

Goals

With the busy lifestyle that most of us have today, we often find ourselves not having time to quiet our spirit and to have good quality time to read the Bible and to talk with God. Prayers are often short and ritualistic. Bible reading becomes like a chore and is sometimes skipped over. In all these, we do not realize that the key to having control over our lives is to rely on God's help and grace. "For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength'" (Is 30:15).

Lessons in this section will serve as a reminder to both teachers and students about the importance of maintaining a healthy spiritual life amid all other things we have to attend to.

unit
1**Teacher Devotional**

Human beings are very limited creatures. Whether it is the mind or the body, we are constrained in many ways. Hence, it is not possible to do all the things we wish we could do given the limited capacity of the physical, intellectual and emotional energy we have. Added on to these constraints is the limited amount of time we have. Knowing how to prioritize is therefore a crucial lesson to learn, in order that we can accomplish what we have to. Life in modern societies is packed with activities and commitments. There are just so many things to do - work, family, friends, church. As Christians, we have to realize that in the midst of a busy lifestyle, it is often easy to forgo spiritual contact with God at the expense of pursuing other commitments. That's because with God, there are seldom any deadlines to meet. It becomes so easy to put spiritual matters aside. Therefore it is really important to allocate our spiritual pursuits a place in our life so that they are not replaced.

Our Priorities

"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col 3:2)

Lesson 1

Too Busy to Pray

Listed Scriptures

Ps 103; Is 59:1-3; Ps 66:18; Num 11; Mt 26:36-44, 7:7

Lesson Aims

- 1) To help our students slow down in order to grow closer to God.
- 2) To encourage our students to develop a lifestyle of prayer (P-praise, R-repent, A-ask, Y-yield).
- 3) To help our students organize their day so that they are able to spend time with God.

Memory Verse

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess 5:16-18)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 1-3

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



From the very beginning of creation, people of God have offered prayers to Him. After the flood, Noah offered a burnt offering of every clean bird and animal (Gen 8:20, 21). We also see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offering sacrifices. This is a type of prayer to God. During the time of Moses, God instructed the Israelites as to how to build the tabernacle. That became a place of worship, and also a place where they could come forth to offer sacrifices to Him. The high priest would also go into the Holy of Holies once a year to offer the sacrifice of atonement for the people. Offerings and sacrifices remained the way the people could reach out to God. Of course, God hears the cries of all who turn to Him. For example, when Hagar was desperate that her son Ishmael was going to die, she sat down and wept and God heard her cries (Gen 21). In later periods, people of God have always turned to God in prayers, in one way or another. There are many psalms that are actually prayers of the psalmist.

In the New Testament period, when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was torn into two (Mt 27:51). This symbolizes that a new and living way has been opened for us, that we can now approach God directly. For the Lord Jesus is the veil that has been torn so we can be reconciled with God (Heb 10:19-22). Today, we should cherish this wonderful opportunity to be able to have direct access to God, and to always turn to Him and rely on Him through prayers. In fact, this is the promise of God, that if we entrust all to Him then we will have peace. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6, 7).

W A R M U P



Have you ever experienced points in life when you are too weak spiritually to pray? How does that feel? Do you feel that in the things you do, you can't be sure of God's approval or guidance, simply because you didn't consult with Him? Do you feel you don't have power to shine for Him, to preach the gospel or to see His power in the church work you participate in?

Many have compared prayer to the breath of life for Christians. A Christian who does not pray to God, talk to Him and listen to His voice, is a Christian who does not have life in Him. He may claim to be a Christian, but the way he lives his life, the decisions he makes and everything else about his life is disconnected from God. How then can he call himself a Christian?

Today, we'll study this important topic. May God guide us so that we have a refreshing perspective about the role of prayer in our lives.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Moses' Deep Prayers

The Bible is replete with models of prayerful men. Can you name a few? Why do you think these are great men or women of prayer? In what ways are their prayers powerful? (Let students respond.)

Today, we'll take a close look at two of the prayers of Moses. Moses always communicated with God. This is what God said of Moses, "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord make Myself known to him in a vision. I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak to him face to face, even plainly and not in dark sayings" (Num 12:6 - 8). Indeed Moses was a very special person in the eyes of God. The primary reason is that he was one who always prayed deeply and talked to God at length. From his exemplary life of prayer, we can see that prayer indeed does make a difference in one's relationship with God.

