

# Standard LESSON™

## Time for Prayer

### Learning in Praying

*by Ronald G. Davis*

Prayer is certainly a part of Bible study. We honor God's Word by giving attention to it. We honor its depth and significance by asking for the wisdom of the Spirit in comprehending it and applying it.

Wise teachers of adults will use prayers and praying to enhance every aspect of the class time. Prayers can be read, heard, composed (by tongue or by pen), and sung. The Bible is full of prayers, those spoken as deeply personal responses to God's goodness and those written for the edification and the worship of God's people. Some were written to be read. Some were simply to be heard. Others were designed to be sung. All were to be heartfelt words of worship. Whether they were glad expressions of praise and thanksgiving or desperate, even frantic words of petition, all were an exclamation that God is able.

### Prayer With Direction

One of the ways to make certain that prayers focus on elements of thanksgiving and petition that relate to a text and its study is to use "directed prayer." Such prayer means that the leader suggests a series of elements aloud as the praying group utters silent words to the Father.

For a study of Luke 11, a directed prayer may offer an excellent review and reinforcement of ideas studied. Consider such prayer stimulus statements as the following (with relevant verse numbers in parentheses):

- Address God as holy and live to acknowledge his holiness (v. 2a);
- Pray for God's coming kingdom (v. 2b);
- Pray that our daily needs be met (v. 3);
- Pray for forgiveness and for strength to forgive others (v. 4a);
- Plead for strength to resist temptation (v. 4b);
- Acknowledge our responsibility to initiate prayer, asking, seeking, and knocking with audacity (vv. 5-11)
- Thank God for his gift of the Holy Spirit and ask to be guided daily by him (vv. 12, 13).

### Prayer With Feet

The concept of prayer walk has an ancient origin; it is reflected in such examples as the "Stations of the Cross" prayer gardens adjoining church buildings of some religious groups. A quiet and serene pathway allowing the discipline of prayer to be practiced has found its way onto modern campgrounds and retreat properties. And it has found simplification in around-the-classroom or around-the-building-hallways manifestations. For such an experience the leader establishes a clearly defined direction of movement and posts prayer-stimulus statements

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(and, optionally, relevant Bible verses or other spiritual truths) at consecutive (or circular) “stations.” Learners are to move from station to station, stopping to pray appropriately at each. Such an activity makes an ideal end-of-unit activity, but it can be applied to individual study occasions.

A lesson taken from James 5 could be the base for effective prayer stations. A three-part path could be based on the three questions found in verses 13 and 14. At station one, have a sign asking, “Is any among you afflicted?” The sign at station two should read, “Is any merry?” Station three should be the place to consider the question, “Is any sick among you?”

The contemporary activity most call “prayer walking” is a similar procedure, aimed more at application of truth learned than of review and reinforcement. And prayer walking is done in a life setting rather than a classroom context. Learners are asked to consider a “path” for walking contiguous to the object(s) of the prayer, and they are simply directed to pray as they walk. A lesson from Jesus’ prayer in John 17 that pleads for the church to be one, presents an excellent opportunity for a unity walk around Sunday school classrooms. Walk praying that we find ways to love and support church members of different age groups and needs.

## Prayer with Tunes

Many songs, from ancient hymns to contemporary praise songs, are prayers put into verse and matched to melody. Every adult teacher needs to consider having his or her class sing—or listen to—songs related to lesson texts and themes. (A class member with musical interests might relish the challenge to bring a song or songs to a study session.)

Modern and classic psalters fill shelves of churches and Christian stores. Hymnals typically contain Scripture indexes of the hymns. “When Morning Gilds the Skies” is a perfect response to James 5:13. A study of Hebrews 4:14-16 could be closed effectively by singing “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”

## Prayer in a Program

The Christian discipline of keeping a prayer journal has proven to be a significant faith-building, disciple-growing practice. Most any Bible study unit can be adapted to a worthy prayer journal—either as a class project or a personal one. In an inexpensive, ruled notebook, with three simple columns: Elements to be Prayed For, Date(s) of the Prayer, and Prayer Responses (with Dates), the user is ready to begin an adventure of Christian growth. Week by week in a study, the teacher and/or the class can list elements related to texts and themes. Day by day the prayers can be offered. Moment by moment the ones who pray can realize the presence and the work of God. Listing prayer content and recording God’s gracious response cannot but encourage anyone who seeks him: “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

## Prayer Without Ceasing

Try a variety of prayer activities: directed prayer, prayer walks, a prayer list in relationship to a lesson series incorporating elements of praise and petition as a way of unifying and reinforcing the unit, a prayer journal for the unit, writing prayers (and sharing them), reading

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prayers of others. Prayer changes things, especially the people who do the praying!