

40
DAYS OF
PURPOSE

UNDERSTANDING
THE ROLE OF PRAYER
IN THE CAMPAIGN

A STUDY FOR INDIVIDUALS OR SMALL GROUPS



INCLUDES

"PRAYER: A FIRST RESPONSE. NOT A LAST RESORT" LESSON

P.U.R.P.O.S.E. PRAYER GUIDE

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEEPENING YOUR PRAYER LIFE

RECOMMENDED READING LIST ON PRAYER



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Understanding the role of prayer in the campaign

A Study for Individuals or Small Groups

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"Prayer: A First Response, Not A Last Resort" Lesson	1-4
P.U.R.P.O.S.E. Prayer Guide	5-12
Suggestions for Deepening Your Prayer Life.....	13
Recommended Reading List On Prayer	14-15

This optional study about prayer will help you understand the importance of saturating the entire 40 Days of Purpose Campaign with prayer. It includes an actual 30-minute time of guided praying for specific segments of the Campaign.

Although this study is written in a Small Group format, please feel free to use it as a personal devotion or share it with a prayer partner.

"Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power. All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer."

R. A. Torrey

PRAYER: A FIRST RESPONSE, NOT A LAST RESORT

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

Leader's Note: Ask a few people in the group to volunteer to answer either of the following questions:

- When or how did God specifically answer a prayer of yours?
- When did someone intercede with prayer for you in a time of difficulty or crisis?

PART I: A STORY ABOUT UNBELIEF

Leader's Note: Ask someone in your group to volunteer to read aloud the following introductory story and question, based on Mark 9:14-24 (NIV).

Imagine this scene: One day Jesus is walking down the road, and he sees a crowd gathered. As he gets closer, he discovers that his disciples are engaged in a debate with the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus asks what they have been arguing about.

Out of the crowd steps a man who is ready to answer Jesus' question. He states that his son is troubled and possessed by an evil spirit. He also says that he brought his son to the disciples, but they were unable to cast out the evil spirit.

Jesus asks the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

The man answers, "From childhood. It [the spirit] has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can"? Jesus echos. There is no question in our minds whether Jesus is really

able to deliver the boy. Rather, the question is whether the father has enough faith to trust God for a miracle. Jesus then says, "Everything is possible for him who believes."

The father immediately replies, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief."

The father captures in this one statement the war that rages inside many of us. We want to believe, and without hesitation, we acknowledge that God can do anything. Yet, we also know that our faith is weak and small. We really want to trust God, and we often pray words of faith, but our heart betrays our doubt and lack of faith. But how do we gain more faith?

WE PRAY! Like the father in this story, we ask for more faith to trust God for a miracle.

Del Fehsenfeld says,

"Few subjects evoke a greater sense of guilt in the hearts of believers than when we begin to talk about prayer. We know that we ought to pray; we know that we need to pray; and yet, the vast majority of us know that we don't pray."

This lesson is not intended to heap guilt upon you. Rather, it is intended to encourage and challenge you to grow in faith, embracing prayer and its possibilities.

- What are some of the obstacles you face in having a consistent and effective prayer life?

PART II: WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES US ABOUT PRAYER

Leader's Note: Ask someone in your group to volunteer to read this section aloud, pausing to let the group answer the discussion questions.

"[2] Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. [3] And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. [4] Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. [5] Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity." Col. 4:2-5 (NIV)

Paul first encourages us to be consistent in prayer. When he says "devote yourself to prayer," the word *devote* means "to persist at." It means "to remain at something" or "to cling to something" or "to continually be available for something." It was used in reference to boats that were continually available for service.

- What would it look like if you really devoted yourself to prayer on a daily basis? Share some practical possibilities.
- What does it mean to be "watchful" in prayer?

As we read Scripture, we discover a very crucial reason for devoting ourselves to prayer: Christians have an unspeakable privilege of having immediate and welcome access to God and His power to change things!

In Hebrews 4:14-16, the writer says that because we have so great a high priest, which is Jesus, let us, therefore, approach the throne of grace with boldness that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Regarding prayer, how and why and when should we approach Christ, our great high priest?
- What do you think it means to approach God with "boldness"?

As we approach God's throne with boldness, we now "tap into" His unlimited power and resources. The result is that God responds. Our prayers matter.

Walter Wink, a New Testament theologian, says: "Human history belongs to the intercessors, to those who believe and pray the future into being."

That statement is also reflective of Paul's belief in Colossians 4:3. Paul says, "And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message..." Paul believed that the intercession and prayers of these believers would open doors for the message of Christ.

PART III: YOUR COMMITMENT TO PRAY

Leader's Note: Ask someone in your group to volunteer to read this section aloud, pausing to let the group answer the discussion questions.

