Cultivating a Culture of Prayer

Session 1

The Culture of the Table

Note to Leader: *We intentionally created this discussion guide with more than enough material so that you can pick the questions that work best for your group. Before your meeting, watch the video, read the discussion guide, and decide which questions you'd like to discuss. Thank you for choosing this study and for faithfully leading your group.*

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing what we know, feel, and do.

MAIN IDEA: A culture of prayer is intentionally cultivated through consistent habits, shared values, and a commitment to remain in God's presence.

Head Change: To know that a culture of prayer doesn't happen accidentally or coincidentally.

Heart Change: To feel grateful that God invites us into a relationship with him through prayer, and he celebrates our growth rather than expecting perfection.

Life Change: To intentionally establish one simple, repeatable prayer rhythm for daily life to begin cultivating a stronger culture of prayer.

OPEN

In twenty words or less, describe your culture.

We tend to think of culture as simply how we grew up – the beliefs, customs, arts, foods, or festivals we absorbed from our families or communities. But in the opening session of the series, Brian Heasley explains that any culture – and certainly, a culture of prayer – needs to be intentionally grown or developed: *cultivated*.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Brian answers these questions.

How did Brian and his wife intentionally create a family culture of eating together at the table?

What are the origins of our English word culture?

The apostle Paul urges us to d_____ ourselves to prayer and to pray c_____.

How does prayer 'heat' our churches and our lives?

Show SESSION #1: *The Culture of the Table* **(12 minutes)**

REVIEW

Brian opens the session by sharing how he and his wife intentionally replaced eating in front of the TV with gathering around the table, creating space to be present with one another.

Looking back over your life, what habits or routines – in your family, workplace, or church – have shaped your culture without you even realising it? Can you think of a time when making one intentional change had a lasting impact?

Healthy cultures are cultivated when we engage in four actions: example, educate, embed, and celebrate.

Which of these four comes most naturally to you, and which do you find most challenging? Why do you think that is?

Brian reminds us prayer isn't something we can outsource. He points to Jesus' invitation to remain in Him (John 15:4).

What do you think it looks like, practically, to remain connected to Jesus throughout an ordinary day, amidst the busyness and distractions of the world?

Brian challenges us by pointing out that we all already have some kind of culture of prayer, but is it the culture we want?

If someone observed your life over the next month, what conclusions might they draw about the place prayer occupies in your priorities?

During the group discussion, Jess comments that our motivation for praying is key to a healthy culture.

Talk about a time when you felt excited to pray because God was so evidently at work in a particular situation, or a time when you felt compelled to pray, not out of duty or obligation, but because you were acutely aware of your need to depend wholly on God.

Brian tells the group, 'I feel relatively well motivated to have a personal prayer life, but how do I motivate people to have a *culture* of prayer?' Hannah responds with the idea that, as leaders, we can't take people places we haven't been – or we become like cheap, unpersuasive travel agents handing out brochures for destinations we've never visited.

How does having a personal prayer life influence the prayer life of the wider community?

Jess points out that, when it comes to motivating people to pray corporately, it's important to acknowledge that we all have different styles of prayer.

What's your prayer style? Do you think the prayer rhythms in your community have something for everyone?

As a group, spend some time in prayer now. Ask God for selflessness, discernment, sensitivity to the needs, preferences, and experiences of others, and creative ideas to strengthen the prayer culture in your community.

LAST WORD

Prayer is fundamental to our relationship with God, and it can't be outsourced. It's also not a backstop – an emergency, last-resort response – but rather a rhythm woven into our daily lives. Let's also keep reminding ourselves and each other that our focus in prayer should be *outward* as we create a culture that seeks to bless others, not just ourselves. Whether you're a busy mum who seldom has a moment to herself, or whether you lead others in a corporate environment, be encouraged that

wherever God has placed you in this season, He can use you to cultivate a healthy culture of prayer.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 in a few different Bible translations. What is God saying to you? What's your next step, as you seek to build a personal and corporate culture of prayer?

Write: In your journal or a note on your phone, jot down what stood out to you from this session, and write down your answer to the question, *Why do you want to grow in prayer?*

Pray: Pray for a prayer meeting! Pray that those indecisive about whether or not to attend would choose to be there. Pray that leaders would be sensitive to the temperaments and worship styles in the room, and that all present would feel encouraged and inspired to seek God in prayer.