

session 4 study guide

asking and listening

starter

ASK AWAY: Deep, committed prayer consists of praise, thanksgiving, confession, asking and listening. Asking is the kind of prayer most people are familiar with. Even those who don't have a relationship with God have, at one time or another, asked "the Big Guy in the Sky" to bless or help them! So, with all you have learned about prayer in mind, answer the following questions:

Prayer is: _____

The best place for me to pray is: _____

The worst place for me to pray is: _____

The hardest things about prayer is: _____

The greatest things about prayer is: _____

message

Although communication with God involves much more than asking for things, Jesus made it clear that appealing to the Father for what we need is not just okay . . . it's what God wants! Read the following parable that Jesus told in Luke 11:5-13. As you read, consider the following questions: (1) Why was the man inside the house resistant to granting his friend's request? (2) What ultimately persuaded him to do so? (3) What was Jesus telling us about prayer?

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

1. What characteristics did the friend at the door display that caused the person inside to finally open the door?

2. What is the point of Jesus' story?

3. In your own words, what does Jesus invite us to do in Luke 11:9-10?

4. What do you think keeps most believers from asking, seeking and knocking more often?

5. Why do you think Jesus compared the gifts of a good earthly father with the response of our heavenly Father?

6. How do the following verses influence your attitude about prayer?

Matthew 21:22:

Hebrews 11:1:

1 John 5:14-15:

dig

With the verses above in mind, write a letter to God. This is a chance to ask Him to meet specific needs in your life, in your family, in your church and youth group, and in the world. Here are some needs you might want to include in your letter:

- For the needs of your community, school, workplace
- For the needs of your church
- For the needs of missions, especially to unreached people around the world
- For your president and government leadership
- For the personal purity and lifestyle of your church leaders (Don't forget to thank God for them.)
- For your family (specifically and by name)
- For your own life—spiritual, mental, physical and emotional

When you are finished, put the letter in an envelope addressed to yourself and give it to your youth leader. He or she will mail it to you in three months, so that you can take an inventory of answered requests.

apply

If we really believe that communication is a two-way street, we must give God an opportunity to speak to us . . . because He will if we give Him a chance! There are many ways God speaks to His followers, including Scripture, the challenge or encouragement of other believers, the “still, small voice” of our conscience, dreams and visions, and Christian books, videos and music. What all of these different methods of communication have in common is the Holy Spirit; it is God living inside us who enables us to hear Him speak.

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus made this promise to His followers:

I will talk to the Father, and he'll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can't take him in because it doesn't have eyes to see him, doesn't know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you, and will even be in you! . . . when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you (John 14:16-17; 16:13-14, THE MESSAGE).

1. According to this passage, what does the Spirit of Truth do in and for us?

2. Do you sense the Holy Spirit living in you? Have you experienced Him guiding you toward the truth? If so, what was that like? If not, write a prayer asking Jesus to fill you with His Spirit. You may also want to talk with your pastor or youth leader about the Holy Spirit.

3. The Bible; the challenge or encouragement of other believers; Christian books, videos and music; the “still, small voice” of our conscience; and dreams and visions were already mentioned as ways God speaks to us. Have you heard His voice through any of these? Which ones? What other ways has He spoken to you?

4. Sometimes we don’t hear God’s voice because our thoughts and emotions are making too much “noise.” In what ways have your mind and heart been too busy or loud to listen for God’s guidance?

5. What are some ways that you can quiet your heart and mind to hear from God?

6. How might praise, thanksgiving and confession help you focus your “inner ears” on the Holy Spirit?

reflect

Are you ready to start putting into practice all you have learned about communicating with God? Say yes! Why? Because without communication, relationships fall apart. Think about it: If you never talked with your best friend again, could you keep calling him or her your “best friend” for very long?

1. If prayer is so important, why do you think Christians pray so little?

2. Many believers have found that a journal is helpful for deepening their prayer lives. They write their prayers down, in addition to saying them aloud or silently. Why do you think a journal could be helpful? Have you considered using a prayer journal? Why or why not?

3. Other believers have found their communication with God deepening when they pray traditional prayers from the Church's long history. The most common example is the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus Himself taught to His followers (see Matthew 6:9-13) and which is still prayed daily by many Christians today. Do you use prayers written by other Christians? Why or why not?

4. What tools from this or the previous sessions will you use in the coming week to get praying?

5. Write a short prayer asking the Holy Spirit to strengthen and challenge you to deeper communication with God.

meditation



Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds
of prayers and requests.

EPHESIANS 6:18