

Lord of Our Prayers



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 53:12; John 14:12-14; Rom. 8:15, 18, 34; Gal. 4:5, 6; Eph. 1:5; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6, 12:24.*

Memory Text: “‘And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son’ ” (*John 14:13, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Those who choose to live under the lordship of Christ are called to follow the Master in a life of prayer.

The life of our Lord. Christ's life was a life of prayer. Jesus made prayer a top priority. Mark records that “in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (*Mark 1:35, NKJV*). Luke testifies that Jesus “went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (*Luke 6:12, NKJV*). “No other life was ever so crowded with labor and responsibility as was that of Jesus; yet how often He was found in prayer!”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 362.

If we follow the life and teachings of Jesus, we, too, will devote ourselves to prayer, and we will learn from the example of our Lord. Prayer is the heart and soul of the Christian life. We would be spiritually dead without it.

When we pray, let us address our prayers to our heavenly Father. Let us pray in Jesus' name. Let us pray according to His will. Let us join our Lord in the sacred work of intercession.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 6.*

Praying to Our Heavenly Father

In His personal communion with heaven, Jesus addressed God as “Father” (*John 17:1*), “Holy Father” (*John 17:11*), and “righteous Father” (*John 17:25*). Even the brief prayer of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:21 is addressed to “Father, Lord of heaven and earth.” During His agony in Gethsemane, Jesus addressed the heavenly Father using the Aramaic term *Abba* (*Mark 14:36*), an endearing name connoting the idea of “my father.” The early Christians apparently followed His example, at least on certain occasions (*see Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6*).

Look up the following Old Testament texts. How do they reveal the kind of relationship God sought for His people, and how does the image of “Father” fit in? *Deut. 1:31, 32:6, Ps. 103:13, Prov. 3:12, Isa. 63:16, Mal. 2:10.*

Ideally, a father is to be someone who is loving, caring, protecting, someone whom a child can love, trust, and obey.

Then there’s also the biblical notion of adoption, that as followers of Christ we have been “adopted” into the Father’s household (*see Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:5, Eph. 1:5*). In Roman times, when a son was adopted, he received all the legal rights and privileges that came with the new family. As followers of Christ, we receive the fullness of salvation that comes from being the children of God. “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (*1 John 3:1, RSV*).

Thus, praying the name *Father* should give us comfort, hope, and joy.

Of course, many earthly fathers have been the opposite of what a father should be. What advice can you give to someone for whom the idea of father brings painful memories? How can you help him or her experience the Father’s love?

Key Text: *1 Thessalonians 5:17*

Teachers Aims:

1. To show how we should make prayer our top priority.
2. To understand why we should pray in Jesus' name.
3. To discuss the purpose of prayer.

Lesson Outline:

I. Putting God First (*Mark 1:35*).

- A. Why should we begin each day with prayer?
- B. How else can we make prayer a part of our daily life?
- C. Why is prayer vital to spiritual growth?

II. Praying in Jesus' Name (*John 15:16*).

- A. Why should we pray in Jesus' name?
- B. Because we claim Christ's righteousness, we may come "boldly" to God. What does it mean to come boldly to Him?
- C. How does praying in Jesus' name remind us to live in His name?

III. The Purpose of Prayer (*John 15:4-7*).

- A. How does prayer help us stay attached to the Vine?
- B. How will obeying Christ's command to love others affect our prayers?
- C. If we remain in Christ and His words remain in us, what types of things will we ask for? How does the answer to this question help us understand Christ's words, " 'Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you' " (*vs. 7, NIV*)?

Summary: As we pray in Jesus' name, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, and we receive power to live each day in His name. Continual prayer will help us do God's will.

COMMENTARY

Lord of Our Prayers.

Prayer is talking to God as to a friend. There are many books about prayer, but there are not many books about talking to a friend. When we get together to chat with a good friend, the conversation just happens naturally. We do not need a formula to follow. This suggests certain principles that might assist us as we reflect upon prayer.

The most important principle regarding prayer concerns the Person with whom we are talking. God is not just an authority figure who tells us what to do, and then we do it. Rather, He is our Father, our Friend, and our Creator. As such, He wishes to be in an ongoing relationship with us. Therefore, we do not just share information and events with Him. We should talk with Him about our

Praying in Jesus' Name

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (*1 Tim. 2:5, NKJV*).

