

Must Talk to Father About This!

Lesson 21: **March 31, 2016**—*prayer*

Billy Bray was a Methodist saint referred to as ‘the King’s Son’ and often he was heard to say, “I must talk to Father about this.” According to J. I. Packer in his book *Knowing God*, and many others, Bray came closest to the life of sonship as the New Testament depicts. Because prayer is the voice of faith directed to God, **the best way to apply a study on prayer is to pray!**

Something wonderful has happened to us...

 Something terrible has happened to us...

 Someone has hurt us sorely or blessed us dearly...

 Someone has asked for our help in a big way...

 Some direction and plan of action must begin today...

 Some decision has to be made this moment...

 Some duty has to be completed this week...

 Someone please help us now—this minute, this day, this year...

Some **one** or some **thing** has been very heavy on our heart—a person, a ministry, or a country—for me it’s my ‘beloved’, *Women & More*, and Japan! And now the question of the moment is: **to whom will we go first—to Whom?**

What matters would we ask our best friend for advice on? What joys would we share with that special person right away? What sorrows, rejections, trials and grievances would we lay out for a friend’s caring, hearing ear—a best friend? God needs to be that ‘best friend’ to every believer. In every situation and circumstance, the friend we think to call on first and foremost should be our Father—He is the Friend that sticks!

♥Hi, it’s me, again. I just thought I’d see how things are going. I hope You know how wonderful You are—how awesome and loving and sovereign and strong—the *One* who has the answer for every need for every moment of my life. Thank You for being all that You are—everything the Bible says You are—the Great and the Mighty God!

I told You about ‘R’ coming back to You, and how very thankful we all are for that? I know that You are more thrilled than anyone. Thank you for overseeing all of that process—for not giving up on him. I’m still asking that the others on our list would return to You, too, and I’m so encouraged for that to happen, especially after what You’ve already done—what a blessing! Let me know what I can do to help bring wandering ones back to vital relationship with You, and lost ones to Yourself for the very first time.

I'm sure You know that my mammogram came back with a request that I have it redone. Show me what to do, when and how. I know that You can just spare me from the ordeal, or if it would bring You glory for me to redo it, show me that. Help me to remember that You are my primary care physician, and that You will let me know my next step. You will send me back only if You choose that blessing for me.

Thanks for the phone call from 'S' this morning; it was such a blessing. Help me to be authentic—if I'm discouraged or discombobulated—but to be a ready witness to Your greatness and goodness. As precious as friends are, You are my 'best friend' ever, and there will never be anyone who will fill that spot again. I had to learn the hard way that earthly friends are like me—fickle and funny about staying true when things go south. You are the friend that sticks, no matter which way things go!

With the persecution that is so intense right now—in homes, churches, countries, and the world—help me stand and hold up the shield of faith. I'm learning that I have to keep the armor on at all times, because the arrows of the enemy will come from people I may least expect. You know all about it, so please work out Your perfect will. I can be sure that You will never be excited to see me suffer or fail. You will cheer me on and guide me in the 'right' direction so that I will experience life with purpose—now and moments from now—to the end of my life.

Keep me close, through Your indwelling Holy Spirit and Your word, so that I'll know just what to say and do in each situation for kingdom value. What a blessing! And thank You for your constant conviction and correction in my attitudes and actions, and for showing me my offenses and turning me away from my sinful 'self' ...to Your blessed Self!

King David prayed: "***O God, whom I praise,** do not remain silent, for wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me; they have spoken against me with lying tongues. With words of hatred they surround me; they attack me without cause. In return for my friendship they accuse me, but **I am a man of prayer***"—
Psalm 109:1-4.

Prayer is not what we should resort to, but what we should begin with. Rev. Billy Graham in his book, *Hope for the Troubled Heart*, told about a lone survivor of a shipwreck who was marooned on an uninhabited island. "He managed to build a hut in which he put everything he had saved from the wreck. He prayed to God for rescue, and anxiously scanned the horizon every day to signal any passing ship.

“One day he returned to his hut and to his horror found it in flames and all of his possessions gone. What a tragedy! Shortly after, a ship arrived. ‘We saw your smoke signal and hurried here,’ the captain explained. The survivor had only seen his burnt hut, but out of disaster, **God worked a blessing!** The shipwrecked man fell to his knees to thank God for the fire that caused his rescue.” Famed early-to-mid-1800s poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning said: “God answers sharp and sudden on some prayers, and thrusts the thing we have prayed for in our face—a gauntlet (*an open challenge...mine*) with a gift in it.”

God works a **blessing** in every answer to prayer! When we ask God for a blessing, he answers with a blessing, but if we ask others for a blessing, they can only ask God to bless us. And while that is good, it is not the best course, because what we need most is God’s blessing in our every ask. “Please give me a blessing” the believer pleas: “Bless me.” cries the child of God.

► In Genesis 32:26-28 we read about Jacob wrestling with God, and he pleads to be blessed by Him. “*Then the man said, ‘Let me go, for it is daybreak.’ But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you **bless me.**’*

27 “The man asked him, ‘What is your name?’

“‘Jacob,’ he answered.

28 “Then the man said, ‘Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have **struggled with God and with men and have overcome.**

29 “Jacob said, ‘**Please** tell me your name.’

