

THE FOLLY OF PRAYER

Small Group Study Guide

Based on *The Folly of Prayer:
Practicing the Presence and Absence of God*
By Mathew Woodley

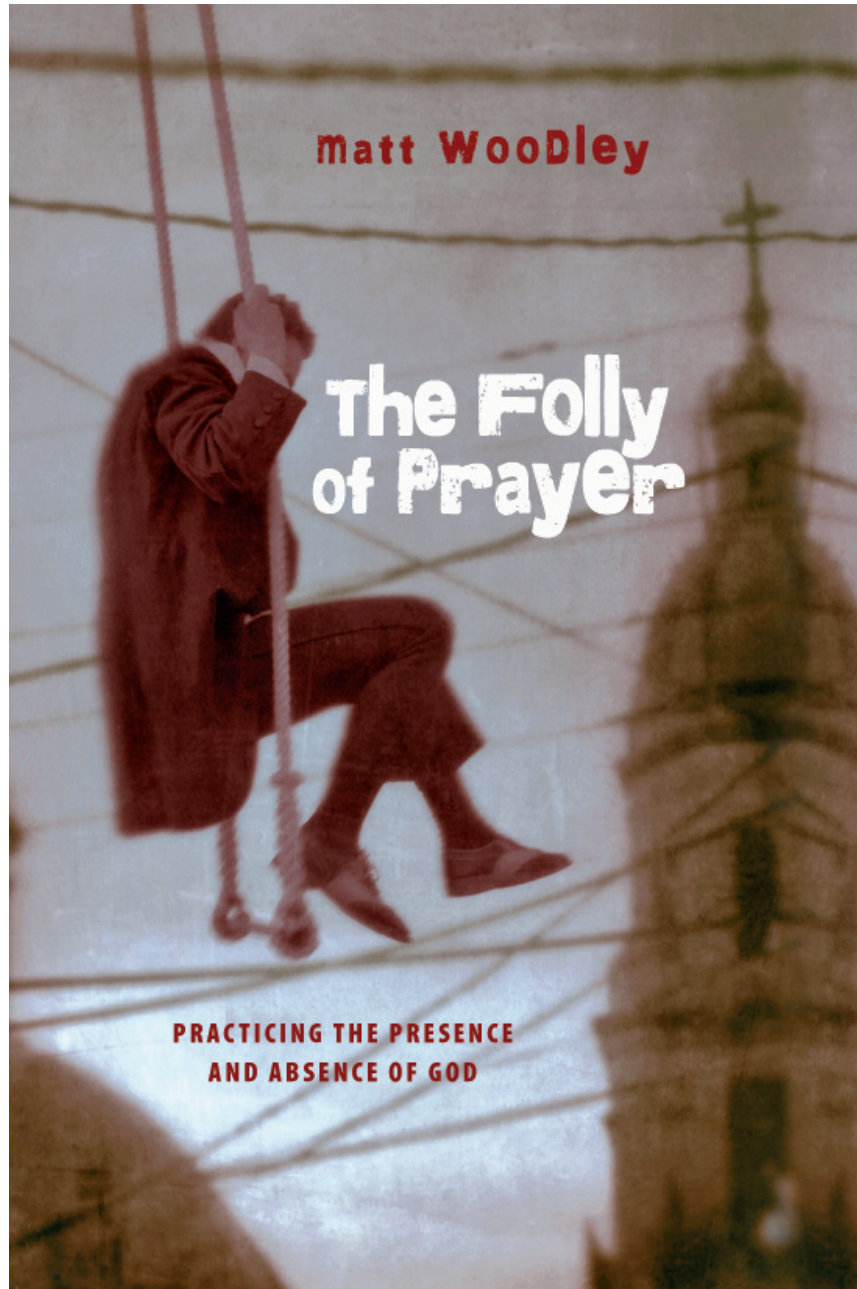


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Introduction for Group Leaders

Prayer isn't necessarily efficient or even comprehensible. Sometimes we feel and know the palpable presence of God and we cry out "Thank you!" At other times we experience more of God's haunting, mysterious, unpredictable absence and we scream "Where are you?" And we usually can't predict God's next move. In this sense, praying to our untamed God can be frustrating, perplexing and even agonizing.

