



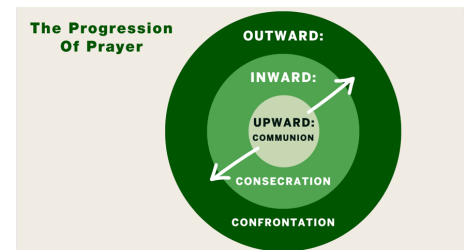
Drawing Near WEEK 2 DISCUSSION GUIDE

Overview

In this message of the *LifeLine* series, we will learn how to draw near to God and grow in our gratitude to Him.

Discussion

When we, as children of God, have faith and pray, power is released on the earth. Jesus said in **Mark 11:23**: ***“For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.”*** Powerful, mountain-moving prayer progresses from the inside-out—starting with Upward Prayer.



Prayer that is upward, focused on God, ushers us into the presence of God – The presence of God subsides the anxiety and the isolation that so often frustrates our lives. God tells us throughout His Word that there is a remedy for the isolation and anxiety in this world. It's found in God's presence. God is omnipresent – everywhere. But, we can enjoy His manifest presence as we pray and his presence fills our lives.

How do we experience God's manifest presence and find relief from life's constant pressures and challenges? **James 4:8: Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...** Jesus took the first step at the cross. It's only by the blood of Christ we can enjoy a relationship with God the Father. The blood of Jesus opened the door so we can draw near. It's not by our efforts and works—Jesus provided the way.

- Since hearing the message last weekend, have you put into practice Upward, Inward, and Outward prayer in your prayer life?
- Can you share an experience where prayer brought you relief and a sense of God's presence?

Why Don't We Draw Near?

Fear: We fear that we don't measure up. We feel inadequate and imperfect and that prevent us from pursuing God. We grip our shortcomings and failures all too tightly. This leads us to hiding from God. We fear God will see something in us that will cause Him to change His mind about us. We can also fear God will let us down.

- In what ways can we overcome the fear of not measuring up and approach God with confidence?
- How does the fear of God letting us down affect our willingness to draw near to Him? How can we develop a trust in God that overcomes this fear?

Busyness: When we put our work and schedule ahead of spending time with God we're pushing away the hand He extends to us. God Himself wants to satisfy and refresh us, yet still, we venture into life without His help, His peace, His presence.

- Discuss the role of busyness in pushing away the hand of God. How can we prioritize spending time with God amidst our busy schedules, and what benefits can come from doing so?

When we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. The starting place is where we take this step towards Him. When we press past the fear and busyness, we can pursue true intimacy with God.

How to Draw Near:

1. Draw near through praise, worship, and adoration.
We draw near by focusing on God as we praise, worship, and adore Him. Upward Prayer gets our eyes focusing on God and off ourselves and off our problems. **Psalm 100:4: Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.** The most important thing you can know in life is that God loves you and the most important thing you can do in life is love Him back. Worship is simply our response to God's love for us. The apostle John says in 1 John 4:19 (NKJV): **We love Him because He first loved us.**
 - In what ways do praise, worship, and adoration help us draw near to God?
2. Draw near through thankfulness and gratitude.
One of the greatest ways we can express our thankfulness is through prayer. David says in **Psalm 107:1: Oh, give thanks to the Lord for He is good!** Gratitude heals the soul and makes us whole.
 - How can a posture of thanksgiving enhance our experience of drawing near to God?

What Do I Thank God For?

- A. Thank God for the blessings.
Thank Him for all the blessings in your life, big and small.
- B. Thank God in spite of your burdens.
Ephesians 5:20: ...giving thanks always for all things... Here, the Apostle Paul demonstrated a proper perspective of the burdens of life. We shouldn't stop thanking God when we face problems. Upward Prayer keeps our eyes focused on God and not on our problems. If we don't shift our focus to God, our burdens demand more attention than God. Upward Prayer keeps our eyes on Him!
 - How does maintaining a posture of thanksgiving during difficult times influence our perspective on burdens and problems?
- C. Thank God for His benefits.
This is not us asking for anything but simply thanking Him. It's celebrating the benefits He brings to our lives—that He's our Healer, Provider, Shepherd... Here, we thank God for who He is. When the Israelites focused on what they didn't have, they failed to see all that the benefits they *did* have. We are constantly adding to our prayer list, but more than anything, we should be adding to our praise list.
 - Share something you are grateful to God for.

Life Challenge

This holiday season, express your gratitude. You may have some challenges with those close to you. Find what you can be grateful for. You may have to go back to a simple thing they did for you years ago. It could be a time when they helped you, even with something small. Thank them. Your gratitude can strengthen your relationships. Share a gift of thankfulness this year.

Prayer Requests & Close In Prayer