

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2017: *The Holy Spirit and Spirituality*
Lesson 10 “The Holy Spirit, the Word, and Prayer”

Read for this week’s study

John 15:7; Matthew 7:7; Psalms 66:18; James 1:6-8; 1 John 5:14, 15; Acts 2:38.

Memory Text

“The Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26, 27, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Prayer That Is Pleasing to God
- III. The Foundation of Biblical Prayer: Ask God
- IV. The Foundation of Biblical Prayer: Believe
- V. The Foundation of Biblical Prayer: Claim God’s Promises
- VI. Praying for the Holy Spirit
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Romans 8:26-27. How does this intercession of the Spirit actually work? How can we more effectively allow the Holy Spirit to communicate the will of God to us? The lesson says that there is no real spiritual life without vigorous prayer. How does that work in practice? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read John 15:7. What does it mean to “abide” in Christ? How do you really do that in practice? What impact do the stages of faith have on this? How can one overcome the challenge of the fact that we cannot see, hear or touch God? Can you truly have a relationship with someone who does not communicate audibly in return? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Matthew 7:7. Before we can receive anything from God, we have to ask for it. Why is asking God so important if He already knows everything about us? What’s the point? Does God ever need our permission to act in this world? Is there a “larger view” to prayer? Read Psalm 66:18 and Isaiah 59:1-2. What kind of sin separates us

from God and prevents the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read Mark 11:24. How do you know when you are praying "according to God's will?" What does it mean when it asks us to believe that we have received what we have asked for? How does one demonstrate that kind of belief? What is faith? Read James 1:6-8. How does the text describe the person who lacks faith? Why is faith a pre-requisite to receiving the promised gifts from God? How do we know when someone else is truly trustworthy? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read 1 John 5:14-15. What is the reason we can be confident that God hears us and that we receive what we have requested from Him? What do you think of ministries who spend donations before they receive them because they "know" that God will provide? Is there a time to move out in "faith" and a time to wait for God's provision? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Ephesians 3:16 and Acts 2:38. What do these two texts tell us about receiving the Holy Spirit in our lives? The lesson says that we need to confess our sins before we can receive the full gift of the Spirit. Why do we need to confess our sins when God already knows them all better than we do? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Is personal, private prayer easy or hard for you? Be prepared to talk about what prayer means to you and also the challenges you face in living a life of prayer. What have you learned about prayer that can be a help to others who are struggling in their prayer life? (Friday's lesson)
8. What do you say to someone who has prayed and prayed for something and it hasn't happened, at least not in the way they had hoped for? What about the sick child who is not healed? How can we learn to trust God even in situations like this? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Imagine that the Father appears visibly among us here at Loma Linda this evening. How would we speak to him? Or to make it more personal, let us say that he is willing to meet us in the fellowship room. As many of us as could, would go over there and gather around him, just as the crowds did around Jesus—Mary loved to sit there at his feet. Supposing we should have the inestimable privilege of talking there freely with God the Father for a whole hour; would it be appropriate at the end for someone among us to arise and say, "This has been such a special occasion, don't you think we ought to close this meeting with a word of prayer?" Or would it be correct to understand that talking, conversing, having conversation with our God as with a Friend for that whole hour actually is real prayer, and we have been praying the whole hour long?

And so, knowing all that we do and the things we have talked about in our conversation series, let us go back with renewed courage to the fellowship room. And God is there waiting for us to come. Whether it be Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, it should make no difference to us, for all three are on our side. Paul said in Romans 8 that all three are our friends. Now, as we walk into the room, we know that God is the all-powerful Creator of the whole vast universe. We know that the mighty angels, sinless as they are, stand overwhelmed with awe and wonder at the majesty and glory of our God. Yet, though that all be true, if we are afraid to go in, then God has failed to convince us of the truth about himself. And Jesus has failed to convince us, not just with his words, but with what he has demonstrated to be true when he was here, that God is infinitely powerful, but equally gracious, and there is no need to be afraid. How could we turn down what he has paid such a price to reveal? And so, overwhelmed with awe, we venture to go inside.

God is seated there and we are gathered around him. What should we say? Should we be the first to speak? Once we have started speaking, would we talk all the time? Or would we let God speak for a while? Normally, when we pray we do all the talking, don't we? And then we say Amen, and go about our business, or go to sleep. It would be like meeting in the room with our Heavenly Father, and talking to him incessantly for several minutes, and then saying, "Amen, thank you very much," and then going home. It wouldn't make sense, would it? It certainly wouldn't be conversation as with a friend. Conversation means at least two people speaking. But how do we converse with God when we can't see him just now, because of the present emergency? We all understand that emergency and why in mercy he does not reveal himself visibly to us at this moment.

