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

***Together, open your Bibles and read from Hosea 2:14-15.***

When it all goes wrong and there seems to be no hope, can we still find hope in Jesus?

At the time of Hosea, the dominant faith of Israel was a mixture of worship to Yahweh and local Baal religions. In the first three chapters of Hosea, we read of Hosea's own marriage as a parable for the relationship between God and Israel. Unfaithfulness is the problem and Israel is seen as an unfaithful wife. However, throughout Hosea, we get a beautiful picture of a love that lasts and a love that endures.

- How would you define hope?
- What does it look like to have hope in Jesus? How has Jesus given you hope?
- What does it look like for us to have a love that lasts and endures? How does Jesus' love for us change the way we love others?

Even when we hit the lowest of lows, God continues to work

through us. In those moments when we feel like we are alone and separated from Him, He is with us. Hosea's experience was one of dark moments, where he had to learn to appreciate what God was doing in his life. We learn from Hosea's experience just as much as it was for the nation of Israel. We have a God who pursues us, who loves us even when things don't work out the way we want them to. We can continually experience God's grace and love in our lives on a day to day basis.

- How does it feel to know that God continually pursues us even when we do wrong?
- How does the story of Hosea connect with you?

Now we come to verses 14-15 where Hosea presents an image of a couple in the desert. They will be alone and it will be a place to start over. This desert imagery would have reminded the Israelites of the commitment that God when they came out of Egypt. This metaphor speaks to restoration, to complete dependence on God.

- Why do we have trouble depending on God?
- Remember a time when you greatly depended on God. Share with the group.

We get a description of a new step in God's desire to win back Israel. Hosea even uses sexual terminology, God will "allure," that is to romantically entice Israel back to Himself. He will speak the tender love language that the people understand. God does not want to punish Israel; instead He wants to marry her and win her back to a life of righteousness and mercy and love. God is drawing us to Himself.

- Where are you at in your relationship with God? How does it

feel to know that God desires you? How does it feel to know that God wants to connect with you at an amazingly intimate level?

Spend some time before God savoring in the fact that God completely and wholly loves you.

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