

MEMORY VERSE: “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.” Psalm 62:8, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

“This week let’s study... practical ways to strengthen prayer in our daily lives.” Qtly, Sab, last par

1. God cares (Sun-Mon)

- The foundation of prayer is the understanding that God *actually cares* for His people. It is for this reason we are invited to pray (see 1 Pet. 5:7; Mt. 6:25-34).
 - The lesson gives the example of Elijah, whom the Bible says was a man “with a nature like ours” (Jas. 5:17). Yet despite the fact that he was frail and sinful (as we all are), God still cared for him, and heard and answered his prayers.
 - We’ve previously studied how God “inclines” to hear when we pray (see Ps. 116:2; 40:1).
- Furthermore, seemingly unanswered prayers are not an evidence that God doesn’t care.
 - While there may be a reason God is not responding as we expect (Pr. 28:9; Ps. 66:18), most of the time an “unanswered” prayer is just a prayer that isn’t answered in the *time* or *way* we expected (see Qtly, Sun, last par).
 - The lesson also gives the sample of Hannah, who prayed to God “year by year” (1 Sam. 1:7), and persisted in prayer until God answered because she knew He cared.
 - Persistence in seemingly unanswered prayers only makes sense if we believe God cares.
 - “Ultimately, God sees the big picture and knows what is best for us.” Qtly, Mon, last bullet point

[T]o claim that prayer will always be answered in the very way and for the particular thing that we desire, is presumption. God is too wise to err, and too good to withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly. Then do not fear to trust Him, even though you do not see the immediate answer to your prayers. Rely upon His sure promise, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you.’” SC 96.2

2. Prayer is a conversation (Tue, Wed)

- “In the time of Jesus [as well as ours], prayers that were long and carefully crafted like a performance... were highly esteemed.” Qtly, Tue, par 1
 - Jesus’ prayers were different; He was actually carrying on a conversation with His Father as if His Father was *interestedly listening*. This prompted their request, “Lord, teach us to pray...” (Lk. 11:1).
 - Jesus’ response is known as the “Our Father” or “the Lord’s Prayer.”
 - This prayer was not intended to be a script, but a model and framework for prayer, consisting of key points of emphasis – (1) Praise, (2) Confession, (3) Requests, and (4) Thanksgiving. Similarly, the A.C.T.S. acronym stands for (1) Adoration, (2) Confession, (3) Thanksgiving, and (4) Supplication.

3. Prayer is for our benefit more than God’s (Fri)

- Thursday’s lesson addresses some common questions about prayer, such as
 - “Why pray when God already knows?”
 - Because prayer is more for us than for God. God is omniscient, and “knows the things you have need of before you ask” (Mt. 6:8).

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. SC 93.2 (Qtly, Thu, par 1)

- “Why pray when all is well?”
 - **Because** all is well! We should be thanking God for his providence and protection!

We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy.... The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. GC 36.1

- “What is the role of faith in prayer?”
 - See Heb. 11:6; Lk. 18:1-8.

CONCLUSION

“As we search [the Scriptures], we’ll always find someone we can relate to, regardless of the state of our [or their] relationship with God.... Spiritual growth should be our goal—our eyes fixed on Jesus, the ultimate Example in all things and the Author and Finisher of our faith.” Qtly, Fri, last par (Summary)