

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

1. Help the group members to understand that prayer is a two-way communication with God (a dialogue)
2. To teach them to respond in prayer to God when he speaks to them in the Bible

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is to submit to God's plan for your life.

Theme: To submit to God's plan for your life

Read the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

Luke 22:39-46.

³⁹ Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."

⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow.

⁴⁶ "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

- Why did Jesus pray in the garden of Gethsemane?
- What does it mean when we pray, "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42)? Or: "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39)?

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship (in one or two sentences) God and submit his life to God's plan for his life

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Responsive prayer

Read or explain in your own words.

Prayer is a two-way communication between us Christians and God, not a one-way communication. Prayer is a conversation, a dialogue, not a monologue. Prayer is a response to God's Word in the Bible and an expectation of God's response to our words in prayer. Prayer has different aspects: *praising* God (who he is), *thanking* God (what he has done or is doing), *confessing* sin, *asking* or requesting (for ourselves) and *petitioning* (for others).

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: Prayer is a dialogue

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| Day 1 ^{BS} | Psalm 34:1-22
God responds to our prayer |
| Day 2 | Genesis 28:10-22
God spoke to Jacob about his covenant and Jacob responded to God |
| Day 3 | Exodus 33:12-17
God spoke to Moses about leadership and Moses responded to God |
| Day 4 | Psalm 40:1-3
David cried to God about his oppression and God responded to him |
| Day 5 | Isaiah 38:1-8
Hezekiah spoke to God about his mortal sickness and God responded to him |
| Day 6 | Luke 1:26-38
God spoke through his angel to Mary about giving birth to Jesus and Mary responded to God |
| Day 7 | John 12:23-33
Jesus spoke to God the Father about his death and God responded to him |
| Day 8 | Acts 12:1-19
The congregation prayed to God about their imprisoned leader and God acted immediately |
| Day 9 | 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
Paul prayed to God about the thorn in his flesh and God responded to him |
| Day 10 | Matthew 21:28-32
The father in this parable spoke to his sons about work, but only one of them responded to him |

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: Prayer is responding to God's Word

- What kind of communication is prayer?
- Who may take the initiative in prayer?
- What kind of prayers are there?
- Which spiritual attitudes are important in prayer?
- What are promises with respect to prayer?
- What are hindrances with respect to prayer?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following questions and record their answers:

- "How important is prayer for you? How important is listening to God speak to you from the Bible and you responding to him through prayer?"
- "What would you like to change with respect to your prayer life?"

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review of previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

PRAYER IS A CONVERSATION Matthew 7:7

Ask and it will be given to you;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.

Matthew 7:7 (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: Prayer is a conversation (between God and man)

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

Psalm 33:1-22; Psalm 34:1-22

Psalm 33:1-22

¹ Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

² Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

³ Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy.

⁴ For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

⁵ The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses.

⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD;

let all the people of the world revere him.

⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be;

he commanded, and it stood firm.

¹⁰ The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

¹¹ But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.

¹³ From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind;

¹⁴ from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth—

¹⁵ he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

¹⁶ No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.

¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.

¹⁸ But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,

¹⁹ to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.

²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

²² May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

Psalm 34:1-22

¹ I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
² I will glory in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
³ Glorify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.
⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
⁵ Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
⁶ This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who
fear him, and he delivers them.
⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
⁹ Fear the LORD, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.
¹⁰ The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

¹¹ Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
¹² Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good days,
¹³ keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from telling lies.
¹⁴ Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.
¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their cry;
¹⁶ but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to blot out their name from the earth.

¹⁷ The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
¹⁸ The LORD is close to the broken-hearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
¹⁹ The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the LORD delivers him from them all;
²⁰ he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.
²¹ Evil will slay the wicked;
the foes of the righteous will be condemned.
²² The LORD will rescue his servants;
no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

2. Emphasis

The Christian responds to God's speaking through the Bible and his acting in life. Also God responds to the Christian's speaking to God through his prayer and to the Christian's behaviour.

3. Explanation for the group leader

Divide the time for Bible study into about three equal parts.

- Let someone read the Bible passage
- Discuss the questions that arise
- Let the group members pray two by two and take turns to pray through one Bible verse

Our response to God (Psalm 33:1-22)

33:1-5. God's words are right and true and all he does is faithful. God's truth, righteousness and faithfulness are very important. That is why Christians respond to it with singing, shouting and making music.

'A new song' is a song which you compose yourself, which originates in your own heart and from your personal experience of life. They are sung in the official meetings of the Church accompanied by all kinds of music instruments.

33:6-12. God's words refer first to his spoken words and then to his written words. By his spoken word God created the universe and the earth (verse 6; Genesis 1:3). By his spoken word he shatters the evil political, military and economic plans of the nations (verse 10).

