LESSON 6 *May 2–8

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Prayer Warriors



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Dan. 2:20–23; Dan. 6:10, 11; Acts 20:36; Gen. 5:22–24; Exod. 33:15–23; Exod. 32:31, 32.*

Memory Text: **"I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live"** *(Psalm 116:1, 2, NKJV)***.**

Imagine if you rarely spoke to your best friend or your spouse. Very soon the relationship would break down, and there would be a problem. In the same way, prayer is an essential part of having a close relationship with God. It is a crucial devotional habit, one that each of us needs and can strengthen. If we don't pray often and continually, we will wander from the Lord sooner or later.

In the Bible, we learn about the lives of different individuals who prayed in different ways. We can step back and catch a glimpse into how their communion with God impacted their relationship with Him, how and for what we might also pray, and how their prayers changed the lives of others. It is true: our prayer life impacts not only ourselves but others as well.

Just like Bible study, this topic of prayer is both huge and important and much broader than what can be covered in just two weeks. This week we'll learn lessons from some of those in the Bible who prayed and showed us just how central prayer is to having a strong relationship with God. Let's learn from their examples.

** Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 9.*

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Faithful Daniel

Daniel is one of the great heroes of the Bible. We know the first story too *(see Daniel 1)*: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies" *(Dan. 1:8, NKJV)*. Also, to Daniel and his three friends, "God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" *(Dan. 1:17, NKJV)*. The Bible describes Daniel as wise *(Dan. 1:20; Dan. 2:14, 21, 23, 48)* because the Spirit of God was in him *(Dan. 4:9, 18; Dan. 5:14; Dan. 6:3)*, and he was greatly beloved by Heaven *(Dan. 9:23, Dan. 10:11)*. These are some descriptors of a man who had a strong, abiding connection with God.

In Daniel 2, when King Nebuchadnezzar issued a death decree to all wise men in Babylon, Daniel sought God's mercy concerning the secret of the king's dream *(Dan. 2:18)*. When God revealed the king's dream to Daniel, he immediately prayed.

Read Daniel 2:20–23. Why did Daniel pray, and what can we learn from this prayer?

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As the years passed by and kings rose and fell, Daniel remained an adviser to the kings and was described as distinguished "because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm" *(Dan. 6:3, NKJV)*. "He was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him" *(Dan. 6:4, NKJV)*. Despite fierce jealousy and evil plotting *(Dan. 6:5–9)* from his peers, Daniel remained ever constant and fearless in his prayer life.

Read Daniel 6:10, 11. What do these verses tell us about Daniel?

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When faced with difficulty, Daniel prayed. Although the threat was against his life, he was consistent and persistent in prayer (three times every day, as was his custom), and predictable (at his open window three times a day as he prayed toward Jerusalem). His prayer was a physical act (he knelt) and focused on thanksgiving and supplication.

In light of a story like this, how weak are your excuses for not praying?

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The Posture of Prayer

When something goes wrong in our lives, most of us call a close friend to talk about it. When we have good news, we find someone to share it with. We can do the same with God. "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ,* p. 93.

Prayer not only keeps us connected to God but tells the devil whose we are. When we kneel to pray in the morning, it's like a physical declaration to the powers of darkness that we choose God this day. Not only that, but God sends angels to our side when we pray, and we are fortified and covered from the enemy of darkness *(Psalm 91)*.

The physical act of kneeling in submission shows a humble posture. It's somehow different from sitting in a chair or lying in a bed while we pray, although we can pray in these positions too. However, when we kneel before God, we show that we are ready to serve God with all our hearts, and our words declare that He is sovereign and that we are merely His created children.

Read the following Bible passages and consider the lives of these individuals who knelt when they prayed: *Dan. 6:10, Luke 22:41, Acts 7:60, Acts 9:40, Acts 20:36***.**

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Standing in prayer was a common practice in Bible times *(2 Chron. 20:5, 6, 13; 1 Sam. 1:26; Job 30:20; Luke 18:11, 13)*. The Bible also shares examples of people who sat when they prayed *(2 Sam. 7:18)*. Others prostrated themselves before God, with their face on the earth—although this posture was less commonly associated with prayer, but rather submission before a superior *(1 Kings 1:47, Mark 14:35)*.

