

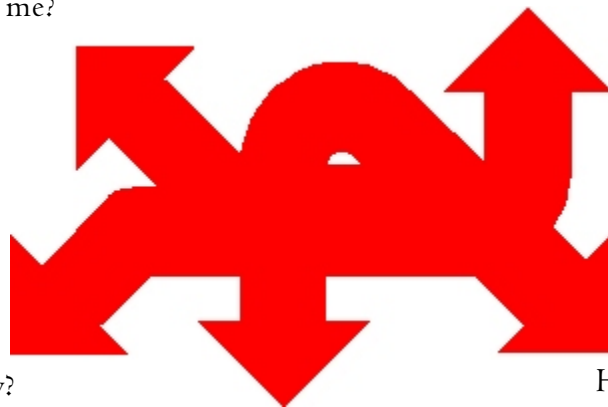
PRAYER

as it Was Meant to Be



Will God hear me?

Will God answer?



When should I pray?

For what should I pray?

How to lead
public prayer?

Prayer *As It Was Meant To Be*

by A. L. Parr

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Dedicated to
Ed Brady & Edwin Davis
elders who saw the timeliness of this study
and encouraged the preparation
of this study guide.

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Preface

In a country music song in the 1950's and 1960's a little boy, being tucked into bed by his father at the end of their day together, said, "Daddy, today you've taught me how to throw a ball, ride a bike and catch a fish; now will you teach me how to pray?" The father turned and left the room in tears because he had "forgotten how to pray."

New Christians often ask sincere questions about prayer. What is prayer? Should we pray to the Father or to Jesus? What do *you* visualize in your mind as *you* pray? What should we say in prayer? Why should we pray?

These simple questions are basic to our being comfortable in our efforts to express our innermost concerns to our Creator, Savior and Judge, and it is not only children and young Christians who want to know the answers. Many grown and otherwise mature saints decline when asked to lead others in public prayer. They simply are not comfortable with the thought of speaking to God in the hearing of others.

One of the most common explanations for this discomfort is ignorance. People simply don't know how to pray — or at least they are not certain that they know how to pray "according to His will" (I John 5:14). At least in recent decades there has been comparatively little teaching done on the subject of prayer — other than to preach that Christians must pray obediently. Sincere saints who make every effort to meet with the rest of the church to worship Almighty God, who are eager to lend a hand when the physical work needs to be done around the property or in the homes of brothers and sisters, will be glad to be taught more specifically just what is the will of God in our prayers.

Our brother Peter wrote, "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). In our knowledge of Jesus we have from God everything that we need in order to live in godliness and to attain unto eternal life. That being the case — and since prayer is an aspect of godliness (Psalm 32:6) — we can learn from Jesus (Him that hath called us — Matthew 11:28-30) how to pray.

Even among the apostles of Jesus there was the lack of proper knowledge — or at least the confidence of knowledge — of how to pray. "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). It's not a sin not to know how to pray. The disciples of John needed to be taught, and the first disciples of Jesus needed to be taught.

This study is written for those who have the faith and desire of the honest souls who first heard Jesus preach and began to follow him — for those who are still today beseeching, "Lord, teach us to pray."

A. L. Parr
Jacksonville, Texas
April, 2002

Lesson 1

A SACRED PRIVILEGE

- I. Prayer is a sacred privilege of the children of God. It is an opportunity to commune with God.
- II. Righteous men through the ages have turned to God in prayer, in times both of joy and of grief.
 - A. In the Old Testament
 - 1. Abraham — Gen. 18:17-33
 - 2. Moses — Ex. 32:30-32
 - 3. David — Psa. 51
 - 4. Elijah — I Kgs. 18:36-39
 - 5. Jeremiah — Jer. 32:16-25
 - 6. Nehemiah — Neh. 1:1-11
 - B. Jesus
 - 1. At His baptism, the beginning of His life's work — Lk. 3:21
 - 2. In the evening — Matt. 14:23
 - 3. In the early morning — Mk. 1:25
 - 4. After the last supper, the end of His life's work — Jn. 17:1-26
 - C. In the Early Church as Well
 - 1. Jerusalem church — Ac. 2:42
 - 2. Peter — Ac. 10:9
 - 3. Jerusalem church — Ac. 12:12
 - 4. Paul & Silas — Ac. 16:25

