CoMission

LEADER BOOK

Praying for People You'll Never Meet

A stranger asked for prayer at a clinic, a concert, a community training. You will never know their name — and your prayer is what opens the door.

Print it, write in it, and take it to the group.

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The request in front of you

REMEMBER

A stranger told the truth. Somebody promised to pray. I'm the somebody.

THE PASSAGE — PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER IS NOT A GESTURE

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

"Is there anything we can pray for?" asks nothing and offers something. It costs the person nothing to say no. If they say yes, they have not signed up for anything, joined anything, or agreed to be visited. In a great many communities that question is the only door genuinely open — not the second-best ask, the honest one.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 25 minutes

Before the session Bring two or three real requests with every identifying detail removed. Read them yourself beforehand so you are not meeting them for the first time in front of the group.

Watch for

- A team treating the prayer question as the polite version of a real ask. It is not a softer evangelism; in many places it is the only honest door there is.
- Someone moved to want to do more — find them, send money, go. Note it warmly and hold it; chapters 7 and 8 are where that gets its answer.

Note

1. Do this in the session with a real anonymised request, and give it the full three readings even though it feels slow. The second reading is where a room stops skimming; the third is where somebody's voice changes. That change is the entire chapter.
2. Push past "nothing, it was free". In many of the communities we serve, being known to have asked Christians for prayer carries a real social cost — and what they got in return was a promise from a stranger, which is not much to bet on.
3. The useful discovery is that each one asks the person to give something or agree to something, and only the prayer question does neither. Somebody usually defends the survey; ask them how it would feel to be handed one at a clinic in a country where their answers could be repeated.
4. The answer is: nothing. No prayer, no reply, and no reason for that person ever to hear from us again. Do not soften it — the whole ministry runs on volunteers believing that sentence.

Everything in this class depends on what a volunteer believes they are holding. Get that wrong in chapter 1 and every later chapter becomes administration.

Slow down on one real request

Do not open with the ministry. Open with a request, read aloud, with every identifying detail gone.

Then run the first exercise properly. Three readings feels like too many until you do it: the first is information, the second is when a room stops skimming, and the third — read as though the person were across the table — is where somebody's voice changes. That change is the chapter. Nothing you say afterwards will do as much.

What it cost them

The second exercise usually gets a shallow first answer: it was free, they just wrote it down. Push once.

People write things into that box they have not told their family. In many of the communities we serve, being known to have asked Christians for prayer carries a real social cost. And what they received in exchange was a promise from a stranger at a folding table, which is a thin thing to bet on. That is the risk the volunteer is now holding the other end of.

Why the prayer question and not another one

Work the third exercise as a group rather than silently, because the comparison is what makes the case.

A phone number, so somebody can call about church, is a lot to ask of a stranger who came for a checkup. An invitation to a service is easy to smile at and forget. A survey about beliefs feels like a quiz, and in many places is the exact thing that makes a family close the door. Each one asks the person to give something or agree to something.

Is there anything we can pray for? asks nothing and offers something. It costs them nothing to say no, and a yes signs them up for nothing at all. Say plainly that this is not the second-best ask because the real ones are off limits. It is the honest one.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Name who the somebody is

Close hard on the last exercise, and do not soften the answer. Somebody at that event promised out loud that this would be prayed for. The volunteer is the person who makes that promise true, and nobody else is going to. If the sheet is set down, nothing happens — no prayer, no reply, and no reason for that person to hear from us again.

Then give them the recite line and mean it: *a stranger told the truth, somebody promised to pray, I'm the somebody.*

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is James 5:13-16 — the passage the panel quotes from. Four verses, and it treats praying for one another as something that does something rather than something that comforts the person doing it. A group that has studied it will write differently in chapter 5.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Take one request. Read it as information, then out loud, then as though the person were sitting across from you. Write what changed.

2. What did it cost that person to write it down? Name what they risked, and what they got in return.

3. A phone number, an invitation to a service, a survey about beliefs. Write why each one asks too much of a stranger at a folding table.

4. If you set this request down, what happens next? Write it plainly.

CoMission

Pray for one another

James 5:13-16

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What should we do when suffering, and when glad (v. 13)?
   What happens when we confess and pray for one another (v. 16)?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What have you been carrying alone that you need prayer for?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who will you ask to pray with you this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, teach me to bring my needs and others' needs to you, and to pray together with your people.*

This study online

Why this prayer does two things

> REMEMBER
>
> I'm praying for a soul, not a step. God opens the door.

TWO REASONS, AND ONE IS INFINITELY LARGER

You are not writing prayers in order to generate follow-up opportunities. If that is the posture, people can smell it, and God is not fooled either. Pray because a person is hurting and God hears.

1. First — you are carrying a person to God	A woman in a village you cannot find on a map is afraid for her son. Nobody in her life is praying for her. This week you will hold her fear in front of the God who made her.
2. Second — it unclogs a pipeline	A promise was made at an event. If the response never comes, the relationship ends there quietly, with nobody at fault.
3. Both, at once	Do not let the second swallow the first. The door opens as a consequence, not as a technique.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 25 minutes

Before the session Decide how you will answer someone who says the second reason is the real reason. Have the honest version ready rather than a slogan.

