

## Prayer Retreat Introduction—Focus On God Explanation

This handout contains major points of teaching/explanation that can be used to facilitate an extended time with God for a group – half day, day, weekend.

Why are we here?

Because God has called a meeting.

Because Jesus calls us to come away with him. Mt 11:28-30.

Because we need a Sabbath rest!

Because God is worthy of our extended attention!

Two Points of View. Prayer has two points of view. Our point of view and God's point of view. Most of our prayer is certainly from our point of view. In this Prayer Lab, we want to experiment with praying from God's point of view. To do that, we really need His help! 1 Cor 2:9-13 explains how the Holy Spirit is here to help us know the mind of God. Let's express our dependence on Him to reveal to us the mind of God. This will help us pray from God's point of view. We know that Jesus stands before the Father on our behalf as our mediator /intercessor before God. But these verses reveal the other half of our intercession loop. The Holy Spirit represents the Father to us – Jesus represents us to the Father.

This is God's time. Let's begin by proactively, deliberately putting aside the concerns and issues we brought with us. These are legitimate and important issues. But we want to focus on God first. He will reintroduce our issues if he chooses to do so. Take 15 to 20 minutes to write down those things you are putting on hold so you can enter God's Presence unencumbered. Throughout our time of seeking the Lord, you may need to add to your list if your mind becomes too occupied or distracted with your concerns. Trust that God will address your concerns in His time.

The 4 Threads of Focusing on God. God weaves a fabric using 4 primary threads to enable us to focus on him. Those threads are worship, Scripture, the prayers He forms in our hearts, and finally, silence. Each of these components usher us into the Presence of God. Songs that express who God is and our connection with him. Scripture that explains who God says he is. Then he begins to form a response in our hearts in prayer and we pray it back to him. Sometimes silence is needed to enable us to slow down and dwell on what was just spoken. Psalms teaches us "Selah," meaning "pause," which is a good way to indicate the need for silence.

The Orchestra and Conductor. We are the orchestra and God is the Conductor. Sometimes he will have us all playing together. He may point to you to have a certain Scripture read. He will point to someone else for the song of His choice. Then He will form a response in your heart and ask you to speak it. He may call for a "Selah" to help us pause and reflect and enjoy what was spoken or sung or prayed. The Conductor is in control of what we say and when we say it. He is leading us. We are following Him. This is a real life metaphor of us being lead by the Holy Spirit.

Different Temperaments. Some process faster. Some process slower. Be sensitive. "Selah" may be needed to help us slow down and connect with each other and with God. It is very important that we find the rhythm of the group so we can move together deeper into the presence of God.

The Diamond. Looking into the character and person of God is like gazing into a huge, perfect diamond. Huge in size, perfect in color, cut and clarity. Each facet of the diamond represents an attribute of God. We often spin the diamond and watch it sparkle in the light by simply naming the attributes of God. But now, we will allow him to stop the diamond on a particular facet of his character and allow us to gaze deeply into one attribute of His personality. Then our prayer can be a response to gazing deeply into His selected attribute.

Together we are praying the Same Prayer. This is not 40 individuals who come together in the same room to have their personal retreat. We could do that better alone in our closet. We are all contributing to the same prayer as God forms it among us. We need to be sensitive to the theme of the conversation. If another theme is being developed in your heart, wait, be sensitive to the group finishing the current subject before changing the subject.

I Agree. This is an excellent prayer. Jesus said in Mt 18:19, “If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.” If you agree with what someone has said, you can say, “I agree.” This communicates to God, who promises to do it. And it communicates to the person you are agreeing with, affirming their prayer.

Posture. Body language with God. Stand, kneel, lift hands. Hebrew, YAD, hand, YADAH, praise gives us strong indication that our hands are intricately involved in worship. Allow God to take you outside your comfort zone. This is “for God.” The real question is, “What does He want?” Does He want you to dance, clap, or lie prostrate on the floor?

Blank Checks. Jesus wrote checks while He was on earth (in a sense). The disciples saw what kind of checks He wrote. Kingdom Checks. He gave the disciples the check book, all signed, when He left. Now He gives the check book, all signed by Him, to us. A never ending supply of checks, signed by Jesus, that the Father will honor, just like He honored those written by Jesus. But they must be Kingdom Value Checks. C. S. Lewis said God holds discretionary power in prayer. He is not obligated to answer our prayers when they do not reflect the values of His Kingdom.

Isaiah 6 is a good picture of prayer, even though it says nothing about prayer specifically. We see God, just like Isaiah. We fall on our faces due to our sin. He cleanses us. He speaks. We listen, respond, obey. This provides a huge reason for us to focus on God first in our extended prayer times. We need to make a significant adjustment to the reality of being in His presence.

Conversation with God. Pray with your Bible open, God has something to say. “Anna and The King.” The little princess runs into the court of her Daddy, the King and whispers in his ear! The King leaves the busy court to attend to the needs and concerns of His daughter.

Importunity in Luke 11. Ask, seek and knock is an explanation of the story Jesus told of the visitor late at night to a neighbor. He goes to his neighbor to “ask, seek, and finally knock” to get the bread he needs for his visitor.

Eph 3:20 Exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or imagine! There are dimensions of prayer that we haven’t even explored. As we move toward God, we drop our normal asking. We begin to ask for what we only imagined before. Then we create a whole new imagining (dreaming). This is all an exercise of faith.