We kneel, how weak!
We rise, how full of power!
-”Archbishop” Trent

- III. Though prayer is sacred to the child of God, some have used it for wrong purposes:
 - A. So They May Fulfill Their Lusts — Jas. 4:3
 - B. For Show — Lk. 18:9-14 (Pharisee Exalted Himself)
 - C. Pretense, “Outward Showing, Cloke” — Matt. 23:14
- IV. Public prayer is powerful under the right circumstances.
 - A. God Hears — I Jn. 5:13-14
 - B. God Heals — Jas. 5:15-18
 - C. So What are Those “Right Circumstances”?

Learn to entwine with your prayers the small cares, the trifling sorrows, the little wants of daily life. Whatever affects you — be it a changed look, an altered tone, an unkind word, a wrong, a wound, a demand you cannot meet, a sorrow you cannot disclose — turn it into prayer and send it up to God. Disclosures you may not make to man, you can make to the Lord. Men may be too little for your great matters; God is not too great for your small ones. Only give yourself to prayer, whatever be the occasion that calls for it.

-Anonymous

Lesson 2
LEARNING FROM JESUS HOW TO PRAY
(Part 1)

In Lk. 11:1 the Disciples, Seeing Jesus Pray, Asked Him to Teach Them. We Can Also Learn from Him How to Pray.

- I. The model prayer (Matt. 6:9-15)
 - A. **This is not “the *Lord's* prayer” (Jn. 17)**
 - B. We cannot pray all of this today
 1. Matt. 6:7 — Don’t use vain repetitions; yet those who recite this prayer often do just that.
 2. Matt. 6:9 (“after this MANNER”) — What Jesus spoke is a pattern or model for prayer, not intended to be recited verbatim.
 3. Matt. 6:10 — Prayer for the coming of the kingdom today is superfluous because the kingdom is now here.
 - a. Matt. 16:18, 19
 - b. Col. 1:13
 - c. I Thess. 1:1 and 2:12
 - d. Heb. 12:28
 - e. Rev. 1:9
 - C. Taught them to ***HALLOW*** the name of the Father.
 1. Greek *hagiazō* means to sanctify, set apart
 2. This is the reason many use the solemn style
 3. In Lk. 18:11 did the Pharisee “hallow” God?
 4. When we speak to our Father in such a manner as to bring him down to our level, we cease to “hallow” his name!
 - D. The petitions of the model prayer:
 1. “Give us this day our ***daily*** bread” (sustenance). We need to ask for his blessings each day; & He will give them if we serve him on the same schedule.
 - a. Lk. 9:23 — we are to take up our cross ***daily!***

- b. Acts 2:46 — together in service daily
 - c. Acts 5:42 — taught daily
 - d. Acts 16:5 — increased in number daily
2. “Forgive us ... as we forgive.”
 - a. I Jn. 1:9 — Forgiveness is available... if we confess our sins to God.
 - b. Lk. 17:3, 4 — Do we forgive others?
 3. “Lead us not into temptation.”
 - a. Jas. 1:13-15 — God doesn't tempt us himself, but allows us to be tempted when we are drawn away from him by our own lust-driven decisions.
 - b. We need to pray that God will providentially prohibit us from being led into situations that could arouse lust and result in temptation.
 4. “Deliver us from evil.” Far from being a tempter, God is a deliverer.
 - a. Col. 1:13 — delivered from the power of darkness
 - b. I Thess. 1:10 — delivered us from the wrath to come
 - c. II Tim. 3:11, 12 — As He delivered Paul physically, the Lord will deliver us spiritually, though we may suffer first.

