

If My People Pray

Study Guide

by

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Chapter 1:

It's Time to Pray!

1. Has God spoken to you personally in the last week/month/year?
 - A. Write or discuss in your group what this experience was like. (What were the circumstances? What had you been praying about? How did God speak to you? What did He say? How did you react or respond? How did you confirm the authenticity of the experience?)
2. Spend a few moments journaling or discussing God's message to you using the following Scriptures as a context: Isa. 30:21; John 10:27.
3. What do you think about God's message to the author: *"You can have all the seminars and books and studies and committees and strategies and plans you want, but until you seek Me with all your heart, it is all in vain"*? Does this message have any meaning to you or for your circumstances?
4. If the condition applies to you, journal or discuss how your Christian experience, or the collective experience of your church, resembles the topical skin cream mentioned on page 11.
5. Do your prayers ever resemble the "Burger King" variety? (See p.13.) Explain. Contrast this kind of praying with the kind of prayer and fasting God desires from us. (See Isa. 58.) Write or discuss your impressions.
6. Look up 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Rev. 3:18. What similarities do you notice? What is God saying to you in these verses?
7. Read the prayer on pages 14 and 15. What are your feelings as you read these words? Which parts of it come closest to expressing what's in your heart right now? If alone, write your own prayer to God expressing your desire for revival. If in a group, start with a moment of silent prayer, allowing God to speak. Then pray conversationally* about what He's said to you during this study.

*("Conversational Prayer" is not "praying around the circle." It is free-flowing like a natural conversation and shouldn't be too artificially structured. First, choose someone to close the "conversation" before you begin. A period of silence longer than usual will indicate that everyone has had their say, and the designated person will begin the final prayer by saying: "And in closing . . ." People in the group, including the "closer," may pray more than once but they should try to limit their "conversation" to one topic at a time. This will give more people a chance to pray. *Enjoy conversing with your Father!*)

Chapter 2:

IF

1. Take a moment to imagine how the church could be different "If my people who are called by my name, [would] humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, . . ."
 - A. If what ways would the church be different?
 - B. If what ways would you be different?
2. Can you think of situations in your life in which the outcome could have been completely different *if* another choice had been made? List two or three or, if in a group, discuss those you don't mind sharing.
3. What is the role of choice in 2 Chronicles 7:14?

Chapter 3:

Our Greatest Need

1. Read pages 28-30. The author sketches a gritty picture of the church in North America. Where do you agree or disagree with him? Do you see any aspects of this description at work in your own local congregation? How does this make you feel? How do you think Christ feels about it?
2. According to Alvin J. Vander Griend (see page 31) what is the church's greatest deficiency? How is this lacking ingredient obtained and released?
3. Ellen White states: "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs." What does "true godliness" mean to you? Can you support your response with Scripture? Write your findings down or examine them with the group.
4. Do a little Bible study on the privileges of being a redeemed child of God. Look up the following texts. Mark them with a letter P in the margin for "privilege," then write or discuss how prayer would help you experience and possess these privileges. (Mark 16:17,18; Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 2:7-16; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:4-10; Col. 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4; 1 Jn. 4:4.)
5. Answer the question, "Why are you a Christian?" What is your purpose for being here?

Does your present Christian experience match up practically with the answer you gave?

Why or why not?

6. Write or discuss what you think it means to have God in a box. In what ways are you "boxing" Him in with tradition, preference, culture, or your own experience?
7. The author says, "We must stop blaming everyone and everything around us for the church's ills and ask God to help us see where we are culpable, where we've failed." Do you agree or disagree? Where specifically have you been part of the problem?
8. Right now, do you have the assurance of Christ's living presence, His acceptance, His forgiveness? How does this make you feel? Read Eph. 1:3-9, 11-14; 2:19-22; 1 Jn. 5:11-13. How does your response above contrast with what God's word says? Pray these verses back to God, inserting your name into each one, and asking God to make the words real in your experience.
9. Meditate on the prayer on page 36. Then, after a moment of silent "listening," write your feelings down on paper whether alone or in a group. Do not share it with anyone else. Close with prayer.

