



## Small Group Work Sheet

John 16:16-33 - Everything is About to Change

July 28, 2013

### Part 1 - Ice Breaker

1. In this passage, Jesus promises that God the Father will answer our prayers that are made in Jesus' name. Looking back, what are some ways that God has answered prayer in your own life? In the lives of those you know?

Try to guide the discussion towards the deeper things. Of course, answers that aren't as dramatic or deep aren't bad, and may be a good place to start! At the same time, don't equate deeper with miraculous. A lot of time we tend to think that answered prayer=someone was healed from a terminal illness. While God works in these ways, if we only focus on the miraculous, we tend to forget the ways that God is at work in the world and in our lives.

One way to set the tone would be to share an example of someone who consistently prayed for you before you came to faith. Or, to set the tone for later in the meeting, perhaps you could share an example of how God answered prayer in a way that you didn't expect—and it was much better than what you were praying for.

Try to get everyone to share at least one example of answered prayer, and—for those groups with one or two people who love to share, perhaps set a limit of 2-3 examples.

### Part 2 - Sermon Review

2. Read John 16:20-22; 20:19-23. Jesus states that their sorrow would turn to joy after the resurrection. How does the resurrection give us joy in the midst of our sorrow and grief? How does the promise of the second coming give us joy in the midst of despair? How does this joy influence the way that we pray?

One way to go about this would be to have everyone think of a specific example from their own life—it may be something they are currently wrestling with or did in the past. It may be something that even happened before they were a Christian. But after having them think about a specific example when they were sorrowful and full of grief and how the truth of the resurrection did (or would have, were they a Christian) give them joy and relief.

One thing to beware of: let's say that someone is thinking of a relative who died (as a Christian) and they were full of grief, yet the promise of the

resurrection and the knowledge that they one day will see that person again gives them joy. While this is true, imagine that another person in your group has a similar situation, except their loved one who died wasn't a Christian. This could not only *not* bring joy, but it could drive the person deeper into despair.

Be sensitive to those who are in your group; for some of you, the hope of this future resurrection is perfectly appropriate. For others, you may have to be sensitive to these situations, and focus more on the joy of the risen Jesus and what that means for us who are Christians.

In the same way, the hope of the second coming gives us the strength to make it through the tough times of life. Rev. 3:8-13 gives us the example of this hope and joy we can have in the midst of tribulation as we look to the second coming (especially v. 11a).

Again, it might be wise to have group members think of a specific area of struggle and suffering, and then think of how the second coming gives hope to persevere. Think of someone who has been falsely accused or wronged in some way; the second coming brings justice. Think of someone who has suffers physical or emotional sickness; the second coming brings the glorified body. Think of someone who bears immeasurable grief; the second coming brings the promise that there will be no more mourning or tears (Rev. 21:4).

3. Read John 16:23-24. Jesus spends a significant amount of time in this passage discussing prayer and its power. How does prayer ensure that your joy is full (v. 24)?

Think of Matt. 11:28-30; when we bring our burdens to God in prayer, a huge weight is lifted off of us. Is there a specific issue that someone in your group is burdened with? Have they given it to God in prayer? (Note: don't assume that even though they still are burdened with it that they haven't given it to God in prayer. These things are often a process rather than an easy 'on/off'.

Additionally, when we pray consistently, our will becomes attuned with God's will. Our thoughts become more in line with his thoughts; our hearts begin to match up with his heart. And so we become more joy-filled by the things of God than we may have previously.

- a. In our fast-paced and busy culture, prayer is often difficult. Do you find it hard to pray? Do you tend to pray as a last resort or a first impulse?

Your Life Group will be switching gears here, no longer focusing on what this passage has to say about prayer to focusing on how a person actually prays. All of us know that we are *supposed* to pray, but very few of us have actually been *taught how* to pray. And because most of us haven't been taught to pray, we don't come into prayer with much more than a knowledge



that we are supposed to pray, and then we get discouraged when we don't do it consistently (more on that in the next question).

A lot of times because prayer is so difficult, we tend to just use it as a last resort. For those in your group who run to prayer as a first impulse, praise God! For those who humble themselves enough to admit that they see prayer as a last resort, praise God that they admit it! Encourage one another to make the transition to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17).

b. What are some practical ways that you help yourself pray?

A few notes: first, I may have made it sound like everyone who doesn't have a plan or an approach to prayer struggles with praying. That's not true at all! Many people in our church and your Life Group are undoubtedly seasoned prayer warriors. During this time, it would be good to have these pray-ers share some of their wisdom and insight with the less disciplined in prayer.

Second, I will share a few different ways that people organize their prayer time.

- There is the prayer list, where people keep a continual list that guides them in their prayer times.
- Others use a prayer journal. This is similar to a prayer list, but it helps them remember how God has answered prayer in the past.
- Many people work their way through the psalms or a prayer book to guide their time of prayer. This helps us focus on the things that God would have us pray for.
- Others use the ACTS model: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. This helps the Christian have a holistic approach to prayer.
- Others model their prayers after the Lord's Prayer, covering 5 areas: God's Honor, God's Kingdom, God's Provision, God's Forgiveness, God's Power.

People probably have different approaches, but sharing how God is guiding us in prayer will be encouragement to all in your group!

3. Read John 16:25-28; 14:12-14. What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? Texts such as these are often abused; how do you reconcile Jesus' promise here with the reality that sometimes prayers go (seemingly) unanswered?

**Jesus' words here are not a set of 'magic words' to ensure that we get whatever we want. In the biblical context, 'name' had much more significance than it does now.**

From IVP's New Testament Bible Background Commentary:

"In the Old Testament, 'name' often meant reputation or renown, and when God acted 'on account of his name' it was to defend his honor. 'In the name of God' could mean as his representative acting on his behalf (Ex. 5:23; Deut. 18:19-22; Jer. 14:14-15), according to his command (Deut. 18:5, 7), by his help (Ps. 118:10-11); Prov. 18:10) or using his name in a miraculous act (2 Kings 2:24). [...]

In this context 'name' means something like: those who seek his glory and speak accurately for him, who are genuinely his authorized representatives. Nothing could be further from the pagan magical use of names that sought to manipulate spiritual forces for one's own ends."

**What Jesus is focusing on here is his mission and that which aligns with the mission of God to reach fallen humanity. The key here is to realize that praying in Jesus' name is aligning one's prayer with God's will.**

4. Read John 16:31-33; 1 John 4:4; 5:4. How is Jesus' victory over the world the foundation for our ability to pray?

**One of the key themes in this passage is how we now have access to the Father through the work of Jesus Christ. Without his work on the cross (his victory), prayer would still be bound by the rules and regulations of the Old Testament period.**

**Hebrews 10 addresses this topic clearly. In your group, try to have group members think through what it would have been like to approach God *before* Jesus. Oftentimes we tend to take for granted what we *currently have* because we forget or do not realize what *was once required* to fellowship with God.**