Watch for

- A group that gets energised by the pipeline and loses the first reason entirely. That is the failure this chapter exists to prevent, and it does not look like a failure — it looks like enthusiasm.
- Someone deflated by "you may never know". Note them; chapter 9 is written for exactly that person.

Note

1. Ask for honesty rather than the right answer, and leave room for a no. Somebody who admits they would lose heart has told you something useful about chapter 9, which is where that gets addressed. Do not argue with them here.
2. The answer is the desk where a prayer request waits for a response — theirs. Say it plainly once, then stop, because the point is weight rather than pressure. A volunteer who feels indispensable in an anxious way writes worse prayers, not better ones.
3. Have several people actually say it aloud with a real request in mind. The clause at the end is doing the work: it is a rehearsal for the ordinary experience of this ministry, which is asking and never finding out.
4. Expect something like "we'd love to keep praying with you — let us know how it goes". Naming it in their own handwriting is what makes it recognisable later. Do not shame the instinct; it is efficiency, not cynicism.

This is the chapter that decides what kind of prayer ministry you are running, and the danger in it is not obvious — because the wrong version is the exciting one.

Give the first reason its own weight

Teach reason one on its own before mentioning reason two, and do not rush it.

A woman in a village you cannot find on a map is afraid for her son. Nobody in her life is praying for her. This week a stranger in another country will hold her fear in front of the God who made her. Read the James line and take the two words at face value: powerful, effective. Not therapeutic, not symbolic.

Then say the sentence that has to be true for this class to work: if every request a volunteer ever prays for ends there — prayed, answered by God in his own way, never reported back — the ministry was worth their time.

Then the pipeline, plainly

Reason two surprises most new members and it deserves to be stated concretely.

A promise was made at an event. If the response never comes back, the whole relationship ends there, quietly, with nobody at fault. The seeker concludes what anyone would conclude: it was a nice afternoon, and these people were like everyone else.

When a response does come, something changes. A stranger prayed and a stranger followed through, and now there is an honest, non-pushy reason to reach out again. Later, the same person can be asked whether they would like to learn how to study the Bible for themselves — and that question is the door to real discipleship. It does not get asked at all if the first promise was broken.

Run the second exercise here. Let them find that the narrow place is their own desk. Say it once and then stop; a volunteer who feels indispensable in an anxious way writes worse prayers, not better ones.

Guard the order

Now name the failure, because it will not feel like one.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

A room that has just understood the pipeline gets energetic, and the energy is aimed at the wrong thing. Say it directly: we are not writing prayers in order to generate follow-up opportunities. If that is the posture, people can smell it, and God is not fooled either.

The fourth exercise is how that becomes recognisable rather than theoretical. Make them write one sentence of the bad version in their own handwriting. It is almost always some form of *let us know how it goes* — which chapter 6 will forbid outright, for this reason among others.

Rehearse the ordinary case

Close with the third exercise, said out loud. The trailing clause is the point: *whether or not I ever hear about it again.* That is not a pious flourish. It is a rehearsal for the ordinary experience of this ministry, and the volunteers who last are the ones who have rehearsed it.

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is Ephesians 3:14-21 — Paul on his knees for a church he had mostly never met, asking for something he would never get to verify. It is the exact posture this chapter is asking for, from a man who had every reason to want a results page and did not appear to have one.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **If you never heard how a single one of these stories ended, would the ministry still be worth your time? Answer honestly.**

2. **Between a hundred people served and a handful who eventually open a Bible, where is the one narrow place everything either keeps moving or stops?**

3. Finish it out loud, then write it: "God, I am asking you for _____, whether or not I ever hear about it again."

4. What would a prayer written to generate a follow-up sound like? Write one sentence of it, so you will recognise it in your own writing.

Ephesians 3:14-21

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Paul pray for the believers, and what does he say about God's power and love?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Where do you most need to know Christ's love in a deeper way?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   How could you pray this prayer for yourself or someone else this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you pray this over — that they would know God's love?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, root me in your love. Help me grasp how wide and long and high and deep Christ's love is, and be filled with your fullness.*

This study online

How a request reaches you

> REMEMBER
> The system carries it. I pray it.

FOUR WAYS IN, THEN THREE THINGS BEFORE YOU SEE IT

Then three things happen before you see it: it is logged, so nobody's request quietly disappears; it is translated, so you pray for what was actually said rather than guessing at it; and it is routed to you.

1. From a conversation	Someone on the team talked with a person and asked at the end what they could pray for. Usually the richest, because it carries real detail.
2. From a seeker survey	People write on paper what they would never say to a stranger's face. Some of the heaviest requests come this way.
3. From a QR code	A poster in a waiting room, a card at the door. They type it themselves, at any hour, and nobody on our team ever met them.
4. From a recommendation	Somebody who already received prayer tells a friend. The healthiest sign a prayer ministry gives off.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 20 minutes

Before the session Be able to demonstrate the responder's queue live, or have screenshots. Know which of the four channels your own events actually use, and roughly in what proportion.

Watch for

- A session that turns into a software demo. The tool takes ten minutes; the reason it exists takes the rest.
- Anxiety about the technology from someone who would otherwise be excellent at this. Show them the index-card version first — it is true, and it is what relaxes them.

