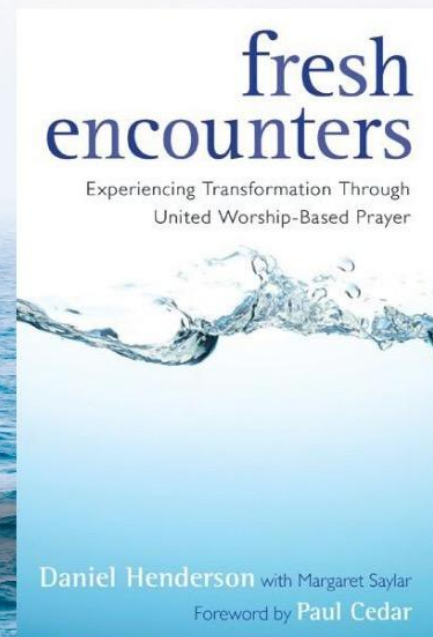


SAVE THE DATE
MCEACHERN
PRAYER SUMMIT
FEB 25-26, 2022

Based on Fresh
Encounters by
Daniel Henderson



Fresh Encounters

Small Group Participant Guide

Fresh Encounters

SESSION 1 **Chapters 1 - 2**

Introduction

1. “We’ve heard that prayer changes things. More importantly, prayer changes us. When we are changed, and Christ’s life-changing power flows powerfully in and through us, the world is changed” (p. 15). Reflect on and respond to this statement.

How could this belief affect your personal prayer life? How could this belief impact the church and the kingdom of God?

Chapter 1

1. Do you believe that only certain people are called to pray? If so, what is that belief based on?

2. Do you fear that you do not really know how to pray?

3. Are you satisfied with the status quo in your life and in the life of our church or do you want to experience all that God has for you/us?

4. Reflect on and respond to this statement: “Prayer is the most-often talked about, but the least practiced discipline in the Christian life” (p. 24).

5. In all three examples of the churches that Daniel Henderson has been called to, the key ingredient to transformation was TIME in God’s presence through prayer. What may need to change in our personal lives and our life as a congregation to make this time available to pray? Where in your day can you block out time to spend with the Lord?

6. The Holy Spirit is creative, always moving, transforming (= change). Is there any part of your soul that needs to be delivered from the “We’ve never done it this way” attitude? Spend some time and ask the Lord to shine His light on any area that He wants to touch with His healing power.

7. “If pastors mobilize their people to pray, the world will be transformed” (p.26). Reflect on and respond to this statement.

8. What are you asking the Lord to do in your life through this small group experience?

Scriptures for Reflection:

Ephesians 6:18 (Amplified Bible)

“Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God’s consecrated people).”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;”

James 5:16

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

Colossians 4:2

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

Acts 2:42

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Chapter 2

1. "Prayer involves humility, depending on God rather than self, and finding our sufficiency in Christ" (p. 31).

Humility is a sensitivity and responsiveness to God.

How much do you really need God? Do you feel you can basically handle things on your own? Are there places in your life that you hesitate to trust Him with? Why do you think that is?

2. How much do you believe we need God's help in the church? Do our practices reflect that need?

"My grace (*charis) is sufficient for you, for my power (*dunamis) is made perfect (brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness) in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

* charis – Greek word for "grace". Additional meanings: good will, lovingkindness, favor, mercy.

* dunamis – Greek word for "power, strength, ability". Additional meanings: inherent power, power for performing miracles, power consisting in armies and forces and hosts.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

3. "As you change in His presence, you can become a change agent for others in encountering the living Christ" (p. 32). The most effective thing you can do to bring about change in yourself, your family, your friends, your community and the world is to spend time with the Lord. What are your thoughts on these statements?

"But we all, with unveiled faces beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18

4. "Worship-based prayer begins with and is fueled by God and his character, not our needs" (p. 33). How does this description compare to prayer times you may have experienced in various settings?

Describe a prayer experience that has had the most impact on your life.

5. “The early days of the church were dominated by corporate prayer and God transformed the world at that time through a praying church. The same could happen today” (p. 36).

Read Chapters 1 and 2 in the book of Acts.

How did continual corporate prayer impact the early church?

