

Finding Renewal in the Love of God

Unit 2: Discovering Renewal in the Testimony of the Word

Prayer Prompts for Week 1

*Today, we will open our prayer time with a little sharing (not longer than 10 minutes total). Read the entire next paragraph aloud, using the questions only as prompts for a complete discussion. Not everyone needs to speak; the idea is to focus our thoughts so that we can **share** with God. Some do this best by listening. The goal is to share those things we have in common with God as we consider Christ.*

*Sharing...something in common...that's what we are seeking, which is, after all, the literal definition of "**fellowship**." God had created man for fellowship, but sin ended that fellowship. Throughout the ages, then, God tried numerous ways through numerous representatives to connect with humankind. All His efforts failed. He had one other choice: He had a Son, the exact representation of His being. John shared his message with us so that we might join the **fellowship** he and others had with God...*

Here is the prompt:

If you wanted badly for someone to **know** you, but you had experienced difficulties in reaching them, who might you send as a representative? Why choose them? What problems would you expect this person to encounter given your relationship with the one with whom he/she would be sharing? How would you feel as you watched your ambassador struggle with the assignment? How long and to what extent could you watch that suffering and yet maintain your desire to be truly known by this other person?

*As we begin our prayer time today, let's begin again with **praise**. Remember, in praise we tell God how awesome He is! Praise is **not thanksgiving**. Thanksgiving verbalizes appreciation for some **thing** what God has done; **praise exalts God for who He is!** Think of it as creating a list in which every item begins, "Father, you are...." Each quality of God might be followed by some evidence of that characteristic, but it is not necessary.*

*After we have spent a few moments praising God, we will move on to **thanksgiving**—often our single most natural response to God's goodness. Children learn to talk to God using this avenue of prayer since thanksgiving is such an excellent practice for reminding us about God, his goodness, and our relationship with Him.*

In order to best focus our thanksgiving today and celebrate God's testimony to us through Jesus, we will explore our hearts for all the reasons we are thankful that God sent the flesh and blood Word of God among us.

Some instruction for today's prayer:

- Once again, listen for your leader's direction as you pray. She will facilitate the movements of the prayer. Each person, including the prayer leader, should keep her contributions to one sentence at a time—no more than two. This will encourage others to pray and also leave others with available thoughts *to pray*.
- Others in the group will follow the prayer leader's prompt—whoever wants to contribute will offer additional words (remember to keep them short), always affirming the evidence of God's praiseworthy nature in sending Jesus as His Word. There is no need to pray in order.
- Brief periods of silence are not only okay, they are sacred as we seek to listen to the Spirit's urging. Maintain the sacred nature of this time.
- Members of the group may pray more than once.
- At an appropriate time, the leader will introduce the next prompt.
- The prayer leader will close the prayer with a short request for vision.
- Remain silent a couple moments to ponder God's greatness, to further declare private words of praise, or to reflect on Him.
- Save a few minutes to share quietly. What was God able to teach you during this prayer as your heart responded to Him and to the words of others in your group?
- Commit to focus on praising and thanking God for His testimony in Jesus this week.

Father, you are amazing for sending Jesus to testify to us

- *You are the essence of love, willing to suffer and to let your Word suffer for those who have no reputation for honoring you.*
- *You are long suffering and patient.*
- *You are visionary.*
- *You are...*
- *And on...*

Father, we thank you for loving us enough to send your very reflection to us, a full part of yourself to walk as a man among us...

- *Thank you for understanding that we needed you in the flesh to believe that a walk with you could be accomplished.*
- *Thank you for the times that life did not go as Jesus planned. Thank you for the interruptions, the seeming failures, the conflicts with others.*
- *I am encouraged by the disciples. Thank you for the evidence that even those who walked nearest to Jesus came to "see" him slowly.*
- *And on...*

Father, we cannot yet envision Jesus, your Word, as we would like. Open our eyes a little wider this week. Clear our vision and teach us to see the sin that is blocking a clear view to your heart.