

Prayer



Bible Study: Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives

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.”

Luke 22:39-46 (NIV)



Jesus knew that he had reached the critical point in his life and mission and he shared his thoughts and feelings with God in prayer. As you read the text above from Luke of how Jesus prayed, ask yourself two questions.

- 1 What does this text tell me about what God is like?
- 2 In what way does the attitude of Jesus help me to pray when I go through tough times?

In much of the Church prayer has become a spiritual description for that which is otherwise considered void of the divine, it has become fluffy language for the more real. We find ourselves randomly reaching for a prayer book or staring at the floor as the chair of our church council invites someone to pray. Our understanding of prayer has often become divorced from our understanding of Scripture and the God at work throughout Scripture.

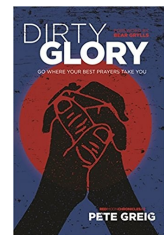
Yet as a normative habit for the people of Israel prayer’s place, rhythm and pattern throughout Holy Scripture appears utterly more profound, more rooted in Scripture and more glorifying of God. While our prayers are often times pitifully self-absorbed (like clanging gongs) the prayers of Israel hold as a primary concern the honouring of Yahweh as Lord. God is God whatever is going on.

The purpose of this Bible study is to help us in recovering a more truthful understanding of prayer. When we accept that we are part of God’s story of love, we can discover a better balance for our lives, however messy, confused and troubled they may be at present.

The prayers of the Bible are mostly voiced by people who see themselves as part of God’s story of redemption, while at same time living in a world marked by its turning away from God. This does not create some sort of holy/unholy dualism, of ‘us’ and ‘them’. On the contrary, the writers of the

Non-Fiction Books

- **Dirty Glory: Go Where Your Best Prayers Take You (Red Moon Chronicles #2)**



Pete Greig

Following on from the success of Red Moon Rising, which tells the story of the first five years of the 24-7 prayer movement, Dirty Glory describes stories of transformation, from a walled city of prostitution in Mexico to the nightclubs of Ibiza, and invites people to experience the presence of God through prayer.

- **My Little Prayers**



Karen Williamson

This collection of 40 cards, each with a prayer and illustration, covers a wide variety of topics building a strong foundation for regular family prayer times. Individually, they reflect the simple, honest and open approach so often adopted by children in prayer. The charming illustrations add colour, focus and inspiration.

Old Testament books see themselves often as ‘we who have sinned’, even though they may have been regarded as ‘holy’ by other people. Those prayers in the Bible are therefore filled with reflections of the deep need of our common humanity, the need of every one of us, and offer us a glimpse into the hearts of people who allow themselves to be fully open before God.

On the Mount of Olives Jesus firstly asks the Father to take the cup, and then, a little while later, submits himself fully to his Father’s work in the world. How might that example influence your pattern of prayer?

Is your prayer life honest?

When is such honesty difficult?

Praying together

Talk with a friend or in your small group. Have an honest conversation about the ways of prayer that you find most helpful and most challenging.

Does our church life contain a mixture of prayer types and styles?

What new patterns of prayer may be helpful for us to introduce?

How do children and young people learn to pray from others in the church? How can we enable them to be part of our church prayer life?



Worship group would be interested to hear your views— speak to Meghan, Joe, Irene or Ian.

For Personal Reflection from Andrew Roberts

Review the balance of your prayer life. Is it all a shopping list of requests or is there a healthy balance of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and intercession?

Have you refreshed the ways in which you pray recently? Try out some different ways of praying.

Make a quiet space: some people like to have a special place for prayer which is holy, set apart. This could be as simple as a special chair or you might find it helpful if there is a cross, some things of beauty such as flowers or an icon or picture, and a candle which can be lit as you pray.

Sit on a bench: prayer could be outside in a local park or on the street corner. Spend some time watching the people going by and pray for them. If you are in the countryside or a place of beauty; stop, observe, and give thanks.

Go on a Prayer Walk: a more intentional time which can be done alone or in a group. Walks can be arranged around the house, the Church or the community. You could focus on places of work, shops, or “problem areas”. Walk slowly, reflecting and listening. Stop at key places to pray using a written liturgy or open prayers. A good book to guide you is Simon Bailey’s ‘Stations: Places for Pilgrims to Pray’ (Cairns Publications ISBN-13: 9781870652124).