

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

UNIT 1	OPENING THE DOOR TO AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER LIFE <i>Introduction and Overview.....</i>	1
UNIT 2	SPENDING TIME WITH GOD <i>Building Any Relationship Takes Time, One on One.....</i>	6
UNIT 3	KNOWING THE GOD WE WORSHIP <i>The Relationship Is Intimate, Personal—and Available.....</i>	17
UNIT 4	YIELDING TO GOD’S DIRECTION <i>Letting Go of Self Allows the Relationship to Grow.....</i>	27
UNIT 5	ASKING FOR GOD’S PROVISION <i>His Nature Is to Give—but First We Must Ask.....</i>	39
UNIT 6	SEEKING GOD’S FORGIVENESS <i>He Is Always Ready to Hear the Prayer of a Sincere Heart.....</i>	49
UNIT 7	TRUSTING GOD’S PROTECTION <i>He Alone Can Guide Us through the Enemy’s Minefields.....</i>	61
UNIT 8	EXPECTING GOD’S RESPONSE <i>Our Relationship Builds Confidence in Him and Boldness in Prayer.....</i>	73
	MICROMESSAGE TITLES.....	86

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Note Tips for Facilitator

Unit 1

OPENING THE DOOR TO AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER LIFE

Introduction and Overview

• OVERVIEW OF SESSION

This session will need to be set up like those that follow—same equipment, same room arrangement. It will be a full one-hour session.

During the session, participants will receive an overview of the study, helping them to know what to expect in terms of their daily workbook assignments, the learning goal of the material and their weekly small group sessions. The introductory video presentation includes all of this.

You will need to distribute workbooks to participants at this session if they have not already received them at a previous registration. Be sure to have extras on hand. If you are collecting money, a cash bag, change and a receipt book may be helpful.

Divide your time into four parts:

Welcome, introductions and opening prayer—	3-5 minutes
Video presentation—	20 minutes
Group discussion—	30-35 minutes
Closing comments and prayer—	2-3 minutes

• WELCOME AND INSTRUCTION

Greet everyone personally. Be warm and reassuring. It is a good idea to have someone else on hand to help with details such as making sure everyone has a name tag, workbook, etc., so that you are free to meet and greet.

As you get started, open with prayer and then give everyone an overview of how this session will proceed.

Ask participants to introduce themselves and to share something personal—such as how long they have been with your church, whether they are married, what kind of work they do, number of children, etc. Begin with yourself, even though you have probably already met each one personally when they came in.

• VIDEO PRESENTATION (20 minutes)

This video presentation includes Jim and Kaye Johns' personal testimony and covers the material in Unit 1, which provides an overview of the course.

Introduce the video. You might begin with something like this—

In this introductory video, you'll meet Jim and Kaye Johns, who have written this material. I think you'll be encouraged by their testimony. I think you'll find their suggestions are practical and down-to-earth. Now, the Johns are going to take us through an overview of the course, so let's get our workbooks out so we can follow along.

Play the video.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Did anything that was shared on the video seem to apply to your experience? In what way?
2. In what way have you ever been intimidated by others who knew more about prayer, more about the Bible, more about God than you did? *(page 8, question #1)*
3. In what ways would you like God to be more real to you today? *(page 8, question #3)*
4. In what ways do you think living in a personal relationship with God is different from knowing scripture? *(page 9, question #1)*
5. What are some of the essentials required in building a personal relationship with another person? *(page 10, question #1)*
6. John 10:3-5 says that Jesus' sheep will know his voice. Has there ever been a time when you were seeking God's guidance and just didn't feel you had heard from him? Do you think the level of your personal experience with God may have something to do with it? In what way? *(page 11, question #2)*
7. How has God invited you to know him through the years? Can you look back over your life and recognize opportunities he has given you to come into an ever-deepening relationship with him? *(page 12, question #1)*
8. What is the one most important thing God has impressed on your heart this week? It may have been something in a daily devotional or Food for Thought and Discussion question, or something that was said during our discussion just now.

