

SUMMER 2022

MASTERWORK[®]

ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FROM GOD'S SERVANTS



Lessons from

PRAY BIG **by Alistair Begg**
THE 4 WILLS OF GOD **by Emerson Eggerichs**
MERE HOPE **by Jason Duesing**

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

A Step of FAITH

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life? The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

F is for Forgiveness

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

A is for Available

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

I is for Impossible

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T is for Turn

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

H is for Heaven

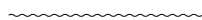
- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

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S U M M E R 2 0 2 2

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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF MASTERWORK

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

1. Read the daily assignments prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the lesson. The main point of the lesson and the goal are printed on the teaching plan pages at the end of each lesson. (See p. 17.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.
3. Read and study the key Bible passages listed in the margin of the teaching plan.
4. Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book. One option is to follow the teaching plan at the end of each lesson. A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the lessons. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.
5. Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at <https://masterwork.lifeway.com> to fit your group.
6. Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
7. Arrive early, praying for the group time.



Pray Big

Learn to Pray Like an Apostle

I want to pray bigger, and better. I want you to, too. Our prayers tell us a great deal about ourselves and our faith. As nineteenth-century Scottish preacher Robert Murray M'Cheyne reputedly, and memorably, put it: *What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more.*

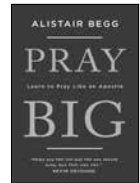
Our conversation with others declares what is on our minds. But our conversation with God in private reveals what is in our hearts. Listen to someone pray—or listen to yourself pray—and you gain a window into the very center of the being—what are our real priorities and what are our real beliefs. And so do our prayers—whether we pray, for whom we pray, and what we pray.

So how about you? How big are your prayers? Do you ask God for anything? And when you do, are you asking Him for big things?

So many of us struggle with prayer. Many books have been written on the subject—and the reason for that is that prayer doesn't come easy to most of us, in most seasons. And when we do pray, our prayers often seek to do a deal with God; or they are tentative in their requests because we're not sure God will come through; or they are, frankly, so self-centered that they bring little pleasure to the Creator and Savior of the world, as He listens to us present our shopping list of worldly requests to Him.

I want to pray bigger, and better. I want you to enjoy praying like that too. And to do that, we need to discover how to pray as Paul did, which means we need to learn to believe what Paul did. We need to know who we're speaking to, and we need to know what to say to Him.

Paul prayed big prayers because he believed great things. Let's learn from him how we might do the same.



ABOUT THE WRITERS

A L I S T A I R
B E G G wrote *Pray Big*. The Scottish-born pastor and author serves as Senior Pastor of Parkside Church in Cleveland, Ohio, a position he has held for nearly forty years. He heads Truth for Life ministry, a daily radio program. In addition, Begg has authored numerous other books, including *The Hand of God* and *Brave by Faith*.

M A R G A R E T
C O L S O N wrote the activities, discussion questions, and teaching plans for this study. Margaret, a frequent contributor to Lifeway resources, is a graduate of University of Georgia (BA) and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (MDiv, DMin). Her DMin studies focused on crisis communications for churches and Christian leaders.

Prayer Basics



DAY ONE

Prayer Is Dependent, Part 1

To pray is an admission and an expression of dependence. A self-assured person has no need to pray if you think you've got it all covered. But the person who knows the depth of their need of forgiveness and help from God does what Paul does. They bow their knees (Eph. 3:14). Paul achieved great things. But Paul never thought he did any of it alone. He knew he had a privileged task:

I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace . . .
to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and
to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery
hidden for ages in God, who created all things (3:7,8-9).

