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SPENDING TIME WITH GOD

**8 Studies looking at examples and
ways of praying and having time
out with God**

Prayer is one of those Christian disciplines that we all do, but few of us are happy with our prayer lives. We have trouble finding the time to pray, when we do pray our thoughts seem to wander in all directions, and often we end up feeling guilty because our prayer life seems so inadequate.

Take heart in the fact that most Christians feel the same way about their prayer life. I am sure that Satan works hard at distracting us from praying, and making us feel guilty even when we do pray.

These notes are not giving any easy solutions to spending time with God. But they do look at some of the methods of prayer that I have read about and in most cases tried. The notes aim to do two things: to help you to see prayer in the Bible and to suggest some ways of praying. The suggestions are only that – some people have found them helpful. You will not find them all helpful and in fact you might not like any of them. You may already have a method of spending time with God that is right for you. Great, continue with that method.

It is good to have variety, and I find it helpful to change the way I spend time with God every couple of years. This keeps me out of a rut. I have also found it helpful to keep a journal and write down prayers and comments on how God has spoken to me. I encourage you to try this – buy a shorthand notebook – and see how easy it is to fill up a page each day.

What is prayer? The simplest definition is that prayer is talking with God. It is not a one way conversation with us talking to God. God can speak to us in many different ways, but we need to know that it is God speaking. These notes always suggest that we have an open Bible when we pray because God will often speak to us from the Scriptures, and God will always speak in a way consistent with the Bible. Enjoy these studies.

Bruce Southwell, 2001

Week 1

THEME: Jesus at Prayer

This week I aim to help you to encounter the risen Christ as you reflect on Gospel scenes and consider the relationship Jesus had with His Father. As we consider Jesus and His relationship with His Father and with human beings we see how we can relate to God and to others.

Day 1 Read John 13:1-17

We are called to be Christ-like. Spend time in quietness meditating on these verses. By looking at Jesus in this passage what glimpse do you have of what God has called you to become?

If on Maundy Thursday you were asked to participate in a service of foot washing, write down what your response would be.

If a wayfarer who had been sleeping rough presented himself at your door late one evening (presuming you had a spare bed), asking for food, a bath and a night's shelter, write down what you would do.

Day 2 Read Luke 4:1-13

Reflect on the passage and see Christ as a human being, and note how we see His divinity through His humanity.

Write the following passage in your journal, and let its implications remain with you throughout the day.

*To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to be sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no-one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safely in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken, it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy is damnation. The only place outside heaven you can be safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is hell. (from *The Four Loves* by C.S. Lewis)*

Jesus sees all His actions and teachings as part of His relationship with His Father. His parables show us his view of His Father and give us images of the kingdom. On the next four days, reflect on the passage set and write in your journal the type of God who the Father is presented as.

Day 3 Luke 14:16-24. One of Jesus' favourite images of the kingdom is of a banquet, a marriage feast.

Day 4 Luke 15:4-7. The Church sometimes tries to correct this foolishness by concentrating all our attention and energies on the one which is safe and leaving the ninety-nine.

Day 5 Luke 15:11-32. Some see the Father as more prodigal than the son!

Day 6 Luke 16:19-31. God's wrath is reserved for the mean and the stingy.

Study Passage: Luke 11:1-13

Share some of your own experiences as you spent time with God this week. Comment on what you found helpful and what you found most difficult.

Look at the following passages which show Jesus at prayer:

Luke 3:21

Luke 6:12

Luke 22:41

Luke 5:16

Matthew 14:23

Mark 1:35

How would you summarise Jesus' prayer life?

Read Luke 11:1-13.

What is Jesus urging in Luke 11:5-8? What do you think Jesus is saying about God?

If we keep asking, seeking and knocking, what will happen?

What does the Father wish to give us most of all? What does this mean?

List things you should pray for as a group and pray for these things daily this week.