Prayer Points: Session 1

- Pray for a fresh encounter with the living God for yourself, your family, for Christ Church and for our community.
- Pray that the Lord will continually bring your thoughts toward Him and show you how you can have a conversation with him all throughout the day. (Remember that a conversation involves talking and listening.)
- Pray the Lord will increase your faith in Him. Our faith is not in our ability to pray. Our faith is in the nature and character of God.

Prayer Practices: Session 1

(Suggestion – 1 Prayer Practice a day.)

Prayer Practice #1 - Prayer, however practiced, is an expression of our hunger for God. This hunger is a part of who we are. St. Augustine said, “For thee were we made, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” Read the words of the psalmist who reminds us of the naturalness and universality of our hunger for God.

Psalm 63:1-8

“ O God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you,
my body longs for you,
in a dry and weary land
I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.
Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.
where there is no water.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus recognizes this natural hungering after God. More than that, he claims this hungering will be satisfied.

Matthew 5:6

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

Write two or three sentences describing how you feel right now about your hunger for God. If you are not feeling a hunger or thirst for God right now, don't be discouraged by that but make it a point of prayer.

In your heart, make this affirmation:

I want to learn to pray.
I open my mind and spirit to you, God.
Teach me to pray.

Prayer Practice #2 - “Taste and See that the Lord is Good.” Read the following Psalms passages.

Psalms 34:4-8

“I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.
Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”

Spend five minutes in silence thinking about the one phrase: “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”
Make notes on what comes to you in your silence.

In prayer, ask God to bring the truth of this scripture to your mind often throughout the day.

Prayer Practice #3 - God is good, and I can communicate with God. Communication with God is possible. That seems so simple, and so obvious, but is it? Do you believe that you can actually talk with God and that God will hear and listen and respond to you?

The dominant image of God in the New Testament is father. This was Jesus' descriptive word about God's nature in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:25-26

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Take five minutes and think about that. God cares for each one of us as individuals. Is that hard for you to accept? Do you believe it? Have you been praying as though you believe it? God cares for _____ (Write your full name in the blank). Take three minutes now, and meditate on this truth.

One of the characteristics of a caring father is the desire to communicate with his children. Express thanks to God, your heavenly Father, that He desires to communicate with you, his child. God, like a caring father, wants to stay in touch with you. During the day, remember:

- God is good.
- God cares.
- God wants to communicate with you.

Prayer Practice #4 – Prayer is a privilege, not a duty. Many of us see prayer as a discipline, as a duty, something we must do. We've been taught we ought to pray, and when we don't, we feel guilty. When we cease to see prayer as a duty and begin to look upon it as a privilege, praying becomes a creative freedom and a tremendous blessing.

This privilege we call prayer is communion with God, feeling God's presence, being aware of God's guidance. Try to experience God's presence now. Get in a relaxed position, close your eyes and imagine Christ present with you. Be quiet in His presence for two to three minutes.

Read aloud Psalm 23 very slowly and deliberately. Stay quiet now, letting these passages of scripture fill your mind and heart. You may want to go back and read it quietly again and pause to ponder the particular words that have special meaning to you today. Spend five to ten minutes thinking about this.

Fresh Encounters

SESSION 2 **Chapters 3 - 4**

Chapter 3

1. Do you view corporate prayer more as an obligation or an oasis? Why?

2. What are your core beliefs about prayer?

Do your prayer practices reflect these beliefs?

3. What do the following Scriptures say about prayer?

- 2 Chronicles 7:14-15
- Jeremiah 29:11
- Matthew 21:21-22
- Luke 18:1-7
- Romans 8:26
- Philippians 4:6-7
- James 5:13-18

4. Respond to these statements:

“Prayerlessness is my declaration of independence from God. At heart, prayer is depending on God” (p.39).

“If we fail to abide in Him, we can do nothing of eternal significance and lasting fruitfulness. Because we think we can do the Christian life, we conclude that we do not need to pray” (p.39).

5. What alternatives to prayer do you often choose in the course of daily life?

How do these become subtle declarations of your independence?

6. What are some things you can do this week to express a greater dependence on God?

7. How can we make prayer time a celebration of the Problem Solver instead of a list of our problems?

What are some ideas of ways to pray for needs so that the needs do not become the main focus of our prayer times?

8. Do you struggle with insecurity about praying out loud with others?

What are some of the reasons you are uncomfortable with this?