Reconciliation is a necessary prelude to
 worship and a condition of effective
 prayer. -Lewis MacLachlan

Lesson 3

LEARNING FROM JESUS HOW TO PRAY

(Part 2)

- I. The Lord's Prayer For Himself On The Cross (Matt. 27; Mk. 15; Lk. 23; Jn. 19)
 - A. a prayer of concern: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34)
 - B. a prayer of crisis: "*Eli, Eli, lamasabacthani?*" (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34)
 - C. a prayer of conquest: "it is finished" (Jn. 19:30) — Jesus was addressing the Father regarding the work he had been sent to do.
 - D. a prayer of confidence: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Lk. 23:46; Mt. 27:50; Mk. 15:37)
- II. The Lord's Prayer For Others (John 17)
 - A. Concern for his followers
 - 1. v. 11, 21, 24 — that they may be one
 - 2. v. 13 — that they may have joy
 - 3. v. 11, 15 — keep them from the evil
 - 4. v. 17 — sanctify them
 - 5. v. 24 — that they may behold his glory
 - 6. v. 26 — that love may be in them
 - B. Concern for all generations of followers
 - 1. v. 20 — for those yet to believe
 - 2. v. 22 — that all generations may be one
 - 3. v. 23 — that many may believe
- III. When Should We Pray?
 - A. Before undertaking any great work for God (Mk. 1:35-38; Lk. 6:12-13).
 - B. When thankful (Jn. 11:41).

When one person prays for another, the first result is that the one who prays is changed. -Lynn J. Radcliffe

- C. When facing trials or suffering.
 - 1. Matt. 26:39 — Jesus prayed for Himself
 - a. that He might be able to endure.
 - b. that He be able to accept God's will
 - 2. II Thess. 3:1-3 — Paul wanted their prayers.
 - a. that people would glorify God when the gospel is preached
 - b. that people would not persecute the preacher when the gospel is preached

IV. For What Should We Pray?

- A. We may not always know, but if we are faithful to his word, we can pray — Rom. 8:26.
- B. Leaders, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life — I Tim. 2:1-2.
- C. That love may abound — Phil. 1:9
- D. The salvation of others — Rom. 10:1
- E. Boldness to preach the word — Acts 4:29
- F. Laborers in God's vineyard of souls — Lk. 10:2
- G. That sins might be forgiven
 - 1. no authority for such in primitive obedience
 - 2. but when, as a Christian, you sin — Ac. 8:22
 - 3. when a brother sins — Jas. 5:16
 - a. if he repents — I Jn. 1:9-10; 5:16
 - b. considering ourselves — Gal. 6:1
 - 4. in your enemies
 - a. Lk. 23:34 — seek God's forgiveness
 - (1) be willing to give your own — v.43
 - (2) God forgives on repentance — 24:47
 - b. Matt. 5:44 — love your enemies & pray for their salvation

A troubled generation like ours, that makes a heavy demand on our resources, calls for prayer. -Harry Emerson Fosdick

Lesson 4
BEING QUALIFIED TO PRAY
(Part 1)

- I. God Has Identified Those Who Should Pray
- A. “God heareth not sinners” — John 9:31
1. Some have said that this man was not inspired
 - a. How do they know?

 - b. In any case, JOHN, who wrote it, WAS INSPIRED.
 2. The Bible often verifies the fact that God doesn’t hear sinners.
 - a. Proverbs 15:29; 28:9

 - b. Isa. 1:15; 59:1-2

 - c. Zechariah 7:13
 3. Effective prayer is prayed only by those who are faithful to God — Jas. 5:16b.
- B. Women may not lead men in prayer.
1. I Tim. 2:8-15 is un-arguable
 - a. “men” (v.8) is *aner*

 - b. “in like manner” (v.9)
 - (1) does not say that women pray in “modest apparel” etc.

 - (2) says that women dress in the same manner in which men pray: *i.e.* “lifting up holy hands”

 - c. See vv. 11-12. How can one person...
 - (1) “in silence with all subjection”...

 - (2) “not...to teach”...

 - (3) “not...to usurp authority”...

 - (4) “in silence”...

 - (5) ...possibly lead the other in prayer????