What is your usual posture when you pray? The Bible doesn't require us to pray in any particular posture, but postures are important, as they reflect our reverence, our inner feelings, and our desire to surrender to God. Some people are unable to kneel; so, ultimately, it's the heart condition that matters most. If you can kneel but usually don't, why not try kneeling next time you pray and see how it affects your time with God?

The Bible invites us to "pray without ceasing" *(1 Thess. 5:17)***, implying constancy** *(Col. 4:2)* **and perseverance** *(Rom. 12:12)***. Today, as you stand, sit, lie, or walk, turn your thoughts to God and talk to Him as your Friend. Begin right now.**

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Enoch Walked and Talked

Read Genesis 5:22–24. What, exactly, do we know about Enoch?

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The Bible doesn't share a lot about Enoch's life, but it does tell us that he walked with God for 300 years until God took him to heaven. How beautiful that a person's consistent devotion to God is what defines their life!

One thing we know is that Enoch must have been "continuing steadfastly in prayer" *(Rom. 12:12, NKJV)*, persevering and growing closer to God in faith through his daily experiences. The earth was becoming increasingly evil in the time in which he was living, and Enoch kept busy serving God, but he couldn't do this well without abiding in Him.

"In the midst of a life of active labor, Enoch steadfastly maintained his communion with God. The greater and more pressing his labors, the more constant and earnest were his prayers. . . . After remaining for a time among the people, laboring to benefit them by instruction and example, he would withdraw, to spend a season in solitude, hungering and thirsting for that divine knowledge which God alone can impart. Communing thus with God, Enoch came more and more to reflect the divine image. . . . Even the ungodly beheld with awe the impress of heaven upon his countenance."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 86, 87.

God doesn't ask us to live like hermits or monks, so separate from the world that we are of no earthly use. Like Enoch, we can be productive and aware of the needs around us, but it's only by walking and talking with God through a steady, abiding relationship that He can reflect His wonderful character through us.

We can pray anytime, anywhere. There is nowhere on earth that God doesn't see or hear us *(Ps. 139:7–12)*; He always hears the cries of our hearts, no matter where we are *(read Lam. 3:55–57)*. Yet, there is something to be said for praying out loud instead of just in our minds. When we pray silently, we might become distracted or not even finish our train of thought or our sentence, and it can be harder for our thoughts to remain focused. But when we pray aloud, whether in a whisper or in our usual tone, it's a reminder to ourselves that God is real, that He's listening, and that we have something specific to talk about with Him.

As you go about your day today, where or how will you whisper a prayer in communion with Jesus?

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Moses, Godly Leader

Although Enoch clearly had a very close relationship with God, we have more insight into Moses' relationship with God and can even read numerous accounts of Moses' conversations with Him. As we journey with Moses through the ups and downs of this humble leader's life, we see time and time again that the single most important part of his life and the secret to his success as a godly leader was his constant communication and abiding relationship with God.

Read Exodus 33:15–23. What is the content and the manner of the conversation between Moses and the Lord?

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Imagine what it would have been like to speak with God and hear His voice so plainly. It's a wonder the Israelites didn't seek this kind of communion with God themselves instead of begging Moses to speak to them on God's behalf *(Exod. 20:18–21)*. Yet, God had prepared Moses for this, beginning with their interaction at the burning bush, on this very same mountain. Although we read of other personal prayers of Moses, we see that he's almost continually in God's presence, asking for guidance and interceding for the people he is leading.

On two occasions, Moses intercedes for family members. What situations surrounded his intercession, and what would have happened had he not stepped in to bridge the gap?

