

***He is God and We Are Not* by Ray Pritchard**
**Session Two: God Doesn't Need Us,
but We Desperately Need Him**
Good Questions: These Lessons Have Groups Talking
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Lesson Two: We desperately need Him

Accountability

- What three fellowships do we have planned for the next 3 months?
- What have you read in your quiet time recently that has warmed your heart?
- Has anyone had a spiritually significant conversation with an outsider in recent days?¹

OPEN

- Let's share our name and one self-made man or woman that is kind of a hero to you?²

DIG

1. This book is about some foundational principles of the Christian life. Let's see how well we know our pastor. If our pastor were to write such a book, what would some of the chapters be?
2. Look at the Table of Contents. Let me ask 8 of you to read one of the chapter titles of this book. Take a stab at what you think might be in that chapter.³
3. Day One. Page 84ff. There are some high dollar words toward the bottom of page 84. One is transcendence. What does transcendence mean? What does it mean that God is transcendent?
4. Pritchard defines holiness as the "Godness of God." What does that mean?
5. Someone read Romans 3:10-12 out loud. Does the Bible really teach that we are worthless?
6. Let me put before you a question that Pritchard raises in the middle of page 85. How can you square the word worthless with the idea that "God so loved the world"?⁴
7. Won't embracing Romans 3:10-12 damage our self-esteem? Should we get up everyday and look ourselves in the mirror and say, "I am worthless. I am worthless. I am worthless."⁵

¹You might cycle through these questions, asking a different one each week.

²The question sets up discussion about half-way through the lesson: there are no self-made men or women.

³Always a good idea to review and preview.

⁴Everything in context. The idea is that without God we are worthless. However, we have enough value for God to give up the life of His Son to redeem us.

⁵That is, at best, incomplete, and at worst, a gross misunderstanding of the total teaching in the Bible about man. Far better to say something like, "I am worthy because God has loved me. My worthiness is not based on my behavior, but on the fact that God values me.

8. Let me read a reading from John Ortberg. When I get finished, I'd like to invite you to summarize what this teaches us about our worth to God.¹
9. Do you think if Pritchard and Ortberg had a conversation, they would disagree with each other?
10. Let's look up and read the verses on the bottom of page 85. What do these verses teach us about our need for God?
11. Day 2. Page 86ff. Someone who did this week reading summarize this story for us. Look over it for a moment to refresh your memory.
12. On the bottom of page 87, Pritchard says, "Nick is doing well today." Does every story for every Christian have a happy ending?"⁶
13. Let's talk about the question from the top of page 88. Describe a time when you became aware of your need for God.
14. We think of needing God in the dramatic times of life. How often, and in what ways, are you aware of your need for God in the more normal times of life?
15. Day 3. Page 88ff. In the first sentence of the last paragraph of page 89, Pritchard says we ought to be bolder and more public in our praise. Do you agree?

Without Him, I am worthless, but God Himself fills me with His presence and thus, I have much value. Even if I fail today, I have value because my value is not tied to my behavior, but ultimately to God's opinion of me."

⁶No. I am not sure this story is completely happy. We sometimes do teaching in Sunday School that is all light and fluffy and happy and it doesn't prepare people for the reality of life.

My niece, is an example of this. She is one that has more than her share of troubles. When she was a young child a pan of hot greased spilled on her. She was on an American Airlines flight that skidded off the end of the runway a few years ago, killing several of her friends. This event triggered an eating disorder that plagued her for some time. She was in a failed relationship. More recently, things seemed to be going a little better for her. She got married about a year and a half ago. A few months back, we got the word she was pregnant. But, tragedy struck this week, and so suddenly. Wednesday night she was at a party. She had a headache; otherwise she was fine. Thursday she was brain dead. Friday her heart stopped beating. I am writing this lesson on an airplane heading for her funeral. If she had lived a couple of weeks longer, the baby likely would have made it.

I was talking to my kids about this yesterday at lunch. "I am so scared, Dad," Dawson said. "It freaks me out; It makes me so afraid." I tried to explain that the storms of life come to the just and the unjust. Sooner or later, if you live long enough, you realize that this is a most inhospitable planet. It is a really, really painful place to live. An unrealistic, feel-good gospel doesn't help us in times like this. We need to give people a theology that will brace them for living life in the real world.

If you think of it, pray for my brother and his wife, and for their son-in-law. I doubt they are over it. I don't know if you ever get over it.

Still, we do not grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. Our grief is assuaged by the truth of knowing this is not the end. It is a painful time, but it is not the end. There is coming a day when He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. And everyone who dies in the Lord will enjoy forever with Him.

