

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

WHAT IF? ENTERING HIS PRESENCE/21-DAY PRAYER & FAST

Matthew 6:9-10

Pastor Miles McPherson – 2/8/15

In this week's sermon, Pastor Miles expressed that Christianity is a relationship with God, the creator of the universe; it's not a habit of doing religious routines. For instance, it is very good to pray and read our Bibles, but without the presence of God it is just doing an activity without God's presence.

As we go into the next 21 days of Fasting & Prayer we want to seek out, and listen for God's presence to acknowledge, confess, praise, listen and wait for Him. The purpose of fasting is to rearrange our lives so that we deny ourselves of some things in order to enter into God's presence more fully.

MEMORY VERSES

"You will show me the path of life; In Your Presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Talk about how you feel when you come across a good friend or family member whom you admire/appreciate a lot. What is your reaction when you see him/her or hear their voice? What emotions are stirred up?

STUDY QUESTIONS

In Matthew 6:11, Jesus is teaching the disciples how to pray and He says, *"Give us this day our daily bread."* For us, as in the times of the Bible, bread was a means of physical nourishment – let's take some time to talk about Spiritual nourishment.

When we pray, we begin by acknowledging God's presence, meeting with Him or having an encounter with God.

- Describe a time when you experienced God's presence
- Describe a time when you felt far from God's presence



Spend about 3 minutes in quiet prayer right now:

Start by sitting in silence for a few moments, slow your thoughts down, detox your thoughts, and relax your body. Ask the Lord to draw you near to himself and that you might experience his presence in prayer. Tell God that you want Him to be your daily bread, and ask him to reveal some things that you can do to enter into His presence more fully this week.

Share your experience with God in your prayer time (be honest!)

READ: Luke 24:13-35

1. When you look at v14-16, what discussions or self-talk are you having with others or within your own mind/heart that may be preventing you from recognizing God's Presence around you? How have these conversations been impacting you?
2. After you read v28-29, describe a time in your life where you felt that the Lord was setting you up for an encounter with Him.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Read the following aloud to the group:

How to Pray in a Group

*Nothing kills a group prayer time more quickly than bad prayer manners!
Here are a few tips to keep your group prayer time engaging:*

- 1) **Keep your prayers short** - long and eloquent prayers can be intimidating to those who haven't developed a public prayer life. Instead of long prayers, consider praying multiple times, allowing several people to pray short prayers for one subject at a time.
- 2) **Pray in conversation** - listen to one another and pray on the same subject, rather than skipping randomly from topic to topic. This creates agreement in prayer as we lift up one issue at a time to our Heavenly Father.
- 3) **Pray loudly so others can hear** - not only is it hard to pray in conversation when we can't hear one another, but some may fall asleep! We are called to be "alert in prayer" (Eph. 6:18).
- 4) **Pray to God, don't preach to one another.** Prayer is a conversation with God, so we need to keep in mind whom we pray to!

Discuss how to implement the above guidelines in your group...

Work through the following prayer exercise as a large group:

In this prayer exercise, you will spend time praising God for both **his greatness** and for **his closeness**. Read the following verses one passage at a time, followed by group prayer. For each



passage, spend a few minutes praying the character traits and truths from the verses as worship to God. Several or many might pray after each passage. If you are uncomfortable praying out loud in a group, step outside your comfort zone this week and pray a short prayer to God!

Isaiah 40:25-26 - *"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.*

Isaiah 41:10, 13 – *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you."*

Isaiah 43:10b-13 – *"Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. I have revealed and saved and proclaimed— I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "that I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"*

Isaiah 30:18 - *Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!*

➤ If time allows, share one thing that you're asking God for during the 21-day fast, then go around the group and each person lift up their request to God in prayer.

THEN:

If you haven't signed up for the 21-day Fast yet, pull out your phones and text the word "Fast" to 59769. You'll be sent a link to fill out your name, email & campus. Then you'll be sent a daily email devotional on fasting. You can also sign up at www.sdrock.com/fast

TAKE IT HOME!

- If you knew that God would hear and answer your prayer, what is the **'one thing'** that you would diligently pray for? Write the request, and then think through how you will pray for that item both boldly and in an attitude of surrender to Jesus.
- Spend time daily seeking to draw close to the presence of the Lord and lift up your **'one thing'** in prayer.

