



WAY TO PRAY, PART 1

The President and the Little Boy

April 2, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Daniel 6:10 (NIV) • “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

Psalms 143:1 (NIV) • “Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.”

Psalms 66:20 (NIV) • “Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!”

1 Peter 3:12 (NIV) • “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Daniel 9:23 (NIV) • “As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision.”

Matthew 26:36 (NIV) • “Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’”

Isaiah 29:13 (NIV) • “The Lord says: ‘These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.’”

Luke 9:28, 29 (NIV) • “About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”

Acts 10:9 (NIV) • “About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.”

Matthew 6:5-8 (NIV) • “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "WAY TO PRAY, PART 1"

Studying the topic of prayer is like observing the many angles of a precious diamond. You can step back and look at the whole diamond and say, "Wow, that's beautiful!" or you can get a magnifying glass and observe the nuances and details. This lesson is the first of a two-part series on prayer focusing on "when" we pray (Matthew 6:5-7). The next lesson covers what we pray about (verses 9-13).

Three themes should emerge: (1) **real** conversations with God; (2) **regular** conversations with God; and (3) **random** conversations with God.

This lesson is about citizens of the kingdom living in an **attitude of prayer** in which talking to God isn't a ritual but a reoccurring conversation throughout the day. The words of Christ about "real praying" call us to "close the door" (verse 6, NIV) for a moment while we talk with God. It is also important that we help students discover the **nature of prayer**—that it is a moment of thoughtful, heartfelt conversation. And, it is also important that we help them learn how to develop the **ability to pay attention** to the One to whom they are talking (close the door). The final component in this lesson would be a challenge to experience moments of real conversation with God throughout the day at **random, spontaneous moments** as well as planned periods of communion.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "WAY TO PRAY, PART 1"

As a result of this lesson we would like the student to be able to:

1. Examine the real purpose of prayer as a way to know and be known by God, as in a friendship.
2. Discover the value and joy of being able to give God their full attention while praying.
3. Develop the habit of simply talking to the King throughout each day.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) handout "Heart Check."

Connecting • Bibles and/or student lessons, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for emphasis Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • The purpose of this exercise is to get the students to think about the nature of their conversations on a normal day. We all have routine, mundane, and mindless conversations.

We also have thoughtful and important interactions as well. The object is to get students to chart their conversations as best as they can for the last day or two. Do the exercise yourself to familiarize yourself with it.

Get set • Give each student a copy of the handout from page 13. Go over the instructions with them and ask them to work individually.

Go • Say: Don't labor over this, but simply list as many conversations throughout any given day as you can remember.

After the students have charted their conversations, have them share the results in pairs or in small groups.

Debriefing • Help students process their results by asking some or all of the following questions:

As you looked at your graph, how did you feel about having to assign a number to the importance of your conversations?

Did you notice any patterns about your conversations?

Do the more personal conversations take place at school, home, over the phone, or through texting?

Keeping in mind what you've learned about your conversations with others, how would you characterize your conversations with God (your prayer life) on a graph like this?

Why does it seem difficult to really have personal conversations with God?

What are the obstacles that get in the way?

What are some things you might do to improve the situation?

Whom do you know who seems to have personal conversations with God regularly?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • The goal of this activity is to have students discuss something relatively important while other students talk to them, distract them, and seek to get their attention off the topic (verbally, not physically) with "good things."

Get set • Divide the students into groups of four or five. Have each group number off and then choose two numbers to carry on an important conversation (have them suggest the subject matter of a conversation that would be important to them). The others in the group will be distracters. The two conversers are to avoid being derailed or distracted. (You might also appoint "observers" to watch and report the dynamics.)

Go • Observe the dynamics as the "distracters" inundate the "conversers" with information so you will be able to comment. Give them two to three minutes to have this interaction, then stop them.

Debriefing • Say: This activity was to help us experience the necessity of "closing the door" (Matthew 6:6).