Read the biblical references and answer the questions that follow.



A. God Showed Himself to Moses (Ex 33:15-23)

a. vv.15 & 16 - Who and what were Moses praying for? What does that say about his character?

Moses was praying that God would go with the Israelites on their journey into the land of Canaan. God had said that the Israelites were a stiff-necked people and He would not go with them. Here, we can see that Moses is a man who shares a very intimate relationship with God, because he knows God enough to trust in His love and mercy, and negotiate with Him.

b. v. 17 - What do you think it means to find grace in the sight of God, and to have God know us by name?

To find grace in the sight of God can include the following:

- *God's blessings are with us
- *God is pleased with us and will hear our prayers
- *God hears our prayers and has mercy on us

To have God know us by name can include the following:

*We are so close to God, by our obedience and constant interaction with Him, that God becomes like a very close friend.

*God is pleased with us and especially pays attention to us and all aspects of our life.

c. v. 18 – What was Moses asking for? Do you think he was too arrogant to ask for such an (almost) impossible blessing? What does that say of his relationship with God?

Moses asked to see God's glory, which is to see God face to face (ref. verse 20). This seems like an arrogant or even dangerous request because no one can see God's face and live. However, Moses was such a faithful man that he had experienced God in a very intimate relationship. He felt close enough to God to ask for such a blessing. This request also shows that Moses sought after God.

d. vv. 19-23 – Describe in your own words what exactly happened here. What does this incident tell us about Moses' status in the eyes of God? Is there anyone else in the Bible who has a similar experience as Moses?

God told Moses that no one could see His face and live. But, God agreed to grant his request in a special way. God walked past Moses, so Moses could see His back and not His face. But He first placed Moses in the cleft of a rock, and used His hand to shield Moses. We can see how much God values and loves Moses.

No one else in the Bible has come so close to seeing God, as far as we know. God often appears in different forms when He is seen by His servants. For example in Genesis 17, God appeared to Abraham, but we are not told if Abraham actually saw God face to face. Elijah also saw God in a still small voice (1 Kgs 19:12).

e. Do you see God in your prayers? Even if you don't literally see God in your prayers like Moses, what do you think would be a similar experience?

To see God in prayer means that your prayers are answered. Having our prayers answered does NOT mean all our requests come true. It means we learn more about God's ways, that He gives us according to our needs and His wisdom, not according to our desires. To see God in prayer also means we experience joy, peace and comfort, and we are able to deal with life's

problems with a different perspective, according to God's teachings.

f. How can one experience being "face to face with God" in prayers?

"For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Mt 7:7). If we seek God, we will surely find Him. Sometimes, when we are confused and weak, the best way to get aligned with God again is to go to church and receive His words through sermons and bible studies. We can also interact with brothers and sisters. From there, we will gain strength to pray, and through prayer we can draw closer to Him.

 **B. Moses' Face Shone (Ex 34:27-35)**

a. vv. 28 & 29 - Where was Moses? What was he doing?

Moses was up on Mt. Sinai, receiving the Ten Commandments again, with God writing them on new stone tablets. (The first set of tablets containing the Ten Commandments was shattered when Moses threw them on the ground upon seeing how the people had made for themselves a golden calf while he was up on Mt. Sinai. See Exodus 32:19.)

b. vv. 29-35 - For how many days was Moses up on the mountain, alone with God? What is the teaching for us today, with regard to prayer?

Moses was up on Mt. Sinai forty days and nights. The teaching for us today is that our prayers with God cannot be a rushed, hasty process. We cannot communicate properly with anyone if we are in a hurry and have only a few minutes for that person. It is the same with prayer. We need to settle our hearts down and really talk to God.

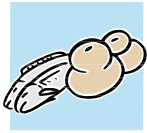
c. Why do you think the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mountain?