Week 2

THEME: The Hour That Changes the World

Dick Eastman wrote a book by this title in which he says that prayer is not optional but is obligatory for the Christian, and that where there is a frequency of prayer there will be continuing display of God's power. We read in the Old Testament *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.* (2 Chron. 7:14)

The hardest thing about prayer is probably much the same for all of us – finding time to pray. Eastman encourages people to spend one hour a day in prayer. That is a lot of precious time and so should be carefully arranged. “The Hour That Changes the World” is an attempt to carefully plan how that hour is to be used. Twelve scripturally-based aspects structure that hour as seen in the diagram on page 8. You can begin using this plan by dividing your hour into twelve five-minute points of focus. As the week goes on you might like to shorten some areas and spend more time on others. Work through the following this week.

1. Read Psalm 63:3. Select a theme, such as God's love, His Word or His acts, and praise God. **(Praise)**

Read Psalm 48:10. Bring your mind into complete silence, and think no thoughts but thoughts of God the Father, His Son Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. **(Waiting)**

Read Psalm 139:23. Examine your recent activities and ask God to search your heart for any unconfessed sin. **(Confession)**

Read Jeremiah 23:29. Then turn to Matthew 5-7 and read a section each day. When you come to a verse that impresses a particular truth on your heart, stop reading and meditate on what that verse is saying to you. Pray to the Lord based on what you read. **(Scripture Praying)**

Read Colossians 4:2. Become spiritually alert, watching for methods Satan might use to hinder your spiritual walk that day. Read a missionary article

and recall international news developments. Watch and prayer. **(Watching)**

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Develop a plan to pray for God's work around the world – your unsaved family and friends, your community and leaders, specific countries. Pray that God will give more labourers and open the doors for them to share the gospel. **(Intercession)**

Read Matthew 7:7. Make a list of all the needs you have for that day and offer each need to God. Make sure your motives for claiming a petition are pure. **(Petition)**

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Think of all that God has given you in recent days and offer specific thanksgiving for spiritual, physical, material and external blessings. **(Thanksgiving)**

Read Psalm 100:2. Pause to sing a song to the Lord – it might be praise, thanksgiving, or a passage of Scripture with an original melody. **(Singing)**

Read Joshua 1:8. Focus on some aspect of God or select a theme. Think of Scripture that relates, and meditate with God's Word as the necessary foundation for meaningful spiritual thought. **(Meditation)**

Read Ecclesiastes 5:2. Ask God about issues that are concerning you. Search the Scriptures, listen, and write down ideas God gives concerning that problem. **(Listening)**

Read Psalm 52:9. Praise God for His power, knowledge and presence. Rejoice for a few moments at the close of your prayer. Rejoice for the time you have spent with God. **(Praise)**

Dick Eastman 'The Hour That Changes the World' (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p 10

Study Passage: Matthew 26:36-46

Share some of your own experiences as you spent time with God this week. Comment on what you found helpful and what you found most difficult.

Read Matthew 26:36-46. Discuss as a group

the contribution of our sins to the “sorrow” Jesus experienced in the garden;
the place of prayer in the time of trouble;
asking specifically in prayer and yet at the same time submitting to God’s will;
weakness when it comes to praying, even in true disciples of Christ, and the need to watch and pray against it.

It is helpful to develop “purposeful regularity” in our devotional habits. Divide the group into pairs (with one group of three if necessary) and make a commitment to your partner in the following:

The best time for prayer, setting a time. Experiment. “Those who have no set time for prayer, do not pray.”

Declare your commitment verbally to each other. Say to yourself each morning, “The most important appointment I have today is my appointment with Jesus in prayer.”

Agree to fight all interruptions fiercely. Seek the help of your husband/wife and children. Susanna Wesley taught her 19 active children not to interrupt when she had her apron pulled over her face – she was praying.

Develop a practical prayer plan which you can vary from day to day.

Reaffirm the importance of a daily hour with God.