Chapter 4

The Supremacy of Christ

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” Colossians 1:15-20

Jim Cymbala says we can tell how popular the preacher is by who comes on Sunday mornings. We can tell how popular the church is by how many people are involved in the midweek programs. We can tell how popular Jesus is by who attends the prayer meetings. The author, Daniel Henderson, contends that in this day of need-based, consumer-driven ministry that we have displaced the centrality and supremacy of Christ (p. 47).

1. Is Jesus Christ the central focus for everything we do in worship and in the church? Would anyone ask “Where’s Jesus?”

2. Read Revelation 3:14-21.

Is it possible that we do not realize our true spiritual condition? Are you content to attend church each week and stay busy with numerous activities without experiencing the transforming power of Christ?

3. Perhaps the greatest danger lies in a mediocre type of faith. Almost everyone (especially in our Western culture) professes to be a "Christian." Most people base this profession not on the fact that they have repented of their sins, been born-again, and are living in the power of the Holy Spirit, but rather on such faulty logic as "I'm a member of such-and-such church", or "I was raised in a Christian home", or "I was baptized as a child." It is very difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the church and the world in these days. Are you indifferent to the commands of Christ while sitting regularly on the church pew?

4. "Nothing is well done without prayer for the simple reason that it leaves God out of the account" (p.49). As a church, what do you believe we are most dependent on?

What are you most dependent on personally?

5. "It is so easy to be seduced by the good to neglect the best. How easy to neglect prayer or abbreviate our praying simply by the plea that we have church work on our hands. Satan has effectively disarmed us when he can keep us too busy doing things to stop and pray" (p. 50). Have you ever thought that you were too busy to pray?

6. Read John 15:1-5. Are you trying to live in your own strength and power or are you dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit?

For Personal Reflection (This conversation is between you and the Lord, not for group discussion.)

Take some time to honestly evaluate the following:

1. What motivates you in life/ministry?

2. How much of what you do is driven by a need to feel important or significant?

3. Do you want credit for the things you are working on?

4. Are your preferences more important to you than God's purposes?

5. Is it more important to you that God receives glory or that you get your own way?
6. Have you asked the Lord if there is any area of your life that is not submitted to Him?
7. Take some time to be with Jesus and lay out your schedule before Him with all the things you are involved in. Ask Him to show you why you have chosen to participate in each one. What is the true motivation of your heart?

Prayer Points: Session 2

- Pray that we will press on through our fears and insecurities about prayer and that we will be willing to be open to learning to pray during our prayer times together.
- Pray that we would hide God's Word in our heart and that our prayers will be full of Scriptures. God promises his Word will not come back void.
- Pray that we will be dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit and not on our own efforts.
- Pray that Jesus Christ will be central in our lives personally and corporately .
- Pray that we will not allow ourselves to be too busy to pray.
- Pray for an increasing awareness of Christ's presence in your life.

Prayer Practices: Session 2

Praising God

Why is praising God important? The reasons are countless.

- God deserves to be praised, and He is worthy of our praise.
- Praising God is useful and favorable for us. By praising God, we are reminded of the greatness of God! His power and presence in our lives is reinforced in our understanding.
- Praise discharges strength in faith, which causes God to move on our behalf.
- God inhabits the atmosphere of praise. If we want to see a clear manifestation of God's blessings and grace, all we need to do is to praise Him with all our heart, our mind, and our soul.

Each day this week, using Appendix A "You Are My God", choose 2 to 3 names of God and look up corresponding Scriptures. Praise Him in prayer for who He is.

Example: I praise you as "My Abba-Father, my Papa God:" – Mark 14:36, Galatians 4:6. Thank you that you have a Father's heart of love for me.

Fresh Encounters

SESSION 3 **Chapter 5 - 7**

Chapter 5

1. Read Exodus 33:7-11. What impact did Moses' prayerful example have on the people?
2. Read Acts 6:1-7. How did the apostles' resolve to give themselves continually to "prayer and the ministry of the word" impact the early church?
3. What difference does a pastor's example and commitment to prayer make in the life of the church?
4. Why is it so important to support the pastor in prayer? The staff and leadership?
5. The author describes a situation involving a man named Terry (p. 62-63): "On his own he could not seem to pray effectively and struggled with a critical attitude towards the leadership of the church." Through an extended time of prayer, he learned how to pray for his church leaders with a loving and tender heart. What is at stake when there is disunity, negativity, or a critical spirit in the body of Christ?