Moses was so close to God that his face shone. We learn the mannerisms and even words of those we spend a lot of time with. If we're always close to God, we can be godly like Moses, with God's glory reflected on our faces. And, we can shine for Him as we interact with others around us.

d. Do you know of any prayerful men? Do you see their faces shining like Moses' did? (Students answer.)

e. What would be some daily manifestations of “shining faces” in the lives of Christians today?

One who has a “shining face” reflects God’s qualities like gentleness, kindness, peacefulness, love etc. It is seen in his/her words and actions towards others.

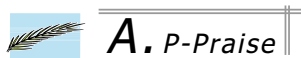


Part 2

P-R-A-Y

Do you sometimes feel that you do not have much to say to God in prayer? Although it can’t be true that one does not have anything to say to God (just think of how you can chat with friends for hours!), it is true that many people are often spiritually so weak that they do not discipline themselves to pray. But it is when we are weak that we need to talk to God.

Today, we will think of “PRAY” as an acronym that will help us to think of things to pray to God about. We will study the 4 letters of “PRAY” and see what the Bible says about them. After that, you can come up with your own ideas about what the acronym P-R-A-Y can stand for!



a. There is a lot in our lives to give thanks to God and praise Him for. As a class, read through the whole of Psalm 103, which is a psalm of thanksgiving.

- i. List all the things that the psalmist praised the Lord for. (forgiving his sins, healing his diseases, redeeming his life (saving his life, physically as well as spiritually), filling his life with love and compassion, filling his life with good things, giving him strength)
- ii. Do you see any modern-day equivalent or relevance of these things in your life? For each of the things you have listed, find a modern day example that matches it. (students’ answers)

b. As the memory verse of this lesson says, we should give thanks in everything. Is it possible to praise God even when there does

not seem to be a reason to give thanks? Let us look at the verses in hymn 394 to help us answer this question.

- i. What does this hymn say about the things to thank God for? (In this hymn, we are taught to give thanks for:
The Lord Jesus for He saves/redeems us
All that God has provided for us
The good or bad times
Jesus Christ who abides with us
Pleasant springtime but also dreary fall
Hard times, and our tears which have now passed
Peace inside our souls
Prayers answered as well as prayers not answered (for good reason)
Difficult times but during which God takes care to provide
Pain as well as pleasure
Comfort in despair
Grace and love from Him
Roses, even though they have thorns (nothing is perfect in this world)
Home, family
Hope
Joy as well as sorrow
Heavenly peace, and hope for heaven and eternity.

This hymn teaches us that in life, there are a lot of difficult times, but in difficult times, we have God’s mercy that sees us through. Most importantly, we have peace from within. We also have hope of salvation, and that’s the most important.)

- ii. Do you think it is difficult to give thanks for some of the things listed in the hymn? Why? Or, why not? (students’ answers)



Repentance is a pre-requisite of effective prayers. That means that for our prayers to be answered by God, we need to repent of all our sins first. Let’s see what the following Bible verses say about the relationship between repentance and having our prayers answered.

a. Summarize in your own words what the verses mean: Isaiah 59: 1-3 and Psalm 66:18.

(Sometimes, when our prayers are not answered, it is because we have sinned, and sins have separated us from God. So, we need to repent and turn from our ways first before we expect God to hear us.)

b. Why do you think repentance is so crucial to having our prayers answered?

(Heb 12:14 – when we have sins, we are not holy. Hence, we cannot approach God. So our prayers cannot be heard in that sense. When we repent, God is faithful and just and He will forgive our sins, as stated in 1 John 1:9. We are then clean to approach His throne of grace again.)



C. A-Ask

a. Many of us do not dare to ask God for the desires of our hearts. Actually, God is our loving Father so we can share anything and everything with Him in reverence. Let's see what the following verses tell us about asking things of God: Matthew 7:7 and Psalm 37:5.

These verses tell us that as long as we seek God, He will answer our prayers. But, we have to totally entrust things into His hand and trust that He will do what is best for us.

b. While we know that we can ask anything of God, we have to understand that God is not going to grant us everything we wish for. He will grant us what is good for us. Read the following verses and summarize what they are saying: James 4:2, 3 and Romans 8:32.

Romans 8:32 tells us that God has given of Himself to die for us, so how much more will He give us things that we need? If we do not get something we need, it is because we do not ask, as James tells us. If we have asked and not received, it might be that we have desired something for the wrong reasons (and that we do not really need those things)!

c. Read the following poem. It reminds us of the importance of asking for God's abidance every day of our lives.

