

Three Prayers You'll Want to Pray

STUDY QUESTIONS

Introduction

1. Who first taught you to pray? Do you think of those first prayers as part of tradition or a conventional wisdom? How have you grown beyond your first prayers?
2. How does the Bible guide your experience of prayer? What Bible passages influence and inform your general approach to prayer?
3. The introduction distinguishes between tradition and conventional wisdom. How do you understand the distinctions drawn between these two? When have you fallen prey to conventional wisdom?

The Diplomat's Prayer

1. People thought of Dag Hammarskjöld as an activist involved in dealing with a variety of global concerns, but his journal shows him as a mystic. How do you think Hammarskjöld's mystic spirituality influenced his daily work?
2. One portion of Hammarskjöld's prayer remembers the past with gratitude while the other portion opens the present-future to new possibilities. How do you remember the past? What events in your past create obstacles to gratitude? How do you seek healing for those wounds?
3. Many fears inhabit our lives and yet, Hammarskjöld's prayer points to the importance of courageous trust. How do you say *Yes* to all that shall be? How will you affirm courage in your daily life?

The Theologian's Prayer

1. Prior to reading this chapter, what experience had you had with the Serenity Prayer? Because many people know the short version of the Serenity Prayer, what surprised you about the differences between the short version and the long version of this prayer?
2. Thinking about your current reality: What are the things you cannot change? What can you change? What will it take to make those changes? Where do you see injustice? How does God address those forms of injustice?
3. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote "Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it..." How would you describe Jesus' understanding of the world? What makes it difficult to take the world as it is?

The Rabbi's Prayer

1. How do you understand the community of prayer? How do you feel about the idea that other people are praying the rabbi's prayer in languages different from your words? What does this tell you about becoming a sister or brother in Christ? Does it seem different or difficult if two nations consider each other as enemies and yet, both nations have strong Christian traditions?
2. When you pray "Thy Kingdom come," what does *kingdom* mean to you? How would you describe attributes and characteristics of the reign of God? What characteristic is most important to you?
3. When and how do you offer forgiveness to others? To yourself? When can we know that forgiveness has become real and is a lived experience?

One Model for Small Groups

Please feel free to use and to adapt this basic model for study of *Three Prayers You'll Want to Pray* with a small group.

1. Welcome everyone and begin with a prayer for trust and learning.
2. Ask if any words seemed strange or needed further definition.
3. Invite the participants to raise questions that they had about the text.
4. Describe the basic content of the chapter.
5. Use the discussion questions for deeper conversation.
6. When conversation ends, invite group to name what they learned.
7. End the session with prayer. Group members may wish to name prayer concerns prior to this prayer.