God will bathe us in ecstatic light and then seemingly abandon us in the dark ... But that's real life. Reality itself – from quarks and human cells to redwood forests and blue whales – is quirky and unpredictable, riddled with sharp edges and surprises and setbacks and strange events ... (Prayer is) an encounter between the Real God and the real us ... I want to face life head on with all its jagged edges of mystery, joy, longing, and agony ... My prayer is that my journey will help you come alive to God and to others like never before.

This study guide was designed to help a small community of people process, wrestle with and apply the content of *The Folly of Prayer*. This study will help your small group deepen your intimacy with God and build community. It will also help you to love and serve the broken and hurting people outside of your small group.

You could use this study in the following settings:

- A leadership team that wants to grow deep in intimacy with God and engage your community.
- A men's group, a women's small group or a mixed group that wants a fresh perspective on prayer.
- A short series for a season of your church life (i.e. some Christians could use this for the season of Lent).
- A one-on-one mentoring relationship.

Before you begin your small group, prayerfully consider the following general guidelines:

1. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. This is not a self-help project or our heroic attempt to live just like Jesus. Any Christ-centered approach to the life relies on the presence of the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us.
2. Cling to the reality of the Gospel. Our religious efforts rely on this formula: we obey, therefore we are accepted by God. But the Gospel turns this upside down: we are accepted by the Father through Jesus, therefore we obey. Keep the Gospel front and center in all of your discussion, sharing and prayer times.
3. Christian community is the place to experience God's grace and grow in Christ. The content and questions in the book and study guide are designed to provoke, disrupt and challenge you to grow up in Christ. Some of the questions require vulnerability. As a group leader or a group member build a culture of grace in your group. Let people struggle, doubt, and question.

As you enter into each study, keep in mind the following more specific guidelines:

1. Each of the eight studies is designed to last 45-60 minutes.

2. It will be helpful if every individual or couple has their own copy of *The Folly of Prayer*.
3. The questions are simple but, hopefully, they allow room for honest dialogue and deep wrestling with the content in the book. I've tried to focus the discussion around 2-3 key Bible passages for each study. That's intentional: for the purpose of this study, it's better to focus deep on a few passages than skim through a number of Bible passages.
4. Each section begins with a short reading from the book to introduce the topic. Feel free to read other sections in the book, but this study guide is designed to help you engage the Bible, one another, and the Holy Spirit.
5. **"Opening the Conversation"** consists of a simple question to build community by provoking a dialogue, sharing a childhood memory or just having fun.
6. **"Reflecting on Scripture and Life"** allows the Biblical text to shape our thoughts, our feelings and our lives. At times your group will be asked to silently meditate on a passage of Scripture. Don't rush through these times of silence. To prepare your hearts for silence and meditation, you may want to read and have the group read the sections on page 133 ("Savoring the Chocolate Cake") and page 149 ("Would you please be quiet!").
7. **"Loving a Broken World"** challenges your group to pray by looking outward to the needs of a hurting world. First, make sure you spend time interceding on behalf of those who feel broken and marginalized. Secondly, as you work through this study, you may want to encourage your group to plan a small group ministry idea to bless the world around you. I've heard of small groups hosting a game night for unbelievers, pulling weeds at a women's shelter, making sandwiches for a homeless ministry, etc. Try to plan at least one specific outreach during the course of the study.
8. **"Listening to Our Lives"** is a crucial section. Plan your time so that this last section isn't rushed. These questions are designed for specific application, moving the discussion into places of weakness, pain, vulnerability, sin and struggle and the joy of renewed obedience. Don't force anyone to respond to these vulnerable questions; but on the other hand, challenge your group members to stretch by opening up and learning to trust one another.

This study guide is free. Make as many copies as you need.
If you have questions or comments, feel free to email the author at mattwoodley@3vc.org.