16. Look at the question on the bottom of 89. How do people around you observe that you know and love God?
17. Day 4. Page 90ff. Let's read the three passages from Psalm 103 and answer the three questions that are in the book. ⁷
18. Day 5. Page 91ff. I want to push back on the title of this chapter. Is Jesus all that you need? Do you need the Father? The Holy Spirit? The Bible? The Church? People? Friends? A good marriage? A job? Food? Money?
19. What exactly do we need?
20. What are some examples of things we think we need, but we don't need?
21. Let's review today's theme. We desperately need God. Can we all admit that often times, we are not as aware of our need for god as we should be? How can we stay in touch with our need for God?
22. What are the benefits for us of staying aware of our need for God?
23. What are some possible consequences of not staying aware of our need for God?
24. What keeps us from staying aware of our need for God?
25. What action might God take to remind us of our need for Him?⁸
26. Let's sing an old hymn together: I need the every hour.⁹
27. Let's pray together repenting of our tendency to think we don't need God, and asking God to keep us in tune with our need for Him. What else shall we pray about?

1. Her Name was Pandy

Her Name was Pandy. She had lost a good deal of her hair, one of her arms was missing, and, generally speaking, she'd had the stuffing knocked out of her. She was my sister Barbie's favorite doll.

She hadn't always looked like this. She had been a personally selected Christmas gift by a cherished aunt who had traveled to a great department store in faraway Chicago to find her. Her face and hands were made of some kind of rubber or plastic so that they looked real, but her body was stuffed with rags to feel soft and squeezable, like a real baby. When my aunt looked in the display window at Marshall Fields and found Pandy, she knew she had found something very good.

When Pandy was young and a looker, Barbie loved her. She loved her with a love that was too strong for Pandy's own good. When Barbie went to bed at night, Pandy lay next to her. When Barbie had lunch, Pandy ate beside her at the table. When Barbie could get away with it, Pandy took a bath with her. Barbie's love for that doll was, from Pandy's point of view, pretty nearly a fatal attraction.

⁷One potential danger of this fine series is that the text is so good, you could be tempted to study it and not the Text (the Bible). Make sure you read and study the Bible.

⁸A good follow up might be: what action *has* God taken in your life to keep you aware of your need for God?

⁹Before you dismiss this idea, you might ask someone in the group to play the guitar, or you may can bring a boom box to class and sing along with that. I have not looked (as usual, I am writing on an airplane) but there are likely a number of places you can download a free MP3 to burn a CD, or I think Wal-mart.com has \$.99 downloads of songs. If you pull it off well, it could be a moment. If it doesn't go well, stop after the first verse!

By the time I knew Pandy, she was not a particularly attractive doll. In fact, to tell the truth she was a mess. She was no longer a very valuable doll; I'm not sure we could have given her away. But for reasons no one could ever quite figure out, in the way kids sometimes do, my sister Barbie loved that little rag doll still. She loved her as strongly in the days of Pandy's raggedness as she ever had in her days of great beauty. Other dolls came and went. Pandy was family. Love Barbie, love her rag doll. It was a package deal.

Once we took a vacation from our home in Rockford, Illinois, to Canada. We had returned almost all the way home when we realized at the Illinois border that Pandy had not come back with us. She had remained behind at the hotel in Canada.

No other option was thinkable. My father turned the car around and we drove from Illinois all the way back to Canada. We were a devoted family. Not a particularly bright family, perhaps, but devoted. We rushed into the hotel and checked with the desk clerk in the lobby_ no Pandy. We ran back up to our room _ no Pandy .We ran downstairs and found the laundry room _ Pandy was there, wrapped up in the sheets, about to be washed to death. The measure of my sister's love for that doll was that she would travel all the way to a distant country to save her.

The years passed, and my sister grew up. She outgrew Pandy. She traded her in for a boyfriend named Andy (who, oddly enough, was even less attractive than the doll.) Pandy had not been much of a bargain for a long while, and by now the only logical thing left to do was to toss her out. But this my mother could not bring herself to do. She held Pandy one last time, wrapped her with exquisite care in some tissue, placed her in a box, and stored her in the attic for twenty years.

When I was growing up I had all kinds of casual playthings and stuffed animals. My mother didn't save any of them. But she saved Pandy. Want to guess why? It was the nature of my sister's love is what made Pandy so valuable.

Barbie loved that doll with the kind of love that made the doll precious to anyone who loved Barbie. All those tears and hugs and secrets got mixed in with the rags somehow. If you loved Barbie, you just naturally loved Pandy too.

More years passed. My sister got married (not to Andy) and moved far away. She had three children, the last of whom was a little girl named Courtney, who soon reached the age where she wanted a doll. No other option was thinkable. Barbie went back to Rockford, back to the attic, and dragged out the box. By this time, though, Pandy was more rag than doll.

So my sister took her to a doll hospital in California (there really is such a place) and had her go through reconstructive surgery. Pandy was given a facelift or liposuction or whatever it is that they do for dolls, until after thirty years Pandy became once again as beautiful on the outside as she had always been in the eyes of the one who loved her. I'm not sure she looked any better to Barbie, but now it was possible for others to view what Barbie had always seen in her.

When Pandy was young, Barbie loved her. She celebrated her beauty. When Pandy was old and ragged, Barbie loved her still. Now she did not simply love Pandy because Pandy was beautiful, she loved her with a kind of love that made Pandy beautiful.

Three lessons:

1. We are all rag dolls

2. We are all God's rag dolls
3. Central to our calling is to love God's rag dolls—"Love me; love my rag dolls"

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 1 John 4:20 (NIV)

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:40 (NIV)