And so, the Bible is called the Word of God—God speaking to us. If we wish to hear God speak, except in most extraordinary occasions, God speaks to us through the Bible. We speak to him in prayer. Truly, as someone has said, "We commune with God through the study of the Scriptures."

I certainly find prayer much more meaningful while reading the Bible. Have you ever had the experience of talking to God while reading certain parts of the Scriptures? Or for some of us, while reading the last few chapters of the *Desire of Ages*? Have you ever found yourself talking out loud, "That's magnificent!?" Who are you talking to? But that's real conversation. We read, we listen in that way. And then we talk back to God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #15, "Talking to God as a Friend" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

So, what language would you use? Then how would we address him?

Jesus addressed his Father as “Abba, Father.” Abba is Aramaic for father. So it is almost like saying, “Father, Father,” although it is a term of endearment. Some versions translate “Abba, Father” as “Dear Father,” the way some of us like to start our public prayers and private too, Dear Father. You remember Paul in Romans and Galatians invites us to do precisely that. He says that when the Spirit of truth dwells within us, we will address the Father as “Dear Father.”

But most important, what would we talk about? Could you on such a precious occasion say, “Thank you, God, for today’s groceries and here is my list for tomorrow, amen”, and then go on about your business? Or more seriously, right there with the Father, might you say, “Bless the missionaries as they carry the truth to the far-flung corners of the earth.” The Lord might say, “How sweet. How is it that you only think of these things when you are at the time of prayer?” Of course, if you are the mother of a missionary, how appropriate for you to talk to God about your loved ones. And missionaries, above all people, deserve and need our prayers. But what if we are not thinking about them the rest of the time, just that when we talk to God, we feel that we should only mention the most lofty themes and not the things we have been really thinking about all day?

You see, for some of us, those well-worn phrases about the missionaries and other sorts of things we understand we *ought* to mention when we pray, might seem rather empty when we are talking face-to-face with God as with a friend. Or, if we should leave the meeting and walk through a garden in the community, wouldn’t it be natural, walking with God, to comment with admiration on the beauty and fragrance of a rose, and the beautiful sounds of the mockingbirds? Aren’t they magnificent right now? And then that lovely, lonely sound of the mourning dove. Why couldn’t we tell him how beautiful it was to create things that way? Or walking through the garden, would we simply say, “We thank thee, Lord, for the beauties of nature that surround us”, and move on to some other topic? We do have well-worn phrases to cover these things. It seems to me that if God really were our Friend, we would take time to talk about these things and to be more specific about them, as we would with other members of the family. We might even venture to ask him about the thorns on the rose. “Did you put them there? If so, why?” Or is it all right to ask questions of our God? Job did, and he honored God with his confidence. You remember how boldly, but reverently, Job agonized with God—to the consternation of his friends. They worried that God would surely smite Job for daring to talk to the Father like this.

The whole book of Job is on this subject. I have picked just one place. Look at Job 29:2-4 and 30:20. Job cries to God:

If only my life could once again be as it was when God watched over me. God was always with me then . . . and the friendship of God protected my home . . . [But now] I call to you, O God, but you never answer, and when I pray, you pay no attention. (GNB)

How that worried Job's friends! But was God offended? No, look at our next verse, Job 42:7. God said to the three friends, who were so worried: "You did not speak the truth about me the way my servant Job did." (GNB) Job knew God, and he honored God with those cries. God was not talking to him just then. And Job was deeply upset because their friendship seemed to be at an end. So what upset the friends complemented God, and spoke well of their relationship. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, "Talking to God as a Friend" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

Lou: In Romans 8:26, it says that the Spirit makes intercession.

Graham: That's right.

Lou: "For us—with groanings which cannot be uttered and sighs too deep for words." What about this matter of intercession? Jesus is Intercessor? The Spirit is Intercessor?

Graham: Well, we know the Spirit isn't interceding with the Father. Jesus said, "There is no need." And he certainly isn't interceding with the Son. So in the context it says, "We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit helps us to pray," and I believe his intercession is in teaching us the truth about ourselves, and about our God—that he is our Friend. He helps us approach him. So it's through prayer. By the way, Bible students for many, many years have taken that view, and Ellen White has taken it. I like it very much. His intercession with the Spirit is helping us see the truth and tell the truth. And we have a whole session coming up on "Talking to God As a Friend," where we will get very much into the work of the Spirit in our talking to God.

Lou: This very important text— John 16:26—that you referred to as perhaps the most misunderstood or . . .

Graham: Ignored.

