



“Relentless”

Matthew 7 Small Group Plan

Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth but from falling in love.

— Richard Foster

We pray not because we think our prayers earn God’s favor, but as an expression of our trust in a Father who already knows our need and merely waits for us to express our dependence on him.

— Craig S. Keener

Prayer is a matter of explicitly sharing with God my concerns about what he too is concerned about in my life. And of course, he is concerned about my concerns and, in particular, that my concerns should coincide with his.

— Dallas Willard

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- When you think about the topic of prayer, what images or memories come to mind?
- When did you first learn about prayer — who taught you?
- How has your understanding changed — who changed it?
- Why are some reluctant to pray?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— PERSISTENT PRAYER —

Matthew 7:7-8

⁷ Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

- “Ask ... seek ... knock” (v. 7). How would it change your view to know that a literal translation of these present imperatives is — “keep on asking ... keep on seeking ... keep on knocking”?
- When you seek an answer, you must be ready to listen. What does this look like in prayer? Describe the attitude and practice of listening in prayer.

- What is the difference between persistent prayer and selfish prayer?
- Practically, what is required in order for prayer to be regular and persistent?

— CONFIDENT PRAYER —

Matthew 7:9-11

⁹ Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

- How can a person's view of God determine how they ask, seek, and knock?
- If they view God as an indulgent, spoiling father, how will they ask?
- If they see God as a severe, harsh father, how will they ask?
- If they experience God as loving and wise, how will they ask?
- What's the difference between confident prayer and demanding prayer?

— REORIENTING PRAYER —

Matthew 7:12

¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

- Persistent, confident prayer (vs. 7-11) leads to a restructured life (vs. 12).
- If we believe that God will use prayer to reshape our hearts, what does a reshaped heart look like? How does it live, what does it say, how does it respond?
- Drawing upon our previous discussion above (vs. 9-11), how will our view of God determine our treatment of other people?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- What obstacles are most likely to keep you from seeking God in persistent prayer (disappointments, fears, doubts)?
- When have you received a "no" or "not yet" from God, only to discover later why it was the best answer?
- Whether it's our story or someone else's story, how does it help us to trust God while we wait?
- Share with the group something you want to pray for every day this week.
- Where will you apply the golden rule (v. 12) this week?
- Close in thoughtful, confident prayer.