And he knew that, without God's help, it would be an impossible task. So he prayed. He was aware that "unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1). This undergirds all of Paul's thinking. One plants the seed and another waters, but only God can make it grow (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

The Pattern of the Master

Paul was following the pattern of the Lord Jesus. As we read the Gospels, we discover Jesus praying to the Father all the time. Jesus's approach to life rested on dependent prayer. The night before His death, Jesus teaches His disciples in some of His most famous and moving words (John 14:1;

15:1,9,13,18,26; 16:33). Then comes the first verse of chapter 17. Jesus prayed, in effect, *Father, I'm praying now that the things I have instructed my friends about, and that they have come to understand as a result of my teaching, may actually be their experience as they go out into the world.*

1. Read John 14:1; 15:1,9,13,18,26; 16:33. Identify at least one biblical truth or promise Jesus taught in each Scripture.

14:1 _____

15:1 _____

15:9 _____

15:13 _____

15:18 _____

15:26 _____

16:33 _____

2. Read John 17:1. How does your daily life demonstrate your understanding of Jesus's teachings?

I find this a tremendous truth and a rather uncomfortable challenge. My prayers—whether I pray, how much I pray, about what I pray—reveal my priorities. And they reveal how much I really think I need God, or whether I am, deep down, in fact self-assured and self-righteous. If Paul, “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (Eph. 1:1), knew he needed to “bow my knees before the Father” (3:14), what of us? If Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher in the world, followed up His instruction by prayer, what of us? If Jesus Christ, who was set on a mission that changed all of eternity, took time to pray, what of us? If Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knew He needed to pray, what of us?

3 If our prayers reveal our priorities, as the author states, what do your prayers reveal about your priorities?

Heart and Knees

So Paul writes this immense letter to the Ephesians, speaking of the glories and wonders of God, and we look in on his bedroom (or rather, his prison), and where do we find him? On his knees, declaring his own helplessness.

Even his posture is dependent. I think that's why he mentions it: "For this reason I bow my knees." Jewish men, by and large, prayed standing. Paul knelt, as an acknowledgment of who he was, and who the Father he was speaking to is. We come confidently, but we do not come complacently. We come to a loving Father, but we do not come as His equal.

One day, at the name of Jesus every knee will bow as every tongue confesses He truly is Lord, bringing glory to the Father (Phil. 2:10-11). As we look in upon Paul in his prison in Rome, he is getting a head start as he bows his knees. His posture is an expression both of the wonder and awe he feels before God and of his earnestness in seeking God. Paul's decision to pray is driven by his awareness of his dependence, and his posture emphasizes this awareness.

When you and I pray, that's really what we're saying. I'm not saying we must kneel. The posture of our hearts, not our bodies, is the issue. Are we coming to God in dependence? Asking Him to bless our work, empower our service, change our flaws, forgive our sins? What matters is a dependent heart, not a particular posture. Real prayer is a prayer of a dependent person to a divine Person.

Discussion Questions

What do Ephesians 3:14 and Philippians 2:10-11. teach about the appropriate posture of humans to God? What does this mean?



DAY TWO

Prayer Is Dependent, Part 2

He Can Fix It (You Can't)

There is such a thing as unchristian prayer. Looking within to find spiritual reality is not the same as praying to God. Self-help mantras are not the same as praying to the One who is our Helper. Equally, praying in some vague hope that the God who is up there, removed and distant, might care to hear and may just bother to act, is not the same as praying to a Father who we know loves us as He loves His Son.

Sometime last year the Church of Scientology sent me a very nice magazine. Apparently, they're trying to recruit me, though they will be disappointed with the results. As I looked at the magazine and went to the back to see the aims of Scientology, I realized their view could be summed up

Discussion Question

Do you agree or disagree with the author's statement, "There is such a thing as unchristian prayer"? Explain.

in four words: *We can fix this*. Through our technology, through doing it our way, through our various stages of the “dianetic” discovery, you can be okay, they claim.

This is modern religion, and it comes in many guises (including a quasi-Christian one), but the view can always be summed up: *We can fix this*. If you’ve got a problem, it’s not your fault. If you’re looking for an answer, look inside of you because you’ll be able to fix it, or look to follow our rules or techniques because they’ll be able to fix it. This view says, “Look into yourself, because you’ll be able to find divinity in there if you search hard enough, and you’ll sort yourself out if you find the right path and follow it well enough.”

