



## GOING DEEPER: OPTIONAL EXTRA MATERIAL

### AIM: TO APPLY THE TEACHING TO REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS CASE STUDIES

#### **CASE STUDY A: CRY BABY**

A newborn baby screamed and cried night after night until her parents thought they would go crazy. They prayed desperately that she would stop crying just long enough to let them get some sleep, but their prayers made no notable difference. If anything, praying seemed to make the crying worse and eventually they made a decision to stop asking God for help altogether.

Jim and Molly's crying baby is now a happy, well-adjusted young adult and her parents are dedicated members of their local church. Yet in an honest discussion one evening, Jim opened up about the long-term impact of that simple unanswered prayer on his relationship with God. He admitted that he no longer expects God to answer his most personal prayer requests. So for twenty years he has only prayed for others, almost never for himself. He and Molly still expect the Father to do miracles for other people, just not for them. As Jim finished speaking there was an awkward silence in the room.

**Reflect:** How would you respond?

#### **CASE STUDY B: THE HEALING OF A HEADACHE**

At your house group meeting you have a bad headache and because no one has an aspirin someone rather self-consciously offers to pray. The group gathers round and joins in, and you feel a little awkward. You also notice that one of the newer people, Sarah, is hanging back. At the end of the evening someone asks how your head is and you realise you're feeling fine. 'Wow, I guess I was healed!' you say and everyone starts grinning and saying things like 'Cool' and 'Praise the Lord'.

Sarah, the new girl, rushes out of the room and you find her in the kitchen in tears. It turns out that when she was twelve her five-year-old brother had died of leukaemia. She describes desperate childhood prayers and chemotherapy and how her mother was never around because she seemed to be at the hospital. Every night Sarah had knelt by her bed and prayed with every fibre of her being for the life of her brother, but he had died leaving a gaping chasm of loss inside. 'Why?' she asks, 'would God heal your headache and let my brother die? It all seems so arbitrary.' Sarah needs love but she also needs real, intelligent answers.

**Reflect:** What might you say to her?

## EXTRA RESOURCES USEFUL QUOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

'When we pray, God sometimes does a miracle and airlifts us out of our problems, but more often he parachutes in to join us in the midst of them.' – Pete Greig

**Thank God you're not God:** "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord' (Isaiah 55: 8)

'The Bible is more honest about unanswered prayer than most churches. Jesus experienced at least three unanswered prayers. And more than half the Psalms are not happy, clappy – they are laments' – Pete Greig