A Study for Children and Adults on Prayer

by Sally Michael
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In prayer there is not only the worship of a king but fellowship as of a child with God. Christians take far too little time in fellowship. They think prayer is just coming with their petitions. If Christ is to make me what I am to be, I must tarry in fellowship with God. If God is to let His love enter in and shine and burn through my heart, I must take time to be with Him. The smith puts his rod into the fire. If he leaves it there but a short time it does not become red hot…So if we are to get the fire of God’s holiness and love and power we must take more time with God in fellowship. That was what gave men like Abraham and Moses their strength. They were men who were separated into a fellowship with God, and the living God made them strong.—Andrew Murray

The purpose of prayer is not to change God, but to change the person praying. Through prayer, God reveals our sinful hearts, makes His will known, discloses His kingdom purposes, and reveals Himself to us. True prayer is getting to know God better. An encounter with the living God means change for sinful man.

“Lord, teach us to pray” should not only be the heart cry of the disciples but of every child of God who desires to know his Father better. Do you want to know Him as a loving, responsive Father? Seek Him in prayer. Do you want to see His almighty hand at work, intimately governing the affairs of your life? Commune with Him in prayer. Do you want others to know and honor God? Plead with Him in prayer. Do you want to see the power of evil broken, for wrongs to be righted, for justice to be done…for His kingdom to come? Cry out to Him in prayer. Do you “dig your heels in,” stubbornly demanding your way? Bow before Him in prayer. Are you needy? Humble yourself before Him in prayer. Do you fail time after time, offending others, damaging relationships, scarring your soul? Repent before Him in prayer. Do you fear for the future of your soul? Confide in Him in prayer. For it is as we seek His face that He meets our every need, including our need for change and our need for intimacy.

How easy it is to go through our days without acknowledging God’s presence. How easy it is to get discouraged in praying for the salvation of another. How easy it is to worry rather than to trust. How easy it is for us to lean on ourselves instead of on Him. How easy it is to neglect communion with Him in striving to “serve” Him. How easy it is for prayer to be monotonous, rote, ineffective, powerless. Lord, teach us to pray!

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1Into His Presence, Daily Devotions for Prayer (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1997), 219.
Lord, Teach Us to Pray is an intergenerational study on prayer using the Lord’s Prayer as the framework for teaching about prayer. When Jesus responded to the disciples’ request to teach them to pray, He gave them the Lord’s Prayer as a model of prayer. In it, Jesus shows us what should be in the believer’s heart when he comes to his Heavenly Father in prayer. Lord, Teach Us to Pray is not a curriculum about the correct formula for prayer—it is about God’s children learning to fellowship with Him in prayer.

Week by week, the class will be adding visuals to large scrapbook pages as they work toward the final lesson when the scrapbook pages are put together into an album to show that prayer is learning to spend time with God—expressing our affection for Him, remembering the needs of His children, glorifying His name, committing ourselves to His kingdom work, submitting to His will, humbly presenting our requests to Him as an expression of our dependence on Him, confessing sin, and pleading with Him to keep us from evil and enable us to persevere in faith. These scrapbook pieces are taken out of a heart box each week as a visual reminder of the need for the appropriate heart attitude in prayer.

There are small group discussions within the lesson time, as well as at the end of the lesson. The final small group discussion time for each lesson is a time for understanding how to apply the truths taught in the lesson as well as a time for praying together as a small group. The curriculum is accompanied by a Family Devotional Guide, which should be provided to each family enrolled in this class.

God-Centered Curriculum

Children Desiring God curricula are birthed by a passion for presenting the truths of the Bible in a God-centered way. This means that these lessons are not about techniques for prayer but about the God to whom we pray and the heart attitude we should have in coming before Him.

Lesson Order

The lessons are designed to teach overarching truths and to encourage responsive hearts. Some lessons are dependent on truths taught in previous lessons and some lessons expand the truth taught in a prior lesson. For these reasons, it is important that the lessons be taught in the order in which they appear in the curriculum.
Intended Use of This Curriculum

This curriculum has been written specifically for use in intergenerational teaching (children and adults). As such, it can be used in the following settings:

- Intergenerational Sunday school classes
- Mid-week classes
- Church family nights (e.g., once a month or bi-weekly)
- Family nights at home
- Homeschool and Christian school settings
- Camps
- Small groups

Although the material is written as intergenerational material, it can also be used as children’s material. **NOTE:** If you are teaching a class of younger children or an intergenerational class in which most of the children are very young (second grade and younger), you may want to alter the curriculum in one of the two following ways:

- Use two class periods to teach each lesson. This will enable you to teach two-thirds of the lesson the first week and use the second week for significant review and the remaining portion of the lesson. (Note: This will extend the curriculum to 26 weeks.)

- Simplify or shorten each lesson, teaching one lesson per class session. (Note: This will keep the 13-week format.)

Intergenerational Teaching

The term “intergenerational teaching” can conjure up all kinds of meanings—and all kinds of misunderstandings. Intergenerational teaching does not mean “dumbing down material so children can understand it, but the adults end up being bored.” It also does not mean “teaching a normal adult class with the hope that the children present may gain a tidbit of information.” Intergenerational teaching consciously takes into account the fact that there are learners of different ages and experiences, and it seeks to teach the hearts of all. Intergenerational teaching benefits both adults and children. It even provides opportunities for both generations to understand the material differently and benefit from a different perspective. It is a unique opportunity for the young to learn from the old, and for the old to learn from the young.