There is nothing that makes us love a man
so much as praying for him. - William Law

2. I Cor. 14:34-35 applies as well
 - a. “let them ask...at home” cannot possibly be construed to authorize women leading in prayer
 - b. I Timothy 2 still disqualifies her.
- II. God Has Specified the Elements of Prayer (I Jn. 5:13-14 — According To His Will)
- A. “in my name” — John 16:23b-24
 - B. “believing” — Matt. 21:22
 - C. with importunity — Lk. 18:1-8
 - D. humbly & patiently — Lk. 18:8-14
 - E. privately, sincerely, not pharisaically — Matt. 6:5-7
 - F. glorifying God — Matt. 6:8-15
 - G. with Thanksgiving — Php. 4:6; Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17-18

This is prayer in its most basic sense —
wanting nothing of the Father, except to
be with him. - Ray W. Ragsdale

Lesson 5
ACCEPTABLE PRAYER
(Part 1)

- I. IF PRAYER IS TO BE ACCEPTABLE THERE MUST BE
- A. *reverent address*
1. directed *TO* God — Lk. 11:1-4
 - a. with recognition of His holiness — Matt. 6:9b
 - b. with recognition of His power & glory — Nehemiah 9:5-38
 2. directed *THROUGH* Christ — Jn. 16:23
 - a. with respect for His being
 - b. with respect for His sacrifice
- B. *saving faith*
1. Matt. 21:22 — spoken to apostles, but
 - a. I Jn. 5:14 — “we...according to”
 - b. Jas. 5:16 — “a righteous man”
 - c. it must come from one consciously striving to serve Him scripturally
 2. I Jn. 3:22 — “We receive ... because we keep his commandments”
 - a. Matt. 19:19-20a — even the apostles were not effective in their service without prayer.
 - b. review “God heareth not sinners” on page 9.
- C. *complete subjection to God's will*
1. I Jn. 5:14 — We must speak to God things that God wishes us to speak...
 2. ...not “gimme” demands that we might pamper ourselves — Jas. 4:3
- D. *complete dependence upon God*
1. Jas. 4:3-10
 2. “Man should pray as if everything depended upon God...”
- E. *diligence in service*
1. Rom. 15:18-21
 - a. Paul preached everywhere he could...

- b. ...but he prayed first -- Rom. 10:1
 - 2. “Man should pray as if everything depended upon God, and then go out and work as if everything depended upon himself.”
- F. *importunity*, because persistent prayer is powerful
- 1. Gen. 32:24-29 — “I will not let thee go”
 - 2. Lk. 18:1-8a — “continual coming”
 - 3. I Thess. 5:17 — “without ceasing”
 - 4. Jas. 5:16 — “fervent”
- G. *thanksgiving*
- 1. Php. 4:6 — prayer...with thanksgiving
 - 2. Col. 4:2 — continue with thanksgiving
 - 3. I Thess. 5:17-18 — “in everything”

Sometimes I have so much to do I think it must be done.
 I'll work so very, very hard from morn till set of sun,
 But here is something I have found; this really doesn't pay.
 I've always found I've weaker grown if I have failed to pray.

Sometimes 'twas something for myself, sometimes it was for God,
 Sometimes it was for other folks that many steps I trod.
 But 'tis no matter who 'twas for, I truthfully must say,
 May faith and trust have smaller grown because I failed to pray.

So I am trying hard to learn that nothing's really great
 If it must take my praying time, so praying has to wait.
 It's praying makes me fit for work; it is my staff and stay,
 And work will never be the best, if I have failed to pray.

-Author Unknown

Lesson 6
ACCEPTABLE PRAYER
(Part 2)

- I. SOME THINGS HINDER OUR PRAYERS:
 - A. turning from hearing the law —Prov. 28:9
 - B. regarding iniquity in my heart (*i.e.* keeping secret sins) — Psa. 66:18
 - C. asking but not in faith — Jas. 1:5-7
 - D. vain repetitions — Matt. 6:7
 - E. lack of humility & patience — Lk. 18:8-14
- II. Is posture important? Must prayer be offered from the knees, with head bowed, or hands folded?
 - A. Submission, Reverence, & Respect are the important considerations
 - 1. Mic. 6:6 — “I ... bow myself before the high God”
 - 2. Eph. 3:14 — “I bow my knees unto the Father”
 - 3. Php. 2:10 — “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow”
 - 4. Ex. 3:5-6 — “put off thy shoes ... holy ground”
 - B. But practically every conceivable posture is approved.
 - 1. standing — Mk. 11:24
 - 2. head bowed — Lk. 8:13
 - 3. kneeling
 - a. Solomon — I Kgs. 8:54
 - b. Jesus — Lk. 22:41
 - c. Peter — Acts 9:40
 - d. Paul — Acts 20:36
 - e. the church — Acts 21:5
 - 4. lying face down — Matt. 26:39