Chapter 4:

The Power of Belonging

1. Do you have a place to belong? Describe that place. Where do you feel the greatest sense of belonging? The least? Why? Read Psalm 23 and put yourself in the place of the sheep talking about the Shepherd. How do you feel and why?

2. Do you believe with your head *and* your heart that God wants you? "That you are His treasured possession and that no one else—no matter how witty, good-looking, well-dressed, talented, charismatic, intelligent, or spiritual—can take your place in His heart?" Explain your answer.
3. Read the *Applause of Heaven* story on page 44. Ever feel like the man who said it was hard for him to imagine God applauding for him? Why?
4. Because of abuse, abandonment, a death or divorce, you may have trouble being able to believe that God loves you in this way. Left unresolved, these feelings will be a barrier to your prayer life because you can't feel safe with someone you think doesn't approve of you. Look at Isa. 41:9, 10; 43:15, 16; 54:4, 5. Ask yourself if your beliefs about God's feelings towards you are based on Scripture or on your own experience. Which—Scripture or human experience—is more reliable?

Chapter 5:

We're Family

1. Read John 1:12, 13, then journal or discuss what it means for you to be able to call God "Daddy."
2. For many—maybe for you—father and fear are synonymous. Think about or discuss why this may be and how you might be able to help someone in this situation. (See John 14:9; Jn. 16:26; and 2 Cor. 5:19.)
3. See 2 Cor. 10:5. Give examples of what you think are the "arguments" and "pretensions" that Paul is talking about here.
4. On page 48, the author suggests that we learn to confront each false belief with a specific truth from God's word. Do the following exercise and then add more of your own:

Satan's lie God's truth

You are a sinner because Eph. 1:1, 5; Col. 1:14

you sometimes sin.

You cannot be sure of Rom. 8:1, 2; 1 Jn. 5:11-13

your salvation.

You aren't worth much. Isa. 43:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

5. Read Deut. 14:2. How does God's declaration that you are His treasured possession make you feel?
6. Read the section entitled "Friends" on pages 49-51. Then read John 15:14, 15. Would you describe your relationship with God as that of servant or friend? What does God call you?
7. Do you have a problem with the requirement of obedience and being God's Friend?
8. Spend a few minutes meditating on Rev. 4:2-11. This is a description of the throne room of Heaven. Our prayers grant us access to this awesome place. Picture yourself entering this throne room. How do you feel? Are you welcome there?

Chapter 6:

People of the Name

1. With the aid of a Bible dictionary or pages 60, 61 in *If My People Pray*, do your own word study on the many names of God. Choose one that has particular meaning or significance to you at this time and spend a few moments writing (if alone) or sharing with the group why this name is special to you.
2. How do you feel knowing that God has chosen you to represent His name before the world? What do you think it means to be God's "representative"?
 - A. If you fell "unworthy" to represent that Name, explore your reasons for feeling that way. Do your feelings arise from a context of grace and forgiveness or from an unbiblical context of absolute perfectionism? Is there an unresolved issue or sin in your life that is a barrier in your relationship with God? If so, talk to God about it now. Read psalms 51 and 1 Jn. 1:9, 10 and deal with this issue in detail.
3. Explain what it means to pray "in Jesus' name."
4. The author says that "to be called by God's name also means to be referred to by that name. God literally gives us His name." What does this mean to you? How does it make you feel?
5. Read Proverbs 18:10 and write or share what this means to you.
6. Through prayer, we may fully possess the Name of God and open the windows of heaven. Enter into prayer right now and receive what God has given you.

Chapter 7:

Admitting the Obvious

1. Read 2 Chron. 7:14. Why do you think God lists humility first before prayer, seeking, or turning from sin?
2. It is easy or difficult for you to admit need? Why?
3. The Hebrew word for humble in 2 Chron. 7:14 is _____ (see p. 73.) Write its meaning here: _____
 - A. In your daily actions, choices, attitudes, etc., do you *Kana* yourself to God?