In our experience, it is easy to understand how the young can learn from the old, but sometimes only seasoned teachers of children can understand how the old can learn from the young. The “old” have maturity, rational thinking, and abstract understanding. The young have “black-and-white” thinking, intense emotions, an easy acceptance of truth, and freedom from conventional points of view. The blending of these strengths can enhance the learning experience for all involved.
But this will not happen if adults do not respect what children have to offer, or vice versa, which is often the case. It cannot happen if the teaching is so far above the children’s heads that they cannot understand what is being taught. It cannot happen if children are not given the opportunity to react to what is being taught and to share their questions and insights. Children often ask questions adults never think to ask. They also often see a different perspective of an issue or a truth. But if the contributions of the children are not respected, this cannot happen. This does not mean that children need to be catered to, but it does mean that they cannot be overlooked. They must be intentionally included.

The following are a few of the potential benefits of intergenerational learning for adults:

1. Adults often think they understand something when in fact their “understanding” is merely familiarity with certain terms and concepts. When asked to explain what they have learned, they realize that they have little true understanding, inadequate understanding, or perhaps little support for the truth they attempt to espouse. Having to explain that truth to someone else (such as a child or an unbeliever) is an invaluable opportunity to measure understanding, or to dig for answers. You never know what you really know until you try to pass it on to someone else. Sometimes just the struggle of having to articulate your understanding of truth can refine your own understanding.

2. Adults will often pass over the practical application of a truth unless challenged to think about what it means for their everyday lives. We are so much more comfortable with theory than with the reality of application. The reality of application is that we may need to change, surrender something, submit, or reevaluate priorities. Often adults have learned to gloss over the uncomfortable application of scripture. Children growing up in Christian homes learn to do the same. However, to inquisitive and literal young children, the truth and its application can be very blunt, obvious, and unavoidable. This is another wonderful way in which adults can be challenged by children’s faith.

3. Adults often do not know how to talk about spiritual truths with children; it can be difficult for parents to engage their children in spiritual discussions. A forum where that is modeled, encouraged, and mentored can be beneficial to adults.

Teaching an intergenerational class is more challenging and requires more preparation than teaching a class of adults. It requires more creativity as well. If a lecture method is used, the children’s minds will wander and there will be little heart application. (This may be true of some of the adults as well!)

Here are a few suggestions for modification of your teaching to fit an intergenerational situation:

- Use a variety of teaching methods—some lecture is appropriate, but
include other methods such as question/answer, demonstration, illustration, role playing, testimony, discussion, discovery (e.g., looking up scripture passages and asking the learner to explain them; comparing two passages).

- Interact with the learners—involve the class in looking up passages, restating passages, and asking them to compare things or to fill in charts, etc.

- Don’t use terms children won’t understand without explaining them. If you are using a word that is not common knowledge for children, teach the term to the class. For example, don’t just throw out the term “justified”; explain what justified means. Use an illustration to help the children (and the adults) better understand and appreciate what it means to be justified. You may want to write unfamiliar terms on the board so children can see how they are spelled and may recognize them in the future.

- Modify your language. Choose simple vocabulary—words that are understandable to children but not insulting to adults (e.g., use “king” or “king of Egypt” rather than “pharaoh”; use “lost” instead of “forfeited”). At times, you may need to make a statement to the adults and then restate it more simply for the children.

- Match activities with the appropriate age group OR adapt the activity to match the age group. For example: When the activity calls for reading a long passage of scripture (e.g., five verses), choose an older child to read the passage. (This would be matching the activity to the particular age group.) OR, using this same activity as an example, choose several younger children and split them into groups. Have each group read part of the scripture passage together. (This would be an adaptation of the activity to match the age group.)

- Encourage discussion between parents and children. For example, you may have the class look up a scripture passage, have the parents and children discuss it, and then ask for a volunteer to explain what the verse means.

- Encourage the children to participate in the learning process. At first, the children may feel intimidated. You, the teacher, will need to put them at ease and communicate that they are valued members of the class. For example, you may say, “I have a question that I want all the children to think about. Raise your hand when you think you have an answer,” or “I have heard the adults’ answers. Now I would like to hear some of the children’s answers.” Encourage children to ask questions as well. Because children can sometimes get sidetracked, be sure you
steer them back on course. Sometimes sidetracking can be prevented by the way you preface your question, such as, “Does anyone have a question about the verse we just talked about?” or “Does anyone have a question about what it means to be justified or how a person is justified?”

- Encourage the class to make personal application of the truth presented in the lesson. This can be done in a group (“Now what does this truth mean for us in everyday life?”), in a small discussion group (i.e., parents and children), or through a personal exercise given to the members of the class.

- You may want to give a short homework assignment for the week for parents and children to discuss or discover together.

**Use of Class Time**

Because opportunities to build the faith of the next generation are precious and limited, it is important to use the available time wisely. The class time should be directed toward Biblical understanding and building faith. For this reason, the curriculum is structured to limit activities to those that build Biblical knowledge and faith. While it is certainly possible to learn while being entertained, entertainment is not the goal of this study. Activities that have fun as their primary goal have been omitted. Bible absorption and faith-building are the central themes of all the teaching and activities.

The time allotment for this study is flexible to best meet your needs. The following is a list of possible ways to organize the time. The **Large Group Lesson Presentation**, **Small Group Discussion**, and the **Application/Prayer Time** are the most important elements to include in the session. You may add other elements as time allows. There are two **Activity** suggestions for each lesson.

**Worship Time**

The goal of worship time is to lead others to experience the greatness and worth of God, out of which expressions of song, praise, and prayer flow naturally. If possible, this time should be led by a gifted adult worship leader.

- Develop a core repertoire of meaningful hymns and songs. Whenever possible, include God-focused songs that are a regular part of corporate worship so children can become active participants in the wider church body.

