

Counter Rev Small Group Conversation based on Matthew 6:1-8,16-18

Try keep this conversation no longer than 45 minutes - it is no good sending people home exhausted from just talking for too long. Keep the conversation moving and upbeat. Do your best to draw out the contributions of quieter people. Land the time in prayer, but remember to gently coach people who haven't prayed in a group before. There is no pressure to pray aloud. Encourage people to download the commentary of this text off the website for personal study during their devotional times this week - notice that there is much in the commentary that appears no where else - not in the Sunday talks or the audio summary.

Getting to know each other

- Two definitions to start: 1) An extreme introvert is someone who replenishes their emotional energy by being alone. 2) An extreme extrovert is someone who does so by being with people. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is an extreme introvert and 10 is an extreme extrovert, where would you place yourself?

Understanding Christ's teaching in Matthew 6:1-8,16-18

- *If some of your group did not hear the Sunday message, then play the summary audio clip. If you don't listen to this be sure to read the section of Scriptures together first.*
- Jesus speaks of the importance of building some spiritual practices into our lives: he mentions three: giving to the needy (v2-4), prayer (v5-8) and fasting (v16-18) for example. Can you think of others?
- *Read verses 1-4.* It is possible to do good things, but to do them for the wrong reasons. Can you think of any examples from your own life where you've seen this happen?
- *Verse 6a says, 'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door'.* Jesus speaks of the importance of regularly getting alone with God. From your own experience of this, or lack of it, why is this so crucial?
- *Verse 6b says, 'pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'* Ponder these words together and try put into your own words what can be learnt about God from them.
- *Read verses 7-8.* The prayers of pagans were an attempt to manipulate "the gods" or the universe to get what they wanted. They would use special incantations, or chanting for example. Their 'prayers' were repetitive, mindless, mechanical and manipulative. Jesus says we should be different in our praying? How so?

Praying alone and then together

- Explain that the themes of our personal prayer life tend to overflow into our together prayer life. In light of this, give everyone 5 minutes to be alone with God in prayer (scatter around the house if need be) and encourage them to be open to any theme God would want to put on their hearts to pray about. Perhaps they want to write a prayer to God in this time. Then come back together to spend a few minutes praying together (possibly in smaller groups) praying about whatever themes arose in their alone times with God.