Week 3

THEME: Prayer in the Old Testament

The Old Testament has many incidents of God's people at prayer. As we look at some of these prayers we will be taken into the presence of a sovereign, personal, loving God who holds us accountable for our actions.

This week I would like you to read some of these prayers from the list of eighteen passages below. Some will read a couple of prayers and reflect on them, while some may have the time to read all eighteen. As you read the prayer, ask yourself the following question:

Question: What do we learn about (a) God, and (b) the person praying?

1. Abraham Genesis 18:16-33
2. Jacob Genesis 32:22-32
3. Moses Genesis 32:1-34:9
4. Gideon Judges 6
5. Hannah 1 Samuel 1
6. David 2 Samuel 7:18-29
7. Solomon 1 Kings 8:22-9:9
8. Elijah 1 Kings 18
9. Hezekiah 2 Kings 19,20
10. Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 20
11. Ezra Ezra 9:5-10:1
12. Nehemiah Nehemiah 9:1-37
13. Isaiah Isaiah 63:7-64:12
14. Daniel Daniel 6:7-14; 9:1-23
15. Jonah Jonah 2:1-9; 4
16. Habakkuk Habakkuk
17. Job Job (the whole book) 20:7-18.
18. Jeremiah Jeremiah 10:23-25; 15:15-18; 18:19-23;

God revealed Himself to us more deeply and widely in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet these Old Testament saints knew God intimately and dealt with Him directly and honestly.

Reflect the three striking passages below:

Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way
and the evil man his thoughts.
Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
(Isaiah 55:6-8 NIV)

This is what the Lord says:
'Call to me and I will answer you
and tell you great and unsearchable
things you do not know.'
(Jeremiah 33:3 NIV)

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD,
I wait for God my Saviour;
my God will hear me.
(Micah 7:7 NIV)

Study Passage: 1 Kings 18:16-46

Share some of the things you learnt about God from the Old Testament prayers. What did the people praying the prayers reveal about themselves? What do you think some of the things are that our prayers reveal about us?

Read through 1 Kings 18 silently, and write down what we are told about Obadiah, Ahab and Elijah.

Read aloud Elijah's prayer (vv36-37). Elijah is praying in a national crisis. For what is Elijah praying? How is the prayer answered, and what is the end result?

What does this chapter tell us about God? Does the New Testament add any light to this incident ?

Should we be concerned for our nation and should we be praying for Australia? If so, decide for what we should be praying, and spend some time praying for these issues now.

Week 4

THEME: Meditation & Prayer

In considering the role of meditation I read *Forty Days and Forty Nights*, written by Brother Ramon, who is a member of the Anglican Society of St Francis. He explores the hermit life.

I selected five studies that he uses in the book to let you experience his method of meditating and praying. Ramon suggests the following:

Find a quiet place and settle down, affirming the presence of God;

Turn up the Bible passage and read it through slowly;

Spend a minute in silence, then say the set prayer followed by another minute of silence;

Meditate on the Bible passage, noting down what it says about the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit or you;

Go through the “Response” section, using your journal to answer any questions, to record your feelings about the theme, and how you intend to act upon any task or challenge set before you;

Read the final quotation, taking note how it brings out some aspect of the theme;

Write into your journal any comments or questions of your own about the theme, to be used in further exploration.

Again this week will require discipline, and some may find meditating a new experience. Persevere for the week. For those who might wish to develop meditation and prayer there are books to assist you.

Day 1 Obeying Hebrews 11:8-19 - *Abraham's faith and obedience*

Prayer: When I call you Master or Lord, I do not think of you as tyrant or despot but as my loving Father who gently receives the obedience of his child. You call me back from my wayward wandering and set my feet aright; You call me forward into new ways of service and responsibility; You call me inward into unimagined depths of loving communion. Grant to me an unfolding awareness of your purpose and a loving obedience to your will. For in your will is my peace. Amen.

Response

How far is obedience part of the discipline of your Christian life?

