

## 40 Days Praying Together

Welcome to the City Reformed Spring reading program. Following the tradition of the last few years we will spend the weeks leading up to Easter invested in intentional reading and reflection. The topic for this year is *prayer*. The morning and evening sermon series, and other ministries in the church will all relate to this topic. In addition to learning about *prayer*, we will make a concerted effort to pray more together.

**Beginning on Sunday February 18, 2024, and concluding on Easter Sunday**, we will post regular entries on this blog, every day of the week except Sunday. New posts will be scheduled to drop at 2:00 am each morning. We do not intend for the blogs to be particularly long, so many people will find that they can continue current patterns of daily Bible reading. For people who are trying to get into the habit of daily devotions, this can be a great tool to jumpstart that practice.

In addition to reading and thinking about prayer, we encourage people to commit themselves to more expansive patterns of prayer. Here are some ways we would like you to consider doing that:

- 1.) Topics - We are asking our congregation to commit to praying for three things during this time.
  - a. **For God's guidance and provision for a new permanent building which can help our ministry serve the *University and Medical Community* in Oakland.**
  - b. **For God to bring spiritual renewal to churches across the land.**
  - c. **For a specific personal request.**
- 2.) Format – We encourage you to think about praying more regularly in a number of ways.
  - a. **Commit time to personal prayer.**
    - i. This is a great time to reshape or perhaps restart daily patterns of prayer and Bible reading.
  - b. **Praying together as a congregation.**
    - i. We will create a more expansive and open time of prayer in the evening worship service.
    - ii. We will create some other opportunities for group prayer.
  - c. **Praying more intentionally in our small groups.**
    - i. Prayer is already an important part of our small group ministries, but we encourage our small groups to think about intentional ways to focus on prayer during this time.
  - d. **Praying together with friends and family.**
    - i. We encourage you to pursue arrangements with friends and mentors that allow for opportunities to pray during the week. Perhaps a 5-minute call at the end of the day, or a quick prayer check-in during lunch or breakfast. This is a great time to reach out and ask people to pray with you.
- 3.) Learning to pray together
  - a. For some people the challenge of praying together can feel like a barrier to participation. We may worry about whether we say the right thing. It can also feel difficult to be authentically transparent with our needs.
    - i. Take slow, small and intentional steps to grow in this area.

- ii. It is ok to pray silently at first. Closing with something familiar, like the Lord's Prayer can help break the ice in praying out loud.
  - iii. Most of all, remember that we are talking to God, and the foundation for our prayers is the righteous standing of Jesus. Even now, he is interceding for us, so he can *fix* our "bad prayers" and offer them acceptably to our Father. This can encourage us to start praying without fear.
  - iv. This is a great time to push through barriers and take the step to establish some new patterns of praying – both alone and together. Nothing helps someone feel more comfortable with a new activity as much as experience. This applies to prayer.
- b. Reading the blog will provide daily encouragements, so follow along... as we journey together through this season of prayer.