

Prayer

Principles and Practice



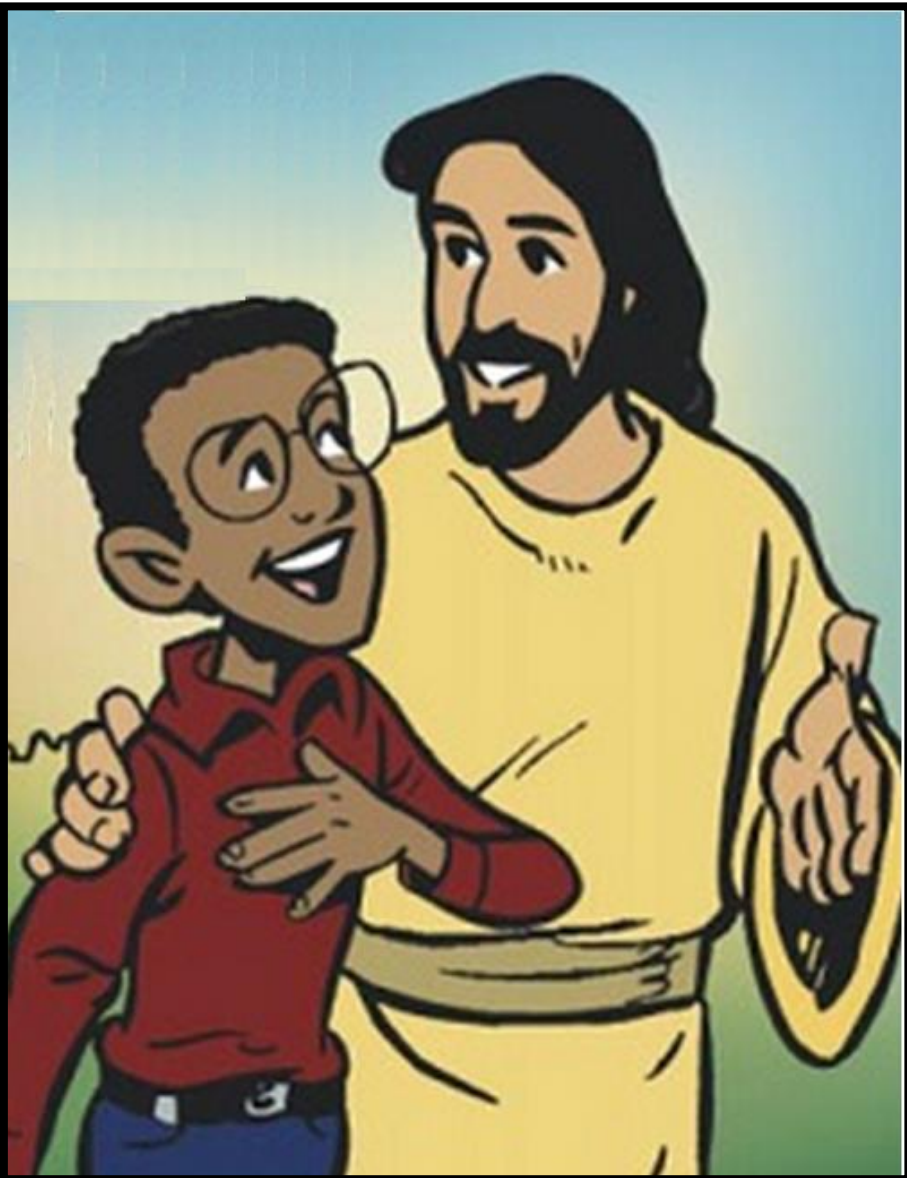
Class Section 1: Prayer Principles

Prayer is simply communicating with Jesus, just like you would talk to a good friend.

Just tell Jesus what's on your mind. He loves to listen to you. He'll either solve the problems that you face, or give you the strength to make it through them.

You don't have to follow any routine for Him to hear you. Prayer doesn't depend on the position of your body, but the position of your heart.

Jesus came to save us for eternity, and He also came to be our companion through life. You can picture Jesus as a constant Companion Who is always beside you and to Whom you can go for counsel and comfort.



"Jim, It's Jesus!"

The story is told of a certain minister who was disturbed to see a shabby old man go into his church at noon every day and come out again after a few minutes. What could he be doing? He informed the caretaker and asked him to question the old man. After all, the place contained valuable furnishings.

"I go to pray," the old man said in reply to the caretaker's questioning.

"Come, come now," said the other, "you are never long enough in the church to pray."

"Well, you see," the shabby old man went on, "I cannot pray a long prayer, but every day at twelve o'clock I just come and say, 'Jesus, it's Jim,' and wait a minute and then come away. It's just a little prayer, but I guess He hears me."

When Jim was injured some time later and taken to the hospital, he had a wonderful influence on the ward. Grumbling patients became cheerful and often the ward would ring with laughter.

"Well, Jim," said the nurse to him one day, "the men say you are responsible for this change in the ward. They say you are always happy."