1. Where do you most readily observe this idea in action?

The Christian gospel says, “If you look into yourself, you will ultimately find only that which disappoints and confronts you with your own ineptitude and inability to fix even the simplest of the things that really matter. The problem is inside of you. It’s your fault. So the answer must come from outside of you and not rely upon you—so it is the most wonderful news that Jesus has come in order to fix your problem. He came to bring down the barrier between you and God, and restore you to the relationship you were made for, enjoying God as your loving Father.” It’s the complete opposite.

This is why Christian prayer is uniquely dependent and humble; it’s also reflective of the cry of every human heart. Even those who wouldn’t name Jesus as their Lord and Savior, when they pause and are honest, acknowledge something is broken and they need help. The more we realize our need, the more we will pray as Paul did, “I bow my knees before the Father.” It’s the heart attitude of dependence that counts. But personally, I find it helpful to cause my body’s posture to follow my heart posture. At our church, we kneel as elders as we pray in the prayer room before the services. We could sit, stand, do whatever we want, and our Father is not going to refuse us access to His heavenly throne room simply because our knees are not touching the floor. But we choose to kneel. It’s an expression of our dependence upon God.

We will not pray big prayers if we do not pray at all. And if we are self-assured or self-righteous, our prayers at best will be irregular, impersonal,

functional, and prosaic. But Jesus was neither, nor was Paul. Prayer reminds us who we are, and who our Father is. Prayer expresses and reinforces our dependence.

2. What do your prayers reveal about who you are and who God is?

I am _____

God is _____

For this reason, God's children bow their knee, in their hearts if not with their bodies, and they pray.



DAY THREE

Prayer Is Spiritual (But Not Impractical), Part 1

When I read Paul's prayers, I am always struck by the fact many of the matters that are the focus of my prayers are absent in his. Read his prayers, and what is striking is the absence of material issues. This absence is especially striking when we consider that Paul was in prison in Rome. But he doesn't pray that he might be released. That would be legitimate—he's the one who wrote Philippians 4:6 regarding worrying about nothing but praying about everything. Paul wrote and believed that, and so must we. But we also need to acknowledge with Paul that these concerns are not the ultimate concerns. All that matters may be brought before God, but what we bring before God is not always what matters most.

Something Bigger Than Health

The believers in Ephesus had concerns for food, clothes, and shelter. They would have thought about, talked about, and worried about being married or getting married; being parents or wishing they were parents, or wishing some days they weren't parents; employment, paying taxes, wealth, health; but there's no mention of these matters in what Paul prays for them.

In fact, praying about health (likely number one among Western Christians) is rare—almost non-existent—in the Bible. Why are we praying about it so much? It's because we don't want to die. We've got a sneaking suspicion that what we've got now, this side of death, is actually better than what God has for us then, on the other side of death.

Discussion Question

Why do you think physical healing is so often the focus of our prayers?

1. Think about your prayers when you or a loved one have faced a life-threatening situation. Did your prayers change or evolve through the experience? What did you learn from that experience?

So we want to hang on to what we've got. Instead, we need to believe—really believe—these things are true:

God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7).

2. Read Ephesians 2:4-7 above. Unscramble the words below and list what God has done through the richness of His mercy.

1. odvel _____ us
2. edam _____ us laive _____
3. saider _____ us up
4. teased _____ us

Why did God do these things for you?

You have been raised with Christ into the heavenly places, been made part of a family that will never come to an end. One day, you will live in a new heaven and a new earth, see your God face to face and, with a heart no longer burdened and distracted by sin and a body no longer broken and decaying in frailty, you will praise Him. And you and I just want to pray

Discussion Question

In approaching God in prayer, how can Christians determine and stay focused on “what matters most”?

we’d stay healthy and live long?! All that matters may be brought before God, but what we bring before God is not always what matters most.