- We suggest using a combination of time-enduring hymns and God-focused contemporary worship songs. This combination provides children with both deep theological truths and channels to express their worship of our great God. Worship songs and hymns should be chosen
Lord, Teach Us To Pray

Lesson 1
Lord, Teach Us To Pray

SCRIPTURE:
1 Kings 18:20-21, 26-29, 36-39; Psalm 34:15; James 5:17-18; 1 Kings 19:1-4; Luke 11:1

KEY VERSE:
Psalm 34:15—The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

KEY THEMES:
- God delights in and always answers the prayer of the righteous.
- The prayers of ordinary Christians are answered.
- Prayer isn’t learned naturally; we need to be taught how to pray.
- We need a heart that wants to learn to pray.
- Only God can give us the heart to pray.

VISUALS/MATERIALS FOR LESSON: Bible; 4 spoons and 2 hard-boiled eggs; Resource Packet—Student Nametags, Heart (for “heart” box), Discussion Cards 1A-1B, Prayer Cards 1A-1B, ELIJAH, PROPHETS (A-I; 9 copies), ALTAR, JARS (A-C; 3 copies), ALTAR WITH FIRE AND WATER, THE LORD sign; whiteboard and marker/chalk board and chalk; optional item: overhead projector

MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY: 4” x 6” photo albums¹ (at least 13 pages or 26 sides, plus a front and back cover, one album per student); permanent markers (for writing on plastic photo album cover); Lesson 1 Activity Cards for each student (see Resource Packet); markers; optional materials to decorate the albums could include glitter, small stickers, stamp markers, etc.

MATERIALS FOR ALTERNATE ACTIVITY: Collect an assortment of missionary prayer letters.

¹These can be inexpensive albums purchased at a discount store photo counter. Handmade albums are an alternative, using cardboard for covers with two holes punched along the left edge of each page and cover, and assembling using ribbon, shoelaces, yarn, or paper fasteners. The cardboard covers can be covered with wallpaper, contact paper, or wrapping paper. If you choose to make albums, bring the necessary materials to class for use during the Activity.
IMPORTANT NOTE FOR TEACHER’S PREPARATION:
This lesson deals with the concept that God answers prayer. Lesson 4 deals with the concept that God’s answer to prayer can be “Yes,” “No,” or “Wait.”

PREPARATION:
Study the scripture passages carefully and prayerfully. Ask God to make them real in your own heart. Be open to what God may be teaching you in this lesson. Study the lesson well. Pray for the children and adults in your class.

Copy and cut out a Student Nametag for each student (see Resource Packet.)

Make copies of the Discussion Card. Write the Discussion Card information on a chalk or white board, or make an overhead so the questions (but not the answers) can be displayed using an overhead projector.

Cut out the color Lord, Teach Us To Pray heart visual from the Resource Packet and glue it to the top of the box provided in the teacher’s kit. This will be referred to as the “heart box.” (Note: You could also use a large heart-shaped candy box saved from Valentine’s Day.)

Hide the heart box and the LORD sign in something (e.g., a large box or tote bag). The heart box will be used throughout the study.

Copy and cut out the Prayer Cards (one for each person). Be sure to keep a copy of the original for future use.

Copy the Activity Cards (one set for each student) on cardstock.

NOTE: You may want to encourage the class to memorize the Lord’s Prayer.

SYMBOL KEY:
The following symbols will help you to quickly identify various parts of the lesson.

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INTRODUCTION:

Ask for four volunteers to be in a contest and call them to the front of the class. Give them each a spoon and divide them into two teams. Give each team a hard-boiled egg and set them up to do a relay race, where one person in each team balances the egg on his spoon and carries the egg to his team member. Then he must transfer the egg to his team member’s spoon so that his team member can carry the egg to the end of the race.

LESSON:

Tell the class that this contest was just played for fun, but the Bible tells us about a more important, serious contest.

Ask the students to open their Bibles to 1 Kings 18:20-21. Tell the class that the contest you are going to read about took place when Ahab was king of Israel. He was an evil king. He built an altar to the false god Baal and worshipped Baal. The Bible says that “Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him” (1 Kings 16:33).

God sent Elijah to tell Ahab that it would not rain in Israel for years. There would be years of drought. Then, after three and a half years, God sent Elijah back to Ahab.

The people of Israel did not follow the Lord with all their hearts—they followed Baal and other gods. Was this okay?

Ask someone to read 1 Kings 18:20-21:

1 Kings 18:20-21—So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.

Explain that Elijah suggested that there be a contest. Each “team” would cut a bull in pieces and lay it on a pile of wood. Then each team would pray to their God/god to send down fire to light the wood. One team would be Elijah; the other team would be the 450 prophets of Baal.

Remind the class that in your contest, each “team” was even—everyone had a spoon, and each team had an egg. But this contest was not even—450 prophets against one Elijah. (Show the ELIJAH and PROPHETS pictures, helping the children count by 50s each of the nine PROPHETS pictures so that they can see that there are 450 prophets.)
Let's see what happened. Ask someone to read 1 Kings 18:26.

1 Kings 18:26—And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made.

Read the first part of 1 Kings 18:27:

1 Kings 18:27—And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying,

Ask a person to read what Elijah said:

“Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.”

Read 1 Kings 18:28-29:

1 Kings 18:28-29—And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

No one answered; no one paid attention. Baal did not answer the 450 prophets. Baal had no power to answer the prophets.

Explain that Elijah then built an altar with 12 stones and dug a large trench around the altar. He put the wood and the bull on the altar. (Show the ALTAR picture.)