5. sitting
 - a. Lk. 24:30 where the Greek word translated “blessed” refers to the expression of thanksgiving to God
 - b. Acts 16:24-25 — Standing was practically impossible, so they would have been sitting or lying, and their singing does not suggest the relaxation of lying.
- C. Prayer is a SPIRITUAL concern, not a PHYSICAL one. God is more concerned with the attitude of the heart than with the posture of the body.
1. Jas. 5:16 — “a righteous man”
 2. I Sam. 2:1 — the heart rejoices
 3. II Chron. 6:38 — return to God with all your heart, then pray
 4. Acts 8:22 — pray that (evil) thoughts of the heart may be forgiven
 5. And yet, posture may be a reflection of the attitude of heart — be respectful.

“IF I SHOULD DIE...”

“If I should die before I wake,” prayed young Tommy. “If I should die before I wake... If I should die...”

“Go on, Tommy,” urged his mother, “You know the rest of the prayer.”

“I’ll be back,” blurted the youngster. Scrambling to his feet, he ran into the next room. Soon he was back. Dropping to his knees, he rattled off the familiar bedtime prayer without a bobble.

Tucking little Tommy into bed, his mother issued a gentle rebuke for the interruption, insisting that he should think about what he was saying when he prayed.

“Mom, I was thinking about what I was saying,” said the boy defensively. “That’s why I had to stop. You see, I stood all of Ted’s wooden soldiers on their heads just to see how mad he’d be in the morning. If I should die before I wake, I wouldn’t want him to find them that way, so I had to go and fix them the right way.”

“You’re right, Dear,” said a proud mother, voice quivering. She thought of herself, and many other adults who should stop in the middle of their prayers and undo some wrong against another.

There are lots of things that may seem fun if you’re going to keep on living. But do you want them that way at the end of life’s few days?

Is everything all right ... if you should die before you wake?

-Joe R. Barnett

Lesson 7
ACCEPTABLE PRAYER
(Part 3)

- I. IS THE CHOICE OF PRONOUNS IMPORTANT?
- A. The question clarified: In addressing God in prayer should we say...
1. Thee, or You?
 2. Thy, or Your?
 3. Thine, or Yours?
 4. Thou, or You?
- B. The question illustrated:
1. Some say that “common pronouns” (you, your, etc.) are not inappropriate when addressing God in prayer because...
 - a. there is no distinction in the Greek language.
 - b. reverence for God is not absent when the heart is right.
 2. Others say “divine pronouns” must be used in addressing God because...
 - a. there *is* a distinction in English and since this distinction exists it must be observed.
 - b. reverence for God, or lack of it, is shown by the words we choose.
 - c. some people are offended by use of the “common pronouns.”
- C. Responses to the arguments
1. It is true that there is no distinction in the Greek words but that there is a distinction in the English words.
 - a. In the Greek the same class of pronouns is used...
 - (1) of man — Matt. 6:5-7
 - (2) of God — Matt. 6:9-13
 - b. In the KJV of the English the same class of pronouns is used...
 - (1) of God — Gen. 3:10, 12
 - (2) of a man — Gen. 3:11
 - (3) of Satan — Gen. 3:15
 - (4) of a woman — Gen. 3:16

- (5) of a sinner — Gen. 4:7
 - c. It is not true that the “common pronouns” in English fail to show respect.
 - (1) When intending to show respect to man we do not use the “solemn style.”
 - (a) Those who refer to men with “thee” and “thou” are considered to be out of the norm.
 - (b) When we address preachers, elders, governors and presidents we simply say “you” and “your”
 - (2) The respect is evident in other considerations:
 - (a) appearance (clothing, grooming, etc.) — we dress and look our best for weddings, funerals and on other “formal” occasions.
 - (b) manner (posture, body language, etc.) — soldiers stand at attention in respect to their superiors, and we wouldn’t put our feet on the desk of the stranger interviewing us for a job.
 - (c) speech (tone, volume, content, etc.) — I don’t show respect for you by talking about myself, by shouting at you or using profanity.
 - d. “reverence” is respect for the holiness of God — Matt. 6:9
 - (1) it is an attitude of the heart — “honor and respect mixed with love and awe” -Webster
 - (2) it is expressed to God privately — Matt. 6:6
 - (3) it is evident to others in our words — I Cor. 14:8-9
 - e. I Peter 4:11 — if we speak we must speak what God has spoken; but God has not spoken on this matter. Therefore the church CANNOT legislate (to say that one way is always right or wrong) in the matter. It is for each to consider on his own.
2. It is true that some are offended by the use of the “common” pronouns.
- a. No faithful Christian wants to be offensive by his choices.
 - (1) Rom. 14:21-22
 - (2) I Cor. 8:13
 - b. However, the offended should not make their choices a matter of faith. Personal choices of others must not be ridiculed.
 - (1) Rom. 14:4
 - (2) II Kgs. 5:10-12