- As you look forward to the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign, what are some of the "doors" in your life that need to be opened that your group could pray for?
- ✍ The "door of time" opening in your schedule to participate more fully in the Campaign
- ✍ The "door of courage" opening for you to invite a family member, Christian friend, or non-Christian neighbor to a weekend service or to your 40 Days' Small Group
- ✍ The "door of trust" opening for you to take a step of faith and host a group
- ✍ The "door of your heart" opening for you to become passionate about prayer
- ✍ The "door of humble servanthood" opening for you to be more available to God during this important time
- ✍ Other?

In Colossians 4:5, Paul admonishes us to "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity." The word *opportunity* that Paul uses at the end of that verse comes to us from the word *cairos*. The Greeks used *cairos* to describe a decisive moment, a crisis, or a crossroad. It's what we would call a defining moment. Is God wanting you to prepare, through prayer, for a defining moment in your life?

In addition, could it be that all around you, there are people who, for whatever reason, are now open to learning spiritual truths? The 40 Days of Purpose Campaign could be a defining moment in their personal journey. As Paul encourages us, please make the most of this defining moment with them. Pray more than you ever have before. Be spiritually sensitive and ask God to open doors today.

Spend the balance of your small group time in prayer for the 40 Days of Purpose. Use the following pages as a guide for specifically praying as a group.

P.U.R.P.O.S.E. PRAYER GUIDE

30 MINUTES OF GROUP PRAYER

(Prayer is the most important component of the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign. Without God's power, everyone will labor in vain.)

Leader's Note: While someone reads the following verse and opening prayer aloud, the rest of the group can read along in silent reflection. Ask that volunteer to also read the suggestion that follows the prayer.

"Pray that the Master's Word will simply take off and race through the country to a groundswell of response, just as it did among you." 2 Thessalonians 3:1 (Msg)

Opening Prayer: God, we come to You with our praise, worship, and adoration. You are wider than the farthest reaches of the universe, higher than the highest heavens, and deeper than the deepest ocean. We offer ourselves to You in prayer for the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign. In confession, we bring to You those times we have fallen short. Help us to be spiritually ready for what You want to do. We know that without Your power, God, we will labor in vain. Encourage us to saturate these important 40 days in prayer. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Suggestion for how you might want to spend your group prayer time:

This prayer time is organized using the acronym "P.U.R.P.O.S.E." In each section of this "P.U.R.P.O.S.E." Prayer Guide, you will find a Bible verse, a related quote, several prayers, and a suggestion for a time of reflection. You may want to ask seven members of your group to each pray through one part of the acronym.

For example, the first person would start with the letter "P" of "P.U.R.P.O.S.E." and read aloud the Bible verse, quote, and prayer. He or she could end by encouraging a minute of silent reflection on what was just read. After approximately a minute of silent reflection, the second person would continue with the letter "U" from "P.U.R.P.O.S.E." and read aloud the Bible verse, quote, and prayer. Then, he or she could suggest a time of quiet reflection for one minute.

PREPARATION

Leader's Note: While someone reads the following verse, quote, and prayer aloud, the rest of the group can let the words express the prayer of their heart.

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:16 (NIV)

"Whenever God determines to do a great work, he first sets his people to pray."
C.H. Spurgeon

God, who enlightens our hearts and minds, we pray...

- For the preparation of each person's heart and for what You desire to do in each life during the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign.
- For the spiritual preparation of our pastors and leaders; for their times of prayer and solitude with You.
- That the quietness of each person before You would be the most important time of preparation for the Campaign.
- That You will provide the energy, time, and endurance for all tasks to be done in preparation for the Campaign.
- That the Campaign work done in Jesus' name will be a defining moment in the journey of our church.
- For a spiritual awakening in our church during and after the Campaign.

Let's take a minute to silently reflect before the Lord on all that we have just prayed.

Leader's Note: You can rotate opportunities among other members to read the rest of the Prayer Guide, one page per person until you have finished.

UNDERSTANDING OF PURPOSES

"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." Philemon 6 (NIV)

"If you have so much business to attend to that you have no time to pray, depend upon it, you have more business on hand than God ever intended you should have."
D.L. Moody

God, who gives us meaning and purpose in our lives, we pray...

- That our praise and worship will rise as a sweet fragrance to You.
- For You to give insight to each person as to how he or she can help others progress in their faith.
- For the truth to be put into practice that "every ministry is important," whether visible or behind the scenes.
- That our church will be inspired to work diligently to reach out to our community with the Good News.
- That the members of our church would be committed to living out Your purposes for their lives.