Help students process their experience by asking some or all of the following questions:

Was it difficult communicating under these circumstances? Explain.

To what degree can we really block things out?

When have you felt that someone wasn't really paying attention to you in a conversation? How did you feel?

When have you disengaged from really being attentive when someone was talking to you about something important?

What do you think are the major "distractions" in our conversations with God?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

Share the following illustration in your own words.

A Native American and his friend were in downtown New York City, walking near Times Square in Manhattan. It was during the noon lunch hour and the streets were filled with people. Cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening.

Suddenly the Native American said, "I hear a cricket."

His friend said, "What? You must be crazy.

You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!"

"No, I'm sure of it," the Native American said. "I hear a cricket."

"That's crazy," said the friend.

The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket. His friend was utterly amazed.

"That's incredible," said his friend. "You have phenomenal hearing!"

"No," said the Native American. "My hearing is no different from yours. It all depends on what you're listening for."

"But that can't be!" said the friend.

"It depends on what is really important to you. Here, let me show you." He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. With the noise of the crowded street still blaring, every person within 20 feet turned and looked to see if the money that had fallen on the pavement was theirs.

"See what I mean?" asked the Native American. "It all depends on what is important to YOU."—Wayne Rice, *More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995). Used by permission.

Debriefing • Ask: If you were to look at what things you are "in tune" with as was the Native American in the big city, what positive/negative things could you list? How does a person's beliefs about the importance of prayer affect the way they pray? Be specific.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

In your own words, share with the students the following concepts of **real**, **regular**, and **random** conversations with God (the 3 R's of prayer). Make notes on a white/chalkboard as you talk.

Explain that most kings and leaders have

very little contact with their subjects, and certainly don't know them personally. Quite the opposite is true in God's great kingdom of grace here on earth. The only way to be part of this kingdom is to have a personal relationship with the King. When we don't communicate (through prayer and Bible study), our connection with the kingdom disintegrates little by little until we no longer feel that we belong in the kingdom. The more we talk openly with God, the more comfortable we feel as His agents.

1. Real Conversations With God

Explain that God wants more than anything to have real conversations with us. Real conversations are rare in this world. We often talk about nothing just to pass the time. And we often pray without even thinking about what we are saying. Many prayers are just replicas of one another. If we desire to really talk with God, we should think about the personal conversations we have with friends and talk with Him in the same way. We have a direct line, a mobile phone, direct access, no waiting. We are even told, as children of the kingdom, to use this privilege boldly (Hebrews 4:16).

Distribute or call attention to the student lesson. **Say:** Look at the verses in your lesson and choose one or two that seem to really speak to the idea of direct access with God.

Ask: Think of some prayers you have heard that gave you the sense that the person praying was having a real conversation with God. What did they say? How did you feel? What impact did this have on you? To what extent do you think that knowing God is eager for "quality time" with you might motivate you to pray more sincerely?

2. Regular Conversations With God

Explain that any exercise, activity, or skill that we want to become good at requires repetition if we don't want to feel awkward. The more we ride a bike, sing up front, or tell the truth, the more we become comfortable doing it. Many pass on praying to God because it feels strange to them. But the truth is that the more we pray,

the more prayer will eventually matter to us.

Ask: Think of some biblical characters who demonstrate “regular conversations with God.” What is it that drove them to be so consistent?

3. Random Conversations With God

Explain that wherever we are there are moments we can experience real communion with God. Short words, songs, thoughts, thanksgiving, or requests as we are walking to and from class can be moments in which we connect with God. The more we talk to God outside of the routine, the more God becomes a part of our daily lives.

Ask: Can you think of some random conversations with God in the Bible or in your own life in which you felt the communication with God was very real? (Peter screaming, “Help.” The woman touching the hem of Jesus’ garment.) **Have you ever just talked with God as you were walking, sitting in a car, or alone in your room? Again, the more you practice it, the more real it becomes.**

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Say: Ephesians 2:13 (NIV) describes the work that Christ has done to make it easy to talk to and relate to God. Ask someone to find and read it from the student lesson, or the Bible.