In John 14:12-14 Jesus tells us that we should ask for things in His name. That is, what we request from the Father, we should request in the name of Jesus. What does this mean? So often, when we pray, we pray to the Father, and then we often, in our prayer, end with something to the effect, “And we ask these things in Jesus’ name.” What is implied with these words?

What are the following texts saying to us that can help us better understand the idea of praying to the Father in Jesus’ name? *Isa. 53:12, Rom. 8:34, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 8:6, 12:24.*

By praying in Jesus’ name, we are declaring before ourselves, before other humans, and even before the universe (*see 1 Cor. 4:9*) that we, personally, acknowledge the authority and power of Jesus Christ in our lives. By praying in His name we verbalize our personal acceptance of Him as our Savior, our Redeemer, as the One who died for our sins and the One through whom we have complete access to the Father (*see Heb. 8:1*). By praying in the name of Jesus, we can claim the promises of God that we have in and through Him. By praying in the name of Jesus, we are openly expressing our faith in Him as the One who has closed the gap caused by sin between heaven and earth, the One through whom we, as sinners, have been reconciled to our heavenly Father. “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (*2 Cor. 5:18, 19*).

By praying in Jesus’ name, we acknowledge Him and what He has done for us. At the same time, what obligations does that place on us—we who pray in His name—regarding how we live, how we speak, and how we treat others?

relationships, our feelings, our wishes, and our desires. We converse with acquaintances on a surface level. We converse with friends on deeper levels. If prayer is talking to God as we would to a friend, then we can converse with Him on the deepest of all levels. Someone might object by saying God already knows what we are thinking. But often we do not know our thoughts until we form them into words. That being the case, God cannot respond to our inner world until we do so.

We might converse at length with a person we meet on a bus or airplane. Often, we will never see that person again. In contrast, a friend is someone with whom we share many conversations about the deeper issues of our life. We may meet with that person only occasionally, but the trust and the level of sharing remain deep. If, however, we agree to become partners in a project, it is likely we will converse daily. We will ask for each other's opinions. We will bounce ideas off each other. We will make requests of each other. Likewise, God has invited us to partner with Him in the project of living. We cannot succeed in this project unless we are in daily communication with Him. We do not need a formula for how to do it. We simply need to think differently about prayer.

Prayer is not asking for what we want. It is not telling God about what has happened to us. It is not unburdening our hearts to Him so we feel good. All these may happen in prayer, but they are not prayer. Prayer is talking to God as to a friend as we work out the project of living the kind of life He has designed for us to live.

Sabbath's study quotes Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages*, page 362, about how Jesus' life was filled with labor and responsibility; yet, He often was found in prayer. The real issue for Jesus, and for us, is how to combine the daily life of labor with the spiritual life of prayer. Could it be that Jesus saw His life as a partnership with God? If so, then prayer was not just His top priority, the first thing He did before He did anything else. It was an all-pervading necessity of life. He often was found intentionally praying; but it also is true that He was always in prayer.

If prayer is a conversation with a friend, it needs to be just that, not a monologue. If someone dominates a conversation and never asks about you, there is little likelihood a friendship will develop. With God, we can view prayer as primarily a matter of discovering God's will. We have a problem, and we want to know God's will for us in the matter. Sometimes we receive a clear understanding of what God wants us to do. Other times, when God's will is not clear, we have to pray a prayer of resignation—"If it be Your will." In such matters, God is the only One who speaks, and what He says is all that matters. However, this concept of prayer leads to boredom and resentment. We are not partners with God.

Another way we can view prayer is to see it as our opportunity to tell God about our needs and ask Him to solve our problems. We

Praying According to the Father’s Will

(Mark 14:36; John 6:38; 1 John 5:14, 15).

Jesus declared, “ ‘For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me’ ” (John 6:38, NKJV). Even in His prayers, Jesus demonstrated His commitment to yield His own will to the will of His Father. When we pray, there are certain requests we can know for certain are in harmony with the Father’s will. For example, when we pray for salvation, Jesus assures us in John 3:16 that we are praying in accordance with the Father’s will.

List three other requests we can make with full assurance that we are praying in accordance with the Father’s will.

Request	Scriptural Support
1	
2	
3	

In other situations, it may be more difficult to determine the Father’s will. For example, have you ever prayed for someone who is sick? How do you know the Father’s will for that individual? We are told to pray for the sick and to trust that God will bring healing. But we do not know the way in which healing will come, nor do we know God’s timing. Should we then shrink back from praying for those who are feeble and weak? No! “Let your prayer include this thought: ‘Lord, Thou knowest every secret of the soul. Thou art acquainted with these persons; for Jesus, their advocate, gave His life for them. He loves them better than we possibly can. If, therefore, it is for Thy glory and the good of these afflicted ones to raise them up to health, we ask Thee in the name of Jesus, that health may be given them at this time.’ ” —Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 375.

