

Question 6

- a) How seriously do we take prayer?
- b) Are we persistent in our praying?
- c) As we understand more about the God to whom we pray, our prayers will be much more in pursuit of outcomes that glorify Him rather than make things easier for us.
- d) God is a generous giver: **James 1:5-6**. We need to pray with the thought in mind of *"how much more will your Father who is in heaven..."* (v11).

GROUP LEADERS NOTES – STUDY 25

Question 1

- a) We need to be careful not to over analyse this verse. These three ideas are simply different metaphors for prayer.
- b) The seeking is the intensity with which we pursue that prayer and the knocking characterises the persistence of our praying.
- c) Jesus is emphasising the need for persistence in prayer in the Christian life; what Don Carson describes as *"prayer that is a burning pursuit of God"*.
- d) Notice that these three imperatives are in the present tense: keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking.

Question 2

- a) These verses are not an open cheque-book to pursue our own personal agenda.
- b) What we are doing here is asking for things that will honour God in our lives and in the lives of others. Remember that we have already been told to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness (6:33)!
- c) We need to ask for the virtues that Jesus has set out already in the Sermon so that we might live holy lives.
- d) If we turn to **James 4:2b-3** we are reminded of the importance of praying; but with the emphasis on motive.

- e) We need to come humbly; recognising that we are poor in spirit (recognising our spiritual bankruptcy and inability in ourselves to conform to the kingdom values as in 5:3).
- f) How great, therefore, that God so graciously responds to such prayers!

Question 3

- a) At face value these illustrations might sound ridiculous. Bread was the staple diet and fish would have been plentiful and readily available. What seems ridiculously obvious is stated intentionally to make the point.
- b) God is a discerning giver.
- c) We can trust God to do what is best for us.
- d) He does not withhold; but rather supplies that which He considers our needs to be. This will not necessarily correspond with our own assessment.

Question 4

- a) Many people see God as a reluctant giver. That is partly because we are apt to judge Him on what we see as 'results'; those things that we think are best for us.
- b) Here we are challenged to consider the comparison between an earthly and heavenly father; considering that phrase "*how much more...*" It is not a question but a statement of fact. God is not just a discerning giver but also an extravagant giver.

- c) The term 'evil' that is attributed to earthly fathers seems harsh. However it is used to point out the gulf between the wisdom of a Holy God and that of those, however willing, who are nevertheless affected by the sinful nature.
- d) This verse also emphasises the Father/child relationship that would be so disturbing to the Jewish listener.
- e) It is true that "*hallowed be your name*" (6:9). However we can approach God with child-like trust in his goodness and grace.

Question 5

- a) Earlier we observed in James 4:2 "*You do not have, because you do not ask*".
- b) We can believe all those things we have discussed so far but not prove them in our daily lives.
- c) One of the reasons we fail to ask is that we find it difficult to reconcile the fact that God who knows all things and has planned all things should invite us to ask and even persist.
- d) We might never fully grasp this 'mystery' but we are called to pray and therefore it continues to be the way God works in and through us. Remember Jesus' words: "*When you pray...*" (6:5,7).
- e) We must seek to pray with the right motives and always desiring God's will. That is why we talk about using scripture in our prayers. That way we are praying in line with God's character and promises.