Then Elijah told the people to fill four jars with water (Show the first of the three JARS pictures.) and pour the water on the altar. Then he told them to pour FOUR MORE jars of water on the altar. (Show the second JARS picture.) THEN he told them to pour FOUR MORE jars of water on the altar (Show the third JARS picture and help the children count to see that Elijah had them pour a total of 12 jars of water on the altar.)

So now we have 450 prophets of Baal and dry wood on one side and one Elijah with very wet wood on his altar on the other side. (Show the ALTAR and JARS pictures.)

And then Elijah prayed.

Refer the class to Discussion 1A.
DISCUSSION 1A:

Read Elijah’s prayer in 1 Kings 18:36-37 and answer the following questions:

1 Kings 18:36-37—And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”

QUESTIONS:

How did Elijah address God? What does this tell you about Elijah’s understanding of God? [Recognized that he was God’s servant, that God is in control; remembered that God had a history of faithfulness to His people; remembered the promises that God had made to His people]

What did Elijah ask of God? Who is the main focus of Elijah’s prayer? [God and His glory]

Who does Elijah pray for? [The people of Israel]

Read 1 Kings 18:38-39:

1 Kings 18:38-39—Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. (Show the ALTAR WITH FIRE AND WATER picture.) And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.”

Explain that when Elijah prayed, the Almighty God of the Universe, the one true and all-powerful God who answers the prayers of His children entered the contest. Then the two sides really were uneven—the 450 prophets of Baal (write 450 on a white board, chalk board, or overhead) and dry wood on one side (write or draw wood on the board) and Elijah (draw a stick figure or write Elijah on the other side of the board) and wet wood (write or draw wet wood) and GOD (write GOD in huge letters) on the other side.

Tell the class that God answered the prayers of Elijah to “let it be known in Israel that He is God.” The God of Israel answers the prayers of His people. The God of Israel shows that He is glorious.
Have a sword drill with the following verse. Discuss the verse.

Psalm 34:15—The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

Give the following examples of answers to prayer:

Two women prayed together for their unbelieving husbands one hour every day for seven years. But their husbands still were not saved. They were discouraged but decided to keep praying and three years later both husbands were saved on the same day.²

Read Psalm 34:15 again:

Psalm 34:15—The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

A man living in England prayed faithfully for a mission agency in China. After he died, a list of 20 mission stations was found in his diary along with the note that God had enabled him to pray for revival in each of these places. It was discovered that God had sent revival to each of these places in the exact order in which the man had prayed for them.³

Read Psalm 34:15 again:

Psalm 34:15—The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

Silvia Tarniceriu was a 13-year-old girl living in Communist Romania. Her family was very poor and she had to share a pair of shoes with her brother. Her teacher made fun of Silvia in school because her family believed in God.

One day Silvia’s pastor told the children in her church, “You need to know for yourself that God is real! Believing in God because your parents believe in God is not enough...You need to know Him personally...You children, and young people especially, are being continually told in school that God doesn’t exist. But everyone can have a personal knowledge that God exists. It doesn’t matter how young you are, you can have a deep heart knowledge that there is a God, and that He cares for you.”

So Silvia prayed one night, “I don’t know if this is a prayer or not. The pastor said I could talk to you as if you were [my father]. I have a problem. In school, my teacher says there is no God. She says no one ever saw You. She mocks me and the other children laugh at me. The pastor says that You exist. And I know my parents pray to You and they believe that You answer their prayers. But, God, You have never answered my prayers. And I need to know. Is there a God? Can You do miracles? Do You know everything like the pastor said? Do You? I need to know!”

Then Silvia asked God for a pair of shoes…and a sweater…and a coat…because she needed to know that God is real.

A week went by and there was no answer to Silvia’s prayer. But Silvia kept asking God to make Himself real to her.

One day Silvia’s father came home with a brown cardboard box. Her father had picked it up in the post office but he didn’t know who had sent it. When Silvia’s father opened the box, right on the top inside the box was a pair of shoes! Girl shoes! New shoes! And they were just Silvia’s size!

Then Silvia’s father pulled out a soft, gray sweater! A girl’s sweater! And it was just Silvia’s size! The last thing in the box was…a long, warm, burgundy-colored coat! Guess whose size it was? It was Silvia’s size! Silvia’s mother said, “It’s strange. It’s almost as if someone took your measurements, Silvia. Who would know us and know what size clothes you need?”

Silvia started weeping. She knew that God is real. She wanted to thank God for the miracle God had sent to her. She had forgotten to tell God her size…but God knew her size. God is real and He answers prayer.⁴

When you pray do you see answers like this? Do these stories seem like the kind of answers to prayer that happen to other people—special people—not people like you? The man and the two women were very ordinary people who were faithful in their praying, and Silvia was just a little girl. While it is true that God was showing Himself to be God to Israel in a very special way when he sent fire from heaven, the Bible tells us something encouraging about Elijah.

Refer the class to Discussion 1B.

DISCUSSION 1B:

Read the following verses and answer the questions:

James 5:17-18—Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

QUESTIONS:
What do these verses tell us about Elijah? [He had a nature like ours, prayed fervently]
Read 1 Kings 19:1-4 to see what Elijah did right after the contest with the prophets of Baal:

1 Kings 19:1-4—Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

What does it mean that “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours” [Sinful—fearful, prone to worry, discouraged, doubting]
How did this sinful man pray? What does fervently mean? [Enthusiastically, passionately, eagerly, zealously]
What did Elijah pray? Did God do what Elijah asked him to do?