Note

1. There is no marked answer and that is fine — the guessing is the exercise. Typed requests read differently from ones written down by a team member, and noticing that is what stops a responder skimming.
2. The useful discovery is that a QR request came from somebody nobody on our team has ever met, alone with their phone, possibly at three in the morning. The same sentence carries a different weight once that is in view.
3. What is lost is scale and reliability. What is not lost is any of the ministry. Do this exercise before showing anyone a screen; a room that has pictured the shoebox version never confuses the software with the work.
4. Routing without a coordinator staying up late, translating without waiting on the one bilingual person in the church, and remembering to reach back out months later when every human involved has forgotten. That last one is the answer worth landing on.

This is the practical chapter, and its risk is that it becomes a software demo. The tool takes ten minutes. The rest of the session is about keeping it in its place.

Watch this chapter

Teach the four channels as four different people

Do not read the list. Take each one as a person, because a responder who cannot picture the requester writes to nobody.

The conversation request came out of a real exchange with somebody on the team, which is why it usually carries detail. The survey request was written on paper — and people write things on paper they would never say to a stranger's face, which is why this channel produces some of the heaviest requests in the system. The QR request was typed by the person alone with their phone, at any hour, and nobody on our team ever met them. The recommendation came because somebody who already received prayer told a friend, which is the healthiest sign a prayer ministry gives off.

The second exercise is where that becomes real. The same sentence lands differently once you know it was typed at three in the morning by somebody nobody has met.

Log, translate, route

Keep this brief and concrete. Logged, so nobody's request quietly disappears and so we know when it is time to reach back out. Translated, so a responder prays for what was actually said rather than guessing at it. Routed, so it arrives without a coordinator staying up late.

Show the queue if you have it. Ten minutes, and no longer.

Do the index-card exercise before the demo

If you have time for only one thing in this chapter, make it the third exercise, and run it before anyone sees a screen.

A stack of index cards, somebody with a phone to translate, and a person willing to write back is the same ministry. Nothing of the ministry is lost in that version. What is lost is scale and reliability — routing, translating, and remembering to reach back out months later when every human being involved has forgotten.

A room that has pictured the shoebox version never afterwards confuses the software with the work. It also relaxes the person in the room who is quietly worried they are not good with technology, and that person is often one of your best future responders.

NOTES

Say the sentence

Close on it directly: the system is a good servant here, and it is not the ministry. Then the recite line — *the system carries it, I pray it.*

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is Acts 9:10-19 — Ananias, handed a name, a street and a house for a stranger he had every reason not to visit. It is the closest thing in Scripture to a routed request, and it is worth noticing that the routing did not do the work. Somebody still had to go and lay his hands on the man.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Open one request. Before praying, name which of the four channels it most likely came from, and what in the wording told you.

2. Would that request land differently on you if it had come from a different channel? Write how.

3. Describe this same ministry run entirely on index cards. What is lost, and what is not?

4. Name one thing the system does that no volunteer could keep doing by hand for a year.

Acts 9:10-19

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does God speak to Ananias, and how does Ananias answer?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   When has fear made you hesitant to do what God asked?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Is there a hard obedience God is asking of you this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who is someone unlikely that God might want to reach through you?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Lord, when you call me to something hard or frightening, help me trust you and obey like Ananias did.*

This study online

What happens after you pray

> REMEMBER
>
> Pray it, send it, and leave the timing alone.

THE PASSAGE — WHO SPOKE, AND WHO OPENED

> **Acts 16:14**
>
> A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira and a worshiper of God, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Paul spoke. The Lord opened. Both are in the sentence. You are not the one who opens a heart — but you are one of the people who shows up and speaks, and God has never seemed embarrassed to use that.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 25 minutes

Before the session Know your ministry's actual re-contact interval and what that message says, so you can answer "how long is later?" with a real number rather than a shrug.

Watch for

- Impatience with the wait — a suggestion that the follow-up should come sooner, or carry more. That instinct is what turns a prayer ministry into a funnel.
- Someone who reads the chain as a burden they are personally carrying. Point them back at Lydia: Paul spoke, the Lord opened.

Note

1. Make them write it from the requester's side, in the requester's position, not as a description of the process. For a lot of people this is the first evidence in their whole life that a Christian's promise was worth anything — and a responder who has imagined that writes a better prayer in chapter 5.
2. Because nobody gets pounced on. Somebody will call the wait a missed opportunity; answer that the whole value of the response was that it asked for nothing, and a quick follow-up retroactively turns it into bait.
3. This is the chapter's real test and it is worth the silence. Anything that reads as advice, pressure, or a sales step fails it. Have one or two people say what they would change rather than reading the original aloud.
4. They are never re-invited to ask again, so they are never eventually asked about the Bible, so the offer to study together never gets made. Say it once as a chain, without any pressure attached — the point is the shape of the failure, not guilt.

This chapter answers the question every new responder is actually asking — does any of this go anywhere? — and it has to answer it without turning the ministry into a funnel.

Show it from the requester's side

Start where the prayer lands rather than where it goes. Somebody in a village reads, in their own words, that a stranger prayed for their son.

Run the first exercise from inside that. They wrote something at a folding table, half expecting nothing. And then something came back — not a form letter, not an invitation to an event, but a prayer about the exact thing they said. For a lot of people this is the first evidence in their whole life that a Christian's promise was worth anything.

A responder who has genuinely imagined that writes a different prayer in chapter 5. That is the reason this exercise comes before the writing chapter and not after it.

