



DO YOU PRAY?

DISCUSSION & SELF-
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Introduction

We have prepared this as an aid that can be used by both Community Group leaders and individuals for self reflection as you turn a marvelous little work on the marvelously big subject of prayer into a study for your group. Despite its brevity, "Do You Pray?" presents as compelling a case for private prayer as you're likely to come across.

*And he told them a parable to the effect
that they ought always to pray and not
lose heart.
(Luke 18:1)*

Organization

This study guide is organized as follows~~

- A self-assessment that, when honestly completed – formally or informally, privately or in your group – will help group members identify both strengths and areas for growth in the realm of private prayer.
- The guide proceeds by chapter by chapter. The best responses to the questions presented in this guide will be based first on Scripture, and then on personal experience and opinion.
- In several of the excerpted statements, readers are invited to gauge their own “standing” – more self-assessment. Readers are also asked to identify concrete steps that you can and will take to enrich your private prayer life
- A series of questions for reflection is included at the end of the study. We hope each reader of “Do You Pray?” will invest time, prayer, and serious thought and respond to these questions.



For Use by Group Leaders

In each of the seven chapter of Ryle’s book, we have offered a number of questions that should stimulate thought and conversation. Feel free to use all or some of them, or create questions of your own.

Self-Assessment:

- How would you describe your prayer life as it is today?
- How would you describe the prayer life you would like to have?
- Why would you want this prayer life?
- What are you willing to do to achieve that?
- What WILL you do to achieve it? Create a plan.
- To whom will you become accountable for following your plan

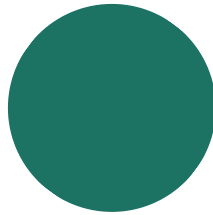


Introductory Questions

- What is the difference between “saying your prayers” and “praying”?
- Which of those best characterizes your own prayer life?
- What have your family members, perhaps especially your kids observed about your prayer habits?

Chapter 1: I Ask “Do You Pray?” Because Prayer is Absolutely Necessary to a Person’s Salvation”

1. Why does Ryle consider prayer so essential to the Christian life? What does prayer demonstrate about a person's relationship with God?
2. What distinction does Ryle make between merely “saying prayers” and actually praying?

3. Why is it possible for someone to participate actively in Christianity—attending church, reading Scripture, listening to sermons—yet have very little personal prayer?
 4. How would you respond to someone who says, “I believe in God, but I don't really need to pray because God already knows what I need”?
 5. If you were completely honest, what does your own prayer life reveal about how you actually view your relationship with God?
 6. If your present prayer life does not reflect the kind of relationship with God that you desire, what is one specific step you will take to begin changing it?
 7. What commitment are you prepared to make this week that would demonstrate that prayer is becoming a genuine priority in your relationship with God?
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Chapter 2: I ask “Do You Pray?” Because a Habit of Prayer is One of the Surest Marks of a True Christian”

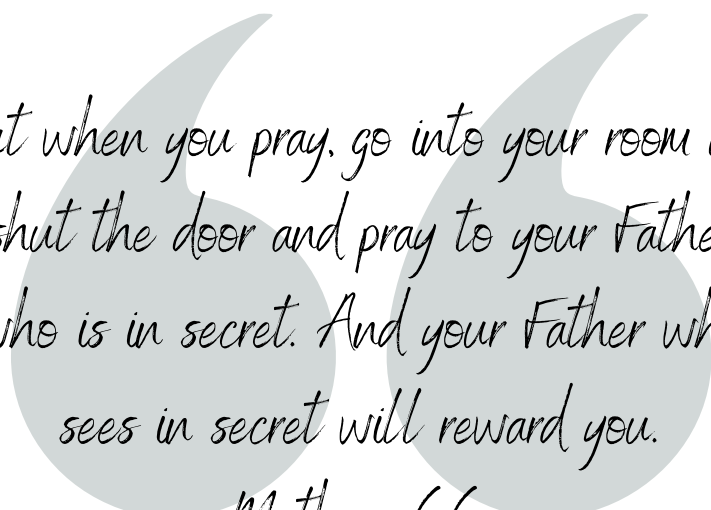
1. What do you think distinguishes a genuine habit of prayer from a religious routine?
2. Why might a person be very knowledgeable about Christianity yet have little desire to pray?
3. Suppose you could examine the private prayer lives of five people who all appear to be committed Christians. What would you expect to find, and why?
4. If someone evaluated your Christianity solely by your private prayer life, what conclusions might he or she draw? What would you want to change?
5. What is one prayer habit you would like to have six months from now that you do not consistently have today? What is the first step toward developing it?
6. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life?
7. What measurable commitment will you make for the next 30 days concerning the frequency, length, or content of your personal prayer?



