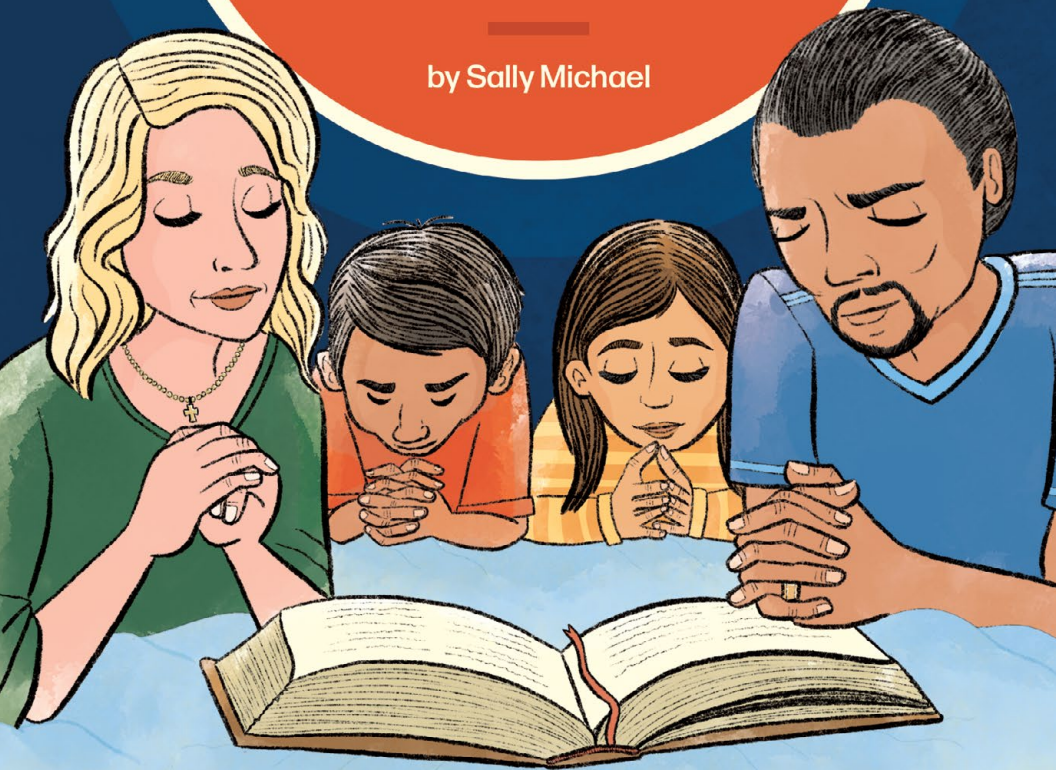


Family Devotional Guide

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

A Study for Children & Adults on Prayer

by Sally Michael



Truth:78

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A Study for Children and Adults on Prayer
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Our vision at Truth78 is that the next generations know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.

Our mission is to nurture the faith of the next generations by equipping the church and home with resources and training that instruct the mind, engage the heart, and influence the will through proclaiming the whole counsel of God.

We equip churches and parents by producing curriculum for Sunday School, Midweek Bible, Intergenerational, Youth, and Backyard Bible Club settings; vision-casting and training resources (many available free on our website) for both the church and the home; materials and training to help parents in their role in discipling children; and the Fighter Verses Bible memory program to encourage the lifelong practice and love of Bible memory.

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PREFACE



“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. Through prayer we can 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 from Andrew Murray:

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.”¹

¹ Andrew Murray, *Into His Presence: Daily Devotions for Prayer* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1997).

L E S S O N 1

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

Main Ideas

- God 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.

Key Verse

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

Scripture

- 1 Kings 16:33
- 1 Kings 18:20-21, 26-29, 36-39
- Psalm 34:15
- James 5:17-18
- 1 Kings 19:1-4
- Luke 11:1

Lesson Summary

The Bible tells us about an important contest organized by the prophet Elijah against 450 prophets of Baal. Each side cut up a bull and laid 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 and wives. 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.⁴

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 Christians 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 this important 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

4 Sylvia Tarniceriu’s story is told in *God Knows My Size!* by Harvey Yoder. See the reference for this book in the Additional Ideas at the end of this lesson.

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.*⁵

—D.A. Carson

*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.*⁶

—Author Unknown

DAY 1

Read: 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.

Note: Remember to check the Additional Ideas at the end of this week's devotions.

5 D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1982).

6 *The Kneeling Christian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1986), 70.

DAY 2

Read: Psalm 18:6-19

Questions

- What was David's situation? (Read 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 rescuing him?
- 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.

DAY 5

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.
- If you haven't already read it, read the Prayer Story.
- Read and discuss the Prayer Poem. Work on memorizing it.
- Read *God Knows My Size!* by Harvey Yoder (Berlin, Ohio: TGS International, 1999). (Note: This is the story of Sylvia Tarniceriu, who is mentioned briefly in the Lesson Summary.)
- Write your own prayer psalm.
- Participate in a prayer meeting.
- Pray for unreached people groups using the Global Prayer Digest at globalprayerdigest.org; or resources from the Joshua Project, joshuaproject.net/resources/prayer
- Start using the following Family Chart of Prayers and Answers.

Parent Resources

- Unknown Christian Author, *The Kneeling Christian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1986).

Family Chart of Prayers and Answers

Date	Prayer	Answer