Go back and read Jesus’ prayer in Mark 14:36. Notice the sequence of thought: (1) His word *Abba* expresses the close relationship with His Father. (2) He acknowledges the Lord’s power. (3) He expresses His own personal desire. (4) He surrenders His own personal desire to the Father. How does this serve as a model for our own prayers? Is there any prayer you need to pray right now that reflects this same pattern? Why not get on your knees, even now, and pray it in the will of God?

can spend our time in prayer asking God for miracles in each situation. In this concept of prayer, we are the only ones who speak, and what we say is all that matters. God may well work some miracles in the areas we have prayed about, but His response is not part of what happens in prayer.

A fulfilling prayer life is one where God is our Friend and Partner. Our conversations involve mutual sharing at the deepest levels. Both what we say and what God says are essential to the communication process.

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Matthew 6:9-13, John 14:12-14.*

1 When Jesus is Lord of our lives, one of the ways we communicate with Him—and He with us—is through prayer. For many, prayer begins with the words “Dear Jesus,” followed by a list of favors that ends with the words “in Jesus’ name, Amen.” What is the difference between that and a child’s letter to Santa Claus? What are some better human examples of what has been called the “Privilege of Prayer”? (See Ellen G. White, in *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.)

2 Our modern society is obsessed with results. We not only want Internet access, we want it faster. We not only want solutions, we want them now. “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend,” wrote Ellen G. White. (See *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.) Communication with a friend is not primarily about getting answers, it is about being heard. What assurances do you have that God hears you when you pray? Is that enough to ensure a satisfactory prayer life? Explain.

3 When God adopted us into His family, He placed us in a special relationship with Him. How does the love and care of an earthly parent reveal something of God’s love for His children? How can that knowledge be translated into our understanding of prayer?

4 By praying in Jesus’ name, we identify our needs and interests with Him and His kingdom. Although we often pray according to our own needs and interests, when Jesus is Lord of our lives, we make our desires secondary to God’s perfect will. Share briefly an experience when God answered your prayers differently (but better) from what you had in mind when you prayed.

Praying for Others

It is impossible to live under the lordship of Christ and pray only for yourself. When Jesus Christ is Lord of your prayers, you will join Him in interceding for others. Jesus prayed for groups of people (see *John 17:9, 20*) and also for individuals (see *Luke 22:31, 32*). Several Greek verbs are used in the New Testament to describe the prayers of Jesus. One such verb means “to beg.” This is the verb used in *Luke 22:32* to describe the prayer of intercession that Jesus offered on Simon Peter’s behalf. “Satan could do nothing against the all-powerful intercession of Christ. And the prayer that Christ offered for Peter He offers in behalf of all who are humble and contrite in heart.”—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 91.

How do the following texts help us understand why we should pray for others? *Jer. 29:7; Mark 9:29; Rom. 15:30, 31; Phil. 1:9, 10; James 5:16.*

Many times we are asked to pray for others when they are facing difficulties and trials. Lists are read in church of people who “need our prayers.” On occasion, we may be tempted to feel overwhelmed because there are so many people on our prayer list. Nevertheless, there are too many mandates and examples in the Bible of God’s faithful servants praying for others. We can’t neglect doing our part, as well. There’s a power in prayer that only those who pray in the Spirit and in truth can experience.

In fact, even science is beginning to understand more about the power of prayer. Though the issue is still debated, studies have been done that have convinced many “secular” scientists and doctors that praying for sick people does, indeed, help the sick get better—a fact that from their “scientific” perspective does not make sense. All of this simply shows how prayer is something beyond science.

What are some of the things Satan throws before our minds to make us think our prayers are not needed? Or don’t matter? What can you do to reject those thoughts and make a personal commitment to pray for others in need?

Witnessing

Prayer is a learned part of the lives of men and women, and it is a way in which the life of the Spirit within us is fed.

Too often we try to bring God down to our level in prayer, but prayer is designed to lift us up. We treat God as an ATM machine, simply going to Him when we are in need of something. God, however, invites us to come boldly before His throne with Jesus by our side and the Holy Spirit offering prayer on our behalf, for we do not even know how we should pray (*Rom. 8:26*).