What have you learned from past disobedience, and do you experience joy in obeying the will of God?

Write down three headings: 1) *Personal Obedience* (your own will); 2) *Corporate Obedience* (family, community, church); 3) *Obedience to God*. Under each heading evaluate how you *feel* and how you *act* in respect to each.

Day 2 Missing Matthew 26:36-56 – The loneliness of Jesus

Prayer:

God my Father, Lover and Friend:

When I rejoice in human love, let me see your face in the loved one;

When I grieve in the loneliness of love lost, be near me in the darkness;

When human friends fail and my heart is cold and lonely, then let me learn your solitude, and in that solitude find your peace;

Through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

Response

Do you value both loneliness and friendship as part of your human experience leading you to know God more intimately?

Do you seek to evade the risk of human loving because of being hurt in the past? Do you realise the danger of becoming cold and cynical if you do not remain open to love?

Reproduce in your journal the following passage by C.S. Lewis from his book *The Four Loves*, and let its implications remain with you through the day.

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to be sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no-one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safely in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken, it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy is damnation. The only place outside heaven you can be safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is hell.

C.S. Lewis

Day 3 Guiding Acts 16:6-10 – Waiting on the Lord

Prayer: Holy Spirit of God:

You have guided men and women through the ages,
leading then through hard and difficult places
to a new and promised land.

Grant us stillness of heart and mind,

A spirit of quiet receptivity,

That hearing your voice and made aware of your leading

We may follow humbly, obey willingly, and find at last

your perfect will; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Response

List some areas in your life where you need definite guidance and ask yourself if you are willing to accept God's will even if it conflicts with your own.

Have you given sufficient attention to the sources of the Holy Spirit's guidance – in your own heart, in Scripture, in circumstances, in the community of faith, and in spiritual direction?

Give some time every day to silent meditation so that there is a place in your life for God's word to be heard.

Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

(Isaiah 40:30-31)

Day 4 Forgiving 1 Peter 2:21-25 – Returning love for hatred

Prayer: Your name, O Lord, is holy, and your nature is love. We have sinned against you, against our brothers and sisters and against the deepest yearnings which you have implanted in our hearts.

In your mercy you dwell with the contrite in heart, so we ask of your true contrition, free forgiveness and the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may walk humbly before you in mutual forgiveness and humble joy;
Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

Response:

Record the names of those who have wounded you in any way, unconsciously, purposely or maliciously. Write the words of forgiveness you *ought* to speak even if you cannot/will not do so.

Record the names of those you have wounded in any way. Write the words of confession you *ought* to make even if you cannot/will not do so.

Hold these people and your words before God in prayer, and ask for grace to confess and be forgiven.

He Was a Gambler Too . . .

And sitting down they watched him there,
The soldiers did;
There while they played with dice
He made his sacrifice,
And died upon the cross to rid
God's world of sin.
He was a gambler too, my Christ,
He took his life and threw
It for a world redeemed.
And ere his agony was done
Before the westering sun went down,
Crowning that day with its crimson crown,
He knew that he had won.

G.A. Studdert Kennedy

Day 5 Doubting Luke 7:18-23 – Who are you and who am I?

Prayer: Sometimes, our Father, we are beset by doubts and questionings which arise from unbelief and the inability of the unregenerate heart to understand the revelation of your love. At such times, forgive and enlighten us in truth. Sometimes, our Father, we are afraid to question teachings and doctrines that are contrary to what we know of love and truth in our experience. At such times, let doubt be a positive instrument of your discipline and lead us gently into an examination of what has been handed down to us by authority, in honesty and integrity. But in all things, our Father, keep us within the fellowship of your church, obedient to the life and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen.

Response

List any doctrines of the Christian faith which have raised doubt and perplexity in your mind.

Have you found yourself doubting the existence, the power or the love of God in any particular circumstance of your life?

Can you believe that doubt may be a positive and creative experience in the exploration of the life of faith? In the light of what you have listed above, how may this apply to you?

