

**essentials**  
small group bible resources

Now you're talking!  
A six-part guide to effective praying

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All materials in the **essentials** series of small group Bible resources are published by **Equipped for Living** – [www.equippedforliving.org](http://www.equippedforliving.org)

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**Equipped for Living** exists to teach the timeless truth of God's word, the Bible, in a fresh and relevant way, in order to help you connect with God and equip you to live as a follower of Jesus Christ.

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# Preface

What an amazing God we have! Not only did he write a book that tells us what he's like and how we can come into a relationship with him, but he's made it possible for us to talk directly to him. The moment we hand over our lives to God through faith in Jesus Christ, we become members of his family and this brings enormous privileges and benefits. One of these privileges is prayer – being able to communicate directly with God himself.

**Now you're talking!** is a small group Bible resource on effective praying and is part of the **essentials** series, produced by **Equipped for Living** ([www.equippedforliving.org](http://www.equippedforliving.org)). Written in an easy-to-follow interactive style, this resource will help you enrich and energise your prayer life.

One of the strengths of the studies in the **essentials** series is that they are each made up of 'core and options'. For instance, if you are time-limited to, say, 30 or 40 minutes, you might want to do only part two of each chapter – this is the Bible study and, as such, is the core part of the material. Perhaps you'll choose this if you want a workplace Bible study to do during your lunch-break, for example. For those of you who have more time, we encourage you to add on any, or all, of the options. The complete format looks like this:

- 1 **Jack, Lynne and Emma – option**
- 2 **What does the Bible say? – core**
- 3 **Discussion questions – option**
- 4 **Group activity – option**
- 5 **Personally speaking – option**

To help you decide which options to choose, we've given suggested times for how long you might want to spend on each section when you meet with your group.

We hope you'll enjoy this flexible approach to Bible study!

Although the **essentials** studies are intended primarily for group interaction, there's no reason why you can't go through them on your own, if that's what you would prefer. If you plan to study with others, we strongly recommend that you try to answer as many questions as possible before you meet with them. You will gain so much by getting alone with God and his word, allowing him to teach you, before you share what you've learned with the rest of your group.

## 1 First impressions

### 1 Jack, Lynne and Emma (5 minutes)

*Jack, Lynne and Emma are fictional characters who work for the same company in the city centre. Their discussions cover various topics, from worship to making the best use of time and money. Join them now as they begin one of their conversations...*

- Jack:** I just bumped into that new guy in the corridor – he's really unfriendly.
- Lynne:** Unfriendly? How?
- Jack:** Well, he just looks through you as if you're not there. I was going to speak to him, but he just gave me a kind of frosty stare, so I said nothing.
- Lynne:** Perhaps he's just shy.
- Emma:** Yes, maybe he is, Jack. I'm quite shy, too. It took a long time before I spoke to anyone here.
- Jack:** You? Shy? You could fool me! First time I spoke to you I thought you were never going to stop talking! No, he's not shy – just plain unfriendly!
- Lynne:** Jack, that's not fair. Perhaps if you just get to know him better you might find that he's quite a nice guy. Maybe he thinks **you're** unfriendly. After all, he doesn't know you either and **you** didn't speak to him.
- Emma:** Isn't it strange... I mean, how we react to people we don't know. Before I became a follower of Jesus, I didn't know God and only discovered what he was like when you two started to explain to me about his holiness, power, love, and all that.
- Lynne:** Yes, Emma, and I think it's really amazing that, although we can know what God is like from reading the Bible, we can really get to know God himself – I mean have a real relationship with him as our heavenly Father.
- Emma:** Too right it is – awesome!
- Lynne:** Jack, maybe you ought to try and get to know that guy. Maybe you'll find he's okay when you get to know him – and when he gets to know you.
- Jack:** Okay, voice of my conscience! I'll try to get talking to the guy at lunch.

**2 What does the Bible say? (30-40 minutes)**

If you want to develop a meaningful relationship with someone, one of the things you'll need to do is to find out what that person is like. Is she kind? Does he follow through on his promises? Does she have a good sense of humour? Without that kind of knowledge, it's very difficult to have an authentic relationship with another person. It's also important that the other person has some idea of what you are like. Does he see you as someone who's trustworthy? Does she think you're friendly? Would he describe you as moody? One way you'll find these things out is by talking with that person.