Explain to the class that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he saw a specific answer to his prayers. God has promised to answer the prayers of His people—including the prayers of ordinary Christians. God does not always answer every prayer in just the way we want...HOWEVER, He has promised to do more than we can ask or imagine.

Tell the class that we don’t just automatically know how to pray when we become a Christian. We must learn how to pray. We must be taught how to pray. Sometimes—not always, but sometimes—our prayers are not answered positively—in the way we expect—because we do not know HOW to pray. We are not unusual in this because even Jesus’ disciples who walked and talked with Jesus had to be taught how to pray.
Read Luke 11:1:

Luke 11:1—Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

Explain that if Jesus’ disciples needed to be taught how to pray, then we too probably need to learn how to pray. Tell the class that this study will help them learn how to pray, but they won’t learn how to pray by just sitting in class and listening to the teacher.

Explain to the class that they will need to have two things in order to learn how to pray. (Pull out the heart box.) One thing you will need is a heart that wants to learn to pray. Learning to pray has to be important to you.

The second thing you will need is the Lord. (Pull out THE LORD sign.) I cannot teach you to pray. I can teach you about prayer, but only God can give you a heart that wants to pray, and only God can teach you to pray. Let’s ask Him to do that now.

Close the class with prayer.

APPLICATION/PRAYER TIME:
Have a prayer time asking the Lord for a heart that wants to pray and that He would teach you to pray.

Pass out the Prayer Cards. (See Resource Packet.) Have the parents (or small group leaders) remind their family (or small group) of Elijah’s prayer in 1 Kings 18:36-37:

1 Kings 18:36-37—And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. 37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”

The parents or small group leaders should each have one person in their group read his prayer card to the group and then pray that God would make Himself known as God in that country.

ACTIVITY:
Each student can decorate his own scrapbook (mini photo album) cover or make covers for his scrapbook. The students’ scrapbooks should be kept in the classroom until the last lesson is completed. Have each student decorate and cut out the two
pieces of the activity card for Lesson 1, putting one on the front cover of his scrapbook as indicated, and putting the other on the first right-hand page inside his scrapbook.

Encourage the children to work carefully on their scrapbook pages so they can have a scrapbook that they will want to save and review. The small scrapbooks are intended to provide the child with a curriculum review after the curriculum has been taught.

**ALTERNATE ACTIVITY:**
Read a missionary prayer letter and pray for the needs of the missionary and the missionary's ministry. Write a letter of encouragement to the missionary.

**SEND HOME:**
- A Note to Parents  (See Parent Resource Page section of the teacher’s notebook.)
- Parent Resource Page
- *Lord, Teach Us to Pray* Family Devotional Guide
Lesson 1

QUESTION: Do you like contests?

The Bible tells us about an important one. Check the SUMMARY of the Family Devotional Guide to find out about this contest.

God hears prayer—God delights to hear prayer. He has allowed His people a thousand times over to be tried, that they might be compelled to cry to Him, and learn to know Him as the Hearer of Prayer.

Let us confess with shame how little we have believed this wondrous truth, in the sense of receiving it into the heart, and allowing it to possess and control our whole being. That we accept a truth is not enough; the living God, of whom the truth speaks must in its light be so revealed, that our whole life is spent in His presence, with the consciousness as clear as in a little child toward its earthly parent. I know for certain my Father hears me.—Andrew Murray*

...He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you.—Isaiah 30:19b

*From Into His Presence (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1997), 137.

Lesson 2

QUESTION: Why is it important to remember when we pray that we are praying to the King?

See the PRAYER POEM in the Family Devotional Guide for the answer.

Abiding in Christ means a life of converse with Him. To tell Him all; to talk over all anxieties and occurrences with Him; to ask His counsel or advice; to stop to praise, to adore, and utter words of love; to draw heavily upon His resources, as the branch on the sap and life of the vine; to be content to be only a channel, so long as His power and grace are ever flowing through; to be only the bed of a stream hidden from view beneath the hurrying waters, speeding without pausing toward the sea. This is abiding in Christ.—F.B. Meyer*

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.—John 15:4

*From Into His Presence (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1997), 108
Family Devotional Guide

A Study for Children and Adults on Prayer

by Sally Michael
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“Lord, teach us to pray,” are the words of Jesus’ disciples in Luke 11:1. But they are also the words of every Christian who desires to connect with his Heavenly Father through life-giving prayer. They should be the plea of every Christian parent who desires to lead his children into a fuller, deeper relationship with God.

It is through prayer that we come to know our Father better. It is through prayer that we unburden our hearts and receive His consolation. Through prayer, we understand the knowledge of His will, and learn to bend our stubborn, rebellious hearts. Through prayer, we confess our offenses against a Holy God, and receive His forgiveness and the strength to walk in holiness. It is through prayer that mere men can touch the throne of the Almighty God.

Yet prayer is often greatly neglected. This may be the result of a heart grown cold...or it may simply be due to experiences of frustration in prayer due to a misunderstanding of how to pray. For all who wish to grow in prayer, take heart from the following words.

Do not expect, when you trust Christ to bring you into a new, healthy prayer-life, that you will be able all at once to pray as easily and powerfully and joyfully as you fain would. But just bow quietly before God in your ignorance and weakness. That is the best and truest prayer, to put yourself before God just as you are. “We know not what to pray as we ought”; ignorance, difficulty, struggle marks our prayer all along. But, “the Spirit Himself, helpeth our infirmities.” How? “The Spirit” deeper down than our thoughts or feelings “maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Andrew Murray
From Into His Presence (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1997).
In the Hebrew system of education, religious instruction took place in the context of relationship. Parents taught their children diligently as they sat in their houses, as they walked by the way, as they lay down, and as they arose (Deuteronomy 6:7). In other words, instruction was continual—everywhere, at all times. Instruction in the scriptures took place in the course of everyday life.