Chapter 6

1. Look up the following Scriptures and make notes on how Jesus continually modeled prayer.
 - Mark 1:35
 - Mark 6:46
 - Luke 5:16
 - Luke 6:12
 - Luke 9:18, 28-2

- Luke 11:1
- Luke 22:39
- Luke 22:40

If Jesus needed to pray alone and with others, how much more do we need to pray in this way?

2. Consider the prayer model of the early church as you read through the following scriptures: Acts 1:13-14, 24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24-31; 6:4; 9:40; 10:9; 12:5, 12; 13:1-3. Then comment on the following statement: "Prayer is not a preface or an addendum to the work of the ministry. It is the work of the ministry" (p. 67).

3. "We need to view corporate prayer, not as a program, but a lifestyle; not a temporary fix, but a lifelong process" (p. 68). How is an authentic prayer life and the vision for a praying church more like a marathon than a sprint?

4. According to Henderson, what should be the one and only motivation for prayer?

5. Reread the last two paragraphs on page 70 beginning with "Prayer transcends . . ." Why is prayer indispensable?

6. "In a praying church . . . plans are birthed, not in human planning but in His presence" (p.71). What is the difference between plans "birthed not in human planning but in His presence"?

7. Reread and comment on the top paragraph on page 73 beginning with "God among you is the aim and ambition of a praying church . . ."

What steps can we take to guard against beginning just another program in our own efforts?

Chapter 7

1. How has the prayer life of another person influenced you?
2. Do you believe your personality traits dictate whether or not God has called you to be a person of prayer? (p.75)
3. “The best way to help people pray is to pray with them” (p. 76). Do you agree with this statement? What are some ways that we might do that as a church family?
4. The possibility of experiencing rich prayer time as a church family is beautifully illustrated in the description of a prayer summit on p. 77 We are hosting the McEachern Prayer Summit – Friday, February 25th 6:30pm to 8:30pm and Saturday February 26th from 9:00am to 3:00pm (breakfast served 7:30am - 8:30am, lunch served 12:00noon – 1:00pm). Have you made plans to attend? If not, prayerfully consider that God is calling us to gather together to seek Him and whether He wants you to be a part of this experience.

Prayer Points: Session 3

- Ask God to make you an influencer in prayer.
- Pray about attending the Prayer Summit October 29-30.
- Pray about ways that we might pray together as a church family.
- Pray for the other members of your group this week.
- Pray that you will experience God and not just know *about* Him; pray this for Christ Church corporately.
- Pray that Christ Church views prayer as a lifetime focus, not a short-term program.
- Pray that we will seek God because He is worthy to be sought.
- Pray for an outpouring of the presence of God.
- Pray that our motivation in prayer is the glory of God.
- Pray for your pastor, Paul Lawler. See Appendix B for scripture based prayers.

Prayer Practices: Session 3

Prayer is Relationship. It is being with God. It is meeting. It is a personal relationship in which you and God move from a hello of politeness to an embrace of love. It is communion.

This week give seven minutes a day to “Getting Alone with God.” Begin developing a regular time with Him. See Appendix C “Getting Alone With God” for guidance.

Fresh Encounters

SESSION 4 **Chapter 8 - 9**

Chapter 8

1. Do you believe guilt could be a motivating factor in encouraging people to pray?

Read the following Scriptures: Psalm 9:10, 22:26, 34:10, 40:16; Lamentations 3:21-25; Matthew 7:7-8, 11:28; John 6:35. What do these passages reveal to you about your Father's heart toward you and why He desires that you seek Him?

2. "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior." Titus 3:4-6

If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, your relationship with Christ has already been established through the cross. He has made you acceptable through His sacrifice. He is not calling us to prayer so that we earn acceptance. He is calling us because He desires relationship with us. How do these truths free you up to approach God in prayer?

3. What is revival?

The Hebrew word for revival means to refresh, to be restored to life and health, to cause to grow, to quicken from discouragement, sickness, and death.

Should we pray for revival?

What cautions do you find in this chapter about our desire for revival?

How might this help you pray differently?

