

follow Prayer Intro 2: Small Group Guide

Purpose: This guide facilitates a discussion on the second **Follow Prayer** video, exploring the grace of God's initiative and building practical prayer rhythms.

Reflective Quotes (30 minutes)

Ruth Burrows, *Essence of Prayer*:

“Prayer has far more to do with what God wants to do in us than with our trying to ‘reach’ or ‘realize,’ still less ‘entertain,’ God in prayer. This truth eliminates anxiety and concern as to the success or non-success of our prayer, for we can be quite certain that, if we want to pray and give the time to prayer, God is always successful and that is what matters... What we think of as our search for God is, in reality, a response to the divine Lover drawing us to himself. There is never a moment when divine Love is not at work... This work is nothing other than a giving of the divine Self in love. The logical consequence for us must surely be that our part is to let ourselves be loved, let ourselves be given to, let ourselves be worked upon by this great God and made capable of total union with Him.”

James Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere*:

“Prayer, understood as the distilled awareness of our entire life before God, is a journey forward, a response to a call from the Father to become perfectly like his Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. But this journey forward can also be seen as a kind of journey backward, in which we seek to gain access to the relationship Adam had with God. In prayer we journey forward to our origin. We close our eyes in prayer and open them in the pristine moment of creation. We open our eyes to find God, his hands still smeared with clay, hovering over us, breathing into us his own divine life, smiling to see in us a reflection of himself. We go to our place of prayer confident that in prayer we transcend both place and time.”

1. What stands out to you in the imagery and ideas from these quotes? How do they inspire you to approach prayer?
2. Have you ever felt pressure to "entertain" God or others with a "good" prayer (like when asked to pray for a meal)? How does that pressure affect your honesty with God?
3. Ruth Burrows suggests that prayer has more to do with what God wants to do in us than our own effort to "entertain" Him. “If we want to pray and give the time to prayer, then God is always successful, and that is what matters”.
 - Have you ever felt pressure to perform "good" prayers in a group? How does the idea of "God's success" take the pressure off your own words?
4. James Finley writes that prayer is a "journey forward to our origin" where we find God "smiling to see in us a reflection of himself".
 - How does the imagery of God "hovering over us" and "breathing into us" change your posture when you sit down to pray?

5. Read Genesis 2:7: "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life..." Finley uses the imagery of God's hands being "smeared with clay" as He breathes life into us. How does this "earthy," hands-on image of God contrast with the image you carry into prayer?
 6. Read Romans 8:26-27: "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." How does the image of the Holy Spirit "groaning" on our behalf change the way you feel when you "don't know what to pray"?
 7. Ruth Burrows mentions we don't need to "entertain" God. In what other areas of your life do you feel the need to perform or entertain? What would it look like to bring that "unscripted" version of yourself to God this week?
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Practicing a Rhythm (5 minutes)

8. St. Francis de Sales famously said, "Everyone of us needs half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy—then we need an hour."
 - o Why do we need *more* prayer when we are busy rather than less?
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Application & Closing (5 minutes)

- **Group Challenge:** When you put prayer in your calendar, try writing "**God**" instead of "Prayer" to emphasize the relationship over the obligation. This week, schedule 5-10 minutes every day in your calendar under the name "God."

Closing Prayer: "Father, thank You that You are always seeking us first. Help us to rest in Your success rather than our own. Teach us to be still and let ourselves be loved. Amen."