While instruction in the scriptures can and should happen in a church setting, it can never replace the humble, face-to-face context of loving relationships in the home. It is in this relationship of trust and love that head knowledge becomes heart knowledge. Anyone can share information with a child, but when a child learns something from a trusted and loved person, the child is more likely to embrace that knowledge as truth. Especially if that truth is demonstrated in everyday life as it is modeled by trusted mentors.

God has placed a unique call on parents to pass on His glorious deeds and the wonders He has done to the next generation (Psalm 78:4). This is a sacred trust. God is calling His people to make Him known to their children so that the next generation will set their hope in Him (Psalm 78:7).

Although both parents share this mantle of responsibility and privilege, fathers as the spiritual leaders of the home are especially appointed by God to initiate this teaching. Twenty-first century fathers often feel defeated in this task. Many short-lived efforts to gather the family together for devotions fizzle out, and fathers feel an acute sense of failure in their spiritual leadership again and again.

This need not be the case. Although the enemy rages against the consistent and sincere attempt to impart the teachings of God to the next generation, God Himself works to preserve His Word in
every generation. He has promised to be the Christian’s strength in every weakness. Humbly look to Him each day to give you the resolve and wisdom to instruct your children.

This guide has been prepared to encourage families to formally gather around the Word of God daily in a simple act of faith—reading God’s Word, discussing it, and praying that God will cause His truth to penetrate the hearts of the hearers.

Continue to review, reinforce, and apply the truths from His Word as you gather around the supper table, ride in the car, tuck your children into bed, and when you rise to start each new day.

**HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

This guide has been prepared as a companion piece to the inter-generational curriculum, *Lord, Teach Us to Pray*. Ideally, the curriculum lesson is taught to parents and children in a church or small group setting, and the Family Devotional Guide is used at home to reinforce and apply the lesson. However, the Devotional Guide, though enhanced by the curriculum study, is not dependent on the study of the curriculum. Each curriculum lesson is summarized at the beginning of each lesson in the Family Devotional Guide.

Remembering and applying the following principles may help to make your time around the Word more life-giving for you and your family: be sincere, keep it simple, keep it short, set the tone, and solicit participation.

**BE SINCERE:** Deuteronomy 6 makes it clear that in order to teach your children diligently, you must have God’s Word in your own hearts (Deut. 6:6). You must first love God’s Word before you can genuinely lead another to love God’s Word. You must treasure God before another can be drawn into a relationship with God through your efforts. There is no substitute for reading, praying, obeying, and asking God to work in your own heart first.

Read the lesson summary first on your own. Look at the key themes and look up the scripture passages. Meditate on the...
scripture and the POINT TO PONDER. Pray for God to open your mind and heart. Ask Him how to apply His Word in everyday life. Ask God to help you see how you need to change, to mold your heart to His desires, to forgive your sins, and to guide you in all His ways. Pray for each member of your family.

**KEEP IT SIMPLE:** Each day’s devotion consists of a scripture passage and a few questions. You need not do more than this unless your family is clamoring for more! It is better to establish a daily HABIT of simply turning to the Word together than to set forth on a complex plan that cannot be consistently executed. Set a specific, consistent time each day for your family devotions. Six days of devotional ideas are provided, recognizing that it is rare that a family would be able to be 100-percent consistent. But if you are able to do so, you may want to choose a Psalm to meditate on for the seventh day.

**KEEP IT SHORT:** It is better to leave your family wanting more than to leave them wishing they could have escaped sooner. Resist the temptation to say, “just one more thing,” or to feel like you must teach all you have gleaned from your own personal study. THIS IS A BEGINNING. You will have many more opportunities to instruct daily as you “sit in your house, walk by the way, lie down and rise.” Keep the Word of God fresh in your heart and seize these moments for informal instruction.

There are additional follow-up ideas for the week at the end of each lesson. If your family consists of older children (i.e., fourth grade and older, depending on your children’s comprehension of written material), you MAY be able to use one or more of these during your devotional time, but DO NOT push your children to the limit of their ability to participate with interest. It is better to use the whole day to informally implement some of these ideas. Plan how this will happen. If you decide to memorize a verse, this can be done during the devotional time—but it can also be done in the car, while washing dishes, or before bedtime.

There is also an optional FAMILY NIGHT ACTIVITY each week. If you decide to have a family night, be sure to include something to make this a special time—a favorite meal or snack, a game the whole family can enjoy, etc. Be sure to check in advance to see if you will need to make any special preparation for the family
night activity. In some cases, you may need to pick up some materials.

**SET THE TONE:** Reading God’s Word is serious business, so your tone should reflect that. However, it is not profitable to tonelessly bore children. God’s Word is full of interesting stories, puzzling instruction, deep thoughts, and wise advice. Be winsome in your manner, not austere and judgmental. Read with enthusiasm and thoughtfulness. Make your comments interesting and thought provoking.

**SOLICIT PARTICIPATION:** Family devotional time is a time for sharing. Encourage everyone to be involved. This is not a time for you to show how much you know but to encourage others to discover and share delight in God’s Word.

In the LESSON SUMMARY you will find question marks in brackets before various statements. If your child has heard the lesson or is familiar with the Bible story, turn these statements into questions. This will encourage your child to think, participate, and remember.