4. How did God speak to you in this chapter about your motives in prayer?

5. According to scripture, what is the only enduring motive for prayer?

Chapter 9

1. What is the difference between seeking God's hand and seeking God's face? Has your experience of prayer, both personally and corporately, been more request-based or worship-based?

What is the benefit of worship-based prayer?

2. "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." Psalm 27:4

If you could only ask one thing of the Lord, what would it be?

3. Read Exodus 33:7-17. "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Meditate on the phrase "face to face" and the concept that God speaks as a man to his friend. Are you that intimate with God?

God knows you by name, and you have found favor in his sight. Consider the impact of that. Does that captivate your heart? Do you believe he wants to reveal himself more deeply to you?

Are you able to rest in the assurance of His presence in the midst of all the circumstances of life?

4. "Worship is the response of all that I am to the revelation of all that he is" (p. 90). How well do you feel that you know the character and nature of God (not facts about God, but who He really is)?

Do you know what his heart is towards you?

Prayer Points: Session 4

- Pray that any barriers or hindrances to our prayer life and relationship with the Lord will be removed.
- Pray that God will develop a ministry of united prayer at Christ Church through worship-based prayer.
- Pray the beauty of who God is, the wonder of His character and the power of His name will become the primary passions for us individually and corporately.
- Pray that Christ Church will be a people who seek the Lord. Pray that we will seek Him for His plan but ultimately desire His person.
- Pray that Christ Church will become true worshipers in spirit and truth.
- Pray that God will reveal Himself to us and that we will know the Father heart of God.

Prayer Practices: Session 4

Understanding the Father's heart is essential if we are to love him, and be assured of his love, worship him, trust him, be secure in him, pray to him, yield to him, and much more. Read "The Father Heart of God" in the Appendix D.

Spend time with your Father and His word, His love letter to you. Find the "Alphabet of the Father Heart of God" in Appendix E. Each day this week, read out loud as a prayer several of the declarations and receive them as truth in your life. Write down the ones that are most meaningful to you and why. Look up the corresponding scriptures and use these in your time of prayer with your Father who loves you.

Fresh Encounters

SESSION 5 **Chapters 10 - 12**

Chapter 10

1. “As it relates to prayer, we have lost the New Testament conviction that we must pray together, first, if we are to learn to pray alone” (p. 98). What has your experience of learning to pray been like?

Has it been a mostly individual pursuit?

Have you had times of frustration because you weren’t sure what to do or how to pray?

Have you had any experiences of corporate prayer that have influenced your prayer life at home?

2. “Because of their strong understanding of genuine community, the early church regularly prayed together” (p. 100). What was the fruit of corporate prayer in the early church?

What do you think we may be missing by failing to come together to pray?

3. “In our faith there are certain activities that we best experience in community – worship, communion, fellowship, baptisms, and yes, prayer” (p.98).

Some ways that we gather together in community at Christ Church are Acts 2:42 evenings, the Bluegrass, Baptism, and BBQ event, and worship and prayer nights. Spend some time asking the Lord for vision about other ways we might gather together for worship-based prayer times.

Chapter 11

1. Read Matthew 6:5-13. What does Jesus have to say about checking our motives in prayer?

2. How is the “prayer closet” of the early church culture different than our concept of a prayer closet (p. 110)?

What difference might that make in your praying?

3. Read Acts 2:42-47. “Many believers struggle in learning how to pray. Hundreds of volumes have been written over the centuries on the theology and practice of prayer. Yet the most fundamental principle has often been neglected: Young Christians must learn to pray in community with mature believers. Prayer is a vital part of discipleship and corporate prayer is indispensable as part of the process” (p. 112). Reflect on and respond to this statement.

We are hosting the McEachern Prayer Summit – Friday, February 25th 6:30pm to 8:30pm and Saturday February 26th from 9:00am to 3:00pm (breakfast served 7:30am - 8:30am, lunch served 12:00noon – 1:00pm). In light of all that you have read, discussed and prayed about so far in the *fresh encounter* small group experience, how important do you believe it is that you participate in this community gathering?

What is at stake?

