

## SESSION 1

# PURPOSE IN PRAYER: ADORATION

### KEY VERSE:

**'FATHER, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME'** (LUKE 11:1-2)

### REMEMBER:

- Computer with speakers
- Music for the prayer time

### (5 MINS) WELCOME

#### AIM: TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME

- Introduce the aims of the course and explain how it's going to work
- Nicky Gumbel, the pioneer of Alpha, says that 'Prayer is the most important activity of our lives. It is the main way in which we develop a relationship with Our Father in heaven'<sup>1</sup>
- Explain that there will be prayer and discussion times and that we're all at different places in our prayer lives. However, if anyone would rather not be asked to read a passage from the Bible/share/pray out loud, ask them to let you know
- Open in prayer

### (15 MINS) VIDEO

#### AIM: TO INTRODUCE THE COURSE AND TODAY'S THEME: ADORATION

- Prayer is like a toolbox – there are 'all kinds of prayers ...' (Ephesians 6:18)
- Prayer begins and ends in worship – climbing into the arms of the Father. God's not a slot-machine!

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<sup>1</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life* (Alpha International, 2010), p. 66

- '(Adoration is) the lifting of the heart and mind to God, asking nothing but to enjoy God's presence' – *The Book of Common Prayer*<sup>2</sup>

### (20 MINS) DISCUSS

#### AIM: TO GET EVERYONE SHARING THEIR THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS

- What did you find most helpful in the video?
- What questions did it raise for you?
- (In twos and threes) Describe a great experience of prayer, such as a time you received a clear answer or sensed God's presence
- What do you find hard about praying?
- **Leader's Notes:**  
The best way to facilitate discussion in groups of over five people is to split down into smaller groups of two or three so that everyone gets to speak – not just the more vocal members. When conversation begins to die down, reconvene and take feedback from each group in turn. This means that the 'best' stories will be aired to the whole group and waffle will be condensed.

### (15 MINS) DO IT

#### AIM: TO WORSHIP!

- **Music:** Play some worship music quietly in the background
- **Psalm 103:** Read it together, slowly, one verse at a time
  - » If there is time you could circle the room with each person reading a verse and – if comfortable – praying a prayer of thanks relating to it
- **Open Prayer:**
  - » First allow time to be still and enjoy the peace of God's presence
  - » Then make space for general prayers of worship and thanksgiving

#### **NB:**

If members of your group are not used to praying aloud, there is a simple way of encouraging them to do so. Hand out paper and ask them all to write down a short prayer, explaining that you will then go around the circle systematically, asking everyone to read their written prayer and then to say 'Amen'. By using this model, they will gain confidence and soon abandon their papers altogether!

<sup>2</sup> Text from *The Book of Common Prayer*, the rights in which are vested in the Crown, is reproduced by permission of the Crown's Patentee, Cambridge University Press.

- **Conclude:** You could conclude with a prayer from Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard:

'Father in heaven, when the thought of you wakes in our hearts, let it not wake like a frightened bird that flies about in dismay, but like a child waking from its sleep with a heavenly smile. Amen.'<sup>3</sup>

### (5 MINS) DEVELOP IT

## AIM: TO PRACTICE ADORATION IN THE COMING WEEK USING PERSONAL PRAYER TOOLS

- **Personal Prayer Tool: The Lord's Prayer**

» Invite people to set the alarms on their cell phones for a convenient time each day when they can pray The Lord's Prayer slowly, trying to use each line like a search engine: to explore different ideas, always beginning with adoration and thanksgiving: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name ...'

## GOING DEEPER: OPTIONAL EXTRA MATERIAL

### (20 MINS) DEEPEN IT

## AIM: TO PROVOKE FURTHER DISCUSSION FROM THE BIBLE

- **Read:**

Luke 10:38–42 – The story of Jesus visiting the home of Mary and Martha

- **Explain:**

In Jewish culture, sitting at someone's feet meant you wanted to learn from them. It was the posture of a disciple. Mary wanted to be with Jesus because she looked up to him and knew that he loved her. After twenty years hearing confession, one Catholic priest observed that the most common problem he'd encountered was 'God' because so few Christians really believe that God loves and likes them. 'This is perhaps the hardest truth of any to grasp. Do we wake up every morning amazed that we are loved by God? Do we allow our day to be shaped by God's desire to relate to us?'<sup>4</sup>

- **Discuss:**

C. S. Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, said that 'in commanding us to glorify him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.'<sup>5</sup> What do you find enjoyable about God's presence? What compels you to worship? Are there particular moments in your life, particular places, songs, people, or events?

<sup>3</sup> Compiled by Veronica Zundel, *The Lion Book of Famous Prayers* (Lion, 1983), p. 74

<sup>4</sup> David Ford, *The Shape of Living: Spiritual Directions for Everyday Life* (Canterbury Press, 2012), p. 28

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958), pp. 93–97

## EXTRA RESOURCES USEFUL QUOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- 'I didn't marry my wife as a child-raising strategy. I married her because I wanted to be with her. One of the wonderful consequences has been children.' – Pete Greig
- 'Who one believes God to be is most accurately revealed not in any credo, but in the way one speaks to God when no one else is listening.' – Nancy Mairs, who has lived with Multiple Sclerosis for more than forty years. <sup>6</sup>
- Adoration is doing what comes naturally. 'I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise ... The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers praising their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game.' – C. S. Lewis <sup>7</sup>
- The great composer J. S. Bach had a tough life – orphaned aged ten, he was once imprisoned for a month and three of his children died ... Bach had many reasons to complain, yet his music overflowed with worship. Eg Cantata #82 'Ich habe genug': 'I have enough! I have taken the Saviour ... into my arms. I have enough.'
- 'Your prayer life is at its best when you pray small prayers continually, rather than big prayers occasionally.' – Pete Greig

## FURTHER RESOURCES

- Video: Bill Hybels, *Coffee With God*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU9GR4H0WQ>
- Read: Brother Lawrence, *Practicing the Presence of God*
- Read: Pete Greig, *Red Moon Rising*

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy Mairs, *Ordinary Time: Cycles in Marriage, Faith, and Renewal* (Beacon Press, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958), pp. 93–97