Small Group Study #1

(Based on Chapter 1: Prayer as Guttural Groaning)

Maybe there are times when we pray and don't even know we're praying, when the doubt and anguish are lodged so deep within us that we can't find the words. So we just ache. And we groan. And we ooze with the pain of life. And maybe God hears the ugly groans and changes the ooze into poetry ... The Bible is a God-centered, Jesus-glorifying, Spiritempowered story, but even so, it constantly honors human suffering. It teaches us how to groan and then it tells us that God validates our deepest groaning. Sometimes we just hurt and we can't find the words to express our pain. We can't explain it, heal it, overcome it, solve it or blunt it. So we just sit and groan in a God-ward direction. In these situations, the groans themselves can become messy-elloquent offerings to God. And in the midst of these groans, God hears us and holds us and then he helps us embrace our fellow-groaners.

Opening a Conversation:

➔ Think of a time from your childhood when you were disappointed (it could be any event big or small, from whiffing at t-ball to losing a favorite pet to your parent's divorce). What happened? How did your family deal with your disappointment (or your groaning)? Did they allow you to groan? Did they make fun of you? Did they tell you to just get over it?

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read Exodus 2:21-25. What happened during this corporate groan session? What does this teach us about our prayer lives?
2. Read Romans 8:18-25. What does this portion of Scripture tell us about life in a fallen but Christ-redeemed world? How does this text describe the tension between agony and beauty of life on planet earth?
3. What does Romans 8:26-27 add to our understanding of groaning our prayers?
4. On pages 14-15, Woodley wrote, "Many of us also grew up in church or family systems that taught us to deny the ache ... Somewhere we bought the lie that we could live without pain, that we could stuff it, numb it, medicate it, blunt it, or stiff-arm it." How about you? When you face the ache of living in a fallen world, how do you try to deny, blunt or medicate the pain?
5. Can you think of a time when all you could do was groan your prayers to God? What was that like for you?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. What does this say about receiving God's comfort? How is God's comfort like the comfort given by Mama P. found on pages 20-21? (It would be helpful to have someone read that section from the book).

Loving a Broken World:

➔ Where do you see examples of this deep groaning in contemporary culture? Which

musicians, films, authors, artists give voice to the groaning and longing for redemption we all feel?

→ As we listen to these groans, how should it change the way we pray for the world around us?

Listening to Our Lives:

→ Spend five minutes in silence

→ Reread Romans 8:18-25. Of all the words in this passage, which word (choose only one) best describes your life right now? Why?

→ Share with the group which word intersects with your life.

Small Group Study #2 (Based on Chapter 3: Prayer as Desperation)

Prayer is rooted in need. One of the most common Biblical words to describe how humans communicate with God is the word “cry” or the phrase “cry out.” It’s never an insipid, calm cry, as in “Uh, God, if you’re not too busy and you’re coming by anyway, would you mind giving me a little boost?” The word “cry” or the phrase “cry out” always implies urgency, neediness and even desperation ... So, to begin with, we can draw some conclusions about prayer: (1) Prayer isn’t always neat or pretty – sometimes it’s very messy; (2) Prayer isn’t always quiet – sometimes it’s very loud; (3) Prayer isn’t always calm – sometimes it’s very passionate. Prayer involves coming to God in the mess of life, the confusion of life, the pain and agony of life, and crying out for help. Prayer begins with these words: God, help! God, I (or we) need you! God designed prayer for desperate human beings.

Opening a Conversation:

→ Describe the last time you needed something from someone (i.e. a cup of sugar, a power saw, a hug, advice, forgiveness, a car loan – anything). What did you need? Who did you ask and how did you ask for it? Were you hesitant to ask for what you needed?

→ Generally speaking, is it hard or easy for you to ask for what you need? Why or why not? What makes it hard and what makes it easy for you to ask for what you need?

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read Exodus 3:7-9. How did God respond when his people admitted their need and cried out to him?

2. Read the Bible verses starting on the bottom of page 42. What are the common themes woven through all of these verses?

3. Psalm 22 says, “Trouble is near.” Matt Woodley commented, “Prayer begins and continues with the uncomfortable reality that trouble will hound me until the day I die.” Do you find this realistic or too negative? Why or why not?

4. There are two great barriers to entering into the desperation at the heart of true prayer – pride (I can conquer every problem by myself) and insecurity (I am completely unworthy of your help).

Which one do you struggle with the most?

5. Read Mark 10:46-52. What can you learn about Bartimaeus' desperation and Jesus' response?

6. Reread the description of "desperate community" from the middle of page 50 to the end of page 51. What's the closest you've ever come to experiencing a desperate community? Does this describe our Christian community? If not, what do we need to change?