"Aye, that I am. I can't help being happy. You see, it's my Visitor. Every day He makes me happy."

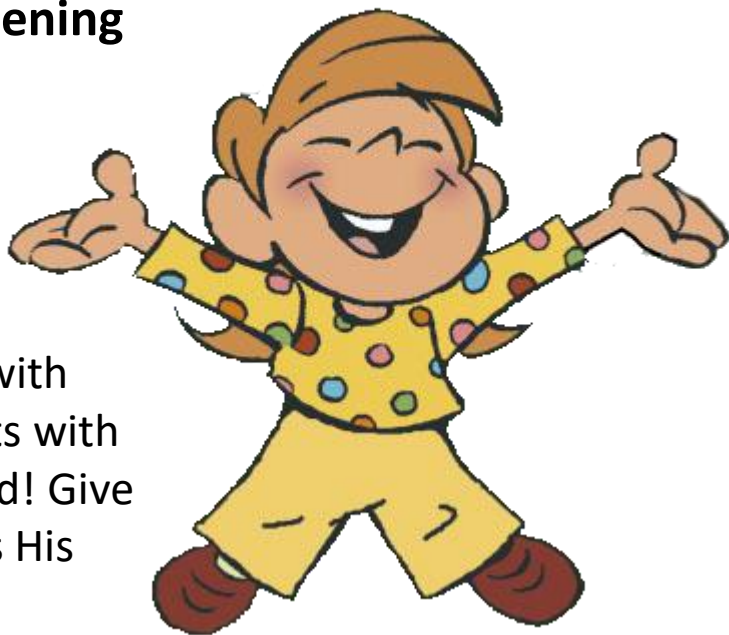
"Your visitor?" The nurse was puzzled. She always noticed that Jim's chair was empty on visiting days, for he was a lonely old man, with no relations. "Your visitor? But when does he come?"

"Every day," Jim replied, the light in his eyes growing brighter. "Yes, every day at twelve o'clock He comes and stands at the foot of my bed. I see Him and He smiles and says, 'Jim, it's Jesus.'"

Prayer is praise, petition, listening

1. Praise

The Lord gives a lot of instruction in His Word that you should come into His presence with thanksgiving and enter His courts with praise. Thank and praise the Lord! Give Him the praise and honor that is His due.



Psalm 100:4—Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

2. Petition

After you've thanked the Lord for what He has already done for you and given you, then you can pray for what you still need. He encourages us to ask:



John 16:24b—Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.



3. Listening

Prayer is not just speaking your piece, but most of all letting God speak His piece, and waiting in quietness and confidence until He answers. Take time to hear from God, and He'll take the time to straighten out your problems.

Mark 4:2-3—Then He ... said to them in His teaching: "Listen!"

Mark 7:14b—He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand."



Class Section 2: Twelve Steps of Effective Prayer

1. Have a praiseful, thankful attitude

Before you begin to list all the things you would like God to do, take a minute to praise and thank Him for all He has already done.

Philippians 4:6—With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.



2. Start with a clean heart

Psalm 66:18 - If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

1 John 3:22— Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

If you have done wrong, ask the Lord to forgive you. Once you do that, the Lord is quick to forgive, and to hear and answer your prayers.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Pray for God's will to be done

When you are
doing your
best to please
the Lord, then
it pleases Him
to grant you
your heart's
desires.

*Psalm 37:4—
Delight
yourself also in
the Lord, and
He shall give
you the desires
of your heart.*

1 John 5:14-15—Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.





4. Put the needs of others ahead of your own

God expects us to pray not only for ourselves, but also for others.

Job 42:10—And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Psalms 31:1—Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

5. Be specific

Specific prayers get specific answers. Jesus wants us to be definite in our requests. He asks us,

Mark 10:51 — "What would you have Me do for you?"



6. Be wholehearted

It's not how long you pray or how much you pray, it's how much you believe.

It's true that God knows what you need before you even ask Him, but He still expects you to pray. It shows that you are depending on Him, that you need Him.

Jeremiah 29:13—You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

7. Exercise your faith

What is faith? It's taking God at His Word. It's believing that what He has promised, He will do.

Matthew 9:27-30—When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened.



8. Pray in the name of Jesus

We approach God via Jesus.

John 14:6—Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

John 14:13-14—And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

9. Claim God's Word

Quote Scripture when you pray. Hold God to His Promises.

2 Peter 1:4—There have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

Here are a few promises that have been favorites for many over the years:

- John 15:7—If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.
- Mark 9:23—Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."
- Jeremiah 33:3—Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.



10. Refuse to doubt

James 1:6-7—Ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

Mark 11:24—Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

11. Count it done

Every prayer that is in line with God's will and according to what God wants and knows is best for everyone involved, is answered—as far as God is concerned—before the prayer itself is even finished.

Isaiah 65:24—It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.



