

Cultivating a Culture of Prayer

Session 5
Celebrate

SESSION GOALS

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

MAIN IDEA: We cultivate a culture of prayer by celebrating stories of God's presence, answered prayer, persistence, and even unanswered prayer.

Head Change: To know that we replicate what we celebrate, and that what we celebrate communicates what we value and shapes what others learn to value, too.

Heart Change: To notice God's goodness with wonder and gratitude, and to value prayer enough to celebrate both God's faithfulness and the faithfulness of those who keep praying.

Life Change: To intentionally seek out, share, and celebrate stories of prayer in our homes, churches, workplaces, or communities, including stories of encounter, answered prayer, persistence, and appropriate lament.

OPEN

- **For your birthday, would you rather throw a big party or go away for a weekend with one or two loved ones? What's your favourite way to celebrate Christmas or New Year's Eve?**

Our celebration styles and preferences might differ, but we're all wired to remember, commemorate, and mark important moments in life, and this human tendency spills over into our prayer lives, too. In the final session of the series, Brian unpacks the importance of celebration for cultivating a culture of prayer.

VIEW

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

- **According to Brian, why is it crucial to cultivate a sense of wonder?**

- **What four kinds of stories does Brian encourage us to celebrate, and why?**

Show SESSION #5: *Celebrate* **(12 minutes)**

REVIEW

Brian reminds us that we replicate what we celebrate. What we give our time and attention to communicates what we value. If we say prayer is important but rarely talk about it, share stories about it, or celebrate what God is doing through it, we may unintentionally communicate that prayer is a low priority. A culture of prayer is therefore shaped not only by how often we pray, but by the stories we tell about prayer and the way we celebrate God's faithfulness.

- **How many times in a week or a month do you have a conversation about prayer with someone in your church? What does your community's conversation reveal about how much it values prayer?**

Stories of people encountering God encourage others to seek out His presence and His love for themselves. A personal testimony of how God has changed you or spoken to you can remind others that God isn't distant and that He hears us. Sharing these stories can therefore become a powerful way of cultivating faith and prayer in a community.

- **Whose story of encountering God has recently encouraged you, and what story can you tell to encourage others this week?**

Not every prayer is answered quickly. Stories of people who continue praying faithfully, sometimes every day for decades, encourage us not to give up. Celebrating God's faithfulness even *before* we see the outcome we long for helps create a culture of persistent prayer.

- **Talk about ways to sensitively thank God for his faithfulness in prayer, even while people are still waiting for breakthrough.**

Brian makes it clear that a healthy prayer culture doesn't only tell stories with happy endings. There are prayers that remain unanswered and experiences of loss, disappointment, and pain that must be acknowledged. Christian celebration isn't

denial of suffering; it's the practice of remembering God's goodness in the midst of a world where suffering is real. The group discussion emphasises the need for sensitive, self-aware leaders who can hold both joy and pain rather than rushing people toward positivity.

- **What could it look like to make a safe space for grief or confusion in your community?**

Every community develops its own 'lore' – stories that are repeated because they tell us something about who we are and what we value. The Israelites repeatedly told the story of the Exodus because it reminded them who God was and who they were. In the same way, the stories we choose to tell, who gets to tell them, and how often we repeat them can shape the prayer culture of our homes, churches, workplaces, and communities.

- **What prayer stories do you have? What stories of prayer do you hope your community will remember and repeat?**

LAST WORD

We cultivate a culture of prayer not just through the prayers we pray, but through the stories we tell about those prayers. When we celebrate encounters with God, answers to prayer, faithful persistence, and even the honest pain of unanswered prayer, we remind each other of who God is and what He's done. Celebration lifts our eyes to Jesus. So, as we notice God's goodness, make space for gratitude, and share the stories of His faithfulness, we help to create a culture in which prayer is valued and remembered. We replicate what we celebrate.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before moving on to a different series.

Read: Read Luke 15:1–32. What does Jesus reveal about the importance of joy and celebration in the Kingdom of God, and how might this influence our approach to prayer?

Write: Write out a story of when you encountered God in prayer. Who could you share your story with?

Pray: Meet with a few friends this week, in person or online, and ask God to guide you as you example, educate, embed, and celebrate prayer in the communities God has placed you.