Loving a Broken World:

→ Who are the desperate people in the world that are crying out for our compassion? What is one thing we can do to welcome and embrace desperate people?

Listening to Our Lives:

→ Spend five minutes in silent prayer.

→ What is one area of your life that feels desperate right now?

→ Pray for each other about these desperate situations.

NOTE: In true sacramental fashion (see Chapter 2), this might be a good time to practice sacramental prayer by laying on of hands. As you pray for these desperate situations, take some time to gather around each group member (or at least the group members who have shared prayer requests, lay hands on that person and pray for him or her).

Small Group Study #3

(Based on Chapter 4: Prayer as Mystery)

Why does God seem to answer some prayers in a quick, tidy and even miraculous fashion; but then other prayers – which are just as sincere, God-honoring, and faith-inspired – seem to hit the ceiling and bounce back? As a pastor and a follower of Jesus I've struggled with the reality of this second scenario. We pray, we cry out, we trust Jesus for great things and reasonable and God-honoring things, we pray boldly and passionately and then zilch, nada, silence. Or maybe things even get worse. Some people pray for healing and a loved one dies. Others pray for God to save a marriage and then the divorce papers come anyway. Many of my friends ask God to remove temptation – the lure of lust or the craving for alcohol or our persistent rage and bitterness – and the enticement to sin grows stronger. Throughout the years I've noticed that most of us don't want to talk about this problem. I seldom hear people attending small groups and telling their friends, "Hey, I have another unanswered prayer I'd like to share." But it seems like everyone has one, two or an entire bag-full of unanswered prayers.

Opening a Conversation:

→ Have you ever had an experience where prayer seemed to work neat and clean and quick? It could be something profound or seemingly "shallow." Write it down in the space below and share it with the rest of the group.

→ In the space below journal privately (and do not share it yet) about the following topic: One unanswered prayer I wonder about is ...

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read Psalm 88. Matt Woodley said, "Psalm 88 is God's dark, painful gift to us." How could this Psalm be a gift to us?
2. Read Jonah 4. What's wrong (or right) about Jonah's approach to prayer? What do you learn about God from the way he responded to Jonah's prayer requests?
3. What did the author mean when he said, "unanswered prayers excavate our hearts?" What could God possibly excavate through the pain of unanswered prayer?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. How was Paul's prayer unanswered and how was his prayer answered? What did Paul learn through his "unanswered" prayer?
5. Reread the story about Bill on the middle of page 66 to the top of page 67. What does the cross teach us about God's heart for us even in the midst of unanswered prayer?

Loving a Broken World:

- Is there anyone you know that seems to be living in the anguish of unanswered prayer? How can we pray for them? Is there anything we can do for them?

Listening to Our Lives:

- Return to your journal entry about your unanswered prayer. What used to hurt or what still hurts the most about this unanswered prayer? Be honest. Don't intellectualize or spiritualize the pain and disappointment.
- Based on this chapter, what comforts or challenges you the most about prayer as a mystery?

Small Group Study #4 (Based on Chapter 5: Prayer as Absence)

By reading his dusty writings, St. John of the Cross mentored me in my prayer life. Initially, John's writings didn't fit my assumptions about prayer. Nor would he fit with many contemporary expressions of the spiritual life. For the most part, we'd rather keep our worship services beating with happy tunes and shining with bright lights. But John taught me that any authentic "spirituality" must grapple with the dark side of life. We do feel far from God sometimes. Surprisingly, John argued that in these times of God's felt absence God may be much closer than we ever imagined. It's often when our life seems to be unraveling that God is putting us back together again. It's often in the deserts of life that God pours his deep satisfaction into our souls. But how does that make sense? How does unraveling suggest reconstructing? How does dryness lead to an infilling?

Opening a Conversation:

- Does prayer generally make you feel more of God's presence or more of God's absence? Does it ever bother you that God doesn't feel closer when you pray?