The Difference

*I got up early and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray.*

*Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task.
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered.
He answered, "You didn't ask."*

*I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, gray and bleak.
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, "You didn't ask."*

*I tried to come into God's presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child, you didn't knock."*

*I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.*

Questions:

1. In the course of the day, what were the things the poet wanted but failed to obtain? (The poet wanted to have a joyful and beautiful life. He wanted no problems. He wanted to be in God's presence.)
2. What are some of the daily needs that you have or things that you desire to have in your daily life? Do you ask these things of God? Why, or why not?
3. "I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray." Describe your reaction to the last two lines of the poem. Think about their relevance to your life.



D. Y-Yield

A very important thing to remember about prayer is that we have to submit to God's will. To ask is our duty but to grant is entirely the prerogative of God. We now look at two contrasting examples about prayer requests – one that is not in accordance

with the will of God and the other, a great lesson in submission to God's will.

a. The Israelites asked to have meat (Num 11:1-14, 31-34)

- i. What was the complaint of the Israelites?
(They missed the good food they had in Egypt – fish, cucumbers, garlic, leeks, melons, onions.)
- ii. Why were they not satisfied with the manna from heaven?
(They ate only manna everyday and they wanted something different to boost their appetite.)
- iii. Did God grant them their desires?
(Yes, God granted them their desires. But, having prayers answered does not mean God is pleased with them. God gave them what they wanted but God's wrath was against them. In the same way, we may sometimes force things to happen, but that does not mean we have God's blessing or approval.)
- iv. Do you think God was pleased with their requests, since their desires were fulfilled? Explain your answers.
(Having our prayer requests granted does not mean our requests are according to God's will. The punishment of God came upon the Israelites even as the meat was between their teeth. There is a difference between forcing things upon God and actual requests that are according to His will, which please Him. A recent article in Issue 36 of *Manna* entitled "Praying in the Holy Spirit" deals with this topic. It is highly recommended for both teachers and students alike.)
- v. In the end, what happened to the Israelites who craved for meat? What is the lesson you learned from this ending?
(God struck them with a severe plague and those who were eating the meat died in the middle of eating. One of the lessons we can learn is not to insist on our own desires. God may grant us what we wish, but that may not be for our good. It is more important to please God than to have our prayers answered. Another lesson to gather is that we need to be wise, to know what our requests to God really mean—whether they are in accordance with God's will. A lot of times, we are so focused on worldly things (like food, or wealth), we forget that God's purpose of being our God is to save us, and for us to glorify Him, not for us to become rich on earth or to enjoy earthly pleasures.)

b. Jesus Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36 - 44)

- i. vv. 37, 38 – Why was the Lord Jesus sorrowful and distressed?

(The Lord Jesus knew that it was time for Him to be crucified and suffer a lot of pain even before He was to be put on the cross. Even though He was God who came in the flesh, He was in an earthly form, and hence suffered pain like any human being would.)

- ii. v. 39 – What was "this cup" referring to?
(The cup refers to the suffering on the cross and the death He would taste for us.)
- iii. How can we tell that the prayer of the Lord Jesus is one that is in accordance with the will of God? (See also Luke 22:43)
(He did not insist on His own will to have the cup taken from Him. He left it to the Father's will. We know that an angel was sent to strengthen Him.)
- iv. What happened after the three prayers that the Lord Jesus made?
(The Lord Jesus was strengthened and determined to suffer for us. He would go along with God's will and not submit to His own earthly fears.)
- v. What does the example of our Lord Jesus teach us about prayer?
(To know God's will when we pray, and not think that prayer means God has to do things according to our ways.)

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 Why is repentance important to our prayers?
- 2 Is it true that God will grant us everything that we ask for?
- 3 What are the two important things to remember about prayer?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Praying Hands

Part A- Read the following letter. Then discuss the questions that follow.

*My dear one,
As you got up this morning, I watched you, and hoped you would talk to me, even if it was just a few words, asking my opinion or thanking me for something good that happened in your life yesterday.*

But I noticed you were too busy, trying to find the right outfit to wear. When you ran around the house getting ready, I knew there would be a few minutes for you to stop and say hello, but you were too busy.