3. It is not innately wrong to use the “solemn” pronouns, either publicly or privately.
 - a. This is the style in the Bible version common among us (I Peter 4:11).
 - b. The one praying must not violate his conscience (Rom. 14:23). If he believes that “common” pronouns do not show respect, then he fails to show respect by using them.
4. It may be wrong to use the “common” pronouns in public prayer. Since reverence for God is evident to others in our words, if there are those listening who would be offended by their use, the conscience of those listeners should not be offended.
 - a. Rom. 14:14-21
 - b. I Cor. 10:23-24 — The authorization of anything is not necessarily requirement of that thing.
 - c. Rom. 15:1-7

II. FASTING OFTEN MAY ACCOMPANY PRAYER

- A. There are many examples.
 1. When Daniel sought national forgiveness — Dan. 9:3
 2. When Nehemiah grieved — Neh. 1:4
 3. Christians may wish to join fasting & prayer — I Cor. 7:5
- B. But fasting is always personal/individual, not congregational — Matt. 6:16-18
- C. But it is not an *essential* companion to prayer — Matt. 9:14-15

If prayer does not drive us into action at some point of human need, there is something wrong with our praying.
 -Harvey and Lois Scifert

Lesson 8
GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

- I. Jesus promised that His Father would answer prayers — Matt. 7:7-11
- II. But He Doesn't Answer Every Prayer The Way We Might Like Him To.
 - A. He does not answer in accord with *our* timetable — Job 1:20-21; 42:1-17.
 - B. He may not answer in the *way* we may expect or desire — Jas. 5:17; I Kgs. 19:4-10
 - C. God sometimes answers “no,” or substitutes something else.
 - 1. II Cor. 12:8-9 — “My strength is made perfect in weakness”
 - 2. Acts 16:6-9 — God chose a different location.
- III. He will not interfere with man’s free will in order to answer prayer; he will not force his will on anyone.
 - A. Man must first believe — Jn. 8:24
 - B. Man must first repent — Lk. 13:3, 5
 - C. Man must first confess his faith — Matt. 10:32-33
 - D. Man must first submit to baptism — Rom. 6:3-7
 - E. Don’t pray for God to save the unrepentant — I John 1:9; 5:16
- IV. If God answers prayer and grants our petitions regarding healing of the sick, etc., why do we say that there are no modern miracles?
 - A. We pray for the healing of the sick because God told us to — Jas. 5:13-15.
 - B. We pray for the daily guidance in our lives because it is consistent with:
 - 1. commands for our human communications — Jas. 4:13-16 (How do we know the will of God concerning where we will be tomorrow?)
 - 2. Jesus’ model prayer for daily bread in Matt. 6:11, while the same Spirit teaches the necessity of labor for bread in II Thess. 3:10-12.
 - C. But is all intervention necessarily miraculous? Consider:
 - 1. Philemon 15-16 — maybe God had a purpose
 - 2. Esther 4:14 — maybe God had a purpose
 - 3. Romans 13:4, considering which, notice the command to pray for them in I Tim. 2:1-3

4. The PROVIDENCE of God is active in answering prayers through natural physical laws, but a MIRACLE is an event which could *not* happen if those same laws continued in force.
- a. “Providence” is God’s *providing* for His people. According to Webster, “the care or benevolent guidance of God.” It is seen in:
- (1) once-created plants & animals (Gen. 1:11-12, 22). We have plenty to eat because God created these with ability to reproduce. As they reproduce, God *provides* an abundance for us.
 - (2) water & sunshine, necessary for life (Isa. 55:10; Psa. 19:5-6). These follow natural, definable, predictable law, but both they and the law which govern them are created by God.
 - (3) Joseph (Gen. 37:28; 39:20; 41:14, 41; 45:17-20). Not a single miracle occurred (no laws of science were broken), yet God brought Jacob’s family into Egypt (Gen. 45:7-8; 50:20).
- b. A “miracle” necessarily involves a suspension or interruption of natural physical laws.