Defend the wait

Then the system waits, and somebody in the room will want it to wait less. Take that seriously rather than brushing it off.

The whole value of the response was that it asked for nothing. A quick follow-up retroactively turns it into bait, and the requester is not a fool — they will reread the prayer in that light. Later, they are simply invited to ask again if they need it. No pitch. Some ask again, some never do, some ask a year later about something completely different, having thought about us in between.

Have a real number ready for "how long is later?" A shrug here makes the restraint sound like a lack of a plan rather than a decision.

The hinge, and the quiet stop

Name the question that eventually comes — would you like to learn how to study the Bible? — and then name how the person arrived at it. Not from an argument, not from a sermon at a soccer tournament, but from months of being prayed for by strangers who wanted nothing.

Then say the chain once, plainly, and without pressure attached: if the prayer is never written, the person is never re-invited to ask again, so they are never eventually asked about the Bible, so the offer to study together never gets made. It does not break loudly. It just stops.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Say it once. Guilt is a poor engine and it produces the exact templated prayers chapter 6 forbids.

Give the weight back

Close on Lydia, because some responder in the room has just quietly picked up more than they should be carrying. Paul spoke. The Lord opened. Both are in the sentence, and only one of them is the volunteer's part.

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is Acts 16:11-15 — the whole scene the panel's verse sits in. A riverside, a conversation, a woman listening, and a household changed. Nobody in it engineered anything; they showed up at a place of prayer and spoke, and God did the part nobody else could do.

Reflect and Discuss

1. They wrote something at a folding table, half expecting nothing. Write what it is like when something comes back.

2. Why does the system wait, instead of following up straight away? Write the reason in your own words.

3. Look back at a response you have sent. If a message reached that person in six months inviting them to ask again, would what you wrote make them glad to hear from us?

4. **"The chain does not break loudly. It just stops." Write where it stops if your response is never written.**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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A household believes

Acts 16:11-15

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does each household — Lydia's and the jailer's — come to faith, and what does each do right afterward?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What changes if you think of planting as reaching whole households, not just individuals?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Which household will you name this week and begin praying for and asking to gather in?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Whom will you tell the moment a household opens its door, so the cohort can pray and help?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Lord, in one city you opened Lydia's heart and a jailer's whole house. Open a household in my city where a church can be born.*

This study online

How to write a prayer that lands

REMEMBER

Address God. Echo their words. Bless them. Stop.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

REQUEST: "Pray for my daughter. She left home 8 months ago and we don't know where she is." — RESPONSE: "Father, you know exactly where this daughter is standing tonight, and her mother does not. Watch over her. Keep her safe in the places we can't see. And for this mother — eight months is a long time to carry a fear like that. Give her rest tonight, and hold her steady until she has an answer. We're asking you for this because we can't do it. Amen." Four sentences. Her words. Nothing added, nothing sold.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 40 minutes

Before the session Have three or four anonymised requests ready to write against, varied in weight. Write your own response to one of them beforehand and be willing to have the room cut it.

Watch for

- Church vocabulary arriving without anyone noticing — covering, hedge of protection, traveling mercies. A person who has never been to church has no idea what was just said.
- A group polishing prose. Sincerity is the whole aesthetic here; a well-turned prayer that says nothing they asked for is worse than a plain one that does.

Note

1. Do this one together on a board before anyone writes alone. The move is small and mechanical — change who the sentence is addressed to — and once a room has watched it happen once, they can do it. Watch for rewrites that still smuggle the instruction in as "Father, help her to trust you."
2. The upgrade is usually to salvation, a marriage, or a walk with God, and it always reads the same way: their words weren't good enough, so we substituted better ones. Say plainly that God can be trusted with the rest of the conversation.
3. The smallest exercise with the largest return. "You said you can't sleep" tells the reader, instantly and without any claim, that a human being actually read what they wrote — which does more than any amount of eloquence.
4. Have them read the before and after aloud. Almost every group discovers the shorter one is stronger, which is a far more durable lesson than being told to keep it short. Time it too — four minutes is the honest budget.

This is the practical heart of the class. Very little of it should be spoken by the facilitator, and most of the session should be people writing.

Fix the direction first

The one mistake worth attacking before any other is drift from praying to addressing. Knowing a message will be read, people slowly stop praying and start talking to the reader: *God wants you to know that…*, *remember that everything happens for a reason…*

Do the first exercise on a board, together, before anyone writes alone. The move is small and mechanical: change who the sentence is addressed to. Watch for the rewrite that smuggles the instruction back in — *Father, help her to trust you* — and ask whose idea that was, hers or ours.

Then read the two versions side by side. *You need to trust God with your son* against *Father, Miguel's mother is afraid for him tonight; bring him home, give her sleep.* The first is advice from a stranger. The second is what she asked for.

Do not upgrade the request

Name this one explicitly, because it comes from a good motive and is invisible to the person doing it. If someone asks about their knee, pray about the knee. The temptation is to look past what they said toward what we assume they really need — their salvation, their marriage, their walk with God.

Say why it fails: it reads exactly like what it is. Their words weren't good enough, so we substituted better ones. God can be trusted with the rest of the conversation.

Restraint, taught by cutting

The rest of the chapter is restraint, and it teaches better by subtraction than by rule.