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read Psalm 42 and 43 and then pray silently for five minutes. Allow the words of Scripture to penetrate your life and sink into the center of your heart.
2. Reflect on Psalm 42 and 43. What feelings, thoughts and words accompany this man's experience of God's felt presence and God's felt absence? (NOTE: Both the absence of God and the presence of God seem to be mingled together in this passage). What is the major theme of his life: God's absence or God's presence?
3. What did John of the Cross and what does the Bible imply by the image of God as a flame?
4. Reread the list of "the telltale faults of beginners" in pages 75-76. Which one can you relate to the most? (Just pick one fault).
5. Reread the section entitled "When God Takes My Milk Away" on pages 79-80. Have you ever (or are you currently) had an experience when God took your milk away? What happened? How did God change you?

Loving a Broken World:

→ Due to chronic pain and suffering, total marginalization or apparent godforsakenness, some people seem to be in an almost unending dark night of the soul. Can you identify in people in your life or in our world who fit this description? How can we pray for them and help them?

Listening to Our Lives:

→ Based on this chapter, describe one of your most painful dark nights of the soul? (Of course this could also be a past or present dark night of the soul).

→ NOTE: If you can't relate to the dark night concept, reflect on the following quote: "Every time we hit a wall at sixty miles per hour, God breaks us down and then remakes us with a little more love in our hearts." Have you ever hit a wall in your spiritual or emotional or relational life? What was that like for you? How did God (or how is God) using that wall to break you down and make you a little more loving towards others?

Small Group Study #5

(Based on Chapter 7: Prayer as a Long, Slow Journey)

Immersing ourselves in the Bible's view of patience will change our prayer life. While impatience strangles the roots of prayer before it sprouts, waiting on God provides the right soil for cultivating prayer. Without patience, everything in our lives becomes a frantic, loud, urgent now: have it now, do it now, get it now, experience fulfillment now, understand it now, get it done now, relieve the pain now. There's no time to wait. There's no time to be sick and recover. There's no time to rebuild broken things. There's no time for the tension of the not-yet. Everything smears into a quest for spiritual, emotional and relational 49 second happy meals. We can't hit the pause button and give God space to work. So we fill in the pause with our ceaseless activity and pushy

demands. But if everything depends on us, if we don't believe that we have a Father who loves us and who has perfect timing for us and our loved ones, then why even pray? It's unnecessary. Instead, we'll live grasping, demanding, impatient lives that resent the party-crasher of waiting.

Opening a Conversation:

Answer one or both of these questions:

- Describe a recent experience when you had to be patient. How did you handle it?
- What are the situations or who are the people that drive you nuts with impatience? How do you display your impatience in those situations or towards those people?

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read all the verses about waiting on the Lord on page 99. What does the Bible mean when it continually instructs us to "wait on the Lord?"
2. Read Psalm 130 and 131. How do these short prayers describe a life of waiting on the Lord?
3. What are the forces of contemporary life that make it difficult for us to wait on the Lord?
4. Matt Woodley called the Biblical story "a long, slow journey that constantly calls for patience." Can you think of specific biblical examples (i.e. people, events, promises from God, etc.) of this long, slow journey?
5. Can you think of a fruitful harvest that God brought into your life because he forced you to wait? What happened? How did you struggle through the waiting season? How did God change you through the process of waiting?
6. Romano Guardini called "patience with oneself ... the foundation of all progress (in the spiritual life)." How well do you practice patience with your own spiritual growth?

Loving a Broken World:

- Who are the "slow people" in our world or in your life that need your patient, prayerful love? How is God asking you to "love slow people?" What can these slow people teach you about prayer and the speed of love?

Listening to Our Lives:

- Read Psalm 130 and spend five minutes in silent prayer.
- What word from Psalm 130 struck you the most? Do you know why?
- In the section entitled "Prayer Means Hitting the Pause Button," Matt Woodley wrote, "Impatience strangles the roots our prayer life. Without patience, everything in our lives becomes a frantic, loud, urgent now. Is impatience strangling your prayer life? If so, how? If not, how are you learning to be more patient as you wait on the Lord?"

Small Group Study #6

(Based on Chapter 8: Prayer as a Dangerous Activity)

Most of us don't think of prayer as a "dangerous" activity. I was raised on wonderful hymns like "Sweet Hour of Prayer" which reminded me that prayer "draws me from a world of care." Prayer is sweet. Prayer vaccinates us against danger. If prayer was a board game, it would be a nice game with clear rules designed by a predictable God who exists to help me get my little game piece safely around the board.