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve;
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health, that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy;
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life;
I got nothing that I asked for — but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

-Author Unknown

Lesson 9

THE CONFIDENCE THAT WE HAVE
(I JOHN 5:14-15)

- I. “Confidence” is (according to Webster’s New World Dictionary - 2nd College Ed.) “1. firm belief, trust, reliance. 2. the fact of being or feeling certain; assurance”
- A. John used a compound word whose root words literally mean “all speech.”
1. In the compound form the primary meaning is “freedom of speech,” or “to speak without reservation” (II Cor. 3:12; 7:4).
 2. The same word is used in John 10:24.
- B. John has taught in these verses that prayer of the faithful is powerful.
1. Jas. 5:16
 2. because it comes before God — Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4
 3. The knowledge of these is a great source of confidence, assurance, or trust in God for everyone who is faithful to him.
- II. If we know that God hears us, then we know that we have the answer to our prayers.
- A. That’s logical — If he is the eternal, all-loving and merciful GOD who will lovingly give all good things to his faithful; and if he hears our proper requests for those good things; then surely he will grant them.
- B. That’s scriptural — Jas. 5:17-18
- C. That’s historical — The Bible is filled with real-life examples of God's answers to man's prayers.
- D. That’s consistent — If we know that God hears our prayers, then we can have full confidence that he answers them according to his own high regard for us (Psa. 8:4-6).
- E. That’s effective — If we know that God hears our prayers and answers them then we can, indeed, “pray without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17).

You must learn ... when life knocks you to your knees ... that’s the best position in which to pray. -Ethel Barrymore

Lesson 10
LEADING PUBLIC PRAYER
(Part 1)

- I. Acts 4:23 — “And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.”
 - A. Acts 4:24 — “And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God”
 - 1. they lifted up their voice to God
 - 2. with one accord
 - B. They Glorified The Name Of God:
 - 1. Acts 4:24 — “And said, Lord, thou art God” (who He is)
 - 2. “which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:” (what He did)
 - 3. v. 25 — “Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?” (Quoted scripture appropriate to the purpose of this prayer)
 - 4. v. 26 -- The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. (Cited examples of God's exercise of power)
 - 5. v. 27 — “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,” (spoke of the present circumstances)
 - 6. v. 28 — “For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” (Remembered even in difficulty that God is over all)
 - C. They Made Petition
 - 1. v. 29 — “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings:” (begged God see their circumstances)
 - 2. “and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word” (asked God to bless them with continued opportunity to obey His will)
 - D. (Remember as you pray that the power is in God and not in you) v. 30 — “By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.”

- II. Acts 4:31 — “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”
 - A. God heard their prayer
 - B. God answered their prayer
 - 1. giving them what they asked
 - 2. giving them what else He knew they needed

I don't know of a single foreign product that enters this country untaxed except the answer to prayer. - Mark Twain

Lesson 11
LEADING PUBLIC PRAYER
(Part 2)

