

Shapes for Living

Week 2: Praying. Bible study leaders notes

Read this passage from Romans 8:26-27:

'... the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.'

Pause and take it in.

Praying is often a place of guilt. We feel we fail and are no good at it – and that others are praying more and are better at it than us.

The Spirit 'helps in our weakness' ...

God knows we are weak, is not ashamed of us – and offers his help.

'We do not know how to pray ...'

Does that feel familiar?

But God does – God not only knows, he sends his Spirit who intercedes within us.

This is so encouraging.

God knows and accepts our weakness and lack of understanding.

In a way the Holy Spirit stands in for us – offering what we cannot do by ourselves.

'To pray as we ought' ~ i.e. in the way that is right.

This praying is vital and life-giving. We cannot do without it - but we do not know how to on our own.

'With sighs and groans too deep for words'

A sigh or groan can be a prayer. It is not about having the right words. It is deeper than words.

'God searches the heart and the mind of the Spirit'

God knows us to our depths – and works in partnership with the Spirit .

Look at the Romans passage again, this time using the translation in 'The Message' version of The Bible:

'He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.'

Discuss

How do we respond to this?

A response: To pray for more of the Holy Spirit – to grow in our awareness of God's presence and purpose – and what he most longs us to receive according to his will.