Yes, God is kind and gentle and prayer can be sweet. However, when we pray we also open our lives to the presence of the most powerful Person in the universe. And he's good but he's not tame. God is utterly undomesticated and at times incomprehensible. So when we pray, we lose our tight grip on controlling the spiritual journey. When we open the "God-box" we always get more than we expected - more joy, more love, more danger, more adventure, more suffering and more holiness. And prayer doesn't draw us from a world of care; as we join with Jesus, he calls us (and sometimes drags us) back into a world of care, danger and brokenness.

Opening a Conversation:

→ Just for fun ... when you were growing up, what was your favorite board game?

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read Mark 5:1-20. Read the story out loud first and then spend five minutes silently meditating on the passage. (NOTE: Look at this story through the disciples' perspective. Remember that they are ordinary blue-collar workers who have recently started following Jesus. Read the story through their eyes).
2. What do you notice about Jesus? How did you (as one of the disciples) get more than you bargained for?
3. Why did the townspeople respond so negatively to Jesus' amazing healing? How do we respond negatively to Jesus' power and healing grace? In what ways is it an interruption and a scandal to us? (NOTE: please consider your life not just the lives of "really bad Christians").
4. Read Genesis 12:1-4. "Abraham went." Based on what you know about Abraham, by invoking God's name, how did he start "a wild, unpredictable journey with an undomesticated God?"
5. Has there ever been a time when you asked God for something and instead he gave you what C.S. Lewis called "the full treatment"? (See page 114). What was that like for you? How did God give you more than you bargained for?
6. Regarding the Christian spiritual tradition of negative theology (see page 122- 123), what is about God that could cause you to "find yourself not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing"?

Loving a Broken World:

→ Page 122 mentions some small and hidden ways that “Jesus invites us to go into the world of care by being a blessing to others.” Give one specific example where Jesus has been inviting you to be a blessing to others in a small and hidden way? How is calling you to be a blessing? How have you responded?

Listening to Our Lives:

→ Mark 6:3-5 states that Jesus’ hometown people “took offense at him” (or they were scandalized by him). Then Matt Woodley claimed that there are only two options in our prayer lives: (1) to be scandalized by Jesus; resent his presence and his constant interruptions, insist that Jesus stop sending us to places of brokenness and pain ... or (2) we can invoke his presence and then joyfully adjust our lives according to his interruptions.

→ Where do you find yourself these days - Option 1 or Option 2? When or how do you need to change so you can be more open to Option 2? Can you think of any specific examples of Option 2 living in your life right now?

Small Group Study #7 (Based on Chapter 9: Prayer as Paying Attention)

Opening a Conversation:

→ Reflect on the lifestyle of your parents or grandparents. Do you think it was easier or harder for them to pay attention to spiritual matters? Why or why not?

→ Do we have more or less distractions in our lives today – or do we just use that as an excuse to be inattentive to spiritual matters?

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read Mark 13:5, 34, 35, 37 and 14:11, 34, 37, 38. What’s the common theme? Why do you think this theme is repeated so often right before Jesus died?

2. On page 130, Matt Woodley wrote, “Grace is the single most powerful awakener in our spiritual lives. Fear, guilt, pain, suffering, failure – they all have their place in God’s plan to help us stay alert, but nothing works like grace. Grace is God’s first and best “technique” to wake up our drowsy souls. In other words, when we slip into spiritual inattentiveness, God’s first speech is something like “Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1 – this is the way I remembered this verse). In other words, God says, “Look, behold, remember and wake up when you see and feel and know once again how much I love you!” How did God use his grace to awaken you and get your attention?

3. Read Psalm 119:67. How has God used pain (or how is God using pain) to get your attention?

4. Read Psalm 1:1-3. How does this Psalm describe meditation? (See also the description of meditation on page 135 that begins with “What does love-based meditation look like?” It continues for two para-

graphs).

5. Read Luke 2:19-20. What do you think it meant for Mary to treasure and ponder these things in her heart?

6. What spiritual disciplines help you to pay attention to God?

Loving a Broken World:

→ In our fast-paced, distracted, inattentive culture, who are the people that you often neglect? Think through your typical day or week: who do you fail to notice? How can you give him or her or them the gift of your loving attention?

