

FRESH ENCOUNTERS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

For Reflection and Discussion:

- What is the greatest way to learn how to pray? Why is this true?
- Why is prayer the most often talked about but the least-practiced discipline in the Christian life?
- Why do some people find it difficult to pray?
- How would you like this book to help you (and others) overcome these challenges?

For Pastors:

- How will you begin to balance speaking on prayer with finding ways to model prayer? Why are both important?
- Which do you think is the most important? Why?

Application:

- Using Acts 6:4, pray, “I will give myself continuously to God through prayer and word because He is . . .”

CHAPTER 2

For Reflection and Discussion:

- What is worship-based prayer? Can you name some examples from Scripture of this kind of prayer? How have you practiced it in the past?
- In Tom’s story, what was the personal impact of his fresh understanding of prayer? How did it influence others?
- How would you like to grow in prayer? Who would you like to affect positively through a fresh experience of prayer?

For Pastors:

- Has your ministry journey been similar to the pastoral experience described in this chapter?
- How do you see God using these experiences to teach you to pray? How have you responded and grown?

Application:

- When you pray, wait a significant amount of time before asking God for anything in prayer. Instead, use this time to reflect on the attributes of God.

CHAPTER 3

For Reflection and Discussion:

- Is living the Christian life more like driving a car or flying a 747 jumbo jet? What is the difference between these two approaches? How does this illustration apply to your daily attitude toward prayer?
- Prayerlessness is my _____ of _____ from God.
- What practical alternatives to prayer do we often choose in the course of daily life? How do these become subtle “declarations of our independence”?
- What will you do to express a greater dependence on God this week?

For Pastors:

- Describe the six basic reasons people resist the call to prayer gatherings.
- Which ones do you think are most prevalent in your life? In your church? Pray for fresh understanding and positive breakthroughs in these areas.

Application:

- Read about the early church, which gathered for 10 days in the upper room (Acts 1:12-14). Why do you think they were able to spend 10 days together in prayer when we struggle to spend 10 minutes?
- Consider Psalm 131 in prayer, asking God to let this be your heart as you seek and rest in Him.

CHAPTER 4

For Reflection and Discussion:

- What does the story of *The Flintstones* and the words of Christ from Rev. 3:14-21 tell us about our spiritual condition?
- Is Jesus inside or outside of your life right now? How central is He in your day-to-day activities?

For Pastors:

- Examine your heart to see if you have been living for God as a powerboat or a simple sailboat. How will you begin to make changes in the time you spend in prayer?

Application:

- Have there been times that God has been trying to speak to you, but you have been too busy to listen? Has He spoken to you as you were reading this chapter?
- Thank Him that He stands at the door eager to enter in and restore your heart.

CHAPTER 5

For Reflection and Discussion:

- How do you support your pastor in corporate prayer? Take time this week to implement one of the ideas offered in this chapter to encourage your pastor toward a growing involvement in prayer.
- Read Psalms 20:7 and 33:16-18. What is the central theme to these passages? How does praying together help honor the ideals of these verses?

For Pastors:

- Review the five reasons why some pastors struggle in their commitment to prayer. Which one is the most relevant to your journey?
- What can you do to turn this negative into a positive?

Application:

- Pray by name for those who lead your church, for their interest and growth in prayer. Ask the Lord to give them a greater desire and to protect their priorities as they seek to balance a busy schedule.
- Write an encouraging note to each leader this week.

CHAPTER 6

For Reflection and Discussion:

- Do you define your prayer life as a sprint or marathon? How can you develop a clearer vision to die on your knees?
- What makes Christians different in the world today? How can you reflect this distinctive more consistently?

For Pastors:

- Consider the five characteristics of those who can help lead a fresh prayer encounter. How can you identify and train more people like this for your church? Why is it important that you do so?

Application:

- Review the characteristics of people who can be an influence in prayer. Which trait is your greatest need? Pray for grace and direction as you develop this more fully.

CHAPTER 7

For Reflection and Discussion:

- How has your example in prayer helped someone grow in desire and skill in prayer? What did you teach him or her?
- Consider one of the biblical examples of prayer mentioned in this chapter. How does it inspire you?

For Pastors:

- When is the last time someone asked you to teach him or her to pray?

- In the course of the average week, how are you teaching others to pray by your example?
- What adjustments can you make in your schedule to allow for more time to model prayer for those God has entrusted to your care?

Application:

- Name someone whose example in prayer you have benefited from; ask yourself what you learned and how it helped you.
- Personally thank one of your prayer mentors, letting that person know he or she made a difference in your life.

CHAPTER 8

For Reflection and Discussion:

- What are several ways people pray with wrong motives? Have any of these been a struggle for you? How did this chapter help you develop a higher and purer motive?
- Why should we pray for revival? What cautions do you find in this chapter about our desire for revival? How might this help you pray differently?

For Pastors:

- If God took away your ministry, would you still pray? Why is it important to resolve this issue?
- How did God speak to you in this chapter about noble motives in prayer?

Application:

- List some of the reasons why God is worthy to be sought.
- Finish this sentence in an extended season of prayer: “Lord, You are worthy to be sought because _____.”

