

Group Study Guide

for

The Red Letter Prayer Life

17 Words of Jesus

to Inspire Practical, Purposeful, Powerful Prayer

Red Letter Prayer Life Group Study Questions

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The Red Letter Prayer Life

Introduction to Group Studies

The outlines on the following pages are provided for those who choose to read this book and share it with others as part of a small group study. They are intended for easy facilitation, even for those who have never led a group study before. They also require minimal preparation ahead of time; other than the reading of that particular week's chapter in *The Red Letter Prayer Life*, there is nothing to obtain or prepare before each session.

These outlines are intended for roughly sixty-minute sessions (the actual length will, of course, depend on the number of people and the amount of discussion and participation in a group). The outline is a suggestion; each group's facilitator should feel free to adapt the questions as desired. The following are offered as general guidelines:

Encourage everyone to follow along. Some people find it easier to participate if they know where the discussion is going. So encourage all the group members to bring their own copies of *The Red Letter Prayer Life* (and a Bible) to the study sessions, and even follow along in the study notes at the back of the book. If your group members feel comfortable doing so, you may even wish to rotate facilitators from week to week, or take turns asking the questions in each session.

Don't be afraid of silence. When a question is asked, give participants time to think; silence can encourage a more thoughtful response. After ample time for thought has been allowed, signal for someone to speak up by saying, "Anyone?" or "Go ahead and express what you're thinking."

Let discussion follow its own path (without letting the group stray too far). You don't need to be in a hurry to move to the next question in the study notes, but be careful not to let the group stray into areas not related to the topic of discussion.

Feel free to follow a comment with another question. After someone has made an observation, ask such things as, "Can you think of an example?," "Anyone react to that?," or "Anyone have a different perspective?"

Don't feel obligated to ask all (or exclusively) the questions in the study notes. If your group's time is limited, highlight the questions you wish to ask. Add questions that occur to you. Encourage others to ask their own questions or add their own observations.

Most importantly, pray. Pray before each session, and (as the study guide prompts you to do) pray to open each session. Make such prayer more than a formality or routine obligation; let it always remind you that unless God's Holy Spirit shows up and guides each study, the study cannot bear fruit (John 15:4). So rely on prayer before, during, and to conclude each study.

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Group Study 1

For use after the group has read chapter 1, “The Riches”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Why do you believe prayer is important? Does your practice match your belief?
4. Who taught you to pray? What early prayer experiences do you recall?
5. What do you find frustrating and fulfilling about prayer?
6. What do you hope to change about your prayer life?
7. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

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Group Study 2

For use after the group has read chapter 2, "Pray Privately"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Share a time you prayed without realizing it.
4. What was Jesus' first "what not to do" about prayer that Hostetler writes about?
5. How do Christians today pray like Pharisees?
6. Contrast your public and private prayers.
7. What annoys or troubles you about public prayers you have heard, or even prayed yourself?
8. Do you believe God will answer when you pray?
9. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

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Group Study 3

For use after the group has read chapter 3, "Pray Simply"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Explain the "three needs" Hostetler tells us to "let go" of. Which of the three do you cling to?
4. Explain what Hostetler calls the "four elements of simple prayer." Which of the four is easiest for you to do? Which of the four is hardest for you to do?
5. React to this quote: "It may take time and practice before you can differentiate between the voice of God and the voices in your head, but it is well worth it to try. Discuss how you are working on hearing God's voice.
6. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 4

For use after the group has read chapter 4, “Pray Communally”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. When you first saw the title of this chapter, what meaning did you give the word “communally”? Whom does Hostetler actually include in that term?
4. React to this paragraph. Do you agree or disagree?
5. A mysterious and powerful symbiosis occurs whenever a follower of Jesus prays. The person praying is approaching the throne of God as a follower of Jesus—His representative, who has authority to ask things on behalf of the Son of God Himself...But even as that is happening, Jesus is acting as the Advocate of all “who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.” (Hebrews 7:25, NLT)
6. React to this Andrew Murray quote. Do you agree or disagree?
“We share His [Christ’s] intercession, too. He cannot do it without us.”
7. Hostetler lists three times when the Holy Spirit helps him pray. Give an example of a time when you experienced any of these. Add other times if you think there are more than three.
8. What benefits have you experienced from praying with other Christians?
9. React to the concept of “praying with all creation.” Is creation groaning in prayer, or is this a metaphor?
10. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

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Group Study 5

For use after the group has read chapter 5, "Pray Relationally"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. What have you asked (and received) from your father or mother that you would never ask from any other person?
4. What is the value of addressing God by any of the titles Hostetler lists as used by the Jews of Jesus' day?
5. Contrast ritual and relational prayer. What value do you find in each?
6. Hostetler writes, Jesus "encouraged a prayer posture that is less like a subject approaching a king and more like a child climbing into a father's lap. Which prayer posture resonates with you? Why?
7. Tell about a time when you believed/realized you were acting as God's apprentice?
8. Read these passages which discuss the concept of being God's child and apprentice:

Ephesians 5:1

1 Corinthians 11:1

1 Corinthians 4:15 – 16

Can you think of others?