Chapter 12

1. Read Matthew 18:18-20. Read through the following examples of praying in agreement.

- **The new Church prayed** - The 3000 original believers in Jerusalem met together daily in the temple courtyard and from house to house. They devoted themselves to teaching by the apostles, to fellowship, to the Lord's Supper, and to prayer. The number of the believers increased day by day.
- **The threatened Church prayed (Acts 4:5-37)** - As miracles happened and the church grew, Peter and John were called before the Jewish religious leaders and were threatened not to preach any more in Jesus' name. When this was reported to the growing church, they had a large prayer meeting. They prayed that God would give them boldness to continue preaching Christ and that God would continue to grant signs and wonders to be done in Jesus' name. When they had prayed, the place where they had gathered was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak the word of God and to witness with boldness and great power. The group was all of one heart and soul and shared their wealth as people had need.
- **The persecuted Church prayed (Acts 12:1-23)** - When James the brother of John was killed and Peter was imprisoned awaiting execution and the church fervently prayed, Peter was miraculously rescued from prison by an angel.
- **The missionary Church prayed (Acts 13:1-4)** - During a time of prayer and fasting, the Spirit called Barnabas and Paul to take the gospel to new areas. The church at Antioch prayed, fasted, laid hands on them (a dedication and commissioning), and sent them on their way.
- **Appointing new church leadership with prayer (Acts 14:21-23)** - After planting churches in new areas, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (church leaders) in these churches with prayer and fasting.

With these examples in mind, why do you believe it is so important to have a theme or focus of agreement for our times of corporate prayer?

2. After reading over ideas presented in this chapter for prayer ministry possibilities, are there any that stand out to you? Spend some time and ask the Lord what He wants to speak to you about this.

3. Are there other ideas you feel the Spirit impressing upon you other than the possibilities mentioned in the book?

4. Consider if the Lord is calling you to receive training for prayer ministry. Are you open to this invitation?

Prayer Points: Session 5

- Pray for vision and inspiration regarding regular worship-based prayer times at Christ Church.
- Pray for the desire and willingness to pray in community with other believers.
- Pray about your participation in the Worship and Prayer Gathering October 17.
- Pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit regarding prayer ministry at Christ Church.
- Pray about how God may want to use you in prayer ministry.

Prayer Practices: Session 5

Read the following Psalms (one a day) and respond on paper to the following: What does this Psalm tell you about God – His character, His attributes, His ways? Praise Him in prayer for His character, attributes and ways that you journaled from the Psalm.

Psalm 86

Psalm 91

Psalm 33

Psalm 145

Psalm 103

Psalm 139

Psalm 40

Fresh Encounters

SESSION 6 **Chapters 13 - 16**

Chapter 13

1. Look at the 4/4 pattern of prayer (p. 131). Which focus do you gravitate toward the most?

Which one do you neglect the most?

How can you find a better balance?

2. Read Jeremiah 29:11-13 and Matthew 6:25-34. What do these Scriptures say about God's response to us when we seek him?

3. Far too many Christians equate prayer with "getting things from God," and group prayer becomes mainly an occasion to recite a list of our wants. Biblical prayers, however, are multi-faceted, and express our desire to enter completely into conscious and intimate communion with our holy, perfect, and righteous God. That such a God would desire this communion with us causes praise and adoration to pour forth in abundance (Psalm 27:4, 63:8), produces heartfelt repentance and confession (Psalm 51; Luke 18:9-14), generates an outpouring of gratitude and thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 1:12), and creates sincere intercessory pleas on behalf of others (2 Thessalonians 1:11, 2:16).

Prayer, then, is cooperating with God to bring about His plan, not trying to bend Him to our will. As we abandon our own desires in submission to the One who knows our circumstances far better than we ever could and who "knows what you need before you ask" (Matthew 6:8), our prayers reach their highest level.

Spend some time with the Lord, open His Word to these scriptures and ask him to speak to you. Record what you believe He is saying to you through His Word.

Chapter 14

1. “Participants need to be taught to pray from the Scripture, talking to God in his own words” (p. 139). Why is this so important?

What are some ways you can begin incorporating the Word of God in your prayers?

2. “If we are going to lead a prayer awakening in our church we must remember that *prayer is ineffective apart from the Holy Spirit*” (p. 140, italics added).

Read John 15:7, Romans 8:26-27, Romans 15:30 and 1 Corinthians 2:9-13. Why is it so important to be submitted to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and not follow our fleshly impulses during prayer times?

What do these scriptures tell us about the role the Holy Spirit wants to have in our times of prayer?