The same is true of our relationship with Jesus Christ. The Bible gives us a lot of information about what he is like and also tells us what he thinks of us. This should give us confidence to talk to him, knowing that the more we do this, the closer our relationship to him will be. In the following table, write the appropriate description of God beside each verse. These verses are only a sample of what God is like – there are many, many more.

VERSES	DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD
Psalms 90:2	
Psalms 111:4	
Psalms 119:68	
Isaiah 6:3	
Hebrews 4:15	
Ephesians 2:18	
1 John 1:9	
Revelation 11:17	

Which of these descriptions might you find particularly helpful when you pray? Share with your group the reasons for your choice.

How might you use these descriptions in your prayer times?

But what about us? We're so different from God, aren't we? For example, in **Romans 3:23**, we read that all of us have sinned and failed to reach God's high standards. In **John 15:5**, we read that we're unable to do anything of eternal value without Jesus Christ. Furthermore, God is fully aware that we're fragile and weak (**Psalms 103:14**). Even so, when we become followers of Jesus Christ by turning from sin and placing our trust in Jesus alone for salvation, we find the Bible describes us in amazing ways. Some of these ways are given in the verses in the following table. Look up each verse and write down how it describes us.

VERSES	DESCRIPTIONS OF US
John 1:12	
John 15:15	
2 Corinthians 5:17	
Philippians 3:20	

How might focusing on these biblical descriptions affect how you pray?

➤ **Read Hebrews 4:16**

This verse talks about approaching “*the throne of grace*”. What do you understand by this phrase?

In light of the previous two verses (14 and 15), why are we encouraged to be confident in our approach to God?

**<<< the essentials >>>**

**Prayer is an amazing thing. In prayer we come to God and speak to him. The Bible encourages us to come with boldness and confidence. But we must never allow boldness to become arrogance or just “chatting-to-the-neighbour-over-the-garden-fence” familiarity.**

**God is our compassionate, heavenly Father, but he is also a consuming holy fire. The boldness of our approach to God must always be tempered by reverence. After all, God is God, and we are sinful men and women.**

**3 Discussion questions** (15 minutes)

- In her conversation with Jack and Lynne, Emma mentions some of the characteristics of God – his holiness, power and love. Why do you think it's important to know what God is like?
- Lynne makes it clear that she believes there is a difference between knowing what God is like, and actually knowing him through having a personal relationship with him. How would you explain these two things to someone who wasn't clear about the difference between them?

- Read again <<< **the essentials** >>> and discuss with your group how we can approach God with both reverence **and** boldness.

#### 4 Group activity (15 minutes)

If convenient, divide into smaller groups to pray together. Refer to the table of the descriptions of God, and use some of these to help you focus on him as you pray. Look at the table of descriptions of us and remind each other of how God sees you as his child. Using these descriptions, and any others from the Bible, spend some time giving thanks to God that these are true of you. As a follower of Jesus, you are:

- God's child
- his friend
- a new creation
- a citizen of heaven – to name but a few!

Once you've done this, you might want to finish your time together by praying for each other.

#### 5 Personally speaking...

*One of the amazing things about humans is their ability to talk – and some of us are much better at this than others! You find out so much about people by talking to them and listening to what they have to say. Words are such great tools for communicating all sorts of things, from facts to feelings, and everything in between. Indeed, it's difficult to imagine any relationship lasting for very long without the use of words, isn't it? The same is true of the relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ. We need to talk to him regularly and be prepared to listen to his response. The more we talk to him, the more we'll get to know him, and the more we'll be able to trust him with all our concerns and difficulties. It's important to remember that, when we talk to God, we are talking to one who is awesome, holy and majestic – he is Lord of lords and King of kings (**Revelation 17:14**); but he is also our heavenly Father (**Matthew 6:9**) and our great high priest who sympathises with our weaknesses (**Hebrews 4:14,15**). Whether you've been following Jesus for a short or a long time, why not get to know God better by getting into the habit of talking to him on a regular basis? You'll soon discover that it's good to talk!*