To Believe in God

Those who believe they believe in God, but without passion in the heart, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, and even at times without despair, believe only in the idea of God, and not in God Himself.

Miguel De Unamuno

Study Passage: Psalm 77:1-20

Share some of your own experiences as you spent time with God this week. Comment on what you found helpful and what you found most difficult.

Read Psalm 77.

List the occasions the Psalmist thinks or remembers or meditates and note what he remembers.

What conclusions does the Psalmist come to about God, his situation, and himself as he remembers?

How do you think the Christian is helped in prayer by remembering?

“The aim (of meditation) is not greater detachment from the world of turmoil and confusion but a greater attachment to God and to our fellow human beings. Biblical spirituality makes a place for silence, yet silence is to be used not to get beyond the Word but to prepare ourselves to hear the Word” (D.G. Bloesch).

What do you think are some of the dangers in meditation, and how can we safeguard against those dangers?

Week 5

THEME: Prayer in Revelation

Day 1 Revelation 7:10-12

This is a doxology. What is the content of the prayer?

Day 2 Revelation 5:9-12

This is an acclamation. What is the reason for the acclamation?

Day 3 Revelation 16:5-7

This prayer describes the attributes of God. What is the attribute mentioned?

Day 4 Revelation 19:6-8

In this prayer of thanksgiving, for what do the participants give thanks?

Day 5 Revelation 19:1,3,4,6

Hallelujah is familiar from the Psalms, but is only here used in the New Testament. For what is God being praised?

Study Passage: Revelation 19:1-10

The book of Revelation was written to a suffering church. During the week you have read some of the prayers of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition. How are these prayers relevant to a suffering church?

Read Revelation 19:1-3. What is this great hymn of the multitude celebrating? With evil still present in the world today, how can we apply this prayer to us?

Read Revelation 19:6-8. Again the voice of the great multitude is heard. What are they celebrating? How does the analogy apply to us?

From the readings for the week, compile a list of the attributes of God. As we reflect on these attributes, what are the grounds for Christian hope?

Week 6

THEME: Making my prayer life work

Bill Hybels in his book *Honest to God* tells of the struggle he had with making time to pray. He eventually tried what many had suggested to him but he had rejected – journaling. Journaling is the daily process of writing down prayers and examining and evaluating our lives in written form. You will need a notebook. I have adapted the Hybels method to suit myself, mainly by spending more time reading the Bible.

Bring yourself consciously into God's presence. You might pray with the Psalmist *Be still and know that I am God* (Psalm 46:10).

Read a Bible passage – if you use Every Day With Jesus or Scripture Union notes, read the passage and the comment.

Write a brief description of what happened yesterday – people you met, decisions you made, thoughts or feelings you had, high points, low points, frustrations – everything about the previous day. Then analyse it. This helps avoid making mistakes, and writing also slows down your pace.

Then write reflections on the Bible reading, and apply it to your life. You may not seem to write anything profound, but you have slowed down and are meeting with God.

Then move to a time of prayer

Write a big A for adoration, and spend a few moments writing a sentence or a paragraph of praise to the Lord. This might be a paraphrase of a psalm or a focus on an attribute of God. Beginning with worship reminds us of the type of God to whom we are praying.

Write a big **C** for confession. Writing out our sins and seeking God's forgiveness makes our confession specific, and it hurts. As we see ourselves for who we really are, we experience the freedom of forgiveness, and gratitude for God's forgiveness motivates us to forsake our sin.

Write a big **T** for thanksgiving. The ten lepers had tremendous feelings of gratitude when they were healed, but only one took the time to say it. Write down and express your thanks to God for answered prayers and for specific spiritual, relational and material blessings. Almost everything in life fits under one of these categories.

