



DIGGING DEEPER

THE PRAYER WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE WORDS

JANUARY 14

The greatest ability we have in prayer is simply availability.

Work through the following questions and scriptures on your own, and get together with your running partner, life group, or friends and family to talk through what you are learning.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Review with your group how you experienced prayer over this past week. What went well? What was challenging?
2. When you pray, how do you picture God? How is He involved and what is His posture? Is He passive or active in your prayer?
3. Read **Romans 8:18-28**. This passage, written by Paul to the Roman church expresses the many implications of living this new life in the Spirit. The adopted children of God share in the life and freedom of Christ, and yet, await His final return when He will fully make all things right.

Make some observations about this passage (What does the text say?):

- What do you notice and what are you curious about?

Make some interpretations (What does the passage mean?)

- What do you learn about humanity?
- What do you learn about God?

Now make some applications (what's my response?)

- How are you encouraged, challenged, or convicted by this passage?
- What should be our response to this passage?

4. Do you feel like you have to be strong and have it together when you come to God in prayer or are you comfortable expressing your weakness or helplessness? Why or why not?

5. Re-read **Romans 8:26-27**. The word for "groaning" here means, an involuntary expression of great concern or stress. When we don't have the words to pray, this means that the Spirit steps in the gap for us, and pleads on our behalf with deep, wordless sighs.

- What do you think or feel about this truth that the Spirit of God acutely experiences our deepest, most painful emotions with us?
- How should the fact that the "Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" impact the way we pray?
- Are you currently experiencing something where you don't feel like you have the words to pray? What are you deeply aching for that you can start relying on the Spirit to intercede for you?

6. What needs to change about the way you approach God in prayer in deep longing and suffering? How can you start doing that today?

KEY SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:18-28 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

PRAYER

This is an opportunity to come together in our longings and deepest pain and invite the Spirit to intercede for you in the painful places where you don't know what to pray. If it helps, write down those painful longings and simply place them in the middle of the group.

Pray this out loud together or the leader can pray over the group:

God, we know things aren't the way they're supposed to be. It's exhausting.

There is deep suffering in this very room and in the world that we are weak and helpless to do anything about.

We ache for the day when everything will be made right.

We put before you the things that are too painful to voice.

There are no words.

Spirit, we don't know how to pray in these places of pain, but you do. You are in it with us.

As promised, come and intercede for us, joining in our silent cries.

We thank you that when we don't have the words, you know the deepest places of our hearts, even better than we do.

We trust you to hear us and we find peace knowing that you are working it all out for good and to make us more like Jesus, even though we don't yet see how.

In the meantime, help us to hold fast to hope and wait patiently for the day you will come again and bring the world, and us, into your glory.

Amen.

TAKE A NEXT STEP

1. Join us in Pray First by participating in 21 days of prayer (1/8-1/28). Go to the Gateway app for a daily prayer guide and videos from our staff. Commit to intentionally praying for and with others through these 21 days and let's see what God does!
2. Use the above guide to help you pray when there are no words or consider using a Psalm.

FOR THE PARENTS

Hey, families! Here's a look at what we're covering with your kids so you can help them continue to grow at home during the week.

THIS WEEK

All month long we will be talking about how God comes to our rescue by studying the story of Moses!

THE BIBLE: "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,,and he saved them from their distress."
(Psalm 103:7)

THE MESSAGE: Notice that God's rescue plan would be worked out through Moses. When we see suffering in our world today sometimes our response is to ask why God doesn't do something about it. But God has sent us to the world to be a light and point people to Jesus. God will accomplish His plan through people like you and me who follow Christ and want to share the message of hope with the world!

THE BIG IDEA: When I am in trouble, God comes to my rescue!

ASK THIS

*Because sometimes you and your kid need a conversation-starter that isn't,
"So . . . how was church?"*

- ***Do you ever make excuses when asked to do something you think is too difficult?***
- ***The word "equip" means to make ready or prepare to do something. What does it mean that God "equips us"?***

REMEMBER THIS

When we are faced with hard tasks, it isn't always easy to accept the challenge, is it? The Bible story today was about someone who had a really tough assignment. We saw how reluctant Moses was to do what God told him to do. But God didn't just cross His arms and wait for Moses to muddle through the job alone. He gave Moses the help He promised, and Moses was able to complete the work. In our own lives, each of us has to face hard jobs. But we aren't on our own—we have God's help! God promises to come to our rescue just like He did for Moses.

NEXT WEEK

Next week we will see how Moses had to trust God to give him the strength to confront Pharaoh!