When our hearts are opened to our future, it changes our lives now—it reorders our priorities and our prayers. We pray less about the practical details of this life, and first and foremost about the spiritual realities of our eternal life. Eternal matters matter more; the concerns of today less: “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

But, time-bound and fallen creature that I naturally am, I often forget the spiritual and eternal element of reality. That’s why the things that fill my prayers are so regularly absent from Paul’s—and why the things that fill his prayers are so regularly absent from mine. He has his eyes fixed on eternity. His prayers are spiritual. We need to make ours so, too.



DAY FOUR

Prayer Is Spiritual (But Not Impractical), Part 2

No More “Be With”

To do that, I want to erase the two words that shut most of our prayers down: “Be with . . .” If you were to record my prayers, I have a sad suspicion you’d hear a lot of “be with”: “Dear Lord, *be with* Tom as he goes to work, and *be with* Mary also, who’s having her wisdom teeth removed on Tuesday, and *be with* . . . and *be with* . . . and *be with* us all. Amen.”

This is unimaginative. It’s limited. It’s certainly not spiritually ambitious, like Paul. And it is unnecessary. Jesus said, “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). He’s promised to be with Tom and Mary. It’s a waste to make the sum total of my prayer for them the request that Jesus would do what He already said He’d do, and has already started doing.

Search the Scriptures; you won’t find a prayer recorded that just asks God to “be with” His people. The prayers of the saints have far more weighty, far more spiritual concerns. In my experience, those of us who are parents are particularly at risk of this when it comes to our children. Here’s one way

Discussion Question

Based on Matthew 28:20, do you agree that the common prayer phrase, “be with,” is “unimaginative,” “limited” and “not spiritually ambitious”? Explain. How might believers replace that phrase with an acknowledgment of Jesus’s promise of His eternal presence?

to diagnose whether your prayers are over-practical and under-spiritual. What do you pray for your kids? Would your prayers reveal you understand their spiritual condition matters more than their financial or relational or vocational well-being? Would your prayers reflect the truth their position in Christ matters infinitely more than their position in school, college, the office, or society? All that matters may be brought before God, but we must always bring before God those things that matter most.

The Hub

Don't take my word for this. Take Jesus's word. In that famous passage in Matthew 6, Jesus talks about legitimate practical concerns—food, clothes, lives. He doesn't rebuke them for caring about those things. But He does say, *Let's think about this. Have you ever seen birds putting up a factory to make stuff? Why not? Because our Father feeds them. Have you ever seen the flowers heading down to the mall to make sure they have the right kit? Why not? Because no matter what clothes we manage to get, we'll never match the amazing natural beauty of God's creative handiwork. So, let Me tell you what to do: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness . . ." (v. 33) [That's prioritizing spiritual things.] " . . . and all these things will be added to you."*

In other words, to paraphrase Jesus, He says, *If you take care of My things, I'll take care of your things.*

Discussion Question

How can Christians guard against prayers being "over-practical and under-spiritual"?

1. Paraphrase Matthew 6:33 in your own words.

How has the truth of Jesus's words been proven true in your life?

The hub—the center of our lives and our actions—is always spiritual. Think about a bicycle wheel—the hub is the key to all the spokes. If that hub is weak or ill-fitting, so that the spokes are buckling, loose, or unattached, then the spokes will be ineffective and insufficient in enabling the wheel to take you in the direction you need to go. The hub is crucial.

When it comes to each of us, our hub is spiritual. Paul bows his knees before the Father and prays in this way because he wants to show the Ephesians this is what really matters. Spiritual matters are what the focus of our prayers—not the entirety, but the focus—must be.

2. What percentage of your praying would you say focuses of spiritual matters? _____%

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the amount your prayers focus on spiritual matters? Express your gratitude and/or repentance to God.



