

Prayer: The Gate, Study Guide

This guide is intended to enhance the study of prayer for small groups
and classes or individual study

This study guide is for use with the book,
Prayer: The Gate, by Erin Slusher

Blue Note Publishing

ISBN 978-0-9816568-0-9

Seven-Week Study

Week One: Rejoice In Prayer

Week Two: Prayer of Confession

Week Three: Conversational Prayer

Week Four: Prayer of Petition

Week Five: Intercessory Prayer

Week Six: Centering or Contemplative Prayer

Week Seven: Fasting and Prayer

You can get through life with one or two types of prayer. Sometimes having a variety of tools can make any job easier and better.

Prayer is like that also. A little rain falls into each life regardless of your beliefs. Different types of prayer can be used to help us to weather the storms that come. We can emerge stronger on the other side.

The joy of the LORD is my strength!

Gathering Week One of Seven: Rejoice In Prayer

Reference the book, *Prayer: The Gate* pages 12 through 18

Opening Verse: **Deuteronomy 26:11** (New International Version)

¹¹ *And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household."*

Opening Prayer: Most wonderful and Holy God, we gather here together as the body of Christ. We love to be with you and to share this time together. We begin a new study about prayer and we ask that you reveal to us, those things you would have us know. We rejoice in prayer. Open our eyes to the rich and abundant blessings you have placed in our lives. We are grateful for these blessings, and as your people we rejoice. Amen

Things to contemplate and discuss: (you can do any or all of these at time permits)

- Take a moment and think about what you consider to be some of the good things the LORD your God have given to you and your household.
- Does God know you are grateful?
- In the opening verse of Deuteronomy did you notice the words, "you shall"? Those are forceful words. They are not negotiable words. You find them used in the Ten Commandments, and shall is often used in legal contract language. It is expected.
- Read the referenced section from *Prayer: The Gate* aloud.
- Write two specific things about your life right now that you rejoice in.
- When you hear the word rejoice, how intense is that word on the emotional scale in your mind?
- Open up discussion about rejoicing.

Closing Verse: **1 Chronicles 16:10** (New International Version)

¹⁰ *Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.*

Closing Prayer: Leader begins the prayer. Allow each person to have an opportunity to speak for a moment during the closing prayer and say something they find to rejoice in.

Gathering Week Two of Seven: Prayer of Confession

Reference the book, *Prayer: The Gate* pages 28 through 34

Opening Verse: **1 John 1:9** (New International Version)

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Opening Prayer: Holy and gracious God, we find comfort in your presence and the unmerited grace you have shown to us. Yet we have been quick to judge, quick to anger and slow to forgive. Open our eyes to those we need to forgive and release. Let us show grace, love and forgiveness as you also forgive us LORD. Amen

Things to contemplate and discuss:

- When you hear the word confess, what do you think of?
- Is confessing your sins or shortcomings before God for some other religion or only for a serious felony type offense?
- Sometimes we are more concerned with other people's sins than our own. Could that be a reason we think we have nothing to confess before God?
 - **Matthew 7:3** "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"
- Everyone deserves our prayers, love, grace and forgiveness more than our judgment.
- If you spend one morning in prayer each week with the prayer of confession, how might this thought transform you?
- Are there people in your life who have hurt you that you need to forgive? Are there people you have hurt or condemned?
- Read the referenced section from *Prayer: The Gate* aloud.

Closing Verses: **John 3:17**, (American Standard Version)

¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

And Luke 6:37 *Do not judge, and you will not be judged, and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon and you will be pardoned.*

Closing Prayer: Everyone pray the Lord's prayer together to close.

Gathering Week Three of Seven: Conversational Prayer

Reference the book, *Prayer: The Gate* pages 36 through 44

Opening Verse: **1 Samuel 3:10** (New American Standard Version)

¹⁰ The LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Thy servant is listening."

Opening Prayer: Our Father God, we gather here together in a longing to be in your presence. We ask that you reveal to us, those things you would have us know. This day we seek to hear you, and that we each may have a vision from you. We shall hear what you will speak to us, O LORD. Open our eyes that we may see, and our ears that we may hear what you would communicate to us. We are grateful for our time together and for the blessings of this fellowship. Amen

This session will a time of quietness and listening for God.

- Read the referenced section from *Prayer: The Gate* aloud.
- God is spirit and communicates with us in a few different ways:
 - Conscience
 - Thoughts in our minds
 - Dreams and visions
 - Written word, the Bible
 - Through other people and conversations
 - Circumstances
- Allow a few minutes for everyone to quiet his or her minds.
- As each person prays, it is important to let God know you are listening and want to hear from him. Then wait expectantly!
- Open discussion about listening for God at the end of the session.

Closing Verse: **Acts 10:19** (New International Version)

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you."

Closing Prayer: Thank you Father God for sending your Son for our redemption. Thank you for the Holy Spirit that allows us direct communication with you. We enjoyed our time together and the quietness and time to walk with you. We will continue to listen to that still small voice and we know it is you. Guide and direct us. Amen

Gathering Week Four of Seven: Prayer of Petition

Reference the book, *Prayer: The Gate* pages 54 through 63

Opening Verse: **Psalm 20:1-5** (New American Standard Version)

¹ *May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high!*

² *May He send you help from the sanctuary, and support you from Zion!*

³ *May He remember all your meal offerings, and find your burnt offerings acceptable!*

⁴ *May he grant you your heart's desire; and fulfill all your counsel!*

⁵ *We will sing for joy over your victory, and in the name of God we will set up our banners. **May the LORD fulfill all your petitions!***

Opening Prayer: Our Father God, we gather here together in a in a common faith that you are the only God. All blessings come from you. We are grateful for our time together and thankful that you hear our prayers and grant our petitions. Amen

Things to contemplate and discuss:

- Read the referenced section from *Prayer: The Gate* aloud.
- Do you believe God hears your prayers?
- Think of a time God revealed himself to you and answered your prayer.
- What are your thoughts on answered prayer? Share with the group events about time when a prayer was answered, but not in the way you thought it would be.
- How do you incorporate faith with prayer?
- How do you incorporate waiting upon the LORD with prayer?
- What would you petition the LORD for, if you knew you would receive it?

