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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas**



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Understanding Prayer

Matt 6:5-8; Luke 11:1-13

Genesis pictures God as introducing Adam to His world. Evidently the Lord and Adam walked together, talked together, and enjoyed a sharing which is characteristic of beings with common interests. There can be no doubt that Adam enjoyed an unspoiled fellowship with God prior to his fall. That sort of dialogue can perhaps be called a type of prayer. Surely Abel also, who knew how to offer a sacrifice pleasing to God, must have addressed some sort of prayer to God. After Abel's murder, God gave Eve a son, Seth, whose name means "appointed"; that is, he was appointed in the place of Abel (Gen. 4:25). It was through this line (not Cain's line, but through the replacement for righteous Abel) that a significant new dimension of fellowship with God was introduced into human History. To Seth was born Enosh, whose name means "man," or even "weakness" or "mortality." *Adam* means "man," generically as human, but now he is Enosh, man in his weakness. As the slowly developing awareness of the dreadful separation sin had imposed permeated the consciousness of this new generation, a sense of yearning and need moved man to reach out to the only source that could meet that need. To Enosh, to one who was frail and realized his dependence on God, was granted the privilege of marking an important milestone in prayer history: "To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26). This calling upon the name of the Lord would characterize God's people from the time of Enosh onward. Abraham *called* upon the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:8); in Elijah's great contest with Baal, he *called* upon Jehovah (I Kings 18:24). The same idea becomes a part of a divine promise in Psalm 145:18: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." Isaiah urges us to "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near" (55:6). Indignation threatens those who do not call upon the Lord: "Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations which do not know Thee, and upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Thy name" (Ps. 79:6). The practice continued throughout the entire biblical period. In the New Testament that calling out to God became a calling out to Christ; Paul addressed his first Corinthian letter to "all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2). Peter's sermon at Pentecost, quoting Joel's prophecy of universal opportunity for salvation (Joel 2:32), promises that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Acts 2:21).

(Excerpts from "The Doctrine of Prayer" by T.W. Hunt)

PRAYER "Teach Us To Pray"

Date	Lesson
01/11	Understanding Prayer (JH)
01/18	How Prayer Changes Us (DS)
01/25	How Prayer Changes God (DS)
02/01	Unanswered Prayers (DS)
02/08	Effective Prayer - Part 1 (JH)
02/15	Effective Prayer - Part 2 (JH)
02/22	Music and Prayer (RH)

Prayer is one of the highest functions and most important privileges of the Christian life. Prayer is the immediate desire of the heart of a new life in Christ to talk with, commune with the Father. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer and plants the "spirit of prayer" in the heart. Prayer is mostly thought of as asking and receiving. Prayer is that and much more. Prayer is manifesting the Christian life in communion with God through His Son and our Savior. Prayer is dependence upon God—not self. It is an expression of the heart of devotion and thanksgiving for God's love and care. Words are not the important part of prayer; the spirit of prayer is what God sees and understands. To pray is as much a part of the Christian life as breathing is to the natural life. To pray is to grow; to pray is a privilege. More is accomplished by prayer than has ever been accomplished by all the "religious activities" in the world. Saying prayers and praying are two different things. A self righteous Pharisee excelled in saying prayers. A regenerated soul can enjoy the privilege of prayer. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of a new creature in Christ Jesus. The language of prayer is the utterance of the new life—the regenerated life. A child by natural birth may ask for a great many foolish things, but he could not ask if he had not life. The ability and the desire to ask are proofs of life. Some prerequisite teachings on prayer are found in Matthew 6:5-8.

Food for Thought

Trust God in ALL Things

Happy moments **PRAISE** God.
 Difficult moments, **SEEK** God.
 Quiet moments, **WORSHIP** God.
 Painful moments, **TRUST** God

*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen,
 but on what is unseen.
 For what is seen is temporary,
 but what is unseen is eternal.*

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV)

(shared by a Class Member)

1. "Thou shall not be like the hypocrites" (Matthew 6:5). Jesus teaches that a hypocrite's prayer is in public, and they love to be seen and heard of men. They stand so all can see them. Jesus taught against the "long prayers" of the hypocrites. Matthew 23:14. The prayers of Jesus and of Paul teach us how to pray. Both prayed for long periods of time, but you will not find long prayers recorded by either one. The longest prayer of Jesus is John 17 and it would require about three minutes to read.
2. Jesus prayed in private. Jesus told us to pray privately. Matthew 6:6
3. Jesus warned about "vain repetitions. Matthew 6:7-8

(Excerpts from "Great Truths of the Bible" by Alan Stringfellow)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

The Types and Role of Prayer as Worship

- (1) **Confession of sin** (Isa. 59:1-3; Ps 66:18; Ps 2:5; 1 John 1:9; Isaiah 59:1-2)
- (2) **Praise** (Hebrews 13:15)
- (3) **Thanksgiving** (Ephesians 5:20)
- (4) **Intercession** (Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Romans 10:1)
- (5) **Petition** (Philippians 4:6)

The Divine Order of Prayer

- (1) **We pray to the Father**—our PROVIDER (John 16:23-26; James 1:17; Ephesians 1:17)
- (2) **We pray in the name of the Son**—our ACCESS. (see John 16:23-26 above; Ephesians 2:18)
- (3) **We pray in the power of the Holy Spirit**—our MEANS (Jude 20)

Categories of Prayer

Understanding that the Christian life is a spiritual warfare, the following, based upon praying according to military objectives, is suggested.

- (1) **Strategic**—long-range goals (Colossians 1:9-12; Matthew 9:37)
- (2) **Tactical**—immediate goals and needs (Colossians 4:2-4; Ephesians 6:19)
- (3) **Logistic**—physical and support needs (James 5:13-20; Acts 12:5; Acts 13:3; Philippians 1:19)

The Prayer-Filled Life

An unnamed disciple requested of Jesus to “teach us to pray.” Not just how to pray, the MECHANICS, but how in the sense of the MOTIVATION. The how aspect is included by Christ in His answer in Luke 11:2-13.

1. Prayer should demonstrate a total consciousness of our need, a sense of our complete inadequacy along with a sense of God’s complete adequacy and willingness (2 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 3:5)
2. Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of God’s ever present willingness.
3. Prayer is not for emergency use only, when we get in a pinch and need someone to bail us out.
4. Prayer is not an “Aladdin’s Lamp” or a trip to a wishing well for our wants.
5. By contrast, prayer is a means of intimate communion, fellowship, and dependence upon God the Father who has promised to work in and through us through His Son, just as God worked through Him.
6. Prayer is for everyday living, moment by moment.
7. Prayer is a means of claiming God’s promises and knowing and becoming yielded to God’s will.

There is no activity in the life of a believer which does not require a prayerful attitude—a prayerful dependence on and an expectation that God is at work and will work according to His purposes and leading. In ourselves we can do nothing. Christianity is living by faith in the Creator God who dwells in us, and prayer is God’s means for us to draw upon Christ’s miraculous life. Christianity is as Paul expressed it in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.” Faith for a committed believer is expressed in intimate, prayerful living.

In practical terms what exactly does this mean?

- We can’t really handle the phone call we are about to make, at least not in Christ’s power and life, apart from prayer.
- The lesson we are preparing to teach, we can’t do effectively without prayerful dependence.
- It means that while we usually recognize our need of God’s enablement in things like witnessing, we nevertheless tend to take God for granted and operate in our own abilities in other areas because we think a task doesn’t seem too difficult or it is within our area of expertise.

(Excerpts from "ABCs for Christian Growth" by J. Hampton Keathley)