

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

## RUNNING THE RACE

### STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, September 21, 2025

**Teaching Title:** Honest Prayer

**Key Scripture:** 1 Samuel 1:1–20

CEDAR VALLEY

#### 5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

**Monday:** Matthew 6:5–13

**Tuesday:** 1 Samuel 1:9–20

**Wednesday:** 1 Kings 19:1–18

**Thursday:** Psalm 51

**Friday:** Luke 22:39–46

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

#### MEMORY TOPIC:

Prayer

**MEMORY VERSE:** Jeremiah 29:12–13 NIV

Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.

#### LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

##### Introduction:

Prayer is the key pathway to a relationship with God. As Martin Luther once said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." Yet too often, prayer can feel intimidating, boring, or even pointless. But Scripture reveals that prayer is a raw, honest, gut-level connection with God. He listens, heals, restores, and strengthens His people when they pray. Prayer isn't about fancy words or performance; it's about bringing an honest heart before God. Scripture gives us powerful examples: Hannah's raw anguish, David's gut-level repentance, Elijah's weary desperation, and Jesus' own anguish in Gethsemane. These show us that we can bring our real, unfiltered emotions to God—we can come to Him just as we are. God responds by bringing healing, courage, strength, restoration, and a deeper dependence on Him. Prayer doesn't just change our circumstances, it changes us.

##### Questions:

Ice Breaker: What is your personal experience with prayer? What are your greatest difficulties when it comes to praying?

We'll be looking at four stories from Scripture to learn more about prayer: 1 Samuel 1:1–20, Psalm 51, 1 Kings 19:1–18, and Luke 22:39–46. If you have time, read each passage aloud before discussing the questions. If not, summarize the story for your group.

1. Looking at Hannah's story (1 Samuel 1:1–20), what does her raw honesty teach us about how we can approach God in prayer?

2. In Psalm 51, David prayed out of deep guilt and shame. Why do you think it's sometimes hardest to pray when we've messed up? What can his prayer teach us about finding forgiveness and healing?
3. Elijah prayed in exhaustion and despair (1 Kings 19:1–18). Have you ever prayed from a place of burnout or depression? How does God's gentle whisper encourage you?
4. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39–46), asking for the cup of suffering to pass—but ultimately surrendered to God's will. What does this reveal about the role of prayer when we face hard or unchanging circumstances?
5. How have you seen prayer change you or your perspective? Share an example.
6. What would it look like for you to bring your honest self before God this week?

## NOTES

Prayer Workshop | Sunday, September 21

Most of us would say that prayer is important. But if we're honest, many of us struggle to actually pray. We get busy, distracted, or feel like we don't have the right words. The truth is, many of us end up living prayerless lives—even though deep down, we long to connect with God.

That's why on **Sunday, September 21, in the theater from 6–8 p.m.**, we're hosting a special workshop called **Unlocking the Practice of Prayer**. Together, we'll break down some common myths about prayer, learn simple ways to make it part of daily life, spend time in worship, and—most importantly—actually practice praying.

If you've ever felt like prayer is hard, complicated, or out of reach, this evening is for you. Come discover how prayer can become natural, life-giving, and woven into your everyday life.

If you're unable to attend, we're recording it! Just send an email to Pastor Hillary and she'll send you the link: [hillaryl@cvchurch.org](mailto:hillaryl@cvchurch.org).

## DIGGING DEEPER

Here are some helpful practices to strengthen your prayer life—

1. Make a list of positive and negative ideas you have about prayer. Note a few concrete ways the psalms might reshape your thinking and beliefs about prayer.
2. Read Psalm 32 or 51. Read it several times. Meditate on it. Pray through it. Consider memorizing a portion of it to carry in your heart as a way to maintain a lively conversation with God throughout the day.
3. Start a journal in which you share your thoughts and feelings with God in a fully honest manner. You may wish to keep this journal to yourself or to discuss it regularly with a trusted, mature, and candid friend. Or you may simply wish to go for a walk and talk honestly to God, instead of writing it down.
4. Make a list of the emotions expressed in the psalm. Then note the ones you personally identify with. In conversation with a friend or a small group, share your thoughts and feelings about the emotions you don't experience in prayer.
5. Adopt a regular practice of confession of sin. This could be done with a pastor or a spiritual director, or it could be done with a friend.

—Taken from *Open and Unafraid: The Psalms as a Guide to Life* by David O. Taylor