Give the rules quickly — three to six sentences, echo their words, plain speech rather than pulpit speech, at most one line of Scripture and only if it fits, and end by blessing rather than asking. Then spend the time on the last exercise: write, then cut by a third, deleting every sentence that is advice.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Almost every group discovers the shorter version is stronger. That discovery lasts; being told to keep it short does not. Time the writing too — four minutes is the honest budget, and a room that has felt how much fits into four minutes stops treating brevity as neglect.

Watch the vocabulary

Listen for covering, hedge of protection, traveling mercies, in the mighty name. Not because they are wrong, but because a person who has never been to church has no idea what was just said, and the strangeness puts distance between you exactly where you were trying to close it.

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is Matthew 6:5-13 — Jesus on how to pray, and then a model prayer that fits in five verses. It contains both halves of this chapter: do not perform it, and do not heap up empty phrases. A group that has studied it has the strongest possible argument for the four-sentence prayer, and it is not the facilitator's argument.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Rewrite this as a prayer: "You need to trust God with your son." Address God, and let the requester overhear it.**

2. **A request asks for prayer about a knee. Write what it would look like to pray for something you decided they needed more — and why they would feel it.**

3. **Take a request and copy out the two words or phrases you would echo back.**

4. **Write a response, then cut it by a third. Delete every sentence that is advice. Write what survived.**

CoMission

Learn to pray

Matthew 6:5-13

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does Jesus say to pray, and how not to (vv. 5-7)?
   What does this prayer show about the Father?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which line of the prayer do you most need to pray today?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   When and where will you pray this week the way Jesus taught?

4. **Who will I tell?**

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, teach me to pray. I am new at this — help me talk with you simply and honestly.*

This study online

What not to write

> REMEMBER
>
> No diagnosis, no promises, no sermon, no signature.

SEVEN THINGS THAT TURN A PRAYER INTO A PROBLEM

1. No diagnosis or counsel	Four lines of text and no context. Advice built on a guess lands badly at best, cruelly at worst.
2. No promised outcome	"I'm asking him to bring her home" is honest. "He will bring her home" is not yours to say.
3. No sermon	If someone's mother is dying and they receive a paragraph about eternity, they have learned that we treat pain as an opening.
4. No correcting their beliefs	Pray for the person. That conversation belongs to a relationship you do not have yet.
5. No questions, no invitation to reply	The channel is one-way by design. A question you can't hear the answer to reads as a door that closed.
6. No name, no church, no template	Sign nothing. And a prayer that could have been written without reading their request is worth exactly as much as no prayer at all.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 30 minutes

Before the session Bring two or three responses that go wrong in these ways — write them yourself rather than using a real volunteer's. Be ready to have your own held up as the bad example.

Watch for

- A room hearing this as a list of restrictions on their sincerity. Every rule here protects the requester, and saying whose side each one is on keeps the chapter from feeling like supervision.
- Defence of the template by someone with a large queue. Answer with volume: it is better to pray properly for six than to process forty.

Note

1. The difference is usually a single verb. Land the reason rather than the rule: when the promised outcome does not happen, the person is left believing either that God broke a promise or that their faith wasn't good enough — and a stranger handed them that.
2. Not every such sentence is wrong — "eight months is a long time to carry a fear like that" is in the worked example. The question is whether it earns its place. Advice never does; a sentence that says "I read what you wrote" often does.
3. Expect folk practice, other religions, prosperity assumptions, and requests nobody would pray for on their own. Decide the answer now, calmly: pray for the person. That conversation belongs to a relationship we do not have yet and cannot start by correcting a frightened stranger.

4. It costs the only thing the ministry has. People know. And if the system does the routing precisely so that a human being does the praying, a template quietly puts the machine back in the one place it was never supposed to be.

This chapter is a list, which makes it easy to teach badly. Read as rules, it sounds like supervision. Say whose side each one is on and it becomes obvious.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Make the case with the two you can prove

Do not go through all seven at equal weight. Two of them carry the argument.

The promised outcome first, with the first exercise. Have them write the same request both ways and find that the difference is usually one verb. Then give the reason: when it does not happen, the person is left believing either that God broke a promise or that their faith wasn't good enough — and a stranger handed them that. Ask boldly for the healing, the job, the daughter's return. Leave the answer with God.

Then the sermon. If someone tells you their mother is dying and receives back a paragraph about eternity, they have learned that we treat pain as an opening. That memory lasts, and it is not recoverable by anybody who comes after. Say where the gospel actually goes: through months of somebody being cared for, and then a real invitation to open a Bible. It does not need cramming into four sentences.

The nuance in "not addressed to God"

Be careful with the second exercise, because the rule has an edge that a literal room will overapply.

Not every sentence addressed to the requester is wrong — *eight months is a long time to carry a fear like that* is in the worked example, and it is the warmest line in it. The test is whether it earns its place. Advice never does. A sentence that quietly says "I read what you wrote" often does.

Decide the theology question in the cold

The third exercise is the one to get settled before it happens at ten at night. Requests will arrive shaped by other religions, folk practice, superstition, and ideas about God the responder thinks are wrong. Some will ask for things they would never pray for on their own.

Pray for the person. The response is not the place to fix anyone's theology — that conversation belongs to a relationship we do not have yet, and it cannot start by correcting a stranger who came to us frightened.

