

Red-Eye Prayer Challenge

What is it?

As part of our week of prayer and fasting we would like to encourage and challenge you to 2 mornings this week of what has grown to be called "Red-Eye Prayer". This is a challenge to either take on as a small group of people or as an individual, where your morning begins an hour earlier than normal with an hour of prayer. (Hence the red eyes!)

Why are we doing it?

With Jesus Christ as our example we see in scripture that Jesus himself got up "... while it was still dark..." to pray. (Mark 1:35, Luke 4:42). So we strive to be more like him in every way.

Part of the reason we are encouraging this to be done in groups is to help you to stick to your commitment of getting up early to pray and so in this way we are encouraging accountability. And secondly, as we heard in the sermon last week that as a church, at Riverside we want to be committed to community.

How do we do it?

Starting your RED EYE prayer group

1. Decide who you can and would like to form a group with for the two days this week. This could be your Lifegroup, your spouse, a few friends, or any people you would feel comfortable with. *(You may do this on your own too, but for the purpose of this week we would like to encourage an accountability with one or more persons).*
2. You may want to form a Whatsapp group for the week for the accountability part.
3. Decide together what will work best for the group; either physically meet at the set time and place to pray or just be praying in your own houses at the same time.
4. Choose the set time that suits your group.
5. Appoint one person who will be the one to follow up with everyone that they are awake (if you are doing it in your own homes) and ready to pray.
6. On the appointed day/time each person 'checks in' with the group e.g. before 5am, to show they are up and about to start praying.
7. Any who do not check in by the start time are phoned by the appointed person to wake them up.

The prayer hour

Please remember that the goal of this time is not just to get through the hour. The goal is meaningful connection with the Lord through prayer.

Nearly everyone who is new to prayer groups experiences some anxiety about praying out loud in front of a group. Often it's because they feel that they don't know how to word their prayers as well as others. In the beginning, it's wise for the group leader to structure the prayer time in such a way as to make everyone comfortable with their own skill level.

Incorporate these elements in your prayer time:

Praying Scripture

Use the following guide as you pray through the scriptures provided

- PRAISE "Thank you that..."
- CONFESSION "I'm sorry I don't..."
- CHRIST FULFILLMENT: "But Christ did..."
- SPIRIT ENABLEMENT: "And so through you I can ... " OR "Help me to ..."

Listening to God in prayer

Margaret Feinberg writes this about listening to God. (The full article can be read on the app or the website, entitled "How to Listen to God.")

Hearing God's voice requires a listening heart.

The art of listening for God invites me into a realm I find uncomfortable: silence. I must quiet my heart and embrace the stillness that allows me to truly know that He is God. While this may sound counterintuitive, silence is a key to satisfying hunger for God. When you think about feeding your appetite, you might have visions of rushing up to a dining room table filled with savory chicken and side dishes that smell like Thanksgiving. But sometimes rushing the meal is the worst thing we can do. God wants to feed us, and we must learn to sit quietly as he serves a banquet for our souls.

Silence asks me to close my mouth in order to open my heart. The first few moments of silence are the hardest, as I become painfully aware of the hum of the refrigerator, the muffled clang of the dryer. In the stillness, a wave of chores left undone crashes over me. The dishwasher needs emptying. I count 17 pieces of lint on the carpet. When was the last time I vacuumed? I fight back the distraction with a prayer: Jesus, help me to focus wholly on You and hear from You. I say His name a few times. My mind, body and spirit embrace the silence as a gift. As my listening sharpens, I realize that silence has its own beautiful rhythm. In this place, I'll ask God, "What's on Your heart?" and wait.

Sometimes I hear nothing at all, but at other times I'll begin thinking of someone long forgotten. Or I'll remember the need of a particular friend. Whether my mind drifts to politics or social justice issues, I offer up prayers to God and pepper Him with questions. Why does this matter to You? What's Your perspective? How can I serve You? At times, I'll feel compelled to pray, serve or give. Other times, I'll simply sit in the silence with a renewed awareness of what's important to God.

Listening forces me to learn patience. Nowhere in the Bible does God commit to running on our schedule or fitting into our time frame, though I wish it were that easy! God answers some prayers in the moment, but on others He waits. Waiting isn't easy and doesn't always deliver the answer we desire. Learning to hear, recognize and discern the ways in which God speaks isn't snappy. But in the

waiting time, God works within us in ways that are unrecognizable at first but over time reveal their priceless worth.

Prayer requests

- The purpose is lifting each other up in prayer with loving, caring hearts.
- The group focuses on praying for each other and typically does not seek prayer requests from those outside of the group.
- Group members treat things shared in the group as strictly confidential.
- Group members refrain from trying to “fix” each others’ problems but instead pray for God’s help and guidance.
- The leader keeps the meeting time focused on prayer, not on discussing specific personal issues in detail.
- Group members maintain a non-judgmental attitude about what is shared.