

# Explorers in Prayer – Lesson Two Handout

## The Place of Praise and Thanksgiving in Prayer

In Romans 12: 15 Paul writes, “Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn.” Both of these reactions can be hard to do. If we are feeling miserable about our own lives it can be very hard to rejoice with those for whom things are going well. If we are rejoicing at our good fortune and hear about someone else’s great loss, it can be just as hard to genuinely mourn with those who mourn. But Paul didn’t write these words just to give us another challenge in life! He is showing us a destination towards which we need to journey. (And it IS a journey. We never really arrive at our destination in this life, so don’t be concerned if you haven’t got there yet.) To grow in Godly maturity includes becoming more able to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. It means coming to a place where we are increasingly able to let go of the need for our own happiness, and instead pursue the happiness of others. This is the world as God intended it, but to arrive at this destination we need to have clearly grasped what it means for God to have love at the centre of all he does. Just as it is hard to trust God if we haven’t found out for ourselves that he is fully trustworthy, so we cannot praise God for his loveliness if we haven’t found out for ourselves just how full of love he is!

*God of Surprises* by Gerard W. Hughes, pages 61-62.

“The problem is the multiplicity and variety of conflicting desires within us. How are we to discover what we really desire? Our surface desires are always the most noisy and demanding. When answered, they can leave us feeling empty and sad because in satisfying them we have frustrated deeper desires within us. In the book of Revelation (3:17), the writer tells the unfortunate Church of Laodicea, ‘You say to yourself, “I am rich, I have made a fortune, and have everything I want”, never realising that you are wretchedly and pitiably poor, and blind and naked too.’ This is a realisation that often hits men and women in what is called the ‘mid-life crises’ and can throw them into depression. In fact, this realisation can be the beginning of a new life.

If we are able to discover what we really want, if we could become conscious of the deepest desire within us, then we should have discovered God’s will. God’s will is not an impersonal blueprint for living forced on us by a capricious God and contrary to almost every inclination in us. God’s will is our freedom. He wants us to discover what we really want and who we really are. The struggle is not our will against God’s will, but our will struggling with its divided self, the will which wants all creation to praise, reverence and serve me against the will that wants to praise, reverence and serve God, the will which wants to take over from God against the will which wants to let God be God.”

### Individual Exercise:

For the daily exercise of 15 minutes do one of the following exercises each day.

Day 1 - Do a mental checklist of God’s characteristics (see Galatians 5: 22-23) and thank him for who he is.

Day 2 - Do a mental checklist of what Jesus did in his life on earth and thank him for those things.

Day 3 - The Holy Spirit is the one who reveals God to us. Thank him for the things he has revealed to you.

Day 4 - Do a mental checklist of all the friends and family God has given you and thank him for them.

Day 5 - Do a reflection of your life and thank God for the times he has clearly intervened.

Day 6 - Do a reflection on your current circumstances and thank God for them.

Day 7 - Do a mental checklist of all your possessions and thank God for them.

Read chapters 7, 8 & 9 of the course book.

**Prayer Triplet Exercise:** Spend time in a collective thanksgiving and praise, avoiding the temptation to ask him for anything. At the end, discuss how you felt about doing this.