The template

Expect a defence of it from whoever has the largest queue, and answer with volume rather than with ethics: it is better to pray properly for six than to process forty. People know. A prayer that could have been written without reading their request is exactly as valuable as no prayer at all — and if the system does the routing precisely so that a human being does the praying, a template puts the machine back in the one place it was never supposed to be.

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is James 3:1-12 — the tongue as a small thing that sets a forest on fire, and the same mouth blessing and cursing. Written about speech, it reads without any adjustment as a passage about four sentences typed to a stranger who cannot answer back.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Write the same request twice: once promising an outcome, once asking boldly for it. Underline what changed.**

2. **Read back your last three responses. Copy out every sentence that is talking to the requester instead of to God.**

3. What kind of request would most tempt you to correct someone's theology? Write it, and write what you will pray instead.

4. A template saves ten minutes. Write what it costs.

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Words that build or burn

James 3:1-12

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What pictures does James use to describe the tongue and its power?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which of your words at home this past week built someone up, and which ones burned?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What is one word you need to say — or take back — in your home this week: an apology, a thank you, an encouragement?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you talk with about the power words carry inside a house?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, my tongue can bless and it can burn — and home is where it shows first. Tame my words and make them a spring of fresh water.*

This study online

Keep it anonymous

REMEMBER

> Report it, then ignore it. What I read here stays here.

WHEN PERSONAL INFORMATION SHOWS UP ANYWAY

Both halves matter. Reporting without ignoring means a stranger got investigated. Ignoring without reporting means personal information sits in a system that promised not to hold it. Pray for the person exactly as if the detail were not there.

1. Report it	Flag it in the system so somebody with the right role can decide whether anything needs to happen, and get the detail scrubbed from the record.
2. Then ignore it	Do not act on it. Do not look it up, do not search the name, do not try to find them, and do not use any of it in your prayer.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 25 minutes

Before the session Know exactly what your report control does and who receives it. Decide in advance what you will say if a volunteer admits they have already looked something up.

Watch for

- Someone who wants to act — send money, make a call, get somebody to the address. It is compassion, and acting on it can make things materially worse for the requester.
- A volunteer distressed by something they have read. Anonymity does not remove the weight; make time afterwards rather than in front of the room.

Note

1. Get them to the version that has consequences in it. In many of the communities we serve, being known to have asked Christians for prayer carries a real social cost, and in a few places worse than social. Anonymity is not a limitation on the ministry; it is the condition that made the request exist.
2. Report, then ignore. Test both failure modes out loud: reporting without ignoring means a stranger got investigated; ignoring without reporting means personal information sits in a system that promised not to hold it. Order matters, and so does doing both.
3. Most volunteers have never considered this side, and it is often what makes the rule feel like care rather than restriction. They are not meant to carry it, and they are not equipped to act on it from where they sit.
4. The small group is the one people do not see coming, because it arrives dressed as a prayer point. Answer it plainly: pray about specifics, talk about them nowhere. Chapter 9 asks them to tell people about the ministry, and this is the line that makes that safe.

This chapter reads like a policy and is actually about protecting the one thing that makes the whole ministry possible.

Start with why the honesty exists

Lead with the requester, not the rule. People write things into that box they have not told their family. A woman names an abusive husband. A man admits he is thinking about leaving. A teenager writes something that would get them thrown out of their house if the wrong person in their town read it.

Push the first exercise until the answers have consequences in them. In many of the communities we serve, being known to have asked Christians for prayer carries a real social cost, and in a few places worse than social. They were honest because it was safe, and every part of the system exists to keep that true.

Anonymity is not a limitation the ministry works around. It is the condition that made the request exist at all.

Both halves of the rule, and both failure modes

Teach report-then-ignore as one rule with two halves, and test each failure out loud.

Reporting without ignoring means a stranger got investigated by somebody with no role to do it. Ignoring without reporting means personal information sits in a system that promised not to hold it. Neither is harmless, and volunteers reliably drop one half or the other depending on temperament — the cautious ones ignore without reporting, the active ones report and then keep looking.

Be specific about what ignoring means: do not look it up, do not search the name, do not try to find them, and do not use any of it in the prayer. Pray for the person exactly as if the detail were not there.

The half nobody expects

The third exercise usually changes the temperature of the room, because most volunteers have never thought about anonymity as protecting them.

They will pray over things that would keep them up at night if they also knew the address. They are not meant to carry that, and from where they sit they could not act on it anyway. Said once, this turns the rule from a restriction into something closer to care.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Inappropriate requests

Cover this plainly and briefly. Some messages are not prayer requests — abusive, obscene, or aimed at whoever is reading, and occasionally someone testing whether a person is really on the other end.

Nobody has to absorb that. Report it and move on. They are not required to pray their way through an insult, and they are not the person who decides what happens next.

The discipline nobody sees

Close on the last exercise, and name the small group specifically, because that is the leak people do not see coming — it arrives dressed as a prayer point with details attached. Pray about specifics. Talk about them nowhere. Chapter 9 will ask them to tell people about this ministry, and this is the line that makes that safe.

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is John 4:7-19 — a conversation at a well at noon, where Jesus knows a woman's entire history and does not broadcast it. He tells her he knows, and then leaves it with her. What she does with her own story afterwards is her decision, and she is the one who tells the town.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Write why a person is able to be honest in that box. Name what would change if they could be identified.