And by his spoken words he reveals himself and his counsel (will, plan) to the prophets, Christ and the apostles. These spoken (revealed) words of God were recorded in the Bible and now are his written words.

God's Word, his plans and purposes, stand firm forever (verse 11). They cannot be thwarted by the physical events in the created universe or the historical events in the history of the world. That is why the nation that has the LORD as God is really blessed (verse 12),

33:13-19. The God of the Bible is intensively involved in the historical events of this world (cf. Isaiah 14:24,27) and in the life of every individual on earth (cf. Matthew 10:29-30). He sees all mankind, watches them and considers everything they do (verse 13-15; cf. Hebrews 4:13).

No man can save himself by his own strength or position. People need God much more than they realise (verse 16-17)!

God's eyes are on those people who fear (trust) him and hope in his unfailing love (verse 18). He looks on them with unfailing love, with favour (mercy and grace) and with goodness (providing them with everything they really need) (cf. Psalm 23:1). He keeps them alive in difficult circumstances (like famine) and often delivers them from death (verse 19).

33:20-22. That is why believers express themselves in their prayers: they confess that they wait in hope for the LORD, that is, they patiently wait for his help and protection (shield) with a very sure expectation in their hearts that it is going to happen!

God's response to us (Psalm 34:1-22)

34:1-6. David sought God in very difficult circumstances. God heard his prayer and delivered him from all his fears (anxieties)! Believers who look to God (who focus their eyes on God) will be radiant. Their faces are never covered with shame (verse 4)!

34:7-10. King David called to the LORD out of his miserable circumstances and God heard him. God responded to his call saving him out of all his troubles (verse 6)! The Angel of the LORD (i.e. the appearance or revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ during the Old Testament period) encamps as the most powerful protector around those who fear (trust in, believe in, depend on) him and he delivers them (verse 7)!

First comes a spiritual experience and then follows the spiritual knowledge (insight). This experience is 'tasted' by people who fear God and seek him. They experience in their lives that God is good; that it is a blessing to take refuge in him; that they lack nothing that they really need or that God thinks is good for them (cf. Matthew 6:25-34). While around them believers see strong animals (and people) grow weak, they themselves lack no good thing (verse 10).

34:11-16. David calls his listeners 'children' as an expression that they are receiving education (teaching) from God and God's teachers (verse 11). David says that people who desire to live well and long have a responsibility. They must refrain from speaking lies, turn away from evil, do good and pursue peace in relationships. This includes restoring broken relationships (verse 12-14).

Such 'righteous' people have a great advantage: God continuously looks at them with favour and listens to their cries for help (verse 15; cf. 1 Peter 3:10-12).

But in contrast 'evildoers' have a great opponent: God's face is against those who do evil and he will certainly cut off the memory of them from the earth (verse 16). No one will remember them with affection!

34:17-22. The righteous people cry out to God and God listens to them and delivers them from all their troubles (verse 17). When God does not remove certain troubles, it is because he uses those troubles to fulfil his best plan (Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; James 1:2-4)! And so "in all things God works for the good of those who

love him (who have been called according to his purpose) (Romans 8:28)!

"The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and he saves those who are crushed in spirit". (Verse 18; cf. Psalm 31:9, which uses 'soul' instead of spirit; and Psalm 51:17, which uses 'heart' instead of spirit). 'The broken-hearted' are people who are deeply grieved and sad about the enmity and hatred of people in the world against the God of the Bible and against Jesus Christ. God says that he is 'close' to them. 'The crushed in spirit' are people who are suffering spiritually (discouragement, depression, anxiety) due to the oppressions, persecutions and sufferings of Christians at the hand of the people in the world. God says that he saves them (cf. verse 17).

"A righteous man may have many troubles (set-backs, disappointments, disasters), but the LORD delivers him from them all" (verse 19). He either delivers him during his life or finally at his death! Whatever way, they will be delivered!

David experienced how God cared for him so that not one of his bones was broken. 'Breaking' bones' was a cruel way employed by enemies to cause people to die slowly (they cannot walk or work and so die of hunger and pain). This is also a prophecy about Jesus Christ: on the cross. Not one of his bones were broken, because he was already dead. People could not take his life, because he had already given his life (John 19:36)!

The wicked will ultimately be destroyed by their own evil (cf. Romans 1:18-32; Revelation 22:11-12). The godless and wicked often turn against one another and destroy one another (Judges 7:12,22; 1 Samuel 14:15,20; 2 Chronicles 20:24; Ezekiel 38:21). God promises: "The foes of the righteous will be condemned" (verse 21; cf. 1 Peter 3:23).

The (righteous) servants of the LORD are ultimately redeemed because they take refuge in God. They will not be condemned (verse 22; cf. Romans 8:1).

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.