Session One: What is Prayer?

Opening Discussion

1. How would you define prayer? What is it? How does it work? How do we learn how to pray?

2. Consider how often it is that someone might tell you that you sound just like another family member (parent, sibling, grandparent)—the way you say our words or certain patterns of speech or accent. Why do we sound like the people we grew up with?

3. Although our brains seem pre-wired for language, we don't come out of the womb with a language pre-loaded. We have to learn how to speak. How does that happen? How do we learn language?

5. How is learning how to pray a lot like learning a language? If language is learned by listening, is the same true of prayer?

Digging Deeper

6. The bible is filled with examples of prayer. Consider and discuss the following biblical prayers.

- ✞ **Read Exodus 15:1-6**
  - What are the Israelites praying? Prayer of praise.
  - When might be appropriate times that you would pray a similar prayer?
  - Which line or lines stands out to you or which words or lines would you want to include in your own prayers? Why?

- ✞ **Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10**
  - What is Hannah praying?
  - What lines or stanzas stand out to you?
  - Similar to Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Hannah's song is all about the weak being lifted up and the mighty being brought low. Why is this a recurring theme in the bible?
  - What was a time in your life when you prayed a similar prayer and said, "There is no rock like our God?"

✞ **Read Nehemiah 9:32-37**

- What do the people of Israel pray here?
- In what ways can this prayer assist us in our own prayers to God?

✞ **Read Jonah 2**

- What is the essence and purpose of this prayer?
- Who might find a prayer like this helpful? What are times in your life when you felt like Jonah?