Closing Verse: **Luke 11:9** (American Standard Version)

⁹ *Ask and it shall be given to you*

Closing Prayer: Pray the Lord's prayer together to close.

***Read the Chapter on Intercessory prayer before your time together next week.

Gathering Week Five of Seven: Intercessory Prayer

Reference the book, *Prayer: The Gate* pages 46 through 52

Opening Verse: **Luke 23:34** (New American Standard Version)

³⁴ *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing "And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.*

Opening Prayer: Our gracious heavenly Father, this day we pray on behalf of others who need your strength, wisdom, and loving kindness. Your own Son amazed the world as he prayed for your forgiveness of those who would take his life. Help us to find the words and the way to stand in the gap for those whom we need to intercede for. Hear our prayers, O LORD as we stand on the promises in your word. Be with us, and let us be a blessing. Amen

Things to contemplate and do:

- Read the referenced chapter in *Prayer: The Gate* **before** gathering.
- Remember to not get too involved in the problem, pray the solution. Refer to page 49 in the book if you don't quite know what people need.
- Probably the greatest miracles occur when praying for someone else. Watch for these in the week after this session.
- There is tremendous power in praying with a partner or in a group. Yet some people don't like to pray with a partner or in a group. What holds us back from this? How do we overcome these obstacles?
- Who needs prayers?
- Make a list of broad overall categories: *
 - Government leaders
 - Teachers, students
 - Church staff
 - Medical staff, doctors, emergency response people
 - Prayer requests from your church and people you know.
 - Prayer for the growth of your church

*Note: This is an example list. You will be able to think of more categories.

- Now take the next hour and pray out loud and silently for those in each category. You can go around the group and each take a category, pray a few moments and move on to the next category. People should feel free to add to a category prayer if something pops into your head.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Lord's Prayer together.

***Read the Chapter on Centering prayer before your time together next week.

Gathering Week Six of Seven: Centering/Contemplative Prayer

Reference the book, *Prayer: The Gate* pages 65 through 70

Opening Verse: **1 Thessalonians 5:17** (New American Standard Version)

¹⁷ *pray continually*

Opening Prayer: Our gracious heavenly Father, this day we choose to walk with you. We would simply ask to help us to take this hour of time away from the busy, noisy distractions of life. Let us “be still, and know you are God. Let us each find you and linger in your presence.

The leader will guide people into Contemplative Prayer. This prayer time itself will take 30 to 40 minutes, plus allow time for reflection before leaving the session.

- Read the referenced chapter in *Prayer: The Gate* **before** gathering.
- Participants need to be prepared to turn off their phones and quiet their minds. They will need to let go of the stress and issues of the day for a little while and commit to being part of this prayer time. What this means is, no interruptions for 1 hour. It will diminish the quality of this session for those who want to do it, if people are in and out of the room and not fully engaged in the session. You may want to make arrangements with other groups who might be sharing the building with you at this time.
- Have everyone sit in a comfortable place where they can be comfortable for at least 30 to 40 minutes. Sitting in a chair is best with knees bent, back straight, head up, support for the back, (you can't sit on a stool or something with no back or you might fall over), and hands gently folded in your lap.
- Turn the lights down a bit, but not in total darkness. Maybe you will need to bring a small lamp from someone's home. Consider also lighting a candle.
- Leader read aloud starting with the last paragraph of page 67, all of pages 68, 69 and 70. Then begin by doing the instructions there.
- After 30 – 40 minutes, bring the lights up and allow people to come back to a fully present state.

Closing Verse: **Jude 1:20** *but you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.”*

** Decide if you want to do a fast before the next gathering. If so, read the chapter on fasting in the book before you gather together. Decide on a time to end the fast together. It is ok if some want to do 6 hours and some want to do 24 hours. The important thing is to end together. Pray together before breaking the fast, then go out for and break bread together.

Gathering Week Seven of Seven: Fasting and Prayer

Reference the book, *Prayer: The Gate* pages 73 through 90.

Opening Verse: **Ezra 8:23** (New American Standard Version)

²³ *We fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.*

It may be that not everyone in your group will want to fast. Have grace and patience with each other. Even if you are not doing a fast together, at least learn about the discipline.

- Read the referenced chapter on fasting in *Prayer: The Gate*.
- Fasting is not just about going without eating. It is a spiritual experience. Be sure to experience the spiritual part.
- Fasting is a powerful and underutilized tool in prayer to hear God's voice and to call upon His mighty power. I encourage anyone who is healthy, and has a desire to draw close to God and grow significantly in your spiritual walk to set aside some time to fast and pray.
- Fasting is to be humble before God. It allows you to sit at His feet and to linger in His presence.
- Many cultures and religions practice fasting, why is it some do not?
- What would hold you back from fasting and prayer?
- Would you consider a short fast of perhaps six or seven hours?
- How long could you go on your own without eating?
- How long could you fast and pray?

Closing Verse: **Acts 14:23** (New American Standard Version)

²³ *Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church, and with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

Pray together to end the session. Pray for each other and pray for your church.

Thank you for participating in this study on Prayer. God bless and keep you.