
Worship in Spirit and Truth:
“The Declaration of Dependence”
Daniel 9:1-19

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

Like a flash of lightning, prayer exposes for a nanosecond what I would prefer to ignore: my own true state of fragile dependence.

- Philip Yancey, *Prayer*

I do not control the action; that is a pagan concept of prayer, putting the gods to work by my incantations or rituals. I am not controlled by the action; that is a Hindu concept of prayer in which I slump passively into the impersonal and fated will of the gods and goddesses. I enter into the action begun by another, my creating and saving Lord, and find myself participating in the results of the action. I neither do it, nor have it done to me; I will to participate in what is willed.

- Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*

America is the land of pioneers and possibilities. We blaze our own trails and control our own destinies. I take care of myself and think that taking care of you is your job. This attitude infects the American church, where we all too easily overlook the significance of the New Testament metaphor for the church as a family of God. ... You cannot read the New Testament with integrity and think that being a Christian boils down to you, Jesus, and your Bible. We are the family of God, brothers and sisters with Christ.

- Wendy Widder, *The Story of God Bible Commentary: Daniel*

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- After reading through the passage together, ask your group what makes an impression upon them from the passage and why it strikes them.
- What has been your experience of prayer? Do you consider yourself a “prayer warrior,” or do you find it a struggle to discipline yourself? Can you think of one or two things that have helped you become disciplined?
- Philip Yancey probably strikes a chord with many of us when he says that prayer exposes our “true state of fragile dependence.” What does he mean by that? Where have you seen that in your own life?
- Read the quote from Wendy Widder. What are your impressions? How is congregational prayer (or, the “prayers of the people” time in worship) an antidote to individualism? How does it then shape our personal prayer?
- Why can we trust Jesus as our “Great High Priest”? If, then, Jesus “lives forever to intercede with God on [our] behalf” as the book of Hebrews tells us, what does that mean for our everyday lives? At home? At school? At work? At play?
- Spend a few minutes talking about what is important to you that needs prayer, e.g. a missionary friend, a justice initiative, your hometown, or a family you are close with. Then close by praying for those people, places, and issues.