Explain.
4. Read about Josiah's humility in 2 Chron. 34. Describe his "tender heart." Is your heart tender toward God? How do you handle correction or reproof?
5. Does your concept of grace allow for expressing sorrow for sin before God? Who gives sorrow for sin? Is it something you have to "work up"?
6. What is the role of spiritual discipline in the life of the Christian? Does the body of Christ have the right to hold members accountable to God for their actions? Please support your answer with Scripture.
7. The author writes: "To be in open rebellion against God in one aspect of life, while praying for and expecting His blessing in another is a recipe for despair." Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
8. In your life, what are the "thrones" that you still occupy? Over what issues, attitudes, or behaviors are you still sovereign?
9. Read "Our message of reproof" on page 79 and 80 of the book. How do you personally respond to Revelation 3:15,16?

Chapter 8:

The Foolishness of God

1. Does prayer ever seem foolish to you? When?
2. Why does God ask us to pray?
3. Ellen White writes: "From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells" (DA 300). Write down or discuss the implications of this statement.
4. Why do you think God often uses "foolish" methods to get His work done?
5. Read the prayer on page 88. If you identify and agree with the feelings it expresses, talk to God about it now.

Chapter 9:

A Passion for Prayer

1. Consider the experience of Christians in Korea (see pages 95-98). How important is prayer to these believers? Compare and contrast the Korean's commitment to prayer with your own and that of your local church.
2. Answer the following questions:
 - A. Do you really believe that God hears and answers prayer?
 - A. Are you convinced that prayer makes a difference—that unlimited power is made available to you through prayer?
 - B. Do you feel a need for prayer?
3. How has prayer been like *exercise* for you?
4. How has prayer been like *discipline* for you?
5. Have you experienced any positive gains from these approaches to prayer? List/discuss them.
6. How has prayer been like a relationship for you? (Be specific.)
7. Discuss or journal about Frank Laubach's statement on page 102.

Chapter 8:

More Passion for Prayer

1. What conclusions do you draw from John 4:20-24; 14:23; 1 Cor. 3:16 in regards to when and where we can worship?

When should we pray for others?
2. Read Psalm 100. What is praise? How do you feel when you give praise? When you receive it? Experiment right now with praying a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Make no requests at this time. Simply praise God for who He is in your life. (Hint: You may need to read one of David's psalms to help you get started.)
3. Read Psalm 46:10; Rom. 8:26, 27. What do these scriptures teach us about times when we don't have anything to say or can't find words to express ourselves?
4. Married or single, there are people in your life that you love and who need your prayers. Claim appropriate promises from scripture for them, inserting their names into the text. Then, pray it back to God. Example: "Lord, I pray that [name of loved on]'s delight will be in the law of the Lord, that [he/she] will meditate on it day and night. That [name] will be like a tree planted by streams of water yielding fruit in season with out withering, and that whatever [name] does will prosper" (Psa. 1:2,3). (Note: You can also write the promise out and give it to the person you're praying for, changing the pronouns to "you" and "your.")

5. Read 1 Peter 2:5,9 and consider your role as priest. What does this mean to you? Now look at Numbers 6:22-27. What do you think the response would be from your spouse, child, grandchild, or loved one if you gave them this blessing? What, according to Numbers 6:27, would be God's response? Ask God for the courage to do this and choose the time, place, and person you're going to give this blessing to.
6. Scan today's headlines in the paper, Focus especially on the local news. Circle any story that reports a crisis, need, or problem. Then take these concerns to God in prayer.
7. Read the excerpts from Charles Swindoll on page 115. Meditate, journal, and/or discuss these. Close with prayer.

Chapter 11:

Much More Passion for Prayer

1. What is intercessory prayer?
2. What role does intercession play in Jesus' words found in John 14:12-14?
3. As far as prayer is concerned, what is one of our primary purposes for being Christians?

(See p. 121.)

4. Consider Ellen White's statement: "All that the Apostles did, every church member today is to do" (*Test.* 7:30,33). Then, consider Jesus' words in John 14:12; "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, . . ." How does your own experience match up with these statements? What about your church?
5. On page 122, the author says that sometimes, "we want to save others but so often feel in need of 'saving' ourselves. How can we give what we feel we've lost or at least misplaced?" Have you felt this way? Explain.
6. Read Hebrews 7:25. How can Jesus' intercession help you?
7. How can a prayer partner help you?
8. How can understanding your role as priest help you?
9. Can our intercession force God to save a person against their will? Explain.
10. Andrew Murray has written:

"Such men indeed have the power—each in his own area—to obtain and dispense the

powers of heaven here on earth. With holy boldness they may make known what they will. . . Church of the living God! Your calling is higher and holier than you know! God wants to rule the world through your members. He wants you to be His kings and priests. Your prayers can bestow and withhold the blessing of heaven" (With Christ is the School of Prayer, p. 136).

