

EDWARD SRI

WHEN

A CLEAR PATH TO A DEEPER

YOU

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

PRAY

Workbook



This workbook for *When You Pray: A Clear Path to a Deeper Relationship with God* has been submitted for ecclesiastical review and *imprimatur* to the Archdiocese of Denver.

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ABOUT WHEN YOU PRAY

When You Pray: A Clear Path to a Deeper Relationship with God is a seven-part study for small groups of two or more people. (Individuals can also do it, but we encourage you to do it with at least one other person, like your spouse or a friend.) Here we explain what the study includes, how it works, and how to get the most out of it.

Materials

The components of the *When You Pray* study include:

- This **workbook**, which contains session summaries, engaging discussion questions, Talk Notes on the video presentations, prayers, home reading assignments, and responses to the questions. (Every participant, study leader, and small group facilitator will need one workbook.)
- The book ***When You Pray***, which can be read on its own, as a home assignment for each session, or as the basis for a thirty-day prayer challenge after you have concluded the study.
- Seven 30-minute **video presentations by Dr. Edward Sri**, filmed on location in Italy. These video presentations provide comprehensive teaching and commentary on Catholic prayer. (Each group will need one DVD set or online video access.)

In addition, every participant, leader, and small group facilitator should have a Catholic Bible. For this study, we recommend *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible that incorporates the color-coded *Bible Timeline*® Learning System used in *The Great Adventure*® Bible Study Program.

Session Outline

Each session of the study has sections for you to complete at home and sections to complete with your group. The sections are titled

(A) “Introduction,” (B) “Consider,” (C) “Watch,” (D) “Discuss,” and (E) “Application”:

- The text under “Introduction” opens each session and briefly summarizes it. Sidebars provide additional details about topics related to the assigned readings. Read the introductory text during home preparation before you meet.
- The “Consider” section provides questions to get you thinking about the session themes. You do not need to prepare your answers for this at home.
- Under “Watch,” you will find Talk Notes for the video presentation.
- The “Discuss” section asks thought-provoking questions for you to answer during home preparation. Your group will discuss these questions during small group discussion.
- “Application” invites you to pray about what you’ve learned and act on it.

At the end of each session, boxed text titled “Prepare...” provides a short assignment from *When You Pray* to read before the next session.

Last are the “Responses to the Session Questions” in the back of the workbook. In this section you will find suggested answers to the “Consider” and “Discuss” questions, which provide an excellent review of the study session.

How the Study Works

Each session of this study can be done in four basic steps, which are designed to fit together and build upon each other. Following these steps will help you get the most out of each session.



Step One: Home Preparation

Sessions Two through Seven each begin with personal study at home. (There is no home preparation for Session One.) To prepare, (1) read the session summary under “Introduction” and the assignment from *When You Pray*. Then (2) answer the session questions under “Discuss.” We recommend allowing at least ninety minutes a week for each session’s readings and questions. Consider doing this in short daily sittings. Even fifteen minutes a day will help you create a habit of daily spiritual reading and prayerful meditation.

Step Two: Video Presentation

Dr. Sri begins each session with a presentation filmed in Italy. This teaching will help you gain a deeper understanding of Catholic prayer, with special emphasis on ways to apply what you have learned. To get the group thinking about the themes of the session, briefly discuss the one or two questions under “Consider” before you watch the video. You can also use the Talk Notes under “Watch” for review and discussion.

Step Three: Small Group Discussion

The small group discussion is one of the most rewarding components of the study. The questions under “Discuss” allow you and the other members of your group to share their insights into the readings and video presentation. A trained facilitator will guide the discussion and keep it on track. The goal is to help you understand and apply the material to your life.

Be sure to follow the “Ten Commandments of Small Group Discussion” on page xi.

Step Four: Review of Responses

The final step is to read the responses for the session at the back of this workbook. Review them on your own at home after you meet, before you begin preparing for the next session.

During the discussions, your small group facilitator may incorporate points found in the responses. But the group’s insights will be richer and more varied if you and the others wait until after the session to view the responses in the back.

For the most effective study experience, complete these steps for each session:

Before meeting: At home, (1) read the text under “Introduction” and the assigned reflection from *When You Pray*, and (2) read and answer the questions under “Discuss” to prepare for your small group discussion.

When you meet: With the others in your group, (3) answer the questions under “Consider” together, and (4) view the video presentation, adding your own notes to the Talk Notes under “Watch” if you wish. (5) Read and talk about the “Discuss” questions you prepared at home.

If time allows, (6) talk over ways to apply new insights in your daily life (see “Application”), and pray the closing prayer.

After meeting: At home, (7) find the responses for this session under “Responses to the Session Questions” in the back of the workbook, and review them before you begin preparing for the next session. (8) Begin to apply what you’re learning.

For more information on how to plan and promote a Bible study and how to facilitate small group discussion, visit ascensionpress.com or call 1-800-376-0520.

