

Small Steps to increase prayerfulness – for Growth Groups

Redeemer Church July 2024: practical steps to conclude our 'faithful in prayer' series

Dear Growth Groups,

We're coming up to the end of our prayer series. Here is a short paper to help us look back on what we've covered, consider how God has been growing us in prayer, and then take some time to pray.

It would be helpful for everyone to have a copy of this paper and a pen to mark it up.

The material is taken with permission from Prayer Training I've been doing with Peter Adam, an Anglican minister in Melbourne who has been a great encouragement to me.

You can find his material here: <https://peteradam.org/> (via a search: 'prayer')

In our groups, I suggest we read a section. Pause to think. Discuss what is important for us, what we struggle with etc. And then move to the next section.

The intention is to spend half the time on this paper and half in prayer as a group / in threes etc.

1. Vision of a praying church
2. How we've been growing in prayer
3. Small steps to increase prayerfulness
4. Pray!

1. Vision of a praying church: what does a praying church look like according to the Bible?

A praying church...

... comes to God our Father in prayer because Christ has died for our sins, and given us his Holy Spirit, so that we can call God 'Father' and approach him with confidence.

... relates constantly to God in prayer, praise, thanksgiving, worship, intercession, confession of sins, lament, self-offering and trust, and casts all its cares on God

... prays for the church, for the community, for the nation, for the world, and for God's great gospel plan.

... shapes its prayers and intercessions by God's priorities (eg Colossians 1:9-14), not its own needs and wants, while still being honest and open to God and brings those needs and wants to him in prayer (e.g. daily bread).

... is where individuals pray, married couples pray together, families pray together, friends pray together, ministry teams pray together, and the church prays together.

... is where young people and new Christians learn to pray by watching the example of the church and its praying, and by joining in that praying.

... is where the church repents of prayerlessness, and plans to pray, makes time to pray, and also prays spontaneously alone and with each other.

... is a church in which the minister is devoted to 'prayer and the ministry of the word' [Acts 6:4].

- Which of the above is a challenge for us? Which is an encouragement? Why?

2. Growing in prayer as a church

Our Redeemer 'Faithful in prayer' series throughout May and June:

Praying to our Father in heaven for his priorities and our needs: the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).

Approaching God and telling God we trust him (Hebrews 4:14-16 & Psalm 25).

Adding praise to our prayers for God worthy of all praise from all creatures! (Psalm 96, Revelation 5).

We pray for others what God wants for all: faith, love and hope (1 Thessalonians 1).

Pray for boldness to speak about Jesus to others: because God saves through the witness of his people (Acts 4:29).

We bring our griefs to God – including our screams and laments and we cast ourselves on his love. (Psalm 44, Romans 8).

Devoted pray-ers habitually depending on God and interceding, praying for others (Colossians 4:2-18).

Praying with Jesus: for the Father's glory, to be in but not of the world, against being divisive (John 17)

[Luke 22]

- Which of the above has been familiar to you? new to you? helpful for you?

3. Small Steps to increase prayerfulness

'Devote yourselves to prayer ...' (Paul's instructions to believers, Colossians 4:2)

'We will devote ourselves to prayer ...' (The apostles' decision, Acts 6:4).

From Peter Adam: 'Here are some small steps to adopt prayerful habits. Habits form gradually by practice, as repetition imprints actions in your muscle-memory!'

- Don't be daunted by the long list! Chose the ones that suit you.
- Make sure that one is in place before you tackle another one!
- The order does not matter. Begin with the one which would help you best.
- Tell others what small steps you are beginning to take, and encourage them to do the same. This will bless them, and increase your accountability!

First step: Ask God to help you to pray, to draw you to pray, to make you a prayerful person. And also ask several friends to pray this for you. Keep praying this prayer! And now:

Redeemer GGs: consider which of the following is helpful for you? & for us as a church?

- Whenever you pray for someone, or for a church or a ministry, thank God for that person, church, or ministry before you ask [Paul does this, e.g. 1 Thess 1:2].
- Whenever you contact someone, tell them that you are praying for them, also tell them that you thanking God for them [Paul does this! See above].