We would do well to spend more time listening in prayer or, at least, less time talking. There is an adage that says, “Pray at all times. Use words when necessary.”

Job was a righteous man, but he also talked a lot. When God addressed him, He had to put Job in check. But the really significant part of Job’s story is that his losses were restored *when he prayed for his friends* (*Job 42:10, NIV*).

If Jesus is interceding on our behalf in heaven, how much more should it be the business of those who call themselves Christians to be actively engaged in intercessory prayer?

You may have limitless opportunities to witness each day, but if your witness is not set on a solid foundation of intercessory prayer, there will be no harvest to reap. We plant the seeds, but conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray for our friends *now* and for those with whom we come in contact on an ongoing basis.

Prayer Examples

The Bible is filled with examples of powerful prayers uttered by God’s people. None of these folk were perfect, none of their lives sinless, and none had any righteousness in and of themselves to commend them to God. All of them were—as all of us are—sinners in need of divine grace, in need of the incense of Christ’s righteousness to mingle with our prayers and make them acceptable to a holy God (*see Rev. 8:3*). Nevertheless, in their great need, in their realization of who they were and who God was, they prayed to their Creator, their Redeemer, their heavenly Father.

Prayer is an expression of our realization that we can’t do it ourselves, that there are forces beyond our control, and that we are beings dependent upon something greater than what we ourselves or what our material world could provide for us.

Below are referenced a few great prayers depicted in the Bible. As much as time allows, read each prayer (or pick one or two), and write down what thoughts come to you about what makes these prayers so powerful. As you read, ask yourself: *What can I learn from these prayers that can help my prayer life be more effective?*

1 Kings 8:15-61

Psalm 51

Dan. 9:4-19

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: The youngest child learns to get attention from its parents by calling them *Da Da* or *Ma Ma*. Most parents then eagerly respond to the child's needs. What did you call your parents? How did they respond, positively or negatively? Our heavenly Father longs for us to call on Him. We can address Him in lofty terms or deep, tender endearment (*see Rom. 8:15*). How has He answered your prayers? Share what you have learned about God through His responses to your prayers.

Thought Questions:

① “No other life was ever so crowded with labor and responsibility as was that of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 362. How does this statement compare with your life? Paul tells us “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (*Rom. 8:18, NIV*). How does God help us order our priorities so we get the quality time with Him we so desperately need? Start a prayer journal where you record the blessings God reveals to you during your private prayer time.

② Plans and agendas look great on paper one day and inadequate and ineffective the next. How does this compare with Jesus' prayer and plans for us as recorded in John 14? Reread this chapter with your spouse or in class. What gift does Jesus want to give us that will help us not to be troubled? Why is it important that this gift is not just in the future but is an everyday reality as we allow His work in our lives?

Application Question:

It always is affirming when a friend speaks on your behalf. The Bible tells us Jesus is “interceding” for us in the very throne room of the universe (*Rom. 8:34, NIV*). Make a list of at least five friends, neighbors, and work associates who have needs or challenges you could present to God for His intervention. Record their names and the answers to prayer received. As they recognize positive things happening in their lives, be prepared to share your knowledge about the Source of those good things.

Further Study: Perseverance in prayer. Read “The Privilege of Prayer” in *Steps to Christ*. Note what new insights impress you in the context of this week’s study.

Note: Various models for prayer have been helpful for Christians. The best-known model is the Lord’s Prayer. It is possible to recite this prayer in fewer than 60 seconds. However, if you use the main movements of this prayer as an outline for prayer, your prayer time can be expanded to last for half an hour, an hour, or even all night.

The earthly sanctuary is also a helpful model for prayer, including praise, confession, cleansing, prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, empowerment through God’s Word, intercession, and intimate communion with the Lord before the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ The apostle Paul encourages believers to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). What do you think that means? How can we pray “without ceasing”?
- ❷ Share in class some personal experiences with prayer. You can talk about dramatic answers to prayer or about what prayer does for you, or how you understand how prayer works. What can you share that can help edify and encourage class members in their own prayer life?
- ❸ Is there anyone whom you, as a class, know needs prayer? Why not stop everything and, right now, pray as a group for this person? Afterward, discuss the experience of praying as a group as opposed to praying individually.
- ❹ How can you help your children, or children within your circle of influence, to experience a meaningful prayer experience with their heavenly Father?