Let's take a minute to silently reflect before the Lord on all that we have just prayed.

RESULTS

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ..."
Philippians 1:9-10 (NIV)

"The most holy practice, the nearest to daily life, and the most essential for the spiritual life, is the practice of the presence of God, that is to find joy in his divine company and to make it a habit of life, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with him at all times, every moment, without rule or restriction, above all at times of temptation, distress, dryness, and revulsion, and even of faithlessness and sin."
Brother Lawrence

God, the immortal, loving, and holy One, we pray...

- That the harvest will be plentiful - that those who are spiritually lost will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- That Your involvement in the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign will inspire a stronger commitment by each person to move from a self-focused life to a God-focused life.
- For lasting, eternal fruit in transformed lives.
- That the Holy Spirit will confirm in each life that He is present and has the power to change lives.
- That a deeper desire to worship and magnify You will arise in our church and in the churches of our nation and around the world.
- That each person's life will be enriched through a new or renewed small group experience.
- That the Holy Spirit will encourage many to become committed to our church family and be baptized.
- That every person involved will be refreshed, renewed, and revitalized for the ministry to which You have called him or her.
- That our members will discover and use their spiritual gifts and abilities for Your eternal purposes.

Let's take a minute to silently reflect before the Lord on all that we have just prayed.

PROTECTION

"And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one." 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3 (NIV)

"Tomorrow I plan to work, work from early until late. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." M. Luther

God, our refuge and our shield, we pray...

- For divine protection against spiritual warfare for our church leaders and all members of our church family during the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign.
- For physical protection and good health for all leaders and participants.
- For protection against distractions, worries, problems, and concerns - to enable everyone involved to focus completely on what You have for them during the Campaign.
- For Your protection against discouragement for all pastors and leaders, as seemingly impossible tasks and schedules mount prior to and during the Campaign.
- For the mental, physical, and spiritual protection of our Senior Pastor and his family.
- For the strength to face trials and tribulations that may arise at this time, remembering that God can use problems to deepen our trust in Him.

Let's take a minute to silently reflect before the Lord on all that we have just prayed.

OUTPOURING OF GOD'S PROVISIONS

"Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'" Mark 10:27 (NIV)

"The work of praying is prerequisite to all other work in the kingdom of God. By prayer we couple the powers of heaven to our helplessness, the powers which can capture strongholds and make the impossible possible." O. Hallesby

God, our Abba, Father, unsearchable, eternal, and mighty Lord, we pray...

- That You will provide the needed volunteers to make each Campaign event successful.
- That You will provide our church with all the resources needed to facilitate this Campaign.
- That You will provide unity among leaders of ministries in our church, as many adjust their schedules to accommodate the Campaign.
- For each person involved in the leadership and details of the Campaign, that they will learn to rely on Your sufficiency and strength.
- That our prayers will touch the fuse of Your power, and we will see spectacular things happen during and after the Campaign.

Let's take a minute to silently reflect before the Lord on all that we have just prayed.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

Ephesians 1:18-19 (NIV)

"Like art, like music, like so many other disciplines, prayer can only be appreciated when you actually spend time in it. Spending time with the Master will elevate your thinking. The more you pray, the more will be revealed. You will understand. You will smile and nod your head as you identify with others who fight long battles and find great joy on their knees." Joni Eareckson Tada

God, our everywhere-present, all-powerful, and infinitely wise King, we pray...

- That Your guidance in this spiritual growth Campaign will deepen our church's faith and prayer life.
- That each participant in the Campaign would have a renewed desire to pursue spiritual habits in his or her life.
- That each person in our church will be challenged to grow spiritually and experience Your plan for living a transformed life.
- That all participants will reflect on Your purposes for their lives and act on what the Holy Spirit has revealed to them.
- That all participants would grow in their love for You - with all their heart, soul, and mind.
- That the congregational reading of The Purpose Driven Life will be a grace-filled turning point for the maturity of our members.
- That all participants would surrender fully to doing their part to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment in their generation.

Let's take a minute to silently reflect before the Lord on all that we have just prayed.

ENORMOUS GLORY TO GOD

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Revelation 4:11 (NIV)

"There is no power like that of prevailing prayer. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings life. It brings God."

Samuel Chadwick

God, who fills the heaven and earth with His glory, we pray...

- That our Celebration Sunday event will be an incredibly joyful time of testimonies of what You have done in our lives, groups, and marriages during the Campaign.
- For our Campaign Directors and teams to accomplish everything through Your power and strength in order that Your glory would be magnified.
- That each person who is touched by Your grace during the Campaign would remember to give You the praise and glory for what You have done.
- That the purposeful lives we are going to live will shine bright like the noonday sun in Your honor.
- That when asked for the reason for our changed lives, we will point others to You!

