

Suggestions for use of *13 Powerful Ways to Pray* in small groups

Introduction

If not already aware, please know that the book has an *Appendix* on how to use the book in small groups. The following has suggestions not in the Appendix, namely, different questions to use and suggestions on a way to combine the chapters in parts one and two during a six week period.

If your intended group is made up of people who have not been together before, it will be important to read pages 208-209 of Appendix.

If your group is one that has been together studying other materials, you will still need to decide:

- How many weeks you wish to give studying the book?
- What will be your format, i.e., beginning, middle and end of each session?
- Do you expect participants will have read the material *before* each meeting?
- Whether it is a new or existing group, it will be good to review pages 214-215, the bullet points on the characteristics of a good and not so good participant. To ensure the best outcome, it may be helpful to have participants read *during* your first session the characteristics of a good participant.

SESSION ONE

Focus

- The Preface
- What is Prayer – chapter one
- Conclusion of book, pages 204-206

Opening Prayer

The book on page 209 offers the following suggestion for an Opening Prayer. Needless to say, your group can use a different one.

Father, we thank you for gathering us together for this time of sharing and reflection. Open our hearts to your Holy Spirit who is present and active in each of us. Help us to share our thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Help us also to listen to one another with love and respect. Bind us together in love and help us to be clear channels of your wisdom and love for one another. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. If the group is new and the participants do not know each other, share your name, how long you have been in the parish and what motivated you to join a small group with the focus and prayer.

2. **Preface.** In the preface the author shares the prayer atmosphere in which he grew up. What was it like, prayer wise growing up in your home?

3. What is Prayer

- What spoke to you most in this chapter? Why?
- Was there a description of prayer mentioned that you had not thought of before? If so, what was it?
- How would you describe or define prayer?

4. Conclusion pages 204-206

The conclusion states in some ways, the goal we wish to achieve in prayer, namely, “*wanting to be with God and wanting to be sensitive and responsive to the Lord’s promptings . . .*” (pg. 205)

What are your thoughts on the conclusion pages? If the group has time, consider reading the conclusion during the meeting.

Conclude with spontaneous prayers based on the content of what you have discussed. Also, offer other prayers as you feel lead.

Focus of Next Session

Introduction to the 4 Keys (pgs. 12-14)

Key One – Positive Image of God and Self (pgs. 15-27)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (pg. 71)

Facilitator and group will need to decide if they want to cover one or two chapters each week. In sessions 2-5, the author aligns a chapter from part one with a chapter from part two. The group will need to decide if this will be too much homework for the members of the group.

SESSION TWO

Focus:

- Introduction to the Four Keys (pgs. 12-14)
- Key One: Developing a Positive Image of God & Self (pg. 15)
- Prayer of Thanksgiving (pg. 71)

Opening Prayer

Use suggested prayer in book (pg. 209) or use some other prayer.

1. Introduction to Keys

What spoke to you most in these pages and why? (pg. 12-14) When responding to this question each week, feel free to share more than one point that spoke to you.

2. Key One (pgs. 15-28)

- a) What spoke to you most in this chapter?
- b) What has helped you most to have a positive image of a) God b) Self? In responding to this question, remember to respond to *both* parts, God and self.

3. Prayer of Thanksgiving (pg. 71)

- a) What spoke to you most in this chapter and why?
- b) Would you consider yourself to be a grateful person, a person who generally sees the cup that is half-full? If so, what has helped you to become a grateful person?
- c) What can make it difficult for us to be a grateful person?
- d) Name some of the things you frequently thank God for.

Next week

- Key Two – Honesty with God (pg. 29)
- The Prayer of Petition (pg. 77)

Conclude with spontaneous prayers that connect with the topic, and with needs of the participants and the larger world we live in.

SESSION THREE

Focus:

- Key Two – Honesty with God (pg. 29)
- The Prayer of Petition (pg. 77)

Opening Prayer

Use Prayer on page 209 or use some other prayer.

Key Two: Honesty with God (pg. 29)

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter? Why?
2. How easy or hard is it for you to get angry with God?

If you never or rarely get angry with God is it because

- a) You think it would be a sin?
 - b) You are always able to accept that God has his reasons even when very bad things happen to you.
 - c) Is there another reason you rarely or never get angry with God?
3. Were you raised to believe and do you continue to believe that certain feelings e.g., hate, jealousy are sinful? What has helped you to deal better with what is often called “the tough feelings?”

Prayer of Petition (pg. 77)

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter? Why?
2. In the section “What to Pray for” (pg. 84-85), four key things are mentioned. How often do the first three things make it into your prayers of petition?
3. Did the section on the ‘issue of unanswered prayers’ (pgs. 87-92) throw any light on this issue? Normally how do you deal with the issue of unanswered prayer?

Conclude with spontaneous prayers that connect with the topic, and with needs of the participants and the larger world we live in.

Next week’s homework

- Key Three: Integrating Prayer and Life (pg. 45).
- Prayer of Forgiveness (pg. 107).

SESSION FOUR

Focus:

- Connecting Prayer with Daily Life
- Prayer of Forgiveness

Opening Prayer

Use prayer on page 209 or some other prayer.

Connecting Prayer & Life

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter? Why?
2. Most, if not all of us, engage in ‘occupational prayer’ i.e. praying *as* we do other things. How often do you engage in ‘spousal prayer’ – time when we are doing nothing but focusing on our relationship with Christ?

If spousal prayer is something you frequently do, how did you develop this habit? If it is not a regular habit of yours, how challenging would it be for you to develop this habit?

Prayer of Forgiveness (pg. 107)

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter? Why?
2. Ten obstacles to forgiveness are named (pgs. 109-110). Which of the obstacles are most challenging to you?
3. Can you see yourself using the prayer suggestions offered pm [ages 110-112?
4. What helps you to forgive yourself?

Conclude with spontaneous prayers that connect with the topic, and with needs of the participants and the larger world we live in.

Next week’s homework

- Key Four – Listening to God (pg. 55)
- Prayer of Consciousness Examen

SESSION FIVE

Focus:

- Listening to God
- Prayer of Examen

Opening prayer

Use prayer on page 209 or some other prayer.

Key Four: Listening to God

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter? Why?
2. Do you believe God speaks to you? If so, how does God speak to you?
3. What helps us to become a better listener to God?

Consciousness Examen (pg. 115)

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter?
2. Can you see how *practicing* the Examen can help us to tune into the movement of the Spirit in our lives?

Conclude with spontaneous prayers that connect with the topic, and with needs of the participants and the larger world we live in.

SESSION SIX

Focus:

- Decisioning Prayer
- Prayer of Contemplation

Opening Prayer

Use prayer on page 209 or some other prayer.

Decisioning Prayer

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter?
2. Could you see yourself using the seven steps mentioned in this chapter? If so, which of the steps would be most challenging?

Prayer of Contemplation

1. What spoke to you most in this chapter? Why?
2. Have you ever experienced ‘contemplative moments’, moments when you had a deep sense of God’s presence and love? If so, what was that experience like for you?

Conclude with spontaneous prayers that connect with the topic, and with needs of the participants and the larger world we live in.

Optional Sessions

As a group, you may decide to meet for one or more session. If so, you can decide on which chapters you wish to focus on. At the end of each chapter in the book, you will find suggestions for small group questions.