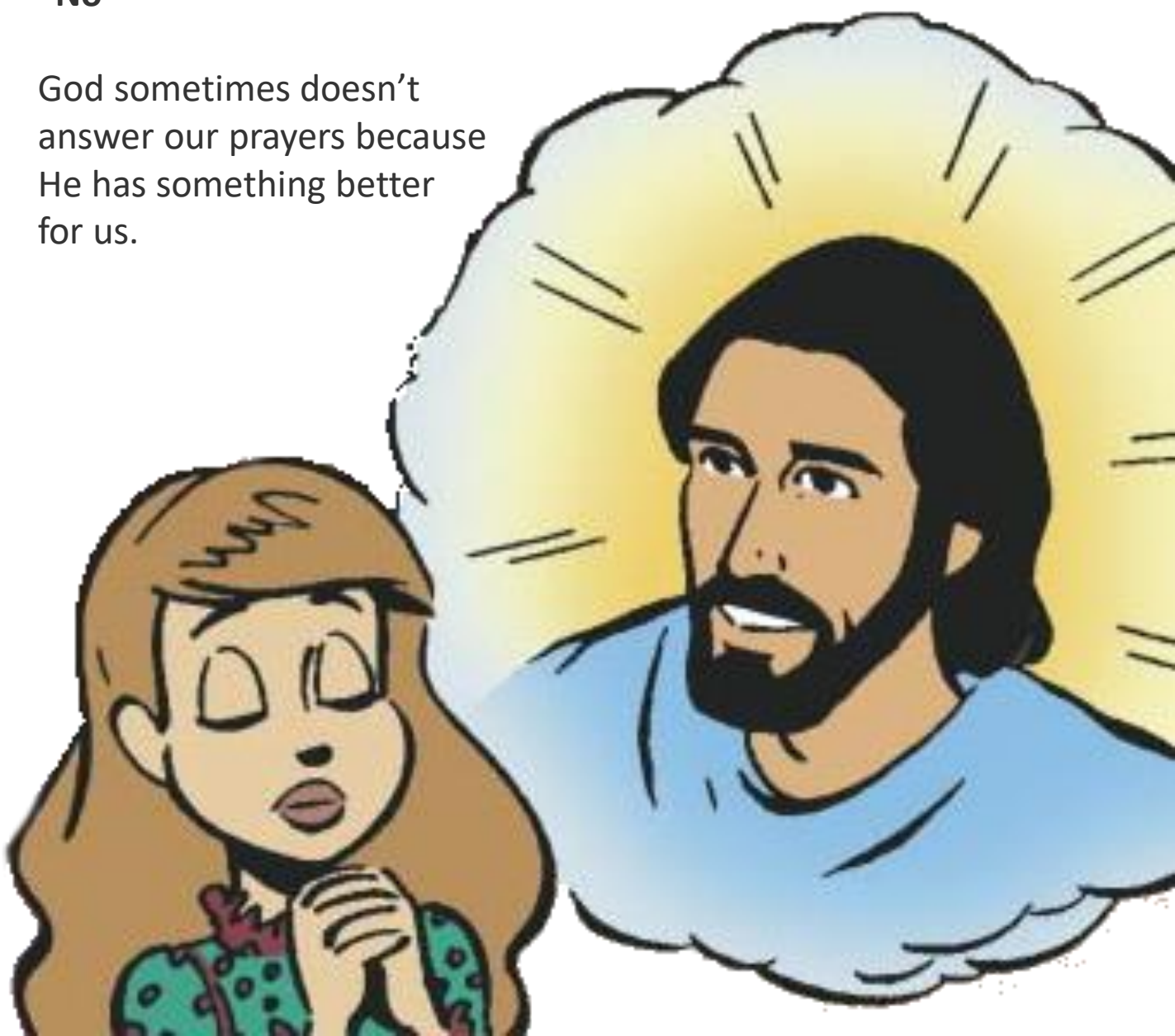
When It Seems God Isn't Answering

Why do some prayers take longer to be answered than others, and why do some seem to go unanswered? There are a number of reasons.

God always answers our prayers, but not always right away and not always in just the way we expect Him to. Sometimes He says “yes,” sometimes He says “no,” and sometimes He says “wait.”

“No”

God sometimes doesn't answer our prayers because He has something better for us.



“Wait”

Abraham in the Old Testament was over a hundred years old and still without a promised heir. God had promised that his wife Sarah would bear a son, but she was now ninety and long past childbearing age. But Abraham continued to believe God’s promise and sure enough, God came through. Sarah miraculously conceived and gave birth to a son, Isaac, who through his son Jacob became the forefather of the Hebrew people.



12. Thank God for answering

It's just as important to end your prayers with praise and thanksgiving, as it is to start them that way.

Just like we get specific with God in the things we ask for, we should be just as specific in thanking Him for the things He gives us. Let's get just as enthusiastic in thanking Him, as we were desperate in asking Him!



Review of the Twelve Steps

1. Have a praiseful, thankful attitude.
2. Start with a clean heart.
3. Pray for God's will to be done.
4. Put the needs of others ahead of your own.
5. Be specific
6. Be wholehearted
7. Exercise your faith.
8. Pray in the name of Jesus.
9. Claim God's Word.
10. Refuse to doubt.
11. Count it done.
12. Thank God for answering.