

### INTRO

Can you recall a time when someone gave you unsolicited advice?

Do you plan your weeks in detail or do you go with the flow?

Do you think most people pray at some point in their lives even if they do not claim to be religious?

### READ

Mark 4:19; Romans 13:14; 2 Timothy 4:3  
Matthew 6:6; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9  
Luke 11:2

### REFLECT

#### 1. Prepare your heart

Augustine, the greatest theologian of the first millennium of the church said that even before we pray, we must account ourselves desolate in this world, no matter how prosperous we may be.

The words desire, lusts, passions in the above verses is the Greek word Epithumia, which literally means over desire. To make sure our prayers don't do more harm than good, we need a level of self-awareness of what our "over desires" are. Examples of the over desires of our heart can be prosperity, success, status, love, and pleasure.

*Qu: How can our prayers go wrong if we don't have self-awareness of our "over desires"?*

#### 2. Plan your time in prayer

Jesus told us to go into your inner room to pray. He also seemed to have special outdoor places to pray.

*Qu: What are some practical challenges to prayer?*

#### 3. Perseverance in prayer

A prayer life where awe and intimacy with God are developed takes time.

*Qu: What do you find the hardest thing about prayer is?*

#### 4. Practices of prayer

*Qu: What is the difference between thinking a prayer and saying or writing a prayer?*

If God is not the starting point, then our own perceived emotional needs become the drivers and sole focus of our prayer. – Tim Keller

A verse of invocation has been historically used by Christians down through the centuries to help us set our minds on God as we begin to pray. Here is an example:

"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall never be shaken." Psalm 16:8

*Qu: When you pray, how do you start? Do you think a scripture of invocation is a good idea?*

*Qu: How do you feel about adding any structure to prayer? Does it seem restricting?*

### RESPOND

*Qu: What prayer practices are you going to implement?*

### PRAY

- Pray for one another that we might have a fresh experience with God as we seek Him in prayer
- Pray for perseverance in prayer
- Pray for one another for any needs in our lives or challenges we may be facing