9. God has many skills. In what area would you like to apprentice?
10. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

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Group Study 6

For use after the group has read chapter 6, “Pray Confidently”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Describe a time you needed to ask help from someone in a high place. Was the need answered?
4. Describe a time when you prayed for a “big” thing. Was your prayer answered? If not, do you understand why?
5. List the ways God differs from human dads. Which of the ways means more to you?
6. What, where, or when is heaven, according to N.T. Wright?
7. Do you have more difficulty believing God is able to bless you or willing to bless you?
8. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 7

For use after the group has read chapter 7, "Pray Cooperatively"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Hostetler identifies three requests that relate to God's name, His Kingdom, and His will. Explain what each request means and give examples.
4. On page 86, "according to Jesus, prayer is first and foremost about the Father, not about us." How can we reconcile that statement with the quote in chapter 6, page 79, "Nothing in the universe matters as much to him as what is going on in your life this day"?
5. When you pray for God's name to be kept holy, what are you committing to?
6. Hostetler lists three ways to keep God's name holy. What other ways can you add?
7. When you pray for God's kingdom to come, what are you committing to?
8. Following Hostetler's visual example on page 93, what do you envision as "your kingdom come"?
9. Have you ever had a Gethsemane experience when you chose God's will over your own? Or when you chose your will over God's?
10. Compare your morning prayer routine to the British army chaplain's morning prayer routine.
11. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 8

For use after the group has read chapter 8, “Pray Practically”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Hostetler begins this chapter with a testimony from a woman led by the Spirit to pray for her daughter. Have you ever had a similar experience you would share with the group? Were you tempted not to pray if it seemed like a small, insignificant prayer?
4. When Jesus told his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” he referred to actual bread. Do you think Jesus could have been referring to something more significant? If so, explain.
5. How does it make you feel to pray for small things such as bread and “simple” necessities? How often do you pray about them?
6. Describe your prayer life’s daily rhythm. Do you have a minimum daily requirement for prayer?
7. Do you have a day-by-day dependence on God for your every need? If not, why do you think you do not? What prevents you from relying solely on Him for your needs?
8. If you have not completed this statement, “Meet my need, especially _____,” do so now. Then end the group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of the chapter.

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Group Study 9

For use after the group has read chapter 9, “Pray Specifically”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most important in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. List five things accomplished by praying for specific needs. Share any experiences related to any or all of the five things.
4. Besides praying for specific needs, what else does this chapter urge us to bring to God?
5. What contrast do you find between prayers of biblical characters and Christian public prayers today?
6. If you haven't already done so, fill in the blanks in the closing prayer. Which was hardest to fill in? Discuss why some were harder than others.
7. Close this session by praying the last paragraph of the closing prayer in unison.

Group Study 10

For use after the group has read chapter 10, "Pray Contritely"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Define "contrite." When have you felt contrite?
4. How do you feel about using the pattern from the Book of Common Prayer?
5. To what extent do you agree with this statement, "It is only the unconfessed sin that can hurt us. It is the unacknowledged, the denied and excused aspects of our lives that force us to lie about ourselves to ourselves and to others. The moment we can acknowledge a sin, recovery begins."
6. Hostetler writes, "We can leave our past in our past. We can check our baggage and walk away unencumbered." What if the sin is not an isolated incident you can walk away from, but an attitude that affects you in an ongoing way, such as an angry attitude v. a solitary angry outburst?
7. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 11

