

Keys to Succeed: Prayer, Preparation & Partnership

<< **Teacher:** This page is the first part of a two part lesson. We cover prayer in this lesson. Bible Study (“Preparation”) and Christian fellowship (“Partnership”) will come in the next session >>

Jesus gave a very special invitation to all who would ‘hear’ Him: come, learn, and share His ‘yoke’ and you will find ‘rest’ (<< Have a student read>> Mat 11:28-30.) <<Ask: do you know what a yoke is? Jesus said it was “his yoke”. That means he is carrying the other ‘half’ (like the two-headed yokes used on oxen). He wants us to share the ‘load’ with him. Often a young, inexperienced ox was paired with an older one so the older could lead the younger.>>

He wasn’t asking much (“my yoke is easy, my burden light”) but these things are necessary if you want to succeed in your new spiritual journey. The way to do this is to come to Jesus (in **prayer**), learn of Jesus (through **Bible study**), and share the experience of Jesus with others who love Him, too (through fellowship at a **church**.) In this and the next lesson we are going to reflect on a few thoughts about each of these. By no means can we cover all that you will want to know about them in this short time so please continue your study as you grow in Christ.



Prayer (Just “talk it over”)



In our first lesson we discussed how important it is for you to win the battles, to run well the race, until your crown is received. And Paul admitted it can be a real challenge at times. Yet, James tells us we should be “joyful” because of the benefits of “testing” [<< Teacher should read >> James 1:2-4].

<< Discuss “temptations” here as being trials or tests., Show that ‘sinful temptation’ is a product of unclean ‘lusts’ and should be eradicated from our lives (read v.13-15) >> But what if it sometimes ‘just doesn’t make sense’? In the next verse, James says, “Ask God”!! [v.5] <<This scripture says

that we must believe that God will answer. But we need to also accept the answer he gives us. Ask the students what they think causes a person to be ‘unstable’ in their faith and relationship with God>>

The simplest way to describe prayer is “having a talk with God” (should be no different than any other conversation you’ve ever had.) The problem for most people is - they do all the talking! The Lord wants to hear us, but He also wants us to hear Him. You can put it this way: **prayer requires pause**!! (Take a look at these two passages <<Have different students each read one of these>> Psa 4:4 & Psa 46:10) Now, listen to this promise, “Then thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.” [Isa 58:9<<Do not read>>] Let God speak: sometimes through His scriptures, sometimes through His servants, and sometimes even with His voice (either into your heart, but can also be into your ear!) <<Discuss whether God can speak to us today in the same clear, sometimes audible ways he spoke to the faithful in the Bible (If He has not changed, then why would his ways of speaking to us?)>>

Prayer also requires praise, petition, and purpose. <<Teacher should read now Mat 6:5-8>> After telling his listeners to avoid praying as a pretense, for any reason but a right one [Mat 6:5-6] and to not try impressing God with the ‘quality’ of our prayer [v.7-8] Jesus gave us a ‘model’ that has popularly become known as “The Lord’s Prayer.” [v.9-13] <<Note: Jesus did not say “repeat these words”...He said, ‘pray something like this’.” [this does not contradict what Jesus says in Luke 11:2. Here the disciples wanted to know how to pray and Jesus gave them this example. However, it is perfectly fine (when at a loss of anything else to say) to recite this very good prayer.] You can also suggest that many of the Psalms are also excellent prayers, and reading or reciting them may also be a good source of comfort or encouragement >>

Let’s examine its three parts: <<Have students join you in reciting/reading Mat 6:9,10 now>>



We **praise** the Lord by acknowledging that, though he is a ‘Father’ to us, we still respect his majestic throne (being in heaven), that His name (reputation) is ‘holy’, that His kingdom (rule) is coming, and therefore His will (commands/wants) should be obeyed. [v.9-10 ; see also <<Have different students read each of these>> Galatians 4:6 & Psalms 29:2]

<<Now recite or read together Mat 6:11-13a (ending with “...deliver us from evil”)>>



Petition is when we ask the Lord for help (for ourselves or for others.) In this prayer it is for our daily needs, for forgiveness (and help in forgiving), and to be victorious over sin. That pretty much covers it for most of us! [v.11-13a] But something else may come up. The important thing is to not worry, but instead ‘worship’ and ‘give it up’ [<<teacher should read these without comments >> see 1Pe 5:6,7 & Phil 4:4,6]



together>>]

And the **purpose** for all of this? Well, of course we get our blessing [Phil 4:7 <<Have class read this out loud together...then explain to them that “hearts” are our emotions and “minds” are our thoughts>>] but it must never be forgotten that we are the Lord’s and the ‘glory’ belongs to Him [Mat 6:13b <<again, whole class reads/recites last part of prayer

Consider this promise from Jesus about answered prayer, but especially why these prayers are answered [Jn 14:13,14 <<teacher read this. Remind your students that to do something in the Lord's name is not just mentioning his 'name'. It actually means to do it in His authority with respect to His sovereignty (lordship). That's why not everyone who supposedly does something in the name of Jesus is truly representing Him (see Mat 7:21-23 if there is enough time>>]

Everything good in our life should be for the one purpose: to honor our gracious Father and to direct others to Him [see Mt 5:16.<<recite this popular verse...>>"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is heaven." Suggest to the students that this would be a good verse to memorize. Then recite Lk 11:9 "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be open to you."]

So, even though Jesus tells us to **ask - seek - knock** [Luke 11:9] and our needs will be met, there are reasons that some of our prayers may not get answered (at least not 'when' and in the 'way' we want them answered.) Someone said once, "God always answers prayer: yes, no, or wait awhile." That's a bit simple, but does contain a lot of truth. Consider these passages on conditions for answered prayer and let them serve as a guideline as you spend your time in conversation with God:

<<Teacher: If your time is running out you may not be able to read these first three scriptures. Just 'assign' them as 'homework' but do read the notes beside them. But do go over carefully 2 Chr 7:14>>



- John 15: 7 You must be 'alive' in Christ, living in His word.
- 1 John 3:22 Do what he has 'commanded' but also what may please Him.
- James 4:3 Don't "self-indulge" - be sure it is a 'need', not just a 'greed.'
- 2 Chronicles 7:14 A very well known passage calling for national repentance, consider it also as a guideline for personal prayer, telling us to come in humility, communicate your need but also yearn for an audience with God, ready to abandon anything he reveals as offensive. Do this and the Lord promises that He will hear, forgive, and heal.

A final passage (though the Bible is filled with scriptures on prayer) gives us special comfort, especially in times of urgent need. We sometimes wonder, when so much is going wrong, 'How is God ever going to get this sorted out in time?' A minister's wife had prayed over her family's financial crisis. It was such a pleading prayer that, when she found a check in her mailbox immediately after for the amount needed but postmarked days before, she wondered if it could even be counted as the answer to her specific prayer. But then she read in Isaiah 65:24 that God will sometimes get started on the answer long before our asking. He knows our need - but tell him anyway!! <<Have one of the students read this last passage>>

<<There are many scriptures in this lesson that would be a special help if they were memorized but I highly recommend John 15:7 as the first, then 2 Chr 7:14 (because of its many important parts) Remind your class that this is an important part of the discipling experience by reciting Psa 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee."]