Write a big **S** for supplication. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Phil 4:6) After adoring God, confessing our sins, and thanking Him for His goodness, we're in the right frame of mind for asking God for what we need. Hybels suggests that we divide these prayers into four categories:

ministry – pray for your church

people – pray for friends, both Christian and non- Christian

family – own immediate family and all areas of family life

personal – your own needs and your own character. You might work through the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:21-22) and pray that one fruit will be seen in your life that day.

Monday to Friday

Each day this week follow the above outline and write things down.

Use your own Bible readings or
Acts 2:42- 47, 3:1-10, 3:11-26, 4:1-12, 4:13-22.

Study Passage: Philippians 4:4-9

Share some of your own experiences as you spent time with God this week. Comment on what you found helpful and what you found most difficult.

Read Philippians 4:4-9. List the types of prayer that Paul mentions, and explain when and how each can be used. Compare these verses to 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

“Even though God knows the secrets of our hearts it is an appropriate expression of our relationship with him that we should actually ask him to meet our needs” (David Paterson). Why ask for our needs if God knows already? Why ask with thanksgiving?

Write out a group prayer which reflects the needs of your group at this time. Then pray the prayer together.

Week 7

THEME: Paul at Prayer

Paul does not give us in any of his writings a systematic exposition on the theme of prayer, but prayer is at the heart of Paul's thinking and practice. His letters often contain prayers and he asks others to pray for him. I will focus our studies on the material in Romans. I am indebted to David G. Peterson *Prayer in Paul's Writings* in 'Preaching Us to Pray' edited by D.A. Carson.

Day 1 Romans 6:15-18

For what does Paul here give thanks?

Day 2 Romans 12:9-13

What place is prayer to play in the Christian's life?

Day 3 Romans 15:30-32

How are the Roman Christians to join with Paul?

Day 4 Romans 15:5-6, 13

What is Paul's wish for the Christians in Rome?

Day 5 Romans 11:33-36

How does Paul's doxology describe God?

Study Passage: Romans 8:12-27

The Holy Spirit gives us the assurance of sonship as Christians. What does this mean that we can call God? What implications does this have for our prayer life?

“The very fact that God can be addressed as Father is a constant reminder of the central truth of the gospel and therefore God’s commitment in love to the total welfare of His children. There can be no greater encouragement to believing prayer.” Why is this statement true?

Three times in this passage the word “groaning” or “sighs” is used (verses 22, 23 and 26). Why do creation, Christians and the Holy Spirit groan?

Paul talks about the Holy Spirit helping us in our distress. How does the Holy Spirit help us? What is the relationship between prayer, suffering and Christian hope?

Week 8

THEME: Praying with other Christians

The New Testament gives us a picture of the first Christians meeting together. They did not meet primarily to worship God as every part of their lives was meant to worship God. Rather they met together for edification, for the spiritual building of each other through prayer and song and teaching and correcting from the Bible. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.* (Colossians 3:16) This week we will look at some of their meetings.

Day 1 Acts 1:12-14

What did Jesus' first followers meet together to do?

Day 2 Acts 4:22-31

For what was this prayer group praying?

Day 3 Acts 12:1-17

What was the response to Rhoda's news?

Day 4 Colossians 3:12-17

What characteristics should be obvious in our times together?

Day 5 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

How do these meetings do more harm than good?

Study Passage: Acts 12:1-17

List the places you pray with others. For what types of things do you pray?

Why does the Bible encourage Christians to meet together? Look at Matthew 18:19-20 and Hebrews 10:23-25. Do you think these times should include prayer? If so, why?

Read Acts 12:1-17.

What do you think the church was praying for while Peter was in prison?

Why do you think the people praying found it so difficult to believe Rhoda?

What does this incident tell us about God, about ourselves, and about prayer?

List the things the Bible tells us to pray for, together with the Bible references? You might like to see that these things are included in your group prayers systematically (not necessarily every time you meet, but on a regular basis).

Discuss if your group might like to appoint someone to coordinate your group prayer life, reminding the group of needs and aiding systematic prayer.