3. “Praying in faith cannot be emphasized enough. Without faith we are just going through the motions” (p. 142). What can we do to build our faith?

4. Have you ever been concerned that you don’t have enough faith? “Faith is not mustering up emotional optimism . . . It is not the greatness of my faith that moves mountains, but my faith in the greatness of God” (p. 143). Prayerfully respond to these statements.

Chapter 15

1. What are the ABCs of continuity in prayer? (p. 150)

Do you cooperate with these when you participate in prayer with others?

2. Corporate prayer edifies and unifies us as we share our common faith. The same Holy Spirit who dwells within each believer causes our hearts to rejoice as we hear praises to our Lord and Savior, knitting us together in a unique bond of fellowship found nowhere else in life.

To those who may be alone and struggling with life's burdens, hearing others lift them up to the throne of grace can be a great encouragement. It also builds in us love and concern for others as we intercede for them. At the same time, corporate prayer will only be a reflection of the hearts of the individuals who participate. We are to come to God in humility (James 4:10), truth (Psalm 145:18), obedience (1 John 3:21-22), with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6) and confidence (Hebrews 4:16). Sadly, corporate prayer can also become a platform for those whose words are directed not to God, but to their hearers. Jesus warned against such behavior in Matthew 6:5-8.

After reading chapter 16 and the scriptures in the passage above, what do you need to do to prepare your heart before coming together for times of corporate prayer?

3. Read Ephesians 4:3-13. Unity is a sign of spiritual maturity (walking in the Spirit); disunity is a sign of carnality (walking in the flesh) (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Unity strengthens the Church and brings about the "one mind" that produces miracles and great power. God wants a fellowship that is of one spiritual mind and purpose and that loves one another – while exercising varying gifts and ministries. As we build unity, we see more and more of Christ revealed in the fellowship and in each other. Why is it important to be unified as a church body as we pray?

4. Read John 17:20-23 and 1 John 5: 14, 15. All prayer should be "according to His will" and it is clearly the will of Jesus that His Church should "be one as We are one" – that is in deep and profound spiritual agreement. Jesus does not want uniformity (His Church is from every tribe and people and tongue) as much as He wants believers to be of one heart and soul and mind.

Jesus prayed for unity so that His Church would be mature, strong and spiritually competent. Unity helps evangelism "so that the world may believe that You have sent Me" (John 17:21, 23). Spiritual power will come to our prayer lives when we obey God's will by dwelling in unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. God commands His blessing where His people dwell in unity (Psalm 133). We cannot rebel against the expressed will and prayer of Jesus and expect our own prayers to be answered.

How unified do you believe we are as a church family?

Does unity mean we will all agree on everything?

How willing are you to submit your preferences to God's purposes?

Are there any actions you need to take to come into alignment with the purposes of God in and for Christ Church?

Chapter 16

1. “God loves diversity. That is why He is called the Creator and why we have to watch our tendency to push conformity and sameness” (p. 154). Take some time evaluate how important following a particular form, style, or model of prayer is to you. What is at stake if we limit the movement of the Holy Spirit to our personal comfort zone?

2. “Scripture offers many ways to pray. Interestingly, sitting in a pew or folding chair is absent from the scriptural record. The Bible shows people praying with hands uplifted and then flat on their faces in the same service (Nehemiah 8:1-12). Biblical prayer can be offered silently (Hab. 2:20), with a broken heart (Psalm 51:17), or in shouts and songs of joy (Psalm 69:30, 107:22). We can pray standing (Psalm 33:8), kneeling (Luke 22:41), lifting our eyes to heaven (John 17:1), or bowing our heads (2 Chronicles 20:18). And this is hardly an exhaustive list” (p. 154).

Which of these postures are most familiar or comfortable to you?

Are you willing to allow the Spirit to move you to worship in new ways?

How comfortable are you with allowing people to worship as the Spirit leads them within Biblical confines?

3. Remember our goal in gathering for prayer is not to earn God’s approval. “We are enjoying the means of grace He has provided in order to know Him more intimately. The only enduring motive for prayer is that He is worthy to be sought. He will be worthy next week, next month, next year, next decade, and for eternity” (p. 157).

How does this encourage you to pray?

How have your beliefs about prayer changed through the *fresh encounters* experience?