DAY FIVE

Prayer Is Spiritual (But Not Impractical), Part 3

Spiritual Change Is Practically Seen

When the spiritual hub of my life is solid, the practical spokes will be strong. We tend to live and pray as if what we most need is help with this practical issue or that specific life problem. We all have particular situations we need divine help with and divine transformation in. But it's as we grow in our appreciation of the gospel that our lives will change to reflect that gospel.

The Ephesian Christians had experienced that. Ephesus was a prosperous city, and prominent on account of being the site of the great temple of Artemis or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. That temple both drove pagan, magical worship and underpinned the local economy. In that setting Paul turned up and proclaimed the lordship of Jesus. Day after day, month after month, he “spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God . . . so that all the residents of Asia [modern-day Turkey] heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:8,10).

Discussion Question

In what ways is prayer both spiritual and practical?

Ephesus was a spiritual battleground. New believers were leaving a life dominated by the occult and the power of spiritual forces (vv. 11-17). That spiritual transformation led to practical change:

Many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily (vv. 18-20).

1. If you were to make a “virtual bonfire” to get rid of some things that distract you from complete devotion to God, what would you toss on the fire? Why?

In prayer, give those distractions to God now.

It must have been a quite magnificent bonfire as these Christians burned their books of magic in a public forum. Don't miss the value—fifty thousand pieces of silver. That is a substantial sum. Imagine the conversations:

“Why are these people burning all their books?”

“They’ve started to believe Jesus of Nazareth is alive beyond His death, forgives sins, and is all-powerful over every sphere.”

“That’s crazy. What idiots, to burn their books. They might at least have sold them.”

The point is this: your hub—your spiritual belief system and view of God—drives your practical actions. When Paul wrote Ephesians, he didn't say, *You need someone to sort out the political and civic structures of your city. You need to get some laws on the books that ban the riots and the occult worship your city has been oppressed by.* No—Paul says to them, and us, that what we really need to know is the truth of the gospel. What we really need to know, or rather, who we really need to know, is Jesus—to know with assurance all

that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to know what is true of us now and what will be true of us on the day when all things are wrapped up. Paul says, *I'm praying for that. You'll stand firm if you know truth.*

We're the same. What you and I need more than anything else is to be experientially aware of the truth and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ—"the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:19). Too often, our Jesus is too weak. We've got a view of Jesus that somehow puts Him fighting for a place in the pantheon of gods—fighting for His position in the great story of spiritual history. We need to understand that Jesus wears a crown that infinitely outshines and eternally outlasts any and every other power—that He is the Lord. If we know this Jesus, we will each have a firm hub in the center of our lives, and we will each pray.

Those Things that Matter Most

So, when you start to pray, what concern fills your vision? Facing a huge issue in your job? Need to know how to fix your marriage? Worried about something one of your kids is into? Facing serious health problems? You need God's help with that, so what you most need to know is the gospel.

We will see as we continue to enjoy Paul's prayers for the Ephesians how gospel truth makes a difference, in prayer and practicalities. But first, we need to start to pray spiritually—then, as we move on to our practical concerns, we need to let the way we pray about them flow from the spiritual truths we've prayed about. Let's not allow the focus of Paul's prayers to be absent from ours. All that matters may be brought before God, but we must always bring before God those things that matter most.

2. If you do not already keep a prayer journal, begin to keep one now. Simply list the day and your prayer for that day; later, go back and record answers to those prayers. Use the space below to get started until you can obtain a journal. If you already keep a prayer journal, continue in your discipline of recording prayer requests and answers to prayer. Over the course of this study, focus in your prayer journal specifically on "things that matter the most."