Lou: Ignored text. "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you." There are so many texts, though, about intercession, and then here's this one that seems clear the *other way*. We don't need an intercessor. You talked about the principle of understanding in the light of all of the texts. What would you say to that, if I would say, "Look, let's take all of these texts that talk about intercession and understand this one in the light of all these texts."

Graham: Yes. We so often say that if it's a difficult verse, it should be understood in the light of all the clear ones.

Lou: Right.

Graham: Well, what's so interesting about that is that Jesus labeled this verse "plain and clear." He didn't say it was difficult.

Lou: So we really didn't need any other.

Graham: I will accept the Son of God's evaluation as a statement. It is one of the only ones in the whole Bible designated as "plain and clear." And I will understand all the other verses in the Bible in the light of this one. However, one should never leave the others out. We must build a model of understanding based on everything in the Bible. We must be able to put that precious verse in, and all the others, too. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #11 with Lou Venden, "God's Emergency Measures" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/11MMCAG>*

If you should watch a loved one die, and you should cry, "Why God? Why?" Would God be offended? Or would the God you know reach down and put an arm around your shoulder and say, "I understand how you feel. You wouldn't be human if you didn't feel that way. Someday I'll make it plain to you. I wish I could right now. But please trust me, and trust me enough to be willing to wait."

But, you see, we have to know God well before those emergencies arise, so that we can trust him and pray to him like this. That's why Paul said we need the Holy Spirit of truth to be able to trust and pray like this. In Romans 8:26, that familiar verse: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought." (RSV)

And so, the Holy Spirit brings the truth to us—the truth about God. He helps us to see that truth and to be convinced about it, and the truth about ourselves and learn how to tell the truth to our gracious Heavenly Father. And then God can do good things for us. Paul even said we should pray without ceasing. You note that last familiar verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Never stop praying." (Norlie)

Or as Goodspeed translates it, "Never give up praying." But if we should spend all our time on our knees, we would never get anything else done. So how can one pray without ceasing and still be effective in this life? But prayer, you see, in its very essence is thinking toward God. It means that God is at the very center of our thoughts. Eventually it becomes a habit that God should be at the very center of all our plans, always.

When we see him face-to-face, as we know we shall, will that be the end of prayer? Does that mean that prayer is yet another of the emergency measures God has used to keep open the

channels of communication between himself and his children until the time comes when there will be no need to talk together anymore?

What do we mean when we sing, “Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer?” “Farewell, farewell, I will never talk to you, God, again.” No, if prayer is conversation with a friend, when we meet God, the hour of prayer will have barely just begun. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, “Talking to God as a Friend” recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

Recommended Listening:

Conversations About God #15 “Talking to God as a Friend” is available at:
<http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

All who seek of Him shall find. All who knock will have the door opened to them. The excuse will not be made, Trouble Me not; the door is closed; I do not wish to open it. Never will one be told, I cannot help you. Those who beg at midnight for loaves to feed the hungry souls will be successful. {COL 148.3}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God’s can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {Pr 182.6}

Those who seek God in secret telling the Lord their needs and pleading for help, will not plead in vain. “Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.” As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. The sure result of our intercourse and fellowship with our Lord will be to increase piety, purity, and fervor. There will be a growing intelligence in prayer. We are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of diligence and zeal. {Pr 183.2}

We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart’s desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul’s desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {Pr 188.1}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4}

When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught His disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon Him. And the assurance He gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.—(*Steps to Christ*, 93.) {Pr 8.5}

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. “The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son. {SC 100.1}

Jesus said, “Ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you.” “I have chosen you: . . . that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.” John 16:26, 27; 15:16. But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works. {SC 100.2}

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you.—(*Counsels on Health*, 362.) {Pr 179.4}

Communion with God encourages good thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and lofty purposes of action. Those who thus connect themselves with God are acknowledged by Him as His sons and daughters. They are constantly reaching higher and still higher, obtaining clearer views of God and of eternity, until the Lord makes them channels of light and wisdom to the world. {MYP 247.1}

Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive." {AA 564.1}

In all ages, through the medium of communion with heaven, God has worked out His purpose for His children, by unfolding gradually to their minds the doctrines of grace. His manner of imparting truth is illustrated in the words, "His going forth is prepared as the morning." Hosea 6:3. He who places himself where God can enlighten him, advances, as it were, from the partial obscurity of dawn to the full radiance of noonday. {AA 564.2}

The germination of the seed represents the beginning of spiritual life, and the development of the plant is a figure of the development of character. There can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the growth of character. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be constant advancement. {Ed 105.3}

Recommended Reading: *Steps to Christ* Chapter 8 – "Growing Up Into Christ"

<https://egwwritings.org/>