

The COMPANION
to
PRAYER

Teaching Guide

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and eat with him,
and he with me.*

Revelation 3:20

INTRODUCTION

*Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.*

Isaiah 65:24

Invitation

We do not assume to know where you have come from in life. We want to welcome all who are desperate and seek help, all who are grieving and long for comfort, all who are ashamed and want to be forgiven, all who are lonely and ache for friendship, all who are unsatisfied and search for a life worth living, and all who will come. The Companion offers a doorway from where you are to who you are called to be.

Purpose

This guide is intended for teachers who will lead *The Companion* course on prayer. The course is a series of classes oriented toward a basic instruction in prayer. You can think of it as a little guide for those starting out on the journey in prayer. Nevertheless, we hope even those seasoned in prayer might find some encouragement in what lies ahead.

We want to be clear at the start, this course cannot manufacture the free and honest communication with God that is at the heart of prayer. Nor does it advance beyond the rich and diverse resources on prayer that have passed down to the church through the ages. We have created something “new” only to the extent that is organic growth out of our heritage—rooted in the Scriptures, instructed by the church’s historic teaching, encouraged by examples from past, and dependent on the Holy Spirit.

The essential thing for anyone who prays is to come to Jesus. As the Norwegian pastor and theologian O. Hallesby writes in the classic book, simply titled *Prayer*, “It is not our prayer which moves the Lord Jesus. It is Jesus who moves us to pray.” Our hope is this “little guide” will be a kind of doorway to come to Jesus.

Course Resources

Leadership Roles

- Teacher - the primary communicator responsible for facilitating classroom instruction and participation
- Connect Leader – the person responsible for hospitality, creating a welcoming and trusting environment
- Prayer Leader – the person whose focus is on praying for the participants and the teacher

The Meal

We strongly recommend incorporating a meal into *The Companion* course. This may not always be feasible. However, eating with others is a simple way of deepening relationships. Within the context of relationship there is the potential for deeper formation and long-term growth. In addition, preparing and cleaning up a meal is a way of sharing responsibility with participants. The leadership team could create a meal sign-up where every participant has some role to serve. Shared responsibility encourages “buy-in.” It moves participants from consumers to servants.

Example Schedule (10 weeks)

Session 1 - Conversing with God

Session 2 – Session 2: Teach Us to Pray

Session 3: Our Father

Session 4: Hallowed be Thy Name

Session 5: Thy Kingdom Come

Session 6: Thy Will be Done

Session 7: Give Us

Session 8: Forgive Us

Session 9: Deliver Us

Session 10: Practicing the Presence

Class Duration (90 minute example)

40 minutes – Meal

20 minutes – Teacher lead instruction

10 minutes – Individual reflection and table group discussion

10 minutes – Group discussion and questions

10 minutes – Prayer

Class Content

All content can be accessed at companionguide.org.

- *The Companion: Prayer* – audio reflections on prayer for individuals, classes, and small groups.
- *The Companion: Prayer Course Study Guide* – a study guide with content and resources for a teachers and participants.
- *The Companion: On Prayer* – a prayer guide for individuals and small groups

Example Class Outline – Session 1: Conversing with God

Listen

In advance of the class meeting assign the audio reflections “Prologue” and “Conversing with God” in *The Companion: Prayer*. Listening to the audio may also be incorporated into the class.

Reflect

Between sessions assign participants “Conversing with God” in *The Companion: On Prayer*. This is a prayer guide intended to reinforce the class instruction through daily Scripture meditation and prayer. An alternative approach would use the prayer guide in class to lead the participants through the practice of prayer.

Converse

The word “converse” originally meant to dwell with or to do life together. We use this word to describe the kind of class instruction we encourage, one that involves a kind of conversation between Scripture, the teacher, and participants.

- Use the content for Session 1 in the Prayer Course Study Guide to guide teacher lead instruction.
- Facilitate class participations through the reflection and discussion questions provided in the Prayer Course Study Guide.
- Further resources are provided in the Prayer Course Study Guide to extend the conversation.

Practices

While teachers should freely adapt the content to the needs of their participants, there are certain practices that are core to *The Companion* course.

Connect

Leaders should seek to create a trusting and welcoming environment where participants are genuinely known and cared for. The teacher should form a class leadership team which includes a person responsible for hospitality. A “connect leader” attends the class ready to seek out, get to know, and serve the participants. This person should join the teacher in praying for the participants. The mentality is “I am here for your well-being.”

Abide

Leaders should consistently seek to delight in and know more of God through the Word and Spirit. A study of prayer is worthless without the experience of God's presence. We also recommend the class leadership team includes a person who prays for each participant by name. Further, participants should be encouraged to put into practice what they are learning. Between sessions, we recommend participants practice daily Biblical reflection and prayer. As Jesus said, "For apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Extend

The course is intended to extend beyond the private, into the public, from the individual to the community. The extent of prayer is as far reaching as the people of God. We hope the prayers that begin in this study will extend to every corner of everyday life—at the bedside, in the kitchen, at the office, on the field, in the hospital, in foreign places and among friends, even to enemies, We exist to extend the transforming presence of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ deep to the heart and wide to the world.

O Lord, our Savior, you have warned us that you will require much of those to whom much is given—grant that we whose lot is cast in so goodly a heritage may strive together the more abundantly to extend to others what we so richly enjoy; and as we have entered into the labors of other people, so to labor that in their turn other people may enter into ours, to the fulfillment of your holy will. Amen. *Augustine*¹

¹ Prayer of Augustine taken from *Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson, 170-171.