Say: In the same way that Tad Lincoln was able to give the soldier direct access to the president of the United States, Christ makes a clear path from our heart to the heart of God without any obstacles, interruptions, or prerequisites. What we do with that clear path is entirely up to us; it’s up to us how we choose to respond to the Holy Spirit, who points out the path to us.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Ask: Of the three R’s of prayer outlined in the previous section, **Connecting to the Kingdom**, which is most prominent in your life? Which is least?

Present the following scenario:

Kendra has always knelt down and prayed before she goes to sleep at night. It’s not just a habit for her; it is one way she worships God. But tonight she is staying at Lisa’s house, where God is not a big part of the home. They have had a great day together, but she feels tempted, just this once, to lie in her bed and pray so she doesn’t make her friend feel awkward. Is she missing an opportunity to talk to her friend about her faith? Would kneeling and praying be misunderstood by Lisa? What should Kendra do? How can she be true to her relationship with God and be a witness to her friend without making her feel strange?

Ask a volunteer to find and read **Matthew 5:16** and discuss with your students how it might apply to the scenario.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Explain to the students that sometimes having a prayer partner helps foster a life of prayer. Challenge them by saying: **If there is someone you feel comfortable with and you think they may be willing, invite them to be a prayer partner with you for a month and see how it goes. Make sure you strive to pray regularly together; most of all, make sure you talk honestly and openly with God; and share examples with each other of random moments of prayer that were especially meaningful.** Help the students make definite plans to do this. In some situations it might be appropriate to choose prayer partners for the month from among the other members of the class.

Ask: If you were to rank the type of prayers you pray, which would occur more often

than others—real, random, or regular?

Say: In the passages given in the student lesson, note which verses seem to talk about the three types of prayers. Look at your prayer life and consider what kind of praying you need to work on.

Ask: Why do you think that is?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Agree or disagree: Having a routine of prayer is good for the soul.
2. What are some different ways to pray other than the traditional approaches? Have you thought of writing or singing your prayers?
3. Agree or disagree: The fact that prayer seems to be a one-way conversation makes it difficult to do. Why?
4. How do random prayers out of the blue build your relationship with God? Can you live on random prayers alone? What do you think?

5. What do you think God is doing when you pray? Have you ever imagined this from His perspective? How does trying to visualize God while you are praying help you?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Let's be honest with God. He knows what we are thinking and feeling, and even though He is aware of our situation He wants us to talk with Him about it. Practicing real communication with God can be the greatest experience you have as a Christian. In fact, people who refuse to be honest and open with Him fail to know Him and are simply playing games. Say exactly what you want to say to God. He can take it. Also, be willing to say what you know you need to say as well. Ultimately, the real challenge of praying sincerely is remembering to pray and shutting the doors on the things that get in the way.

FOR LESSON ONE:
THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE BEGINNING ACTIVITY.

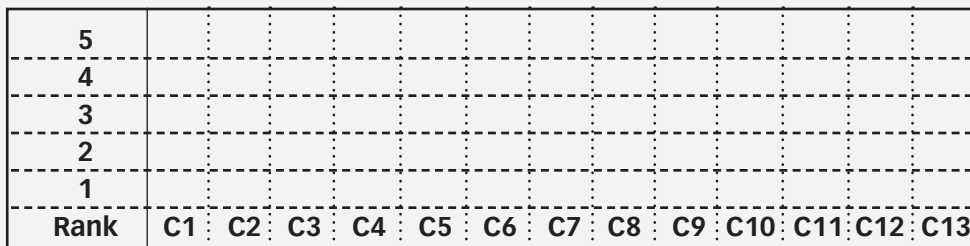
“Heart Check”

On the list below briefly describe who you had a conversation with and rank the conversation as to its depth. For instance, I had a conversation with the person who was selling groceries at the grocery store. Since the conversation wasn’t terribly thoughtful, personal, or deep, I ranked it as a 1. I called my dad and we talked about a cousin who was asking questions about God. I ranked that a 3. A young person and I talked about a friend who was considering suicide. I gave that one a 5.