2. A request arrives with a name and a phone number. Write the two steps, in order, and what each one is for.

3. Anonymity protects the responder as well. Write what you would be carrying if you also knew the address.

4. Where would you be most tempted to repeat something you read here — a spouse, a small group, a story about the ministry? Name it now.

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Jesus meets people personally

John 4:7-19

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus offer the woman, and how does he describe it?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   How does Jesus handle what he knows about her life?
   Why is it surprising that he speaks to her at all?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What thirst will you bring to Jesus this week instead of to what you usually reach for?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you talk to as personally as Jesus talked to her?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, thank you that you asked a stranger for a drink and offered her living water. Meet me where I actually am, and let me stop drinking from wells that never satisfy.*

This study online

When to escalate

> REMEMBER
> Escalate it, pray for them, and stay out of the middle.

WHAT TO ESCALATE — DECIDE BEFORE IT IS IN FRONT OF YOU

> **Luke 5:16**
>
> But Jesus often withdrew to solitary places to pray.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

If you are unsure, escalate. Wrong in that direction costs a few minutes of somebody's time; wrong in the other direction can cost more than any of us want to think about.

1. Suicide or self-harm	Explicit, or oblique: giving things away, saying goodbye, saying everyone would be better off. Take the oblique ones as seriously as the explicit ones.
2. Violence, at home or coming	Being hurt, afraid of what someone in the house will do, or hinting at what they might do to somebody else.
3. A child at risk	Anything describing harm to a child, from anyone, in any wording.
4. Immediate crisis	No food tonight, just been thrown out, in the middle of something happening right now.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 30 minutes

Before the session Know exactly what escalation does in your ministry, who receives it, how fast, and what they can actually do locally. If you cannot answer that, settle it before teaching this chapter rather than in front of the room.

Watch for

- Anyone treating escalation as an admission of inadequacy. Say early that it is the competent response, not the timid one.
- A responder who has already met one of these and handled it alone. Expect it, and talk with them afterwards rather than in front of everybody.

Note

1. Do this in the session with devices open. Not "there's a button" — where it is, what it is called, what happens after. Somebody who has never pressed it will hesitate on the night it matters, and hesitation is the only cost this chapter is trying to remove.
2. Giving things away, saying goodbye, saying everyone would be better off, asking for prayer for the family rather than themselves. Write them on a board together. The explicit ones nobody misses; these are the ones that get read as sadness and scrolled past.
3. Not to rescue, counsel, talk anybody down, find them, contact them, or put themselves into a dangerous situation. The tempting one is nearly always contact. Answer it with the harm: an outsider inserting themselves into a violent household at a distance, with no context and no way to follow through, has caused real harm before.
4. The people who can help now know, and God is being asked to intervene. Neither would have happened otherwise. Land this one properly — passing it on feels like passing the buck, and a volunteer who believes that will try to handle the next one alone.

Teach this before anyone needs it, and teach it as competence rather than as caution. A responder who thinks escalating is a confession of inadequacy will try to handle the first one alone.

Get the control found tonight

Start with the first exercise, devices open, in the session. Not “there is a button somewhere” — where it is, what it is called, and what a responder sees after pressing it.

Somebody who has never pressed it will hesitate on the night it matters. That hesitation is the entire cost this chapter exists to remove, and it is removed by two minutes of looking now.

Spend the time on the oblique signals

The explicit ones nobody misses. Work the second exercise on a board, together, because these are the ones that get read as ordinary sadness and scrolled past: giving things away, saying goodbye, saying everyone would be better off, asking for prayer for the family rather than for themselves.

Then give the rule for uncertainty and give it plainly: if unsure, escalate. Nobody has ever been harmed because a responder flagged something that turned out to be fine. Wrong in that direction costs a few minutes of somebody’s time; wrong in the other direction can cost more than any of us want to think about.

The direction good people get wrong

The third exercise is the heart of the chapter, and the room will resist it, because everything in them wants to help.

They are not being asked to rescue anybody. Not to counsel someone through a crisis, not to talk anybody down, not to find them, contact them, or put themselves into a dangerous situation for a stranger on another continent.

The temptation is nearly always contact — just a message, just to say someone cares. Answer it with the harm rather than the policy: an outsider inserting themselves into a violent household, at a distance, with no context and no way to follow through, has caused real harm before.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Escalation exists because the people who were actually at that event know the community and know what help exists there.

Refuse the “smaller thing” reading

Close on the fourth exercise and do not let this land as passing the buck.

Somebody in the worst night of their life told the truth to strangers. Two things happen because a responder was at their desk: the people who can help now know, and God is being asked to intervene. Both are real, and neither would have happened otherwise.

Read Luke 5:16 here. Jesus kept stepping away from crowds who needed him in order to pray, which is a strange thing to do if prayer is what you fall back on when you cannot do anything real.