- **Aaron:** *Exod. 32:1–14, 31–34; Deut. 9:20*
- **Miriam:** *Num. 12:13*

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What is particularly amazing about the interaction with Miriam is that Moses was the recipient of her poor treatment and jealousy. He could easily have stood back and let God deliver the punishment Miriam and Aaron deserved. Instead, he was quick to forgive and intercede for his sister's healing. What a powerful reflection of God's forgiving grace for sinners is seen here in the actions of Moses.

Read Matthew 5:44 and Colossians 3:13. How can you learn to do what you're told here? Why is it important that you do?

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Moses Intercedes for a Nation

Read Exodus 32:31, 32. What does this teach us about Moses and prayer?

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Moses boldly interceded for God's people time and time again. Moses turned to God when the people were thirsty *(Exod. 15:25, Exod. 17:2–6)*, when the people were hungry *(Num. 11:21, 22)*, and in sheer desperation *(Num. 11:11–15)*.

When the Israelites built the golden calf immediately after God had covenanted with them, Moses recalled, " 'For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also' " *(Deut. 9:19, NKJV)*.

When the spies returned from the Promised Land, Moses recalled, " 'Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you' " *(Deut. 9:25, NKJV)*.

When Levi was separated from the other tribes to serve in the sanctuary, Moses recalled, " 'As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, and the LORD chose not to destroy you' " *(Deut. 10:10, NKJV)*. God heard Moses' plea.

We can learn much from Moses' life when it comes to prayer and holding fast to God:

- **Moses had a deep love for God and a clear picture of His character.** God described Himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6: " 'the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth' " *(NKJV)*.
- **Moses was both bold and faithful as he held on to God through the ups and downs** of the weary journey to the Promised Land. Though struggling as we all do, Moses trusted God's power, presence, and leading in his own life *(Exod. 33:13)*.
- **Moses reminded God of His covenant** *(Exod. 32:13)***, claimed God's promises on behalf of His people** *(Deut. 7:8)***, and remembered God's leading in the past** *(Deut. 8:2)***.**
- **Moses accepted God's answers to his prayers, whether they were a yes or a no.** Being in a close relationship with God doesn't automatically mean we'll always get what we want *(Deut. 3:23–29)*, but we should pray with persistence anyway *(Luke 18:1–8)*.

Who needs your intercessory prayers right now? What is stopping you from praying right now?

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Further Thought: Ultimately, we should pray because we love God so much, and we just can't help sharing everything in our lives with Him: our joys and life's "wins," our burdens and worries, our requests and daily needs. "We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun. Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. . . . His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. . . . The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 99, 100.

Discussion Questions:

❶ Would you describe prayer as beautiful or burdensome? What has contributed to your perspective?

❷ There are so many insightful messages in the quote above. Which thought particularly resonates with you?

❸ Of the three Bible characters studied this week (Daniel, Enoch, and Moses), whose prayer life do you most relate to, and why?

Summary: As we read about the prayer giants of the Bible, it can be easy to think that we can't have a relationship that close to God or be quite as committed. But we can. Like Daniel, we can be steadfast and faithful in kneeling every day, despite opposition. Like Enoch, we can choose to walk and talk with God, turning to Him before we do the work He's called us to do. Like Moses, we can lead those within our sphere of influence, interceding for our families and those in our communities when we choose to abide under the shadow of the Almighty, our Leader and Friend.

INSIDE *Story*

Changing a Shuka for Pants

The pastor told Rompas, a Maasai boy in Kenya, that Seventh-day Adventists were devil worshipers. He also said Adventists entered church backward on Saturdays and worshiped without wearing any clothes.

When he was 16, Rompas decided to find out if the pastor had told the truth. Early Saturday, he walked from his village home to an Adventist church several miles away. He hid in the hills near the church and watched.

Before long, the first person arrived. The man was not walking backward, and he wasn't naked. Rompas was impressed that the man was wearing a nice suit and tie. The boy wished that he had a suit and tie. He was half-naked, wearing only a traditional Maasai shuka, a red cloth with black strips.