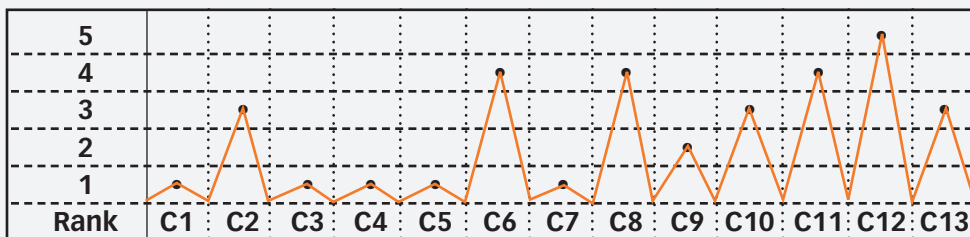
List and rank the conversations you had on one day this week:

| Conversation | Who and what was it about? | Rank (1 being superficial; 5 very personal) |
|--------------|----------------------------|---|
| C1 | | |
| C2 | | |
| C3 | | |
| C4 | | |
| C5 | | |
| C6 | | |
| C7 | | |
| C8 | | |
| C9 | | |
| C10 | | |
| C11 | | |
| C12 | | |
| C13 | | |

After you make the list and rank your conversations, plot them on the “heart check graph” with a dot in the appropriate rank column below.



After you have plotted your ranked conversations, connect the dots. But be sure to draw the line to the bottom between each conversation so your graph should have the appearance of a cardiac readout. Like this:





STUDENT LESSON

WAY TO PRAY, PART 1

The President and the Little Boy

April 2, 2022

Sabbath

FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:** “By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. . . . In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 102, 103.

THE PRESIDENT AND THE LITTLE BOY

During the American Civil War a young soldier in the Union Army lost both his older brother and his father in the Battle of Gettysburg. The soldier decided to go to Washington, D.C., to see President Lincoln. He had decided to ask for an exemption from military service so that he could go back to the family farm and help his sister and mother with the spring planting.

When he arrived in Washington, he went to the White House. Approaching the front gate,

he asked to see the president.

The guard on duty told him, “You can’t see the president, young man! The president is a very busy man! Now go away, son! Get back out there on the battle lines, where you belong!”

So the young soldier left, very disheartened, and was sitting on a park bench not far from the White House when a little boy came up to him. The boy said, “Soldier, you look unhappy. What’s wrong?”

The soldier looked at the little boy and began to share his sad story. He told of his father and his brother being killed in the war. He explained that his mother and sister had no one to help them with the farm.

The little boy listened and said, “I can help you, soldier.” He took the soldier by the hand and led him back to the front gate of the White House. Apparently the guard didn’t notice them, because they weren’t stopped. They walked straight to the front door of the White House and walked right in. After they got inside, they walked right past the generals and high-ranking officials, and no one said a word. The soldier couldn’t understand what was happening. Why didn’t anyone stop them?

Finally they reached the Oval Office—where the president was working—and the little boy didn’t even knock on the door. He just walked right in and led the soldier in with him. There behind the desk were Abraham Lincoln and his secretary of state, looking over the battle plans that were laid out on the desk.

The president glanced at the soldier and then looked at the boy with a smile. “Good afternoon,

Tad. Can you introduce me to your friend?"

And Tad Lincoln, the son of the president of the United States, said, "Daddy, this soldier needs to talk to you."

The soldier pleaded his case before Mr. Lincoln, and right then and there he received the exemption from the war that he desired.