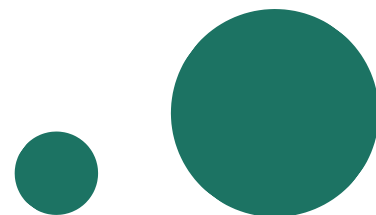


Chapter 3: I Ask “Do You Pray?” Because Private Prayer Is the Most Neglected Christian Discipline

1. Why do you think private prayer is so easily neglected—even by sincere Christians?
2. What competing priorities most commonly push prayer out of our daily lives?
3. If you were forced to identify the single greatest obstacle to your own consistency in prayer, what would it be—and what would it take to overcome it?
4. What measurable commitment will you make for the next 30 days concerning the frequency, length, or content of your personal prayer?



But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
Matthew 6:6



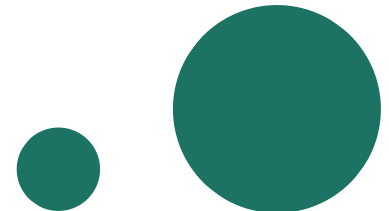
Chapter 4: I Ask, “Do You Pray?” Because the Bible Is Full of Encouragement for All Who Want to Pray.

1. What are some of the biblical reasons that give Christians confidence that God wants us to pray?
2. Why is God's willingness to hear us such an extraordinary privilege?
3. How can God's sovereignty actually encourage prayer rather than make prayer seem unnecessary?
4. Think of a time when prayer changed your perspective even though it did not immediately change your circumstances. What does that teach you about what prayer is really accomplishing?
5. How could you use Scripture more intentionally in your prayers? Identify one passage or biblical promise you will begin praying back to God.
6. What truth about God's character or promises most encourages you to pray? How will you incorporate that truth into your prayers?
7. God's holiness: How might it hinder prayer? How might it help prayer?
8. How can/does the Holy Spirit aid a believer's prayer?
9. What do we learn in Scripture about the need for and value of persistent prayer? How do you apply this in your prayer life?



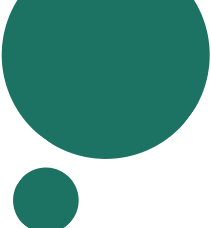
Chapter 5: I Ask “Do You Pray?” Because Faithfulness in Prayer Is the Secret of True Holiness

1. Why does Ryle believe that diligence in prayer contributes so significantly to holiness?
2. How does prayer help us fight particular sins and temptations?
3. Why might someone sincerely desire holiness, but still resist developing a deeper prayer life?
4. If you wanted to grow substantially in one area of Christian character during the next year, how could your prayer life become part of that pursuit?
5. Ryle states that, “Prayer is the most effective remedy against the Devil and against persistent sin”. Defend or challenge his assertion based on Scripture and your experience. How have you seen that play out in your life?
6. Who could you ask to pray with or for you regarding an area of spiritual growth or struggle? What would prevent you from asking, and are you willing to overcome that obstacle?

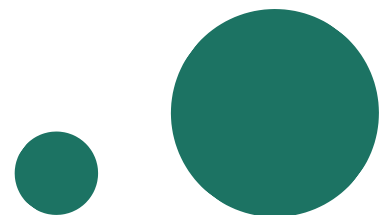


Chapter 6: I Ask “Do You Pray?” Because Neglecting Prayer Is One of the Great Causes of Backsliding

1. What does Ryle mean by "backsliding," and why does he regard it as such a serious danger? What do you understand "backsliding" to mean?
2. Why do you think spiritual decline usually begins privately before it becomes visible publicly?
3. How can neglect of prayer gradually weaken a Christian's resistance to temptation?
4. What are some early warning signs that a person's relationship with God may be cooling even though outward Christian activity continues?
5. Why might someone continue attending church, serving, and appearing spiritually strong while his or her private prayer life is deteriorating?
6. Looking back over your own Christian life, have you noticed a connection between seasons of prayerlessness and seasons of spiritual weakness? What did you learn from that experience?
7. Who in your life knows you well enough to recognize when you are spiritually drifting? What would it look like to invite that person to hold you accountable?
8. If your prayer life has weakened, what is the single most important step you believe God is calling you to take as a result of this chapter? When will you begin?