Then the pastor and other church members arrived. They also did not enter the church backward, and they were nicely dressed.

Then the church choir began singing. As the words of the song "Oh Happy Day" drifted to Rompas's ears, he couldn't resist. Walking to the church, he sat in the back row and listened with great interest.

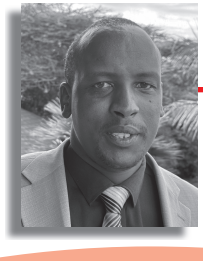
After the sermon, a young white man approached him. He was a missionary from the United States whom he had never seen before and never saw again. The man spoke with the help of an interpreter. "These are your pants," he said, handing Rompas a pair of pants with many pockets.

Rompas was excited! He had never owned a pair of pants. He put them on and tore his shuka to make a belt to hold them up.

Back at home, his 82 brothers and sisters were surprised to see the Maasai boy wearing pants. They surrounded him and asked, "What happened?"

Rompas placed the prized pants under his bed that night. He only wore them again when he returned to church the next Sabbath. Putting on the pants attracted the attention of the children and women of his village every Sabbath. Some of them began to follow him to church.

Several months passed, and Rompas and his mother gave their hearts to Jesus in baptism on the same day. The first two members of a family of nearly 100 people had become Seventh-day Adventists. Rompas felt free for the first time in his life. Jesus told His disciples, " 'And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' " *(John 8:32, NKJV)*.



"The truth has set me free," Rompas said in an interview.

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, also known as the Quarterly Mission Project Offering, will support projects in Kenya and elsewhere in the East-Central Africa Division. Read more about Rompas next week, and watch a YouTube video of him at bit.ly/Rompas-IS.

Part I: Overview

Key Text: *Psalm 116:1, 2*

Study Focus: *Dan. 2:20–23; Dan. 6:10, 11.*

We pray because we know that God hears our voice, and because we also know that He will respond to our prayers *(Ps. 116:1, 2)*. Our prayers are, therefore, essentially a response to God, who took the initiative to bring us back to Himself. How significant, then, that worship in the book of Psalms, which contains the prayers of ancient Israel, is described as a response to God the Creator, who is the Giver of life *(Ps. 95:1–6, Ps. 100:1–3)*. It is through prayer that our spiritual life survives. As Ellen G. White puts it: "Prayer is the breath of the soul."—*Prayer*, p. 12.

To understand better the meaning and function of prayer, we have chosen two instances of prayer from the book of Daniel, a book in which prayer plays an important role. The two instances of prayer, which are particularly representative of Daniel's personality, are found in chapters 2 and 6.

In chapter 2, Daniel and his three friends entreat the Lord to reveal the meaning of the king's prophetic dream that concerns the future destiny of the world *(Dan. 2:20–23)*. Daniel's subsequent prayer of thanksgiving to God for His gracious answer is given in poetry.

In chapter 6, Daniel, who serves as the highest governor in the kingdom of Persia, supplicates and thanks God, even though doing so imperils his own life *(Dan. 6:10, 11)*. This particular prayer is not recorded in the book of Daniel, but the chapter situates this prayer within the context of Daniel's struggles in the royal court.

Part II: Commentary

The Apocalyptic Prayer *(Dan. 2:20–23)*. This humble invocation of praise is the first prayer of the book. The prayer is provoked by an external event. The Babylonian king had dreams that gave him insomnia. Worse, he can't recall the substance of the dreams. No one among his magicians is capable of responding to the king's request to reveal his dream and, therefore, to interpret it. Nebuchadnezzar realizes, at this moment, that the Chaldeans are a pack of deceptive charlatans. The king is furious and

decides, then, to kill all the wise men in Babylon *(Dan. 2:14)*, including Daniel and his three friends, who respond with prayer to the threat. Though their words of supplication are not recorded, the biblical text tells us that Daniel enlists the help of his three friends to "seek mercies from the God of heaven" *(Dan. 2:18, NKJV)*. In answer to their prayer, God reveals the dream and its interpretation to Daniel in a night vision *(Dan. 2:19)*. Afterward, Daniel blesses the God of heaven in a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving. These prayers of supplication and gratitude share a number of characteristic features, including:

A. Uniqueness. The prayer of Daniel and his friends is a specific prayer, a unique prayer, in response to an unexpected event that threatens them with certain death. This first instance of prayer in the book of Daniel concerns a "secret" that no one can reveal, a secret whose revelation will save the lives of Daniel and his friends *(Dan. 2:18)*. Thus, Daniel and his friends do not pray simply because it is their habit to do so or because prayer is a natural part of their culture. And because their prayer is unique to their specific situation and experience, it is a genuine, heartfelt prayer.

B. An Encounter. The prayer of Daniel and his friends is not a mystical experience, a mere moment of spiritual meditation in the hopes of producing relaxation and peace. Daniel desires to meet with Someone he cannot control or foresee, Someone outside of himself, "the God of heaven" *(Dan. 2:18)*. This God is the true God precisely because He hides Himself. As Isaiah acknowledges: "Truly You are God, who hide Yourself" *(Isa. 45:15, NKJV)*. Because God hides His face (unlike the idols), Daniel doesn't presume his petition will be automatically answered. Thus, Daniel and his friends approach God humbly, seeking mercies from Him. Their request is a supplication, just as the prayer of the tenacious widow in Jesus' parable is also a supplication *(Luke 18:1–8)*. Her persistence, as well as that of Daniel and his friends, recalls Jacob's prayer in which he wrestled with God: " 'I will not let You go unless You bless me' " *(Gen. 32:26, NKJV)*.

C. An Up-Down Movement. Although human prayer moves the soul upward to God, the process of God's response implies God's move downward toward us. Herein lies the main difference between the prayer of Daniel and his friends and the prayer of the Chaldeans, whose religion comprises the practice of magic. For the Chaldeans, the whole process of fulfilling the king's command takes place below, in the realm of their existence on this earth. Thus, the process of fulfilling the king's command centered on their technical skills and magic formulas. For them, access to the divine realm was impossible because the gods "do not live among humans" *(Dan. 2:11, NIV)*.

For Daniel, on the other hand, the God of heaven comes down and reveals the "secrets" of the dream *(Dan. 2:28)*. If God responds to our

prayers, it is not because of our merits or because of the quality of our prayer. God's response depends not on us but on Him and His merits. This idea of total dependence on the merits of God is the meaning of the Levitical sacrifice, which points to the sacrifice of Christ. For this reason, Jesus, the fulfillment of the Levitical sacrifice, recommended that we pray to the Father in His name *(John 16:23)*.

D. Gratitude. Because God responded to Daniel's supplication, thanking Him is an important part of Daniel's prayer *(Dan. 2:20–23)*. Daniel blesses God because He has given him "wisdom and power," which belong to Him *(Dan. 2:20, NIV)*. Thus, Daniel acknowledges his dependence on God. More important, Daniel recognizes the merciful grace of God. What we receive from God is something that God gives us for free, a grace that has nothing to do with our own wisdom *(Dan. 2:30)*.

E. Prophecy. Even though God's answer to Daniel's prayer saves his life and the lives of the other wise men, what is important is the future salvation of the world and the salvation of the king. Daniel blesses God for more than the preservation of his own life. More important, Daniel gives thanks for God's presence in history and His control over world events. Daniel also thanks God for His power to change times, remove kings, and set up his eternal kingdom *(Dan. 2:44)*. Likewise, Christ's prayer in the Sermon on the Mount is focused on the same hope: " 'Your kingdom come' " *(Matt. 6:10, NKJV)*.