LEADER GUIDE



Before the Session

Write Ephesians 3:14 on a large writing surface or individual note cards so participants can read the Scripture in unison. (Step 2)

During the Session

1. Ask participants to share one-word adjectives to describe their prayer lives. State that although prayer is vital and biblical, many believers struggle with prayer. (If appropriate, admit your own struggles.) Our prayers might seem mechanical, self-serving, infrequent, impersonal or (read back words participants just shared). State that the next four sessions will focus on praying big, with a specific look at how the apostle Paul prayed. Say: *If we take the author's insights to heart, our prayer lives might be transformed from mechanical to natural, from self-serving to God-focused, from infrequent to continual, from impersonal to personal or* (read back antonyms to the words shared earlier).
2. State that as children reach their teen years, they long for independence from their parents. Explain that such an independent streak is often seen in our spiritual lives. However, the apostle Paul taught by example that prayer should reflect dependence on God, rather than independence. Such humble dependence is seen in Ephesians 3:14. Guide participants to read the Scripture in unison. Briefly discuss why it is important to come before God in prayer with a humble and dependent heart, evidenced through the bowing of the knees. Ask: *Why or why not is the posture of the physical body a prerequisite to a Christian prayer?* Stress: *As we come before God with a humble and dependent heart, our prayers, the author states, reveal our priorities.* Challenge participants to discuss what their prayers reveal about their priorities (Day One, activity 3, p. 7).
3. Write this equation on the board, *God > humans*, and ask participants what it means (God is greater than humans). State that the author explains, "Prayer reminds us who we are, and who our Father is" (p. 10). Organize participants into small groups and challenge them to

The main point of this

lesson is: The believer's prayer should reflect one's dependency on God and priority on spiritual matters.

Focus on this goal: To help adults assess their prayer patterns for the degree to which they pray about spiritual matters rather than physical ones

Key Bible Passage:

Ephesians 2:4-7; 3:7-9,14

To the Leader:

This session stresses that we should make eternal matters the primary focus of our praying rather than physical matters. Exercise sensitivity to those in your group who are dealing or have recently dealt with significant physical issues, either personally or with someone they love. Though our prayers should focus on spiritual matters, they are not to exclude physical needs.

talk about what their prayers reveal about themselves and about God (Day Two, activity 2, p. 10).

4. On the board, form two columns, titled *What Matters* and *What Matters Most*. Invite learners to the board to add words under each column. Briefly discuss why practical matters, rather than spiritual matters, often dominate our prayers. Encourage learners to share from personal experiences if their prayers have ever changed from the practical to the spiritual during a difficult experience (Day Three, activity 1, p. 11). Call on a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:4-7 (p. 11 or a Bible). Draw attention to all that God has done for us. State that these verses inspire us to focus, not on the present, but on the eternity God has for His followers. Lead learners to brainstorm practical tips to keep prayers focused on spiritual matters.
5. Challenge learners to find or recall prayers in the Bible that ask God to *be with* His people. After a brief time, call on learners to report. State that nowhere in Scripture is God asked to *be with* His people. Call on a volunteer to read Matthew 28:20. State that God has already promised His eternal presence to believers, so it is redundant to ask Him to be with us. Ask: *Why do we pray be with so often?* Call on a volunteer to read Matthew 6:25-33. Ask: *What do these words of Jesus have to do with the spiritual aspect of prayer?* Ask learners to share how the truth of Matthew 6:33 has been displayed in their lives (Day Four, activity 1, p. 13).
6. State that spiritual transformation can lead to practical change. Explain how the Ephesian believers made a huge practical change in the flames of a bonfire (Acts 19:18-20). Invite participants to share how their spiritual transformation has led to practical change. Ask rhetorically what things in participants' lives need to be thrown on the bonfire because they distract from their spiritual commitment (Day Five, activity 1, p. 15).
7. Read the final quote from Day Five (p. 16): "All that matters may be brought before God, but we must always bring before God those things that matter most." Allow participants a few minutes to pray silently, then lead in a group prayer that all participants can begin to grasp how to focus their prayers on things that matter most.

After the Session

Pray that the individuals in your class will begin to focus their prayers as the apostle Paul focused his prayers—on things that matter most. Ensure your prayers maintain this focus as well.