Chapter 7: I Ask “Do You Pray?” Because Prayer Is the Best Recipe for Happiness and Contentment.

1. Why does Ryle believe sorrow and difficulty are unavoidable in this life?
 2. How does prayer help a Christian respond differently to suffering than someone who does not know God?
 3. What is the relationship between prayer and contentment?
 4. Why is it sometimes easier to worry about a problem than to genuinely entrust it to God in prayer?
 5. How can prayer change our attitude toward circumstances that God has not chosen to change?
 6. If God answered your prayers by giving you greater contentment rather than changing the circumstances you are praying about, would you consider that a satisfactory answer? Why or why not?
 7. What recurring request could you begin praying with greater submission to God's will rather than insisting on your preferred outcome?
 8. What biblical truths about God's goodness, sovereignty, provision, or faithfulness do you need to remind yourself of when you become discontented? How will you incorporate those truths into your prayers?
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Reflection Questions – Looking across the entirety of Ryle’s book, consider and respond to the following questions ~~

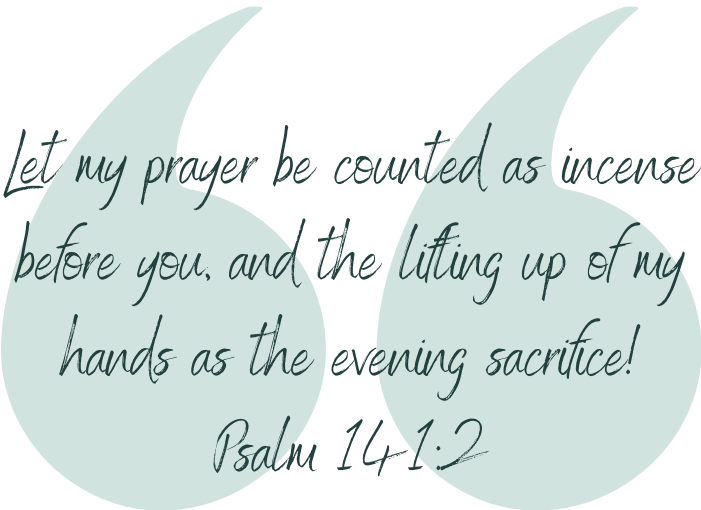


1. What is the difference Ryle draws between “saying prayers” and truly praying? Why is this distinction important?
2. Ryle states that prayer is “absolutely needful to salvation.” On what biblical or logical grounds does he make this claim?
3. What evidence does Ryle give to support his claim that few people truly pray, even among professing Christians? Do you find his reasoning convincing? Why or why not?
4. How does Ryle use biblical characters and historical examples to support the idea that true Christians are always people of prayer?
5. According to the text, what are some common excuses people make for not praying, and how does Ryle refute each of them?
6. What relationship does Ryle establish between private prayer and spiritual growth or holiness? How might this shape your personal devotional habits?
7. What does Ryle say about the connection between neglect of prayer and backsliding? What warning does this offer to believers?
8. How does Ryle describe the spiritual benefits and encouragements available to those who pray, even amid suffering or sorrow?
9. In the final section, Ryle gives practical advice to those who do pray. Which of these points do you find most challenging or most helpful, and why?
10. What does Ryle mean when he says that prayer is “the spiritual pulse”? How can this metaphor help you assess the true condition of your spiritual life?



Finally, considering Ryle's arguments and your assessment of your prayer life, what changes in your prayer life do you believe God is showing He most wants you to make?

State them as specific commitments you are willing to begin this week.



*Let my prayer be counted as incense
before you, and the lifting up of my
hands as the evening sacrifice!*
Psalms 141:2

