



TRANSIT

PRAYER | GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Is there a place you have always wanted to visit? If so, what place and why?

SHARE

Welcome to “Transit.”

We all want to go somewhere. To get there, we have to make a purposeful decision to begin the journey. When we travel, we take different vehicles – cars, planes, subway systems, buses, bikes, etc. Each of the vehicles serves a distinct purpose in moving us closer to where we want to go. As we purposefully take a journey together through “Transit,” the hope is that we can discover how we can grow closer to God through prayer, studying God’s word, relationships, serving, giving, and sharing our story about what Jesus Christ has done in our lives. As we talk about and experience these spiritual disciplines, we hope you realize that the power is not in the vehicles themselves, but in the subject of our affection, which is Jesus Christ. We can’t do anything to earn God’s love or salvation, but there are real ways we can cultivate a thriving relationship with God.

The truth is that God is the one who finds us, but he also promises in his word, that if we are serious about seeking him, He will be found (Jeremiah 29:13-14). No matter where in the world we might be, there is God. God is omnipresent, meaning he is “everywhere at the same time.” So there is no situation here on earth in which we cannot turn to God in our time of need. He will be there. David understood this and precisely why he proclaimed:

Psalm 139:7-10

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

If you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, God is with you and the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. You are an adopted son or daughter of the King and your identity is found in Christ Jesus, not in past mistakes or failures. With this in mind, we can boldly approach God and cultivate a closer relationship with Him. Whether you are brand new in your relationship with God or have been following Christ for decades, we hope this series can remind you of God’s incredible love and the ways we can ignite or re-ignite a more authentic relationship with God and each other.

This week as we talk about prayer, we will be talking about common hang-ups and misunderstandings

about prayer, and clarifying what prayer is really about. There can be so much confusion on prayer and why we should do it ... like why pray when God already knows everything? Does prayer really change anything? Does it really matter?

What comes to mind when you hear the word “prayer?”

What kinds of circumstances typically encourage you to pray?

Do you ever talk to God just to talk as a close friend? If not, what hinders that for you?

GROW

In this week’s message, Shawn talked about the reasons we should pray. Specifically, he mentioned how life groups were going to discuss the difficulty of when we don’t get the answer we were hoping for in prayer. If God doesn’t say ‘yes,’ then what is the point of praying at all?

Prayer changes things. It changes us, regardless of the answer. Absolutely, God can miraculously provide, heal and calm the immediate storm and we need to pray for God to intervene and pray big prayers all the time. But ultimately, we need to trust God when the answer is no, not yet, or there seems to be silence. As Shawn stated in Transit (p.41) “A yes from God will change one circumstance in your life, but His mercy, grace, and peace will change everything about every circumstance from here to eternity.” What we do know is that when we talk with God through prayer, we get mercy, grace and peace.

Prayer changes us as we pray! Billy Graham once said, “Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God.” Like any relationship, the more we spend time talking, the more we get to know the person and the same goes for our relationship with God. We can learn to pray and God wants to teach us.

Let’s read Matthew 6:5-13

In S.K. Weber’s Matthew commentary, we look at the importance of praying like Jesus’ example:

An important point to be made about the “Lord’s Prayer” is that Jesus intended it to be a pattern for the servant of his kingdom, just as he intended much of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not a magical formula. The specific words he used are not any more sacred than requests we might make expressing the same kinds of desires to the Father. We should seek to learn how to pray like Jesus prayed, not merely what Jesus prayed. That was his point when he said, **This, then, is how you should pray** (6:9). The pattern of meaningful prayer is to begin by majoring on the person and nature of God and his kingdom interests, coming to personal requests and needs only secondarily.

Why do you think Jesus prefaced the Lord’s Prayer by talking about motivations first?

Jesus asks us to “forgive” as we have forgiven. In the original Greek language, this is an active verb, meaning we are to actively pardon people who have wronged us. Why do you think this is so important to our spiritual heart condition during prayer?

After spending time talking with God, do you personally sense more of God’s mercy, grace,

and peace? If so, how does that change your day?

MOVE

Shawn talked about Jesus' example of how we should pray and created a simple acrostic to help us remember how to pray, which is simply "P.R.A.Y.S."

Praise. Praise and thank God as we focus on the greatness and goodness of God. (Matthew 6:9, Psalm 100:4)

Repent. Meaning, we change our mind and hearts, then our direction to follow God's best for our lives. We turn from sin, ask forgiveness, and move forward. (Matthew 6:12, 1 John 1:9)

Ask. We come to God to ask for those things we need or desire; our requests. (Matthew 6:11, James 4:2)

Your Will. After we present our requests, we follow that up with asking God to do His will here on earth; not our own will. (Matthew 6:10, Matthew 26:39)

Show Me. God show me where to go, guide me with wisdom in what to do, I depend on God's direction, lead me in your way, protect me. (Matthew 6:13, Isaiah 58:11 & James 1:5)

When you pray, is there an area that you feel you tend to neglect? If so why do you think that is?

After listening to Jesus' example on how to pray, is there something you had not thought about before?

How do you think you might try to pray differently going forward?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Let's remember, don't be dismayed; God will strengthen us to do what we are called to do!

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Additional Resources on Prayer:

Prayer by Richard J. Foster

E.M Bounds on Prayer by E.M. Bounds

The Circle Maker by Mark Batterson

Before Amen by Max Lucado