Reading Guide

The following chart shows the primary readings and supplemental texts for each session.

Session	Main Reading from <i>When You Pray</i> trade book	Additional Readings
1. “I Thirst”	–	John 15:5
2. The Battle for Prayer	Reflection 6	Romans 8:26 Deuteronomy 8:2
3. Trust and Surrender	Reflection 10	Proverbs 3:5–6 Matthew 6:25–34
4. Meeting God in the Valley	Reflection 15	2 Corinthians 12:7–10 Proverbs 9:4
5. The Living Flame of Love	Reflection 22	Psalms 42:1–2 Jeremiah 29:13 Matthew 6:21 Matthew 16:24 Hebrews 12:29
6. In the World, Not of the World	Reflection 28	Romans 12:1–2 Psalm 46:10 Psalm 62:1–2, 5 Habakkuk 2:20 1 Kings 19:11–13 1 John 2:15–17
7. Radiating Christ	Reflection 30	John 13:3–5 John 13:13–15 Matthew 22:36–40 John 13:34 John 3:16 Romans 5:8 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

What to Do During Each Small Group Meeting

1. Welcome, introduction, and initial “Consider” questions (15 minutes)
2. Video presentation (30 minutes)
3. Small group discussion (40 minutes)

Facilitators: There is a short group discussion for the first week. Use the additional time to divide participants into small groups of eight to twelve people, ensure that everyone has the study materials, and explain how the study works. A trained facilitator should lead each small group.

4. Closing and prayer (5 minutes)

Getting the Most Out of This Study

This study will give you a new understanding and appreciation for prayer. The “head knowledge” you learn will help you grow in “heart knowledge” as you apply your insights from each session. In some ways, God will always remain a mystery, which is part of the beauty of our Faith and our prayer: we can never exhaust their treasures. Fortunately for us, prayer is not a subject to master; it is a whole way of life and an encounter with God himself.

When you begin your home assignment each week, start with a prayer and place yourself in God’s presence. You might take the words of David as your starting prayer: “Teach me the way I should go, LORD, for to you I lift up my soul” (Psalm 143:8). As you work through the readings, adopt an attitude of listening, being open to what God wants you to learn. What do the words say? What do they mean? How do they apply to your life?

An Important Note About the Responses to the Study Questions

Responses to the study questions appear at the back of this workbook. People will have unique insights into the readings and video presentations that they’ll bring to your group discussions. In comparison, the responses in the back will only touch on the rich meanings you explore together when you meet.

The responses have two functions:

- The first is to provide a review of each session, which will help set the context for the readings and questions in the next session. Thus, the best time to read the responses is before you prepare for the next session.
- The second is to provide guidelines for the small group facilitators.

Facilitators: As you prepare for the small group discussion, complete the readings and answer the questions before you read the responses.

Participants should review the responses for each session after meeting together and completing the session. Although it might be tempting to look at the responses in advance, it is essential to wait for the following reasons:

- This study is not simply about reading a book, reading Scripture, and watching video presentations. It is equally vital that you take what you learn into prayer and engage it with your heart. The questions in this study are designed to draw you into prayer. Reading responses written by someone else may satisfy your mind for a moment but will not nurture the growth toward God that will occur if you reflect on the questions personally, pray with them, and answer them on your own.
- The success of a small group depends on good discussions. A group of participants who have spent time pondering the reading and Scripture passages on their own will have more varied insights to discuss.

For these reasons, please wait until after your meeting to read the responses in the back. When you follow the steps of this study as intended, you will explore prayer in different ways—in the readings, the small group discussions, the video presentations, and the suggestions for living out what you're learning. After that, you can review the responses. Follow these steps over time, and you will not only be fed—you will learn to feed yourself.

Ten Commandments of Small Group Discussion

1. Enjoy yourself!
2. Speak with respect and charity.
3. Do not ridicule or dismiss what others say.
Keep comments positive.
4. Come prepared.
5. If you were not able to prepare, let others speak first.
6. Stick to the topic and questions at hand.
7. Start and end on time.
8. Allow silence. Give people a chance to think.
9. Listen to others without interrupting.
10. Keep personal matters within the group.

—Adapted from Thomas Smith's "Ten Commandments of a Small Group."



Jesus and the Samaritan Woman by Virginio Monti,
in the Chiesa del Sacro Cuore di Gesù, Rome

Session One

“I THIRST”

A. Introduction

When you pray, do you ever feel restless or distracted? Do you ever feel like you don't know what you're doing in prayer? Do you have times when you don't feel close to God?

When you pray, do you ever struggle to trust God and surrender to his will? Are you sometimes uncertain how to discern God's plan for your life? Do you ever get discouraged by your many weaknesses and wonder, “Why do I have so many struggles? Why can't I change?”

Do you long to be transformed?

God wants to take us on a profound interior journey. He wants to lead us step by step into deeper relationship with him. In short, Catholic spirituality is all about God changing us “into his likeness from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). And this spiritual transformation takes place primarily through the life of prayer.