...God Himself pursues a love relationship with you. He is the One who takes the initiative to bring you into this kind of relationship. He created you for a love relationship with Himself. That is the very purpose of your life. This love relationship can and should be real and personal to you. ...If you cannot describe your relationship with God by saying that you love Him with all your being, then you need to ask the Holy Spirit to bring you into that kind of relationship.

...If I were to try to summarize the entire Old Testament, it would be expressed in this verse: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." [Deut. 6:4-5]

This heart-cry of God is expressed throughout the Old Testament. The essence of the New Testament is the same. Quoting from Deuteronomy, Jesus said the greatest commandment in the law is: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." [Mark 12:30]

Everything depends on this! Everything in your Christian Life, everything about knowing Him and experiencing Him, everything about knowing His will, depends on the quality of your love relationship to God. If that is not right, nothing in your life will be right.

...A love relationship with God is more important than any other single factor in your life.

Note Answers Provided

DISCUSSION GUIDE (30-35 minutes)

- Turn with me to the Discussion Guide which begins on page 6.

1. Did anything that was shared on the video seem to apply to your experience? In what way?

- You might begin the discussion by leading into the first question with something like—*I don't know about you, but I could really identify with something said on the video...*
- Continue the discussion by asking after the first response, *Who else has something to share? Did the same thing ring true for you, or was it something else?*
- As needed, prompt more complete answers with something like—*What effect do you think that may have had on your prayer life?*

Turn with me to the Food for Thought and Discussion questions on page 8 in your workbooks, and we'll consider question #1.

2. In what way have you ever been intimidated by others who knew more about prayer, more about the Bible, more about God than you did? Lead them with—*Some of you may have never been intimidated by such things, but I think most of us have. Who can remember a time in your life when you felt that way?* Comments will be personal and varied.

- If you need to prompt them to answer, ask a second question like—*Does anyone feel that way today? I confess that sometimes I do...* (share an example)

Now, let's consider question #3 on the same page:

3. In what ways would you like God to be more real to you today? Likely responses—

- I'd like to see more answers to prayer...**
- I'd like to learn to know when he is speaking to me...**
- I'd like to sense more of his presence...**

- As a follow-up question ask something like, *What might we do to encourage God to be more real to us today?* Likely responses—

- Get serious about having a quiet time...**
- Pray about it...**
- Spend more time reading the Bible...**

The ball is pretty much in our court, isn't it? Now turn to page 9, question #1.

4. In what ways do you think living in a personal relationship with God is different from knowing scripture? Likely responses—

- It's the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge.**
- It's like reading everything we can about our president and what he stands for— knowing a lot about him, but never knowing him personally.**
- It's the difference between knowing someone in a general way, versus knowing them more intimately, one-on-one.**

MICROMESSAGE SERIES

Included in the video study are thirteen 5-minute messages on prayer that are designed to be used on a regular basis throughout the life of your church. They are effective reminders that prayer is an essential element in every meeting of staff, church committee, deacons, women's and men's ministries, Bible study group, Sunday school class, small prayer group, etc.

Make them a part of your plan to make your church the house of prayer that God wants it to be. To use them in a meeting, call your group to a time of prayer, show the brief micromessage, then continue with your prayer time, requests, etc.

PART ONE—BECOMING A PEOPLE OF PRAYER

1. **BECOMING A PEOPLE OF PRAYER**—*Prayerless Means Powerless, for Individual and Church*
2. **THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER**—*How Good Habits Can Produce Great Results*
3. **LISTENING FOR THE VOICE OF GOD**—*He's Speaking! Are We Ready to Hear?*
4. **THE HEART AND SOUL OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER**—*Finding a New Level of Intimacy with God When We Pray for Others*
5. **PRAYING WITH YOUR FAMILY**—*A Gift Your Spouse and Children Need to Receive from You*
6. **PRAYING WITH OTHERS**—*How to Overcome Our Natural Self-consciousness*

