

# STUDY NOTES

## SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES IN ADVENT

### A SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH

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The following content is based on the message “Advent Hope: Prayer” spoken on 11/20/16 by Chris Townley at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://www.newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

## PRAYER

*Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.*

## THE SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 5:5-13

### WHAT IS PRAYER?

We are going to start with some broad discussion questions. Answer the questions with your own words.

- *What is prayer?*
- *Why do we pray?*
- *What is the purpose of praying?*

The disciples spent their whole lives praying. They knew how to pray. Yet, they still asked Jesus to teach them how. Why would they ask him this? Because they wanted him to teach them. They wanted to be like Jesus. As Christians, we too want to be transformed to be like Jesus. Learning to pray like him is part of what transform us to be like him.

### **Prayer changes things. It changes us.**

We want prayer to be an earthquake, immediately changing the topography of reality. But really it's water over rocks, smoothing **us** out over time.

- *Share a way that God has answered prayer in your life.*

- *Share a way that God has answered prayer by changing your perspective to be more like Christ's.*

## HOW DO WE PRAY?

Jesus didn't tell them, “It's easy. Just pray whatever comes to mind”. Instead, he taught them this pattern of prayer to shape their own prayer habits.

- *Walk through the whole passage as a group, pausing to talk about the elements of prayer that you see. Start with Jesus's teaching in verse 5, and then go line by line of the prayer. \*\*After talking about the passage, if you want to see the points Pastor Chris talked about, the second page of the study guide has an outline.\*\**
- *What is something that the Holy Spirit is convicting you about your own prayer life by using this passage?*

## DO WE ACTUALLY PRAY LIKE THIS?

To learn to pray is train our prayer muscles to stretch in ways that don't come naturally. For instance, to pray for our enemies is a difficult task. When we've been deeply wronged or hurt (or those I love have been wronged or hurt), the prayer that comes naturally are ones for our own vindication. But those prayers do little to shape us into people capable of *loving* our enemies. By praying this 2000 year old prayer our hearts inch toward forgiveness and love, even in spite of ourselves as we ask that we may “forgive those who sin against us.”

- *What are some of the elements of this prayer that transform us to be like Christ?*
- *There are a lot of communal aspect to this prayer. Why do you think it is important to pray together?*
- *Most Christians would say that they'd like to pray more. Share with each other different ways that you've learned to pray.*
- *Pray the Lord's Prayer together. (Choose a translation to pray the same words together.)*

## PRAYER OUTLINE FROM PASTOR CHRIS:

- The teaching before the prayer. (Vss5-8)
  - Prayer is not a spectacle... because it's not about us. (vss 5-6)
  - Your Father knows exactly what you need... you are known! (vss 7-8)
- Vs 9:
  - We are not praying to MY Father. We are a family, praying to OUR Father, unified around the God to whom we are praying.
  - Jesus is inviting us to pray as Jesus-people, His people, a family united in the Kingdom of God.
  - "Our Father" is both a gift and a goal.
- Vs 10:
  - We are the Kingdom bringers that God is using.
  - We are agreeing to participate as healed healers, as His Church.
- Vs 11:
  - What we are praying for is also a feasting on the Word of God. As we follow Jesus' teaching on prayer we find that if we are to pray for our needs up front, like we're often prone to do, we get here too quickly and let greed overrun grace.
  - But let's not look past the prayer for something physical to eat... God wants to provide. And He wants to provide by using His Kingdom bringers, to bring the bread.
  - We cannot see only our needs without also seeing the needs of others.
- Vs 12:
  - Having received God's forgiveness ourselves, we are to practice it amongst ourselves. Not to do so would mean we haven't grasped what is going on.
- Vs 13:
  - Temptation will come. As we pray, temptation is an opportunity to choose our allegiance. Is it to the Kingdom or to the destructiveness of sin?
  - There is a real force of evil to be rescued from.
  - The Satan which means, literally, The Accuser. We participate with the evil one when we live the lie of accusation. Is this not one of the great forces at work within our country, and ultimately our churches, on this very day? We must pray for rescue from the evil one, the accuser, lest we miss our calling as Kingdom people.