The Wisdom Prayer *(Dan. 6:10, 11)*. In Daniel 6, Daniel's prayer does not depend on the impact of events but takes place in spite of them. Although he knew about the signing of the decree, which forbade anyone to petition any god or human except the king, Daniel continued to pray *(Dan. 6:10)*. Such prayer belongs to the daily course of life. This prayer displays a number of distinctive characteristics, including:

A. Privacy. Daniel went to his upper room to pray. As Jesus counseled: " 'When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father' " *(Matt. 6:6, NKJV)*. Daniel's prayer is both private and personal, a prayer "in the secret place" *(Matt. 6:6, NKJV)* that no one except God Himself hears. If we pray with "being heard" in mind, thinking of what others may think of our words and our reputation, prayer becomes a public-relations exercise or a parade of words and pride. Worse, it becomes an opportunity for boasting instead of a place to meet with the Lord. A boastful prayer may be appreciated by others, but it never reaches God.

B. A Refuge. Daniel prays in a room that he set aside for this particular spiritual moment. The upper room was located on the roof, far from busy and noisy activity. Prayer is thus associated with a place that is separated

from the ordinary concerns of life, a place where the worries and distractions of existence are left at the threshold. Such a place is a refuge where our attention cannot be diverted, a quiet place that is far from the chaos of the world.

C. Regularity. Daniel maintained the habit of praying three times daily, thus marking the rhythm of the day: in the morning when he woke up and prepared for the work of the day; in the middle of the day, in the midst of his work; and at the end of the day, after the completion of his work and before he prepared to sleep. Thus, Daniel maintained his prayer life through discipline and habit. This example teaches us the value of integrating prayer into the rhythm of life itself. Prayer should not depend on our mood or our emotions. Prayer must be part of our daily regimen, like our meals, work, or other regular routines and appointments.

D. Humility. Although the Bible records various physical positions of prayer (standing with outstretched hands, head bowed, etc.), the most favored one is kneeling down, which expresses humility. Bowing before the Lord is an acknowledgment of our finiteness and unworthiness, as well as our reverence and our commitment to serving God.

E. Hope. Daniel's routine of prayer three times daily coincided with the schedule of sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem *(1 Chron 23:30, 31)*. In Babylon, Daniel faced west; that is, in the direction of the Jerusalem temple. During his inaugural prayer for the Jerusalem temple, Solomon alluded to the crucial need for prayer during the exilic time, when the Israelites would not have access to the temple of Jerusalem *(1 Kings 8:47–49)*. The association of the exilic prayer with the temple of Jerusalem was also a gesture of hope that expressed the exile's longing to return to the Jerusalem on this earth, as well as to inhabit the New Jerusalem of heaven.

Part III: Life Application

Teacher's Tip: Share with your class members the following personal activities to help them enrich their prayer life. Encourage members to incorporate these attitudes and habits in their prayer life in the coming week. Ask them to come ready to share next Sabbath how these activities grew their faith and drew them closer to Jesus.

Activity 1: A unique prayer: Habitual prayer, such as saying grace at mealtimes, runs the risk of becoming mechanical, so much so that we sometimes forget that we prayed!

1. Challenge yourself to utter a unique prayer at mealtime in seeking God's blessing.

2. Alternately, read a prayer from the Psalms in place of your usual mealtime prayer.

Activity 2: A prayer of gratitude:

1. When you thank God, avoid generalizations in your prayer. Refer specifically to the reason for your gratitude.
2. Every morning when you wake up, thank God because you are alive, because God resurrected you from spiritual death.
3. Every evening before going to bed, thank Him for the good things you received and experienced.

Activity 3: A prayer of hope:

1. Reflect on the early Christians' greeting *Mara' na' tha*: "O Lord, come!" *(1 Cor. 16:22, NKJV)*.
2. When you pray, make it a habit to think of Jesus' second coming. Ask the Lord to come.

Activity 4: A secret and special place:

1. Designate a special room or place in your home where you can pray.
2. Arrange this special place to inspire quietness and meditation.

Activity 5: A time of humility *(read Lam. 3:29)*:

1. Make it a habit to kneel down when you pray.
2. Think of your spiritual lifelessness apart from God. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit and give you new life.

Notes