—Wayne Rice, *More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995). Used by permission.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Psalm 5:3.
- » Corin has a friend who is struggling with her parents because they are getting a divorce and the whole situation is getting ugly. Her friend seems bitter about God, but Corin really wants to pray with her or for her and show her that God can be a source of strength and hope. She doesn't want to drive her friend away, but she feels this is a great moment to talk honestly to God with her friend. What do you think she should do? What should she be careful of?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST

- » Read 1 John 4:4; James 1:27; Colossians 2:6.
- » We live for Jesus because of what He has done for us and what He is doing in us. Since Jesus lives in us, we are to live as He lived—doing good and helping others. And we do this by staying connected to Him through prayer and Bible study.
- » How can you make prayer and Bible study a priority in your life?

- » Unscramble the words in the word box and fill in the blanks with the correct words.

oedeirmtpn
nigdokm
srsdakne
gionfrsvsee
ldidreeve
ocnvyydee

"He has _____ us from the power of _____ and _____ us into the _____ of the Son of His love, in whom we have _____ through His blood, the _____ of sins" (Colossians 1:13, 14, NKJV).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Mark 1:35.
- » The question isn't whether we should pray or not—even those who don't believe in God will pray when they face a moment of potential disaster. There are other people who repeat prayers all throughout the day, but still never really connect with God. The question is: What is the quality of the communication?
- » Jesus would steal away at night just to be able to talk with His Father in prayer. Jesus knew talking with His Father was worth more than sleeping. Think of a conversation you have had with someone that means the world to you—maybe a parent, or a friend. That is what a conversation with God can be like.

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Fill in the blanks.
- » Look up the texts from the NIV translation and fill in the blanks. If you do not have a New International Version, go to www.BibleGateway.com, where you will find many translations of the Bible.

1. "Very early in the _____, while it was

still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a _____ place, where he _____" (Mark 1:35).

2. "In the _____, Lord, you _____ my voice; in the _____ I lay my _____ before you and wait _____" (Psalm 5:3).
3. "_____ always, _____ continually, give _____ in _____ circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
4. "And _____ in the _____ on all _____ with _____ kinds of _____ and _____. With this in mind, be _____ and _____ keep on _____ for all the Lord's _____" (Ephesians 6:18).
5. "In the same way, the _____ helps us in our _____. We do not know what we ought to _____ for, but the _____ himself _____ for us through _____ groans. And he who _____ our hearts knows the _____ of the Spirit, because the Spirit _____ for God's _____ in accordance with the _____ of God" (Romans 8:26, 27).
6. "By His _____ and His _____, Christ has achieved even more than _____ from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an _____ separation between God and man; but in _____ we become more closely _____ to _____ than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the _____ has bound Himself to _____ by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is _____ with us" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25 [*The Desire of Ages* is online at www.WhiteEstate.org]).

Thursday

CONNECTING

- » Romans 8:26, 27.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Have you ever wanted to pray but just couldn't bring yourself to do it because it had been so long since your last conversation with God? The fear or guilt that keeps us from opening our hearts to God in prayer is not coming from Him. It is the work of someone else. Take the Savior at His word when He says, "whoever comes to me I will never drive away. . . . And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day" (John 6:37-39, NIV).
- » Jesus understands how hard it is to stay connected to God while we are here on earth. He knows how busy life can be. He spent whole nights in prayer so He could be ready for the day ahead! The key is making time to spend with God. The more you talk with God just as you would a friend, the more you will experience how wonderful He is.

Friday

APPLYING

- » 1 Peter 4:7.
- » This week, identify three things that keep you or distract you from having a real interaction with God. Plan how you are going to close the door on those distractions, and journal a few thoughts about your experience doing this throughout the week. Also think of someone you could hold yourself accountable to for this activity. (You will discuss the concept of accountability in class on Sabbath.)

Close the door on . . .

Close the door on . . .

Close the door on . . .

Journal: _____