- Whenever you read, think & meditate on the Bible on your own, or with a group, turn the message of the Bible passage into a prayer which expresses your desire to do what God has told you he wants you to do in the Bible passage. You may find it helpful to use words or phrases from the Bible passage in your prayer. [If you don't know what to pray, then you won't know what to do!]
- To expand and enrich your prayers, use some of Paul's prayers for his churches in his letters. You can use them to pray for churches, and, with a few changes you can use them to pray for yourself, or for other believers [e.g. Col 1:9-14].
- If you find your mind has started worrying about something or someone, then turn that worry into a prayer. As Martin Luther said to his wife Katy, 'Pray, and let God worry!'
- Trust and entrust. Learn to say to God, 'I trust you about this issue or person, and I entrust them to you.'
- If you go for a walk, pray as you walk: Pray for people who are on your mind; your family or your friends; the people who live in the houses you walk past; missionaries you support; praise God for the beauty of the world, the sky, the clouds, the trees; pray that everyone you see will become a Christian, etc.
- If you have lots of people and ministries to pray for, make a list of different people or ministries to pray for each day. Use www.prayermate.net [an app] to help you pray.
- Plan time in your calendar and daily planner to pray. If you don't plan it, you won't pray! Set aside a longer time to pray once a week, and/or once a month.
- When you pray, don't just ask. Include praise, thanks, lament, confession, meditation on God's words and works, and promises to trust, love, hope, and wait for God.
- Work on a habit of praying short prayers frequently during the day: for the phone call you are about to make; the message you are about to write / have written; the person you are about to talk with / have just talked with; the meeting you are about to take part in or which has just finished; the people arriving for / departing from your Bible study.
- When you feel unwilling or unprepared to pray, ask the Holy Spirit to prompt your turning to your heavenly Father, and to make up for the deficiencies of your prayers [Romans 8:16,26,27].
- When you have a significant conversation with someone, ask at the end if you might pray out loud with them [and, if appropriate, invite that person to pray as well]. Do this in ministry situations, with members of your family, and with friends! Plan to do this, unless you think at the time that that it might not be appropriate.
- When you sin, immediately repent and ask God to forgive you, claim his promise of forgiveness by the blood of Christ, and ask his help you to change the way you live.
- At the end of each day, remind yourself of who God is, praise him, and thank God for three gifts that he has given you this day, and ask him to make you aware of three gifts he will give you tomorrow!
- Each day, praise God for his generous creation gifts such as water, food, air, sight, hearing, words, the beating of your heart, electricity, roads, music, farmers, banks, stable government, etc [A couple of these a day is sufficient! Think widely each week!].
- When you hear bad world news, praise and thank God for his providential care and rule of this world, and ask him to act.

4. Pray!

... that we would be a praying church

... that our affection for God would be reflected in our prayers of praise, thanks, worship, honour and credit to him etc

... that the trials we face, including the challenges to endure in the faith, will bring us to our knees in prayer, rather than keep us from prayer.

... that God would help us turn what we find in the Bible into prayer, so that we pray more and more what he wants for us and for all people.

... that we will persevere in praying for the lost, those outsiders to Christ that we are in regular contact with, and that God would use our witness & love to draw them to himself.

... that through our prayer and work, God would add to our number those being saved: two people in 2024, three people in 2025 etc.

... give thanks for...

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... pray for

- Our growth group
- Our church
- Our ministries
- Our people
- Our challenges
- Our local context: Hornby High School, western Christchurch connections etc

- Our CCA Diocese of churches: for faith, love and hope etc
- Our bishop Jay Behan, and those who serve on groups, boards, committees to see the ministry of the gospel grow amongst us and beyond us.
- Our mission partners – the Dunbar family in Phnom Penh

- New Zealand leaders & authorities
- The 50% who nominate 'no religion' on the census forms.

- This world and it's many troubles
- For the love of God to prompt repentance and faith
- For God's gospel plan to save and build a people from every nation & language