- I. As with prayer in general, so in leading public prayer: women may not lead men (I Tim. 2:8-15)
 - A. “men” (v.8) is *ane’r*
 - B. “in like manner” (v.9)
 - 1. does not say that women pray in “modest apparel” etc.
 - 2. says that women dress in the same manner in which men pray: *i.e.* “lifting up holy hands”
- II. Vocal prayer in unison, as practiced by some, is not authorized.
 - A. In such a scene the women are not keeping silence relative to teaching or leading the men who might hear them (I Cor . 14:34; I Tim. 2:12).
 - B. Such a confusion of voices is not orderly (I Cor. 14:40).
 - C. No one is listening to the giving of thanks; therefore none are edified (I Cor. 14:15-17).
- III. It is clear that a faithful man speaks the prayer and all others present listen.
 - A. They are to be able to say “AMEN” when he gives thanks (I Cor. 14:16).
 - 1. Not required to say it, but authorized to do so.
 - 2. Speaker must “give thanks well” (I Cor. 14:17).
 - a. In accord with the will of God (I John 5:14; John 4:24 “in truth”), “with the spirit” (I Cor. 14:15; Jn 4:24 “in spirit”).
 - b. Speaking clearly so as to be heard and understood (I Cor. 14:14, 19).
 - B. Speaker must say in prayer that which is the concern of the listeners.
 - 1. This is not the time for personal prayers.
 - a. If you need to pray for the right attitude and relationship with God to be able to lead His people in worship, do so *before* leading the church in prayer/worship.
 - b. Don’t say in the prayer, “I pray that...” but rather “We pray that...” since it is not your private prayer, but the prayer of the church.

Prayer is a strong wall and fortress of the church; it is a goodly Christian’s weapon.

- Luther

2. The prayer leader must know what concerns the worshipers have.
 - a. As one people (John 17:21) the church must “all speak the same thing” (I Cor. 1:10 – *i.e.* all have the same spiritual concern).
 - b. There are often individuals with personal concerns.
 - (1) These must concern the rest of the body as well (I Cor. 12:25-27).
 - (2) Brothers and sisters in Christ pray for others as they would pray for themselves (I Cor. 13:4-5; Php. 2:3).

Flo: C'mon, Eb! Make up your mind!

Eb: Okay — you drive and I'll pray.

Flo: What's the matter? Don't you trust MY praying?!

Lesson 12
PRAYER IS OFTEN
THE UNUSED BLESSING

- I. Too Many Christians Don't Pray as They Ought.
- A. Jas. 4:2 — “ye have not ... ye cannot obtain ... ye have not ... BECAUSE ye ask not”
- B. Isa. 7:10-14 — Ahaz thought that asking was *beneath* the mature child of God... He was wrong!
- II. The Blessings of Prayer are Denied Them.
- A. Psa. 21:2, 4 — When the king asked, the Lord gave.
- B. Psa. 118:5, 21 — The faithful Jew prayed in distress; the Lord heard and saved.
- C. Psa. 138:3 — The same day that man cried, God heard... and strengthened the soul.
- D. Lk. 11:5-13 — “If ye ... know how to give ..., how much **more ... God ...?**”

I got up early one morning
And rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish
That I didn't take time to pray.

Problems just tumbled upon me,
And heavier came the task.
“Why doesn't God help me?” I wondered.
He answered, “You didn't ask.”

I wanted to see joy and beauty
But the day toiled gray, and bleak.
I wondered why God didn't show me,
He said, “But you didn't seek.”

I tried to come into God's presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God lovingly and gently chided,
“My child, you did not knock”

I woke up early this morning
And paused before ent'ring the day.
I had so much to accomplish,
That I had to take time to pray.

-Author Unknown

Lesson 13
CONCLUSION

- I. Prayer is a privilege and blessing accorded a child of God.
 - A. It is an opportunity to express the deepest thoughts of our heart to One whom we know will hear.
 - 1. He will accept our praise, of which He is worthy.
 - 2. He will bless our thanksgiving, which He deserves.
 - 3. He will hear and answer our petitions, which He desires to hear.
 - B. An alien sinner has no invitation to pray.
 - C. An alien sinner receives no benefit from God in prayer.
- II. Prayer should be an essential part of each Christian's life:
 - A. Peace of mind comes through effective prayer.
 - 1. Because we know that we are following the will of God.
 - 2. Because we know that He has heard our prayer in Heaven.
 - B. Strength to persevere comes through effective prayer
 - 1. Because the Lord's strength is made in perfect in weakness: our yielding.
 - 2. Because we know that the power is in the word which we obey; we are not alone.
 - C. Prayer is addressed to the Father, with Whom we seek to live eternally.
 - D. Prayer is heard by the Father, Who alone will determine our eternal destiny.

He who runs from God in the morning will
scarcely find Him the rest of the day.
-John Bunyan