



Be prayerful

Aim of lesson

To think about prayer throughout the Bible and talk about some practical strategies for developing a closer relationship with God.

Bible background

Read through the prayers in the students' books.

Preparation required

John Morris' book on prayer would be useful background reading.

Outline of lesson

Talk with the class about how in the past men have talked face to face with God. It isn't necessary to go into detail about what this means practically but the relationship Adam had with God is clearly closer than we experience today.

It is also clear that God wants us to talk to him and listen to him so we should try to develop as close a relationship as we can.

Particular prayers

Help the students to look at the prayers in the table in the Student's book, talk about their answers and fill in the table. The aim is for the students to see the variation in the practicalities (when, where etc) of prayer, but also the consistency in the content of the prayers.

Discuss with the students why we have these prayers recorded – as examples for us to turn to.

Note that Daniel prayed publicly. However this is not the same as what was condemned in Matthew 6:6. Daniel had different motives.

You may like to give each student one prayer to analyze and then have them feed back to each other.

Content of Prayers

Spend some time talking with the students about what should be in our prayers. Maybe we shouldn't begin with our requests but start with praise and thanks and generally asking for God's will to be done. The Lord's prayer is a good example for us to follow in this respect. Asking is not a bad thing especially if we are in trouble but discuss with the class what they think. Be careful not to put them off by suggesting that some things are too mundane to be brought to God. Prayer is very personal and at different times in our lives we will have different ideas.

What was God's answer?

Get the students to think about these individual prayers.

Hannah prayed for a son (1 Samuel 1:11), and God answered her in two ways. Firstly she was no longer sad; secondly he gave her a son (1 Samuel 1:17-20). God makes the same promise to us (Philippians 4:6-7)

Isaac was 60 years old when he prayed to God (Genesis 25:20-21), and Jacob and Esau were born. No doubt he had been praying for many years.

2 Samuel 12:15-23 - David's son died, but David accepted that it was the will of God and did not complain.

Practical issues

Get the young people to spend some time thinking about how they might become more prayerful – some really practical ideas, like ...

- Stick to a routine so you don't forget to pray
- Start a prayer notebook – write down people who need your prayers, or events in your life, and also note down when your prayers are answered
- Use Psalms or other bible prayers if you don't know what to say, for example, Psalm 23 – 'Lord I pray that you will be my shepherd, and lead me by still waters...'
- Speak out loud so your mind doesn't wander

If you feel able to, tell the students some experiences from your own life where prayers have been answered and encourage them to share theirs if they want to. Make sure you talk about times when it is difficult to pray and that everyone experiences this. This is why we are talking about it now. We all need help.

Sometimes prayer is easier for small children. Why do we lose this as we get older? Like all things, prayer gets easier with practice but when we have problems we have to rely on God.

Discuss Romans 8:26. There is no need to get into deep discussions about what the spirit means but we can see that God understands when we find prayer hard, and can understand our poor efforts even when we can't find the right words. The paraphrase in the students' books might help.

Relevance to our Lives

Our prayers shouldn't be a shopping list. They are the way we build a closer relationship with God and share with him our hopes and troubles. This is the real challenge. It shouldn't be a casual relationship but a feeling that God is always there to be talked to at any time. You could talk about what Paul meant when he told the Thessalonians to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Extension activities

- You could discuss why God sometimes seems not to answer our prayers. What effect does this have on our relationship with him? Think about a child's relationship with a parent.
- The students might like to write a prayer to take away with them or a class prayer about what you have been talking about.