

“Lord, Be Merciful” – a family devotional study guide for June 14th

Prayer - Share the concerns of the day or week, and the blessings perceived and received of the day or week, then Pray. Take plenty of time to allow each one to share their needs.

Discussion starter: Ask, how did you learn to swim. Who taught you? What method to teach you actually worked, or failed? Did you learn the correct form? Do you have confidence being in the water, especially in water when you can't touch the bottom?

Gary Holloway in [Praying Like Jesus](#) makes this comparison of learning to pray to learning to swim:

“Learning to pray is like learning to swim. There are two extreme approaches. You can read all about swimming, practice the strokes in front of a mirror, even read the biographies of great swimmers. When you finish all that, there’s still one problem. You don’t know how to swim! On the other hand, someone can just throw you in the deep end of the pool. Sink or swim. There’s great motivation in this technique, but also a clear danger of drowning. So also with prayer. We can learn all about prayer and still not pray. We learn to pray by praying. On the other hand, we need coaching to learn to pray as we should. Jesus is our coach.” (p.23)

This devotional is meant to help us learn as Jesus coaches us to better prayer.

Pray for Enemies

Like learning to swim, some prayers just don't seem natural (“If God had intended man to swim, he would have given him gills,” someone might joke.). What is the most difficult prayer you have ever offered? Perhaps the most difficult teaching on prayer from Jesus is found in **Matthew 5:43-48** (please **read** this together). Have you ever prayed for someone who “persecutes” you? How difficult was it? Is it possible to be sincere in a prayer for an enemy? By the way, if kids are involved in your devotional today, please explore the meaning of enemy, especially that an enemy seeks to do you harm; you don't have to be an enemy (do harm) to your enemy. Ask what praying for an enemy might look like. If Jesus had not coached us to pray for our enemy, would you?

Power in Prayer

A prayer answered by God is always more powerful than our own efforts alone. **Read Mark 9:28-29; 11:20-24** Share a time that prayer did not work as you expected because: you failed to pray; you prayed too late; you prayed for something not believing God could do it (you lacked faith in God); you asked for something against God's will or nature; you prayed – he answered – but you failed to see or acknowledge His work?

Persistence in Prayer

Read Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8 **Share** an example in your own life of something you prayed “long and hard” about. What we talk about most (and most often), often demonstrates what is most important to us. What are some important things you talk to God about most frequently or repeatedly: Hopes? Needs? Current events? For overcoming recurring sin? Health? Marriage? Workplace challenges? If you are comfortable enough, share with one another from this list or add to the list.

Humility in Prayer

Read Luke 18:9-14 Are we today typically more like the Pharisee or the tax collector? "Prayer must never be a time for us to rejoice in our own righteousness. Only one is righteous, the One to whom we pray.... But we always come with these words, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!'" Holloway -31

Application: Ask each one to say which of these they most want to work on this week:

Pray for Enemies

Power in Prayer

Persistence in Prayer

Humility in Prayer

Close with a prayer for each other, for peace and justice in our distraught world, and for concerns related to the Pandemic.