CHAPTER 9

For Reflection and Discussion:

- How do you give God your undivided attention? What typically distracts you? How can you reduce these distractions in your life?
- What is the blessing of seeking God’s face rather than just His hand?

For Pastors:

- As you review some of the biblical examples of seeking God’s face, how can these passages strengthen and encourage your prayer life?
- As a pastor, how can you teach your people more about seeking the face of God?

Application:

- Review the closing poem in this chapter, and consider how you have experienced this change of perspective.
- Pray about the ways in which you might want to grow more in your pure passion for Christ.

CHAPTER 10

For Reflection and Discussion:

- What did you learn about “rugged individualism”? How do you see it influencing your view of the Christian life and your church involvement?
- Using the ideas presented in this chapter, compare the early church to today’s society. What major differences do you see?

For Pastors:

- What fresh insights do you have about the importance of community? How is your congregation experiencing this, especially in prayer?
- What can you do to cast a fresh vision for real community?

Application:

- Review the chart at the end of the chapter, and consider the “lens” of the community culture of the early church. Then read an entire New Testament book from that perspective. Consider how your understanding and applications change when you do this.

CHAPTER 11**For Reflection and Discussion:**

- Describe what the “closet” likely was in 1611 when the King James Version was written. How is this different than our concept of a closet? What difference might this make in our praying?
- Read the first four chapters of Acts. Where do you see the early church gathering in their community closet to pray together? How does this inspire you?

For Pastors:

- In what ways could you reconstruct your prayer closet and lead a movement of reconstruction in your church? Develop an “extreme makeover” vision for closet expansion throughout your congregation.

Application:

- Acts 2:42 reminds us that we learn to pray by praying with others. This week get involved in corporate prayer and look into mentoring younger believers in prayer.

CHAPTER 12**For Reflection and Discussion:**

- Why should we focus more on reality than form? What “forms” can sometimes keep you from the “reality” of prayer?
- How can a prayer ministry be implemented by inspiration and not imitation in your church?

For Pastors:

- Using the examples given, what prayer initiative would best suit your church for the opportunity of corporate prayer? Prayerfully put together a plan to see this implemented in the coming weeks.

Application:

- Ask the Lord for guidance on the next step to expand your prayer closet.
- Use the list of examples and begin discerning which ones you will use. Don't be scared to try some new ones.

CHAPTER 13**For Reflection and Discussion:**

- Review the keys to a dynamic prayer time. Which one do you need most right now? Why?
- Look at the 4/4 pattern of prayer. Which focus do you gravitate toward the most? Which one do you neglect the most? How can you find a better balance?

For Pastors:

- How can the 4/4 pattern help you teach your church to pray?
- What other ideas can you share with your church to develop a biblical, balanced model of prayer?

Application:

- Spend time worshipping God in a selected psalm.
- Use the 4/4 outline to pray through that psalm.
- Journal any insight the Lord gives you.

CHAPTER 14**For Reflection and Discussion:**

- Why is it important to pray from the Bible? How can you start doing this more effectively?
- What does this chapter tell you about the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer? What can you do to focus on this more?

For Pastors:

- Which of the hindrances presented in this chapter do you most frequently see in the prayer times you lead?
- How can you begin to make adjustments to that aspect of prayer? Ask a friend or associate to work with you in making this change, then get feedback.

Application:

- In your next prayer meeting, practice worship-based prayer from the Scriptures by reading a portion from the Bible, then do not ask God for anything for 15 minutes.
- Follow the other components of the 4/4 pattern.
- Discuss how this worship focus made a difference in your prayer time.

CHAPTER 15

For Reflection and Discussion:

- What are the ABCs of continuity in prayer? Do you cooperate with these when you participate with others?
- Practice saying brief and specific prayers the next time you pray with others. A great pattern to use is a finish-the-sentence exercise, such as “I praise You, Lord, because . . .” or “Please let _____ feel Your peace today.”

For Pastors:

- Next time you begin a prayer time, explain the ABCs of continuity in prayer to the group.
- Get feedback from them as to why these guidelines would be profitable in a prayer time.

Application:

- Use a psalm to design a prayer time by listing all the attributes of God that you find in that psalm. Describe how you or those with you might respond in surrender.
- Find three areas of prayer focus based on some of the verses of that psalm. Spend time praying about those focal points on a regular basis.

CHAPTER 16

For Reflection and Discussion:

- The next time you pray, try exercising more freedom of form by using a variety of postures as you communicate your heart to God.
- What actions can you take to develop more faithfulness in your prayer life and your commitment to praying with others?

For Pastors:

- How can you encourage others to enjoy more freedom in their prayer expressions? What biblical basis do you find for this?
- Study the various prayer postures noted in the Bible, and help your people stay more engaged and passionate as they enjoy these options.

Application:

- Review the convictions for prayer listed in this chapter. As you think about your own commitment, rank them in the order that the best reflects your current commitment. Pray about the ones at the end of your list, asking the Lord to give you growing and lasting conviction in prayer.