Has your commitment to corporate prayer and building a house of prayer at Christ Church changed as a result of the *fresh encounters* study? How so?

Prayer Points: Session 6

- Pray for unity in the body of Christ at Christ Church.
- Pray that we will submit ourselves to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Pray the following as declarations during your time of prayer each day this week:

- God is worthy, far beyond the attraction of anything this world offers.
- I am needy, in spite of my apparent self-sufficiency and earthly prosperity.
- Jesus Christ invites me to seek Him and will empower me by His grace to endure in my pursuit.
- Jesus longs for His church to be a house of prayer, and I will faithfully contribute to that vision.
- Jesus' glory in and through the church to the world will be my determined passion.
- God is a rewarder of those who seek Him diligently.
- I desire to experience life changing fresh encounters with the living Christ – enjoying and exhibiting His glory.
- Let the awakening begin today in me and in Christ Church.
- Lord, teach us to pray!
- Christ Church will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

Amen! So be it! He is able!

Prayer Practices: Session 6

How do I hear from God?

The Bible is clear that people can hear from God. Prayer is two-way communication. God wants to speak to us when we meet with Him in prayer. His desire to speak to us is far greater than our desire to hear from Him. He is not going to make it difficult. Often we can miss what He is saying to us because we are seeking the wrong thing – for an obviously supernatural voice – for it to be audible and preferably from a six foot angel dressed in white, so that there is not the slightest doubt that it is God speaking to us!

Remember that God wants us to listen to Him. *"Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord."* (Proverbs 8:34). Jesus said, *"My sheep listen to my voice."* (John 10:27).

God speaks to us in many ways. Here are some of them:

- **A still small voice.** 1 Kings 19:11-13 says, "The LORD said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the

LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

Isaiah 30:21 says, "Whether you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"

- **The Leading of the Holy Spirit.** Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." When you are in a constant state of loving intimacy with Jesus, He will lead you. He will speak to you as you take the time to listen to the Holy Spirit as to how He desires to lead you.
- **Conviction by the Holy Spirit.** John 16:8 says that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. The Spirit reproves us to warn us not to sin. For example, you are tempted to say something unkind to someone. You suddenly feel a "pulling back" or alert from the Holy Spirit not to follow through and allow this thought to become an action.
- **Through His Word.** The Bible is God's living Word. Often when we read a scripture or passage, there is something in it which jumps out at us that is particularly relevant to our situation. Particular verses come into our minds as we pray, and God will use some of them to speak to us. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that "the word of God is living and active" and "sharper than any double edged sword."
- **Through words and pictures.** Through the Holy Spirit, God can give us certain pictures, visions or words. We may understand the meaning of these immediately, or they may require sharing with others so that someone else can explain them to us, or God may reveal it to us over time.
- **Through Others.** God can use others in many ways. We may recognize significance in their words or actions or in their timing that resonates with what God has been speaking into our lives. Sometimes others may have heard from God on our behalf. Again, always check others' words out with His Word and with other things God has been speaking to you.

If it is God speaking, it will line up (agree) with His Word. Always.

Prayer Practice #1 - Set aside at least 30 minutes.

1. Find a quiet place, free from distractions. Ask the Lord to quiet your soul and help you focus on Him. If stray thoughts come through your mind, write them down on a separate piece of paper. You may wish to begin your set apart time with the Lord by listening to worship music.

2. Read a passage of scripture. Ask the Lord to speak to you through it in a way that you can understand.
3. Ask the Lord how He wants you to apply this scripture to your life or what He wants to say to you through His Word. This is where you wait and listen. God may direct you to another passage of Scripture. He may share a tender word. Whatever you feel he may be saying to you, write it down.
4. Ask him to confirm anything he shared with you.

Prayer Practice #2 - Read the beautiful worship scenes in Revelation and sing or proclaim the choruses there as an act of adoring your Lord. (Revelation 4:8, 11, Revelation 5:9-10, 12-13, Revelation 15:3-4, Revelation 19:1-3, 4-8)

Glorify God for His perfection using His many names in prayer. (You may wish to use the resource “You are My God,” found in Appendix F.)

As you pray using the names of God or as you worship Him using the scriptures from the book of Revelation, try some of the biblical worship postures to enhance your expression of worship of God (found in Appendix G). He is worthy.