“But he replied, ‘Why do you ask my name?’ **Then he blessed him there.**

30 “So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because **I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.**’” Here is the gauntlet with the gift in it—don’t miss it—Jacob lived to wrestle with God, and he would not be killed by Esau either. He had struggled with God and with men and had overcome.

What about the prayer that Jacob had prayed in Genesis 32:11 “*Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children.*” Where is the answer to that prayer? Our Blessed God had worked in Genesis 33:10b when Jacob said these words to his brother Esau: “*For **to see your face is like seeing the face of God,** now that you have received me favorably. **11Please accept the present (gift) that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need.**’ And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.” Remember Esau had begged his own father to bless him: Genesis 27:34c “*Bless me—me too, my father!*” But Isaac had nothing left to give.*

● This lesson is **not about not sharing** prayer requests or needs with believers. It’s **not about not asking** women how we can pray for them. It’s **not about not confessing** our faults and vulnerabilities with a few Christian women who’ll hold us accountable. **It is about going to the Source of blessing...first!**

► The introduction to the Chronicles states that they “were written for the exiles who had returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity to remind them they were from the royal line of David and were God’s chosen people.” It reiterates God’s faithfulness to keep His covenant with Israel. Amidst a listing of the “other clans of Judah” in 1 Chronicles 4, the author interjects a prayer made by one of those listed—Jabez. No other had been so bold while roll was being taken, but Jabez interrupts and his interruption is included in Holy writ for us to read today. To get the real feel, we must begin with verse 7 *“The sons of Helah: Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan, sand Koz, who was the father of Anub and Hazzobebah and of the clans of Aharhel son of Harum.”*

And then: ⁹*“Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, ‘I gave birth to him in pain. ¹⁰Jabez cried out to the God of Israel.*

*‘Oh, that you would **bless me** and*

enlarge my territory!

Let your hand be with me, and

keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’

And God granted his request.”

And that is that—God granted Jabez’ request(s)—there were four! We never hear of Jabez again, but we know this much about him: 1. **He was blessed by God**; his 2. **sphere of influence** (territory) **was enlarged**; 3. **God’s own hand was with him**, and 4. **God kept him from harm** so that he would be free from pain. And that is what going to God in faith will do! We know Jabez had faith, because of the nature of his asks—beginning with God to bless him personally!

Cameron Thompson: “Heaven must be full of answers for which no one ever bothered to ask.” Imagine that we’ve shared our heart with others, we’ve poured out requests for others to pray for us—ones who may have promised and forgotten—but we failed to petition, to plead, to pray to the One who could answer in that very verse: ***And God granted our request!*** This is profound, because we could have had an answer, but do not; we could have found a way, but did not; we should have made an impact, but have not—because we did not actually ‘pray’ to the Lord God, the request we’d made to others. That is prayerlessness, and it is a sin for which we must repent and confess!

►► In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus shared a very peculiar story using someone with a character opposite of God to be the one that a widow needed to cry out to for justice. **Point:** If a wicked judge would answer her request, what would a loving God do? Much more! *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable **to show them that they should always pray and not give up.** ²He said: ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, “Grant me justice against my adversary.”*

⁴“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, **‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men,** ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, **I will see that she gets justice,** so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!”

⁶“And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷**And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?** ⁸I tell you, **he will see that they get justice, and quickly.** However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?’”

There are a number of reasons why Jesus told this parable, not the least of which is to show up Satan’s big lie that God will be bothered by our incessant crying out to him. Verse 5 quotes the unjust judge as saying: “...**yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice**—reluctantly and prejudicially—“**so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!**” This is a lie Satan wants us to buy! Remember that Jesus told the parable “**to show them that they should always pray and not give up.**” And 1 Thessalonians 5:17 exhorts us to “...**pray continually.**”

Prayer is not so much an act as it is an attitude, and Jesus is our example! **Luke 6:12** “**One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.**” Right after this all-night prayer time Jesus chose the twelve disciples—He’d prayed for them. And later he prayed for His murderers from the cross in Luke 23:34a “**Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’**” “I have often thought that because of His prayer, we will see the men who nailed Jesus to the cross in heaven,” said Billy Graham. “No prayer that Jesus ever prayed to the Father went unanswered.”

“Prayers have no boundaries. They can leap miles and continents and be translated instantly into any language,” continued Graham. “When we turn in prayer to our friend Jesus in times of crisis, **sometimes our lives are strengthened forever.**” That bears out in a story told about Joseph Scriven (1820-1886): Just before his wedding day the woman he dearly loved drowned, and out of that tragic experience—after a time of grief and soul-searching—Scriven penned the words to *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*.

Moses told the Israelites in Deuteronomy 33:25 “**Your strength will equal your days.**” Philip Yancey: “You cannot suddenly fabricate foundations of strength; they must have been building all along.” See, sometimes the Lord calms the storm; and sometimes He lets the storm rage and He calms the child. That is so like our Father, to allow the storm that we’re in to be the thing that ends up delivering us from something worse. God’s blessing rushes out of our prayers to Him—it’s like that part of the pasture where the burning bush was. If we are to be powerful in prayer and have strength for our days, we must spend time there!