How does this statement make you feel? Do you believe it? Please write your response/feelings in your journal and/or share in your group.

Chapter 12:

When Churches Pray

1. Describe the mid-week "prayer meeting" at your church.
2. Why is praying in a group or corporate prayer necessary?
3. Why do we need power from God?
4. Explain the role of unity or agreement in corporate prayer.
5. Look at the seven suggestions for breathing new life into the corporate prayer meeting on pages 134-137. Discuss how you might incorporate some of these into your own local prayer meeting.
6. How important is prayer in the life of your church?

- A. Does your church have an organized congregational prayer ministry led by a prayer leader (staff position or lay leadership position?)
- B. Does your church have a prayer room or designated prayer center?
- C. Does your church have "prayer chains"?
- D. What does your church do to maintain prayer as a vital part of congregational life?

Chapter 13:

For God and God Alone

1. If Paul or Barnabas or Steven or Priscilla were resurrected and allowed to visit our churches, would they be able to tell that we follow the same Master? That we've pledged our allegiance to the same cause? Explain.
2. In your own words, define the "gospel of convenience."
3. Journal or discuss your reaction to Dr. Larry Crabb's statement: "We Christians cannot talk about loving God until we come to grips with our raging passion for ourselves" (*Finding God*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999, p. 67)
4. What does it mean to seek God's face?
5. Read the example on page 144 about the management team that waits on God before acting. Is this a practical way to do business or is this taking things too far? How about for a church? Should a church operate this way? Does Yours? Why or why not?
6. Respond to the statement made by the southern Asia Division president: "Of all the work the church has accomplished, 95 percent of it could have been done without the aid of the Holy Spirit."
7. Read 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1,4,5. Explain how "the flesh and human energy" can take the place of the Holy Spirit. What are the results of effects of this?
8. Are there "indicators" in your own life that signal a need for change in the way you are seeking God? What are they?
9. In addition to what the author suggests on pages 148 and 149, what is God telling you about seeking Him?

Chapter 14:

Send Revival!

1. Read Luke 13:6-8. What can we learn about Jesus' attitude towards the church in this parable?
2. Can our prayers bring revival? Explain.
3. The author gives six points we need to consider in our pursuit of revival. Write about, or discuss each one, especially as it applies to you personally.
 - A. We must be willing to be revived.
 - B. Praying for revival takes work.
 - C. Revival must be combined with reformation.
 - D. Revival must be maintained with prayer.
 - E. Revival requires extraordinary prayer.
 - F. Revival is God's work.
4. What does "explicit agreement and visible union of all God's people in extraordinary prayer" mean to you? Is it possible? What could be done to actively pursue this experience in the church?
5. Read Ellen White's statement on page 163 and use it as a prayer to close your study.

Chapter 15:

There Is A Savior

1. What would be the sure result of all our effort to seek the Lord for revival if we chose not to let Jesus deal with the sin in our lives? (See Psa. 66:18.)
2. Would you agree or disagree with this statement: "One of the characteristics of our age, of its life and thought and theology, is the lack of a sense of sin" (Andrew Murray, Revival, p. 87). Explain.
 - o How is this manifested in the church? In your own thoughts and attitudes?
 1. Do you agree that the "externals" (no drinking, smoking, dietary and dress reform, etc.) are often the "easy" part of Christianity? Explain.
 2. How does Ellen White's statement on page 171 apply to your church or to you personally?
 3. What should be the role of Church leadership in repentance for God's people?
 4. What should be our role?
 5. Where does repentance come from?
 6. How should we deal with self doubt and Satan's accusations about our sinful condition?

Chapter 16:

Then

1. Read this chapter in the book. What is your personal response to God's sure promise of revival?
2. Now that you've come to the end of this study, what do you feel God is calling you to do? How will your prayer life be different from now on? What is the number one thing you need from God right now?

Close with prayer.