Listening to Our Lives:

→ Read the following quote from page 136: "Pondering prayer begins with meditation on God's word and God's activity. What is God saying? What are the themes of God's good work in the world? I stay with God's word and pay attention to God's revelation. But as I meditate I also start to ask, 'Where is God's word intersecting with my life?' So as I pay attention to God's word I'm also paying attention to God's good work in my life. I listen with both ears of my heart."

→ Spend 3-5 minutes in silence pondering this question: Where is God's word intersecting with my life? What biblical theme or commandment or promise seems to keep coming to my attention these days?

→ Share your answers (or your questions) with the group.

Small Group Study #8

(Based on Chapter 10: Prayer as Feeling God's Heartbeat)

Throughout the ages Christian thinkers and spiritual guides have offered diverse definitions for contemplative prayer. It is "an intimate sharing between friends ... taking time to frequently be alone with (God) who we know loves us." It's not "so much a way to find God as a way of resting in him ... who loves us." It's like falling in love (with God) on a starlit Syrian night. It's the "knowledge of God that is impregnated with love." It begins when we release our obsession of doing things for God and others so we can say, "I am in God's presence, what a joy, let us be still."

These definitions flow from a key Biblical theme: those who trust in Jesus can draw near to God the Father (see Hebrews 7:18). Through Jesus our Great High Priest, the One who has abolished our sin (see Colossians 2:13-15), we can even cry out with childlike faith, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15) ... This Triune God invites us to come into his presence with childlike trust. There are times in this new relationship when we won't ... argue or groan or take a dangerous journey; we'll just sit with God and listen to the safe, rhythmic beating of his heart ... and feeling God's heart will heal our broken lives.

Opening a Conversation:

→ When you were growing up (i.e. ages 1-18), who did you enjoy just being with? De-

scribe the friendship or the relationship.

→ What was it about this person that enabled you to enjoy being with him or her?

Reflecting on Scripture and Life:

1. Read the definitions of contemplative prayer quoted above. Which one resonates with you the most? What are the common themes running through all the definitions?
2. Read Luke 10:38-42. Describe Mary's focus and Martha's focus. What does a Mary-like, contemplative prayer life look like? What does a Martha-like, noncontemplative prayer life look like?
3. Read Psalm 36:5-8. How does this passage describe the reality of experiencing "the immense love of God for us?" How is this different from just knowing facts about God?
4. Have you ever tried a day-long (or longer) silent prayer retreat? If so, what happened on your first retreat? Did you like it or not? If you haven't tried it, what do you think would happen? Would it drive you nuts or do you think you would enjoy being in the woods (or somewhere else) alone with God for 24 hours?
5. Read the story of the encounter with Clyde on pages 146-147. How is this (or how should this) scenario be reflected in our prayer life?
6. In the discussion of the busyness of our pragmatic culture there's a quote from David Brooks on page 152: "The fabric of our lives (in America) is frenetic." Do you agree or disagree? How do you see this manifested in your life?

Loving a Broken World:

→ Read the following quote on page 151: "Look at Martha: she's productive and efficient, but she also exudes the toxic fruit of her pragmatic lifestyle. After bulging with anxiety, Martha finally pops and then sprays everyone with her frustration and manipulation. Undiluted pragmatism always leads to manipulation because everything - people, trees, rivers, soil, oceans, and even God - becomes an object to manipulate and force into our idea of usefulness. So Martha manipulates others with her harsh and judgmental spirit. She assumes that Jesus doesn't care and that Mary is lazy and unproductive. She manipulates (or attempts to) by demanding that Jesus get with her agenda ("Tell her to help me!"). She manipulates with her compulsivity. Like every other addict in the world, Martha insists that her needs get met right now. Anti-contemplatives never back up and reflect on their lives, how they effect (and sometimes damage) people and creation. The Martha's of the world have one speed: full speed ahead."

→ How does this quote describe your life? What do you need to change in order to love more deeply?

Listening to Our Lives:

→ Spend 5 minutes in silent prayer.

→ Think through your ordinary day or week. Where could you find "crumbs of wasted time" for contemplative prayer?