This study is not merely *about* prayer or how to pray. It's more about learning how to encounter God in prayer and allowing him to act more in our lives.

B. Consider

Discuss these questions with your group before watching the video presentation together:

1. What are your hopes for this study? What would you like to get out of it?

2. In John 15:5, Jesus says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”
 - a. How much do you live by this reality day to day? In other words, to what extent do you live as if everything depended on God and to what extent as if everything depended on you?

 - b. What does this verse tell us about the importance of prayer?

C. Watch

Watch the video presentation for Session One with your group.

Session One Talk Notes

I. A pilgrim versus a tourist

II. The journey of prayer

- a. Struggles in prayer
- b. The example of the saints

III. “I Thirst”

- a. Our thirst for God
- b. God’s thirst for us
- c. The woman at the well
- d. “Prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him” (CCC 2560).

IV. Daily prayer

- a. Not just ...
 - 1. Vocal prayers
 - 2. Devotions
 - 3. Liturgical prayer
- b. Prayer is intimate conversation with God.
 - 1. Fifteen to thirty minutes a day
 - 2. Meditation
 - 3. Grace meeting the fertile soil of a daily prayer life
- c. “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NAB).
- d. Radiating Christ prayer: May every person we come in contact with “look up and see no longer us but only Jesus” (Mother Teresa).

- e. We need daily prayer, and the people in our lives need us to pray daily.

V. Sister Josephine Garrett: Practical Tips for Prayer

- a. Be okay with where you are starting.
- b. Start with Scripture.
- c. Set aside a specific time for prayer.

VI. Faithfulness is more important than feelings.

VII. We make time for the things we value most.

VIII. Daily prayer unites us with God's will.

- a. It makes us more fruitful.
- b. It prevents us from doing harm.
- c. The soul needs prayer as the body needs oxygen—"the deep breath of prayer."¹

—Jesus' Thirst—

“

“At this most difficult time He proclaimed, ‘I thirst.’ And people thought He was thirsty in an ordinary way and they gave Him vinegar straight away; but it was not for that thirst; it was for our love, our affection, that intimate attachment to him, and that sharing of His passion. He used ‘I thirst’ instead of ‘Give Me your love.’ ... ‘I thirst.’ Let us hear Him saying it to me and saying it to you.” – Mother Teresa²

”

Missionaries of Charity in the chapel of the Mother House, Kolkata, India



D. Discuss

Prepare these questions at home, and discuss them together as a group:

1. Put yourself in the scene at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday. Imagine Jesus in his dying moments looking down into your eyes and saying these words to you, just you—"I thirst." How would you feel? How would you respond?

Chapel of St. Catherine in the Basilica of San Domenico, Siena, Italy



2. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that prayer is the loving response to the thirst of Jesus: “Jesus thirsts; his asking [for a drink] arises from the depths of God’s desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him” (CCC 2560).

How does this understanding of God’s thirst for us—for our time, our attention, and our love—change the way you think about prayer?

3. This session discusses how our prayer life blesses the people around us. In what sense are the people around us depending on us to pray each day? How does this truth motivate you to be more committed to daily prayer?

4. What are the biggest challenges you have to consistent, daily prayer? What are some practical ways you might be able to overcome those challenges?

E. Application

One of the most important ways to cultivate a daily prayer life is to prioritize it above the many responsibilities and activities we have each day. Setting aside a time, usually earlier in the day, is best.

What is one small resolution you can make to start or deepen the daily habit of prayer?

Closing Prayer

“Radiating Christ,” based on a prayer by St. John Henry Newman, was the favorite prayer of St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa). Let us pray it together.

Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go.
Flood our souls with your spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly
that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through us,
and be so in us,
that every soul we come in contact with
may feel your presence in our soul.

Let them look up and see no longer us
but only Jesus!

Stay with us,
and then we shall begin to shine as you shine,
so to shine as to be a light to others.

The light, O Jesus, will be all from you;
none of it will be ours.

It will be you, shining on others through us.

Let us thus praise you in the way you love best,
by shining on those around us.

Let us preach you without preaching,
not by words but by our example,
by the catching force,
the sympathetic influence of what we do,
the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear for you.

Amen.³



San Gregorio Magno al Celio, Rome

Loyalty in Prayer

“Are we loyal to Jesus even when it does not *feel* like good prayer, even when we *feel* like we’re not getting any ‘feedback’ from God or getting much out of our prayer time? Are we coming to prayer only for what we get out of it—the feelings—or are we showing up for prayer faithfully each day out of love for our Lord, to give ourselves to him and to give him the praise, thanksgiving, love, and attention that he justly deserves? After all, real love is not all about feelings.” – Edward Sri, *When You Pray*⁴

Prepare for Session Two

Read Reflection 6, “Restless, Distracted, and Dry: Give God That Nothing,” in *When You Pray*.