

A Time of Preparation for the Prayer Vigil

THE SEVEN MISSION RESPONSES

Leader's Notes: The leader gathers and facilitates the prayer group. Make certain that participants are in a comfortable setting. If you are using the sanctuary, invite them to sit as a group. Instruct them to take breaks as necessary, leaving and entering the prayer space in silence.

A Time of Preparation (one hour)

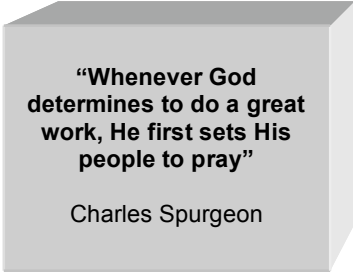
Personal Prayer: Please begin with ten minutes of silence to meditate on God's Word, asking God to make us sensitive and alert to His presence.

Ablaze is...

Knowing that *"The LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."* Deuteronomy 20:4 (NIV)

Praying for the salvation of all people *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."* John 17:20 (NIV)

Recognizing that God has *"raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."* Exodus 9:16 (NIV)



"Whenever God determines to do a great work, He first sets His people to pray"

Charles Spurgeon

Invocation: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Have someone read aloud Luke 11:1-13.

Imagine this scene: You are told that you were going to have the opportunity to talk with Jesus Christ for fifteen minutes today and you could make one request of Him, what would your request be? (Encourage participants to reflect on this question.)

The disciples had this opportunity. In Luke 11 we learn that they went to Jesus one day with the request, *"Lord, teach us to pray."*

It's interesting that the disciples watched Jesus preach the greatest sermons ever, they watched Him do miracles, heal the sick, and raise the dead but never once did they say, "Lord, teach us to preach" or "Lord, teach us to do miracles" or "Lord, teach us to raise the dead". Instead they said, *"Teach us how to pray."* They saw that prayer was His life support system. There is nothing more vital to the Christian life than prayer.

You can't communicate with somebody unless you have relationship with them. What is your relationship to God? (Stop to reflect.)

In John 15:15 Jesus says this, *"I no longer call you servants because a servant doesn't know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends. For everything I've learned from My Father, I've made known unto you. You didn't choose Me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name."* He says the reason you can ask anything in prayer is because we are His friends. Isn't that amazing? We do not deserve to be treated as his friends, but through grace and the eternal love that was given for us on Calvary, He calls us and chooses us to be His friend.

Prayer is an act of dedication. It is the way we express our dependence upon God. Prayer is an act of communication. It is the way we communicate with God. It is our life communication, the umbilical cord of the Christian life from which we draw our strength.

When we read the New Testament and read about the New Testament Christians, they were unbelievable. They were happy, joyful, contagious, and enthusiastic about life. They had power in their lives. They saw miracles happening on a regular basis. You ask a typical New Testament Christian, "How's it going?" and he'd say, "Business as usual. One miracle after another!" We say, "Why don't I have that kind of power?" It is because we do not ask.

James 4:3 says, "You have not because you ask not." Over twenty times in the New Testament the Bible says, "Ask." Ask, seek, knock, and keep on asking. Six times in John 15, Jesus says, *"If you will ask, I will answer... If you will ask, I will do ..."* He says, "Your part is the asking, My part is the doing." Our part in cooperating with God's plan in the world is prayer. We can pray. The most important thing you can do in our Christian life is pray.

(Spend 5 minutes reflecting on these thoughts. Spend 10 minutes sharing with one another.)

Personal Prayer

Have each individual in the group take 15-20 minutes to reflect personally on the following: What are some of the obstacles you face in having a consistent and effective prayer life?

As a friend of God pray and ask God to touch your heart with one or more statements or Scriptures that He wants you to understand, learn, or practice. Write down your thoughts in a prayer.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, just like the disciples, we come before You and ask that You teach us how to pray. We pray for the miracle of changed hearts in the lives of the unchurched, unreached, and our own lives. We want to see impossible situations made possible through prayer. Right now we ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to set our hearts on fire for the Great Commission. And we ask for courage to go forth and share the message of salvation with all whom we meet. Lord God, we give all praise and thanks for what is already happening in the outreach efforts of your congregations and we look with joy for that time when we will celebrate with all the faithful, all whose hearts have been set *ABLAZE!* by the power of the Gospel. In Your most holy name we are bold to pray. Amen.