Let's take a minute to silently reflect before the Lord on all that we have just prayed.

Read this final prayer together:

God, we thank You for the graciousness that You extend to Your children as You hear our prayer requests. We lay our petitions at Your feet with anticipation and excitement about the way You will choose to answer them. Help us to be prayer warriors during the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign and for the rest of our lives. We give You in advance all the praise and glory for what You are going to do in the hearts and minds of thousands of people.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEEPENING YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Now that we've had a time of prayer, it is important to ask: "Would you like to grow in your prayer life during the Campaign?" If you want to take prayer to a deeper level, you may want to consider participating in some upcoming prayer opportunities. Watch for more details on each of these suggestions.

PRAY Pray especially for members of your group who have stepped out in faith and agreed to be Host Home leaders!

Use the Campaign "Prayer Reminder" wallet card and table-top tent card to remind yourself to pray many times a day for the Campaign, in general. (These are available from your Host Home leader at your first meeting or from Grand Central.)

PRAYER WALK/DRIVE Choose a block of time between September 21-27 to get your walking shoes on or get your car gassed up, so you can walk or drive your neighborhood in prayer. (Request an electronic copy of "A Guide to Praying for Your Community" from kstones@saddleback.com or pick up a printed copy from Grand Central.)

7-DAY PRAYER GUIDE Pray for the Campaign the week before it starts, by using the Prayer Guide daily from September 22-28. (Request an electronic copy of the "7-Day Prayer Guide" from chiss@saddleback.com or pick up a printed copy from Grand Central.)

FAST ONE DAY FOR THE CAMPAIGN On September 23rd, Saddleback staff and Campaign Prayer Teams will be fasting and praying for the Campaign. Join them in a 24-hour, water-only fast. (For more information, contact chiss@saddleback.com or pick a flyer up at Grand Central.)

BIBLE STUDY ON PRAYER Saddleback offers (as part of its *Equipping Series*) a brand new Bible Study taught by Ben Patterson on "The Power of Prayer." Consider doing the lessons as a group next year. (Call the Maturity Team at (949) 609-8201 or stop by the weekend Resource Tent on the church patio.)

ADOPT-A-CHURCH-TO-PRAY-FOR Pray for a church which is participating in the Campaign. (Email suzanne@purposedriven.com to get a name of a church.)

RECOMMENDED READING LIST ON PRAYER

BOOKS

Deepening Your Conversation With God, Ben Patterson.
(Bloomington, Bethany House, 1999).

Ben Patterson helps to turn prayer from a spiritual discipline into a delight by showing how God covets our prayers and how it gets God's work done on earth.

"Prayer is a discipline before it is a joy, and remains a discipline even after it becomes a joy."

Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Jim Cymbala with Dean Merrill.
(Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997).

Jim Cymbala shares how the fire within his church was ignited when the Spirit worked within the hearts of his congregation moving them to their knees in humbleness before God.

"I discovered an astonishing truth: God is attracted to weakness. He can't resist those who humbly and honestly admit how desperately they need him."

The Coming Revival: America's Call to Fast, Pray, and "Seek God's Face," Bill Bright. (Orlando, New Life Publications, 1995).

Bill Bright explains how the power of fasting and praying by millions of believers can usher in a mighty spiritual awakening.

"Fasting reduces the power of self so that the Holy Spirit can do a more intense work within us."

JOURNAL ARTICLES

(Because web links are subject to change without notice, we have included the source for obtaining a hard copy also.)

"How God's People Pray," Eugene H. Merrill.

Moody Magazine.com, [article on-line]; (Moody Bible Institute, 2001); available from www.moodymagazine.com/articles.php?action=view_article&id=783; Internet; accessed 11 July 2002.

Eugene Merrill discusses three main concerns that revolve around prayer issues: (1) the manner of prayer; (2) the content of prayer; and (3) the practice of prayer.

"Our attitude matters more than our method."

"Prayer Changes Everything," Donald R. Spradling.

Enrichment Online, Winter 2001 [journal on-line]; available at www.enrichmentjournal.org/enrichmentjournal/200101/0101_118_prayer_changes.cfm; Internet; accessed 11 July 2002.

Donald Spradling addresses the components of prayer, a prayer paradigm, the expectancy of prayer, the exercise of prayer, and the exponential power of prayer.

"I don't know anyone who consistently enjoys the first few moments of an exercise program. It is after we begin in prayer that a euphoria and an anointing emerge."

We do not necessarily endorse all theological statements from these books, journals, or internet sites. We do, however, hope that these specific recommendations will enrich your prayer life.