PART TWO—BECOMING A HOUSE OF PRAYER

7. **WEEKLY PRAYER MEETINGS**—*The Body's Health Depends on Them to Stay Spiritually Fit*
8. **PRAYER MINISTRY IN SUNDAY SCHOOL**—*How to Make Time for Meaningful Prayer*
9. **SMALL GROUPS AND EFFECTIVE PRAYER**—*A Starting Point for Powerful Corporate Prayer*
10. **COMMITTEES: EVERY MEETING A PRAYER MEETING**—*Decisions Are Usually Right When Prayer Is Priority #1*
11. **BUILDING AND SUPPORTING CHURCH PRAYER MINISTRIES**—*Understanding and Encouraging a Passion for Prayer*
12. **PRAYING FOR OTHERS**—*God Expects It! We Must Respond!*
13. **THE JABEZ PRAYER**—*A Prayer for Every Christian to Pray*

APPENDIX

The following articles are found in the Appendix of the participant workbook:

PRAYING WITH THE APOSTLE PAUL—*Ten Scriptural Prayers for Intercession*

SMALL GROUP PRAYER, HOW AND WHY—*Blessing and Benefit of Praying Together*

TIPS FOR CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER—*Making Small Group Prayer More Comfortable, Effective*

A WORD FOR MARRIED COUPLES—*An Easy Way for Couples to Begin Praying Together*

Tips for Conversational Prayer

Whether you are praying with one other person or with several, it is important to recognize that praying with others is different from praying by ourselves. When we pray together, our prayer is meant to be a dynamic conversation, with one person's prayer leading the next—rather than each one praying a separate, unrelated prayer. The way to accomplish this is to pray with a prayer leader and follow these tips.

Pray for only one request at a time.

When we pray by ourselves, our prayers move from one subject to another in a continuous and free-flowing manner. When praying with others, we need to pray along with that person or group, for a specific request.

Pray “back and forth” or “taking turns.”

Each individual prays for only one request, and then pauses to give other(s) the opportunity to add their prayer for the same person or concern. As they pray, their prayers will come from different perspectives. The Spirit will remind one to pray in one direction, another to pray something else. Hearts will be more closely knit together in agreement for each request as they pray about it.

Please speak up.

This is especially important for women, who may have soft voices. When they pray aloud, their voices usually sound louder to themselves than they actually are to others.

Try not to bow your head.

When we bow our heads, we speak into our laps, which makes it harder for others to hear.

Pray silently along with each other.

Pray silently or softly along with the person praying, in agreement with his or her prayer.

Be comfortable with silence.

Each can pray quietly in the silence, and also be listening for the leading of the Spirit as He brings Scripture to mind to include in our prayers, or other concerns to pray about.

Pray simple, brief prayers.

This is more than a matter of courtesy; it is a means of helping the less experienced pray-ers feel comfortable.

It also assures a more dynamic prayer time. The shorter the prayers, the more frequently everyone is able to participate. The prayers really become conversational, with each one inspiring the next, offered from hearts that are bound together in one accord, rather than a series of individual prayers.

Stay focused on prayer.

It is important that those who pray together, whether as a couple or in a small group, agree from the beginning that their purpose for an appointed time is to pray. It is easy to begin personal conversations that leave little or no time for prayer.

Pray requests rather than explaining them.

This takes practice, but leaves much more time to pray! Here's an example of how someone might pray a request: “Lord, I'm bringing my concern for Mary, who has been out of work for more than six months. She's a Christian, but she is very discouraged, especially since her husband Bill is disabled and unable to work. Please help Mary and Bill keep their eyes on You during this difficult time.”

Then your spouse, prayer partner or others in your prayer group would each pray for Mary and Bill *before introducing another prayer concern.*

Follow the prayer leader's instructions.

Even if there are only two of you praying together, it is helpful to take turns leading your prayer times. The leader's part is to introduce topics or “seasons” of prayer. Those praying together need to develop a listening ear to stay focused and praying as one.

Be relaxed and casual so you can enjoy your prayer times together.

Remember, we may be changing habits and introducing new ideas, and each of those praying together will likely experience a learning curve, individually and together. And that's okay!