At one point you had to wait, fifteen minutes with nothing to do except sit in a chair. Then I saw you spring to your feet. I thought you wanted to talk to me but you ran to the phone and called a friend to get the latest gossip instead.

I watched patiently all day long. With all your activities I guess you were too busy to say anything to me.

I noticed that before lunch you looked around; maybe you felt embarrassed to talk to me, which is why you didn't bow your head. You glanced three or four tables over and you noticed some of your friends talking to me briefly before they ate, but you didn't.

That's okay. There was still more time left, and I hoped that you would talk to me yet. Then you went home and it seemed as if you had lots of things to do.

After a few of them were done, you turned on the TV. I don't know if you like TV or not. Just about everything goes on there and you spend a lot of time each day in front of it, not thinking about anything, just enjoying the show. I waited patiently again as you watched the TV and ate your meal, but again, you didn't talk to me.

Bedtime. I guess you felt too tired. After you said goodnight to your family, you plopped into bed and fell asleep in no time. That's okay because you may not realize, but I'm always there for you. I've got patience, more than you will ever know. I even want to teach you how to be patient with others as well. I love you so much that I wait everyday for a nod, prayer or thought or thankful part of your heart. It is hard to have a one-sided conversation.

Well, you're getting up once again. And once again, I will wait, with nothing but love for you. Hoping that today you will give me some time.

Have a nice day!

Yours, _____

Questions to think about:

1. Who do you think the writer of the letter could be? Explain your answer.
2. Were there times in your life when you felt rejected or ignored? Describe how that felt. Do you think the feelings of the writer of the letter are the same as what you have experienced?
3. If you have not already guessed, this letter can be seen as a letter from God to His children, who often neglect to pray. Do you see similarities in your life – where you also fail on many occasions to talk to God?
4. Draft out a routine of a typical day in your life, from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. Note down the points during the day where you make your prayers to God.
5. Share your daily routine with a partner in your class. Your partner will make suggestions to you about certain times of the day when you should pray but often fail to do so. You will do the same for the routine drafted by your friend. Here's a sample:

Period of Day	Activities	Times When I Prayed	Suggestions From My Partner/ Times When I Should Have Prayed
Morning	Got out of bed and rushed to the shower, grabbed a granola bar as I rushed to catch the school bus.		
Mid-Morning	In school, a classmate said something nasty. I tried to control my anger but I failed and returned his comments with some sarcastic remarks. We ended up being mad at each other.		
Afternoon	Student's own additions		

6. Consider the suggestions of your partner. Then, between the two of you, make a pact to encourage each other to pray every day. If your schedules permit, you might even want to arrange to pray together at a specific time, each one in his/her own home.

Teaching Tips

Every week, for about 15 minutes, either at the beginning or end of the class time, have a class sharing of this daily routine. Encourage the students to keep up with this schedule and to share it every week.

Part B- The following is an inspirational piece of prose. Let us read it and meditate upon it in our hearts; and when we pray, let it be a reminder to us as to what to pray for. After reading, write a list of items for prayer. This will be your personal prayer list. You don't have to share it with anyone if you don't want to. But, let this list be your guide each day as you pray. With the passing of time, you may have to modify certain items on the list.

1. Your thumb is nearest to you.
So, begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest ones to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C.S. Lewis once said, "a sweet duty."
2. The next finger is the pointing finger.
Pray for those who teach and instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors and ministers. They need support and wisdom for pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. The middle finger is the tallest finger.
It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance.
4. The fourth finger is our ring finger.
Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger (as any piano teacher will testify). It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.
5. And lastly comes our little finger, the smallest finger of all.
This is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others, as the Bible says, "the least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Sing hymn 405. (Go through the lyrics with the students.) This hymn tells us about many things that we can pray for. Whether we are in sorrow or in gladness, we can pray to God. In times of temptation, in moments of anger and even in times of great trial and difficulty, we should always pray. If only we would give it a try, and discipline ourselves to talk to God, we would surely experience that prayer really makes a difference in our lives!