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is Mark 2:1-12 — four friends who could not fix it and carried the man to somebody who could, through a roof, because the ordinary route was blocked. It is the clearest picture of escalation in Scripture: they did not treat handing him over as giving up, and nobody in the story thinks less of them for it.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Find the escalation control now, while nothing is urgent. Write where it is, in enough detail to find it at ten at night.**

2. **Write three oblique ways someone might say they do not want to be here anymore.**

3. List what you are NOT being asked to do. Then write which one you would be most tempted by.

4. You escalate and you pray. Write what actually happens because you were at your desk.

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Jesus forgives and heals

Mark 2:1-12

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus do first for the paralyzed man, before he heals him?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What did the four friends do to get their friend to Jesus?
   What does the crowd's reaction show about how people see Jesus?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Whom will you carry to Jesus this week, and how?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who needs to hear that Jesus forgives, not only heals?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, thank you that you deal with what is deepest in me first. Forgive me, heal me, and give me friends who carry me to you.*

This study online

Tell somebody, bring somebody

REMEMBER

I'll say what God is doing, and I'll ask somebody by name.

THE PASSAGE — THE SHORTAGE WAS NEVER THE HARVEST

Matthew 9:37–38

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field.

The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Ask the way it actually works, not "we could always use more people" — nobody has ever joined anything because of that sentence. Ask like this: "There's a woman who asked for prayer at a clinic in Honduras last week and nobody has prayed for her yet. Will you take that one?"

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 30 minutes

Before the session Have a real unanswered request in hand to demonstrate the ask with. Decide how you will collect the commitments and when you will follow up.

Watch for

- A room that will say "we could always use more people" and think that counts as asking. Make them rehearse the specific version out loud.
- Anyone quietly discouraged by the no-results-page section. That is the honest reaction; give it room rather than correcting it, and let the passage answer it.

Note

1. Do not answer this for the room. Let the honest answers stand, including the discouraged ones, and then read 1 Corinthians 3:6-7: nobody in that sentence watched anything grow. The person who admitted in chapter 2 that they would lose heart is the person this exercise is for.
2. A person in a village asked strangers to pray, and strangers did. People ask again months later, which does not happen unless the first response mattered. Some eventually say yes to opening a Bible. Three facts, no names, no details — and this is also the answer to chapter 7's line about carrying nothing out of the room.
3. Retired people with mornings, homebound people with time nobody is using, bilingual people who are worth their weight here, teenagers who will take it more seriously than you expect, and anybody who has said they wish they could do something for missions but cannot travel. Do not accept fewer than three.
4. Both blanks, out loud, every person, before anybody leaves. Collect them and follow up. A class that ends on asking somebody by name and does not itself ask anybody by name has argued against its own last chapter.

The last chapter is an assignment, and it has two halves that a group will happily agree with and then not do. Both halves need to leave the room as a commitment with a name in it.

Let the discouragement be real first

Do not rush the no-results-page section, and do not answer it for them.

A responder will pray for hundreds of people and learn how almost none of the stories end. Did the daughter come home? Did the surgery go well? Did that person ever say yes to opening a Bible? There is no results page, and there was never going to be one.

Let the honest answers stand in the first exercise, including the discouraged ones. Then read 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 and point out the thing that is easy to miss: nobody in that sentence watched anything grow. Paul had the same arrangement and did not appear to consider it a hardship.

If somebody admitted back in chapter 2 that they would struggle with this, this is the moment that was written for them.

Separate what you know from what you don't

The second exercise is the bridge out of that, and it is also how this chapter stays inside chapter 7's rule.

They do not know the endings. They do know that a person in a village asked strangers to pray and strangers did; that people ask again months later, which does not happen unless the first response mattered; and that some of them eventually say yes to opening a Bible with somebody.

That is tellable with no names and no details. Say plainly that most Christians have never heard of a prayer ministry like this — they assume it means a list read out on Sunday, and nobody has ever told them that a person on the other side of the world wrote down their worst fear and is waiting on somebody to pray.

Rehearse the ask, out loud

The recruiting half fails on one sentence, so make them say the right one.

We could always use more people has never caused anybody to join anything. Have them practise the real version instead, with a genuine unanswered request in hand: *there's a woman who asked for prayer at a clinic in Honduras last week and nobody has prayed for her yet — will*

Watch this chapter

NOTES

you take that one?

Make it awkward on purpose. A person who has said it once in a room will say it once outside one.

Close with a name and a date

Both blanks, out loud, every person, before anybody leaves. Collect them and follow up.

A class whose last instruction is to ask somebody by name, and which does not itself ask anybody by name, has argued against its own final chapter.

What the passage is doing here

The bound sheet is Matthew 9:35-38 — the chapter's own passage, and worth studying rather than quoting. Jesus looks at crowds who are harassed and helpless and does not conclude that the problem is the crowd. He tells his disciples to pray for workers, and then in the very next chapter sends the people who were praying.

Reflect and Discuss

1. You will pray for hundreds and learn how almost none of the stories end. Write how you will keep going anyway.

2. You do not know the endings. Write three things you do know that are worth telling.

3. Who do you know who already prays for people constantly and would never call it a ministry? Write three names.

4. I will ask _____ to join the prayer team, by _____.

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

The harvest is plentiful, the workers are few

Matthew 9:35-38

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus feel when he sees the crowds, and what does he tell his disciples to pray for?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Do you see the people around you as a harvest waiting for workers, or just as a crowd?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Will you pray every day this week for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers — starting with you?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who in your life could you invite this week to read a Bible story with you?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Lord of the harvest, thank you that the harvest is plentiful. Give me your compassion for the crowds, and send me out as one of your workers.*

This study online

CoMission
comission.cc