When looking at a text, resist the temptation to explain it to your child. Instead, ask questions to train your child to discover what the text is teaching. It is important that your child be able to answer the following questions about the text:

- What does the passage say? (observation)
- What does the passage mean? (interpretation)
- How does the meaning of the passage apply to me? (application)

In asking the question, “What does the passage mean?”, help your child try to discover the author’s point. Steer him to words or phrases in the text that will help him to see the author’s intent. The child should not understand the question as, “What does this mean to me?”, but rather, “What is the author saying?”

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When you ask a question, give your child time to respond. If your child has difficulty, point him to the text for the answer (e.g., “look at verse 2”). You may need to give a hint, but encourage your child as much as possible to think about the text and its meaning. Don’t hesitate to gently correct erroneous answers that your child gives by pointing to specific words or phrases to help him understand. Little by little your child will acquire the skill of careful reading and thoughtful consideration. This process takes time and is difficult to learn, so work with your child patiently while he learns this critical Bible reading skill.

**TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF BIBLE PASSAGES:**


- Look for key words or repeated phrases.

- Look for “connections” within the text (e.g., conclusions, summaries, comparisons, contrasts, results, etc.). Words that may signal these include therefore, for, so that, for this reason, because, but, however, nevertheless, as, like, and if...then.

- Look at the verse in context.

- Look for lists in the text.

The questions in the Family Devotional Guide are based on the English Standard Version of the Bible. It is highly recommended that you use the ESV, although it is not essential. Try to avoid simplified or abridged children’s Bibles, which often omit key connecting words.

Once your child has discovered the author’s meaning of the text, you can ask how the text applies to your child personally. It is important for your child to understand that the Bible speaks to individuals today. Help him to very practically apply the teaching of the passage to his life. He needs to know how he can be a “doer” of the Word and not just a “hearer.”

Lord, Teach Us to Pray ©2006             Sample                         Children Desiring God
End each devotional session with prayer, and encourage participation in the prayer time. Vary your prayer pattern—one day you may pray short sentence prayers, another day one member of the family may lead in prayer. It might be helpful to encourage your child to think about the text and to pray according to the content of the passage. Often children don’t know what to pray so it may be helpful to mention some things that could be touched on in prayer.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR VARYING YOUR PRAYER TIMES**
Varying your mode of prayer will help keep your children engaged.

- Pray “sentence prayers”—each person prays a sentence or two and prays at various times.
- Pray topically—pray about a certain topic; then mention another concern for prayer; pray through several requests.
- Place prayer requests on slips of paper and draw to determine who will pray for each request.
- Gather around a person, lay hands on him and pray for him.
- Pray in pairs.
- Take a prayer walk— stop at critical spots to pray.
- Pray over requests in missionary letters.
- Pray with a map.
- Pass out pictures of friends and family—each person can pray for the person pictured.
- Write out your prayers.
- Suggest a “prayer starter;” others finish (e.g., “Lord you are so good because…you send rain on the good and bad alike…while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us…”).
- Go outside and pray with your eyes open.
SCRIPTURE:
1 Kings 18:20-21, 26-29, 36-39; Psalm 34:15; James 5:17-18; 1 Kings 19:1-4; Luke 11:1

KEY VERSE:
Psalm 34:15—The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

KEY THEMES:
• God delights in and always answers the prayer of the righteous.
• The prayers of ordinary Christians are answered.
• Prayer isn’t learned naturally; we need to be taught how to pray.
• We need a heart that wants to learn to pray.
• Only God can give us the heart to pray.

LESSON SUMMARY:
The Bible tells us about a big contest organized by the prophet Elijah against 450 prophets of Baal. Each side cut up a bull and lay the pieces on a pile of wood. And each side prayed for fire to be sent down from heaven to light their wood. The 450 prophets prayed to Baal and Elijah prayed to God.

The prophets of Baal prayed all morning, they “cried aloud” and cut themselves. They prayed in the afternoon as well...but there was no answer. (1 Kings 18:26-29)

So Elijah built an altar for the wood and the bull, and he dug a large trench around the altar. Then he told the people to pour 12 jars of water over the wood and the offering!

The people of Israel had been trying to follow both the one true God of Israel and the false god Baal. So Elijah prayed, “Let it be known this day that you are God in Israel” (1 Kings 18:36b). After
Elijah prayed, the “fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust” (1 Kings 18:38). Even the water was “licked up” by the flames! God showed that He is the one true God, and the people fell on their faces when they realized this.

God answered the prayers of Elijah because God answers the prayers of His people. (See Psalm 34:15.)

God answers prayers for the salvation of unbelieving husbands, He answers the prayers of prayer warriors who pray for revival, and He answers the prayers of little girls, like Sylvia Tarniceriu, who prayed for a pair of shoes, a sweater, and a coat.

We might be tempted to think that Elijah’s prayers were answered because he was a special man—a prophet of God. But people who pray are ordinary people, and God answers the prayers of ordinary people who are faithful in their praying.

Even though Elijah was a prophet, James 5:17 tells us that Elijah was “a man with a nature like ours.” After the “big contest,” Elijah became afraid and ran away. He sat down in the wilderness and told God that he wanted to die. So Elijah was very ordinary in many ways. He became afraid, discouraged, and worried.

God answers the prayers of his very ordinary children but sometimes His children don’t know HOW to pray. Even Jesus’ disciples, who walked and talked with Jesus, had to learn how to pray.

This book (and the Lord, Teach Us To Pray curriculum) will help you to learn how to pray, but prayer can’t be learned just by listening to a teacher or reading about it in a book. To learn to pray, we need two things. We need a heart that wants to learn to pray, and we need the Lord. Only God can give us a heart that wants to pray and only God can really teach us how to pray.

**PRAYER POEM:**

Faith asks no signal from the skies,  
To show that prayers accepted rise,
Our Priest is in His holy place,
And answers from the throne of grace.