For use after the group has read chapter 11, "Pray Graciously"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Describe a time when a negative situation caused you to suffer spiritual affliction as Hostetler describes on page 135-136. How did you overcome the affliction and maintain your spiritual life and vitality? If you have not overcome it, what steps can you take in order to do so?
4. Hostetler writes that, "Jesus linked our forgiveness from God with our forgiveness with others" by telling us to forgive as we wish to be forgiven. Think of a time you could not forgive someone else. Describe how Hostetler's statement above makes you rethink that situation.
5. In the quote on page 140, James Mulholland writes, "Our Father is a forgiving God. We need to be as forgiving." Is it possible to be as forgiving as God? Is it necessary?
6. Think about a time you forgave someone. Did you truly forgive, erasing the debt as the king in the Matthew 18 parable did, or do you still harbor resentment, anger, and frustration over the incident? Was your forgiveness "a done deal?" If not, what can you do to truly forgive?
7. On page 145-146 Hostetler talks about daily forgiveness. Discuss how choosing daily to forgive someone could heal your wounds and enable you to fight the enemy.
8. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 12

For use after the group has read chapter 12, "Pray Submissively"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Hostetler writes, "Then he teaches us to align ourselves with God's reputation, kingdom, and will in prayer...Only after all that does Jesus teach us to ask to be led." How does aligning ourselves with God's will differ from asking to be led?
4. What past experiences of God's leading give you encouragement that God will continue to lead you in the future?
5. Contrast the meaning of temptation with the meaning of trial. How do we strengthen ourselves to face either or both?
6. In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
7. How do we balance praying for our persecutors with praying to be delivered from evil people?
8. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 13

For use after the group has read chapter 13, “Pray Purposefully”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Share any experience you have had when you were delivered from evil like Dave and Becky in the mission trip story.
4. Contrast “detachment from evil” with “deliverance from evil.” Why doesn’t detachment work?
5. How much do you agree or disagree with the Benson quote that prayer is “all we have to offer each other”?
6. Ephesians 6:10 – 20 details the armor of God, and Hostetler names prayer as “part of the arsenal.” How else may prayer be viewed in this passage?
7. Close this session by praying the Lord’s Prayer together, but pause when you come to “deliver us from evil.” Silently or aloud name a specific evil you are concerned about.

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Group Study 14

For use after the group has read chapter 14, "Pray Worshipfully"

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. How do you define worship? How does Hostetler define it?
4. How do you feel about the church's traditional ending of the Lord's Prayer not being original to Jesus?
5. What are some implications of praying, "Yours is the kingdom"? Share any experience related to having prayed it.
6. What are some implications of praying, "Yours is the power"? Share any experience related to having prayed it.
7. What are some implications of praying, "Yours is the glory"? Share any experience related to having prayed it.
8. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 15

For use after the group has read chapter 15, “Pray Gratefully”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Share any experiences where you have remembered or were pressed to pray a prayer of thanks for God’s goodness.
4. Name two things—one “big” and one “small”—you have thanked God for. Did each prayer of gratitude seem the same? How did they differ?
5. Do you believe it is important to speak your thanks to God out loud the way Jesus did? Why or why not?
6. How has being grateful to God and speaking that in prayer to Him helped your mood, situations, or thoughts? If gratitude acts “as a vaccine and antidote to depression, discouragement, bitterness, and resentment,” is your gratitude genuine or self-serving?
7. End your group session by praying in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

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Group Study 16

For use after the group has read chapter 16, “Pray Biblically”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. Why did Jesus choose Psalm 22 to pray on the cross, and why only one line?
4. What is your favorite go-to psalm to pray? Which psalm resonates with you? Why?
5. Of the biblical prayers mentioned in the chapter, which have you prayed, or are you most likely to pray?
6. Of the biblical promises mentioned in the chapter, which have you prayed, or are you most likely to pray?
7. Challenge: Next time you are worship leader, pray a biblical prayer or take a non-prayer passage and turn it into a prayer.
8. Close this session by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.

Group Study 17

For use after the group has read chapter 17, “Pray Persistently”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. As Hostetler says on page 219, why it is so difficult to keep praying until we “get the call,” until an answer comes?
4. Which plays more of a part in preventing our praying, laziness or busyness?
5. How has a prayer you have prayed changed as you have been consistent in prayer about it?
6. How have you been changed by consistent prayer?
7. How does consistent prayer change your relationship with God?
8. Close your group session by praying aloud in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

Group Study 18

For use after the group has read chapter 18, “Pray Boldly”

1. Open in prayer.
2. What did you find most helpful in this chapter? What did you highlight?
3. How did this chapter make you feel about your prayer life?
4. Tell about a time you did pray boldly. What were the results?
5. How has your prayer life changed while reading and studying this book? What further changes do you hope to make?
6. Name one thing you've been afraid to pray for. As each person names his or her request, another member of the group will pray for that request, until all requests have been brought to God—boldly.
7. Close your group session by praying aloud in unison the prayer included at the end of this chapter.

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