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees,
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, It shall be done!

—Charles Wesley

PRAYER STORY:
David Brainerd, missionary to the Susquehanna, Delaware, and Stockbridge Indians, died in 1747 at the age of 29. His ministry was marked by much prayer. He often spent whole days alone in the woods praying for the souls of the Indians. Sometimes, he would pray so earnestly that he was covered in sweat.

He could not speak the Indian languages so he was completely dependent on God to reach the lost Indians. Brainerd knew that if the Indians would be saved, it would be through a remarkable work of the Holy Spirit. He prayed that the Holy Spirit would so work through him that the Indians would not be able to turn away from the gospel.

Once Brainerd’s sermon to the Indians was interpreted by an Indian who was so drunk that he could hardly stand up. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, dozens of Indians were saved through that sermon.

POINTS TO PONDER:
“Good praying is more easily caught than taught.”
—D.A. Carson from A Call to Spiritual Reformation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1982).

“When we confess that we never get answers to our prayers, we are condemning not God, or His promises, or the power of prayer, but ourselves.”
DAY 1

READ: The Lesson Summary
READ: John 11:38-44

QUESTIONS:
- What does verse 38 tell you about Jesus’ heart for His people?
- What was Martha’s response to Jesus’ instruction to take away the stone?
- Verse 40 has a condition (“if”). What is the condition? What is the result of fulfilling the condition?
- What act of faith did Mary and Martha and the crowd show?
- In his prayer, Jesus thanked God—“I thank you that you have heard me.” What does this show you about Jesus? [He depended on the Father; He responded to life situations with prayer]
- What expression of faith does Jesus’ prayer contain?
- How was God’s glory shown in this passage?
- If Jesus, the Son of God, prayed to God the Father what does this tell us of our need for God and for prayer?

PRAY: (See suggestions in the Introduction.)

(Remember to check the ADDITIONAL IDEAS at the end.)

DAY 2

READ: Psalm 18:6-19

QUESTIONS:
- What was David’s situation? (See verses 1-5.)
- What was David feeling? How do you think that affected the way he prayed?
- How does David describe God’s response to his prayer? What does this tell you about God?
- What do you think David is saying about God by describing how much energy God displayed in His rescue?
- Why did God rescue David?
- What does this psalm tell you about God’s protection of His children and His response to their prayers?
PRAY: (See suggestions in the Introduction.)

**DAY 3**

READ: 2 Chronicles 20:1-12

QUESTIONS:
- What was King Jehoshaphat’s first response to news that a great army of enemies was marching toward him? What was his second response? Which response could he not control? Which response could he control?
- What was Jehoshaphat’s view of God? [Powerful; promise-keeping, faithful]
- What confidence did Jehoshaphat have that God would hear his prayer and deliver His people? (See verse 9.)
- What was Jehoshaphat’s view of himself and of Israel?
- What did Jehoshaphat ask God to do?
- What confession did Jehoshaphat make? (See verse 12.)
- What does verse 12 tell you about Jehoshaphat’s heart attitude?

(Suggestion: Read the rest of the story to see God’s amazing answer to Jehoshaphat’s prayer!)

PRAY: (See suggestions in the Introduction.)

**DAY 4**

READ: Psalm 84

QUESTIONS:
- What does the psalmist ask of God in this prayer?
- What can you tell about the psalmist’s heart attitude and his relationship with God from this prayer?
- On what does the psalmist base his confidence in God’s willingness to answer him? (Read carefully; there are at least 12 reasons for his confidence.)
- What reasons do you have for confidence that God will hear your prayers?
PRAY: (See suggestions in the Introduction.)

READ: Psalm 31:1-3, 21-22
(If your children can follow it, read the whole psalm.)

QUESTIONS:
- How do you think David would have said the first two verses? (What emotions would his voice have shown?)
- How does David describe God in verses 1-3? What does this tell you about God?
- What reason does David give God in verse 3 for leading and guiding him? What does this mean?
- What is David remembering in verse 21?
- What does David mean when he says, “I am cut off from your sight”? What did David think when he was being attacked? Was it true that God did not see or care what was happening to David?
- What did God do for David when he was being attacked? Why is David remembering this in this prayer?
- What does this tell you about trusting in our feelings? What should we do instead?

PRAY: (See suggestions in the Introduction.)

FAMILY NIGHT DEVOTIONAL AND ACTIVITY:

READ: Psalm 34
(You may want to take turns reading each paragraph.)

QUESTIONS:
- What does this psalm say about prayer?
- How does this psalm contrast the righteous and the wicked? How does God respond to each?
- What does this psalm say about God?
- Choose a favorite verse from this psalm and explain it.
**PRAY:** (See suggestions in the Introduction.)
Each person can use his or her chosen verse from Psalm 34 as a prayer topic.

**ACTIVITY:**
Talk about answers to prayer that your family has seen in your own lives and in the lives of other ordinary Christians.

Go as a family to visit someone in the hospital or an elderly person. Each person can share a verse from Psalm 34 with the person and pray with him. You may want to bring along a special treat!

**ADDITIONAL IDEAS:**
- Work on memorizing the Key Verse. You may want to make a verse card.
- Read and discuss the poem. Work on memorizing it.
- Read *God Knows My Size* by Harvey Yoder (Berlin, Ohio: TGS International, 1999).
- Write your own prayer psalm.
- Participate in a prayer meeting.
- Start using the following FAMILY CHART OF PRAYERS AND ANSWERS.

**PARENT RESOURCES:**

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FAMILY CHART OF PRAYERS AND ANSWERS
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