

Revival and Reformation

Prayer: The Heartbeat of Revival

Lesson #2 for July 13, 2013

Scriptures: Acts 1:4,8,14; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Matthew 18:19,20; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Psalm 50:23.

1. God wants to be our Friend. He has designated three ways in which we can get to know Him better: Bible study, prayer, and witnessing/sharing. Each of these methodologies has its specific purpose. This week's lesson will focus on prayer. Alfred Lord Tennyson famously said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." God's faithful people are not yet in His kingdom. Why? Could a better understanding of the role and purpose of prayer bring us closer?
2. In the New Testament and particularly in the book of Acts, we read of marvelous results from personal and group prayer. In His own prayer life, Jesus revealed a constant dependence on His heavenly Father. Have you ever wondered exactly how Jesus practiced His prayer life? Read Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; and 9:18. Clearly, Jesus spent a lot of time in prayer. Notice these comments:

Christ was continually receiving from the Father, that he might communicate to us. 'The word which ye hear,' he said, 'is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.' [John 14:24] . . . Not for himself, but for others, he lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God he came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily he received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened him from his slumbers, and his soul and his lips were anointed with grace, that he might impart to others.—Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 11, 1910.

When the cities were hushed in midnight slumber, when every man had gone to his own house, Christ, our example, would repair to the Mount of Olives, and there, amid the overshadowing trees, would **spend the entire night in prayer**. He who was himself without the taint of sin,—a treasure-house of blessing; whose voice was heard in the fourth watch of the night by the terrified disciples upon the stormy sea, in heavenly benediction; and whose word could summon the dead from their graves,—he it was who made supplication with strong crying and tears. **He prayed not for himself, but for those whom he came to save. As he became a suppliant, seeking at the hand of his Father fresh supplies of strength, and coming forth refreshed and invigorated as man's substitute, he identified himself with suffering humanity, and gave them an example of the necessity of prayer.** (*4T* 528.1 (1881); *GW92* 28.3; *LHU* 188.6; *Pr* 18.4; compare John 4:31-33)

Elder [Hiram] Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. **Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word.** Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. (*1SM* 206.4; *TDG* 317.3; *YRP* 233.2; *RH*, May 25, 1905 par. 24; *SpTB02* 56.4)

Christ, the Majesty of heaven, laid aside His robes of royalty and came to this

world, all seared and marred by the curse, to teach men how to live a life of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and how to carry out practical religion in their daily lives. **He came to give a correct example of a gospel minister. He labored constantly for one object; all His powers were employed for the salvation of men, and every act of His life tended to that end.** . . . After teaching throughout the entire day, He frequently devoted the night to prayer. He made His supplications to His Father with strong crying and tears. He prayed, not for Himself, but for those whom He came to redeem. (4T 373.1)

3. A careful reading of the Gospels suggests that Jesus and His Father with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit planned every day of His life. What would happen if Seventh-day Adventists—even a relatively small group of us—did the same? Could we have that kind of relationship with the Father? Should we pray for that?
4. Unfortunately, looked at superficially, the life of Jesus yielded a relatively small result. How many people were committed to His cause on crucifixion Friday? But fortunately, that was not the end of the story. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31 and 15:5 suggest that the church grew exponentially through the first century. Reliable estimates suggest that by the end of the first century, there were more than 1 million Christians in the Roman Empire. Obviously, God had a lot to do with that! But, God depended upon human beings willing to do whatever was necessary to carry the gospel forward. Read Acts 1:4,8,14; 2:42; 4:31,33; 6:3,4. These verses make it very clear that genuine prayer was an essential part of that growth.
5. It has been suggested frequently that God speaks to us through Bible study and through our study of the spirit of prophecy. In turn, we speak back to God through prayer. That is not exactly what we think of as a two-way conversation; but, how well does it work for you?
6. The ultimate revival in the form of the latter rain is what we are looking for. “A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 121.
7. Why don't we pray more? Have we lost the science of prayer? Are we too busy? Are we claiming that our lives are busier than Jesus' life was? How was it that Jesus managed to pray all night and arise refreshed? Did Enoch do that? Was that a miraculous happening? Could it happen to us? What are we losing by not spending more time in prayer? Do our prayers need to be longer? Or, better? Could we have a closer relationship with Jesus Christ? A better Christian experience? More temptations? Or, the blessing of the Holy Spirit?
8. Jesus prayed for us. (John 17:20-24) What was He praying for? Jesus also prayed for His closest followers. (Luke 22:31-32) He even prayed fervently for Himself. (Matthew 26:36-44)
9. Read Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-13; and Luke 9:28-36. These passages talk about the famous experience on the mount of transfiguration. What is a transfiguration? At that time, Jesus' entire being was transformed into brilliant light. Do you think that ever happened to Him during His times of personal prayer? Or, was that display at the transfiguration just for the benefit of His three closest disciples?
10. Obviously, there were miraculous responses to many of Jesus' prayers. Did that help to make His prayers more meaningful? Have you seen miracles as a result of your prayers?
11. Read Matthew 18:19,20. Is group prayer better than private prayer?

The promise is made on condition that the united prayers of God's people are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer. The power given will be proportionate to the unity of the members and their love for God and for one another.—Ellen G. White, *The Central Advance*, Feb. 25, 1903.

12. Are there some people who cannot pray for themselves? Is there some reason why group prayer is more “powerful” than individual prayer? Is there an essential difference between group prayer and private prayer? Do you believe that private prayer allows you to speak more openly to God than when you are speaking in a group? Does that make a difference?
13. We all recognize that God knows everything about us even before we begin to pray. Do we always recognize that when we pray? John Bunyan said, “You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.” Do you agree?
14. Read Acts 12:1-16. Try to imagine yourself in the upper room praying for Peter’s release from prison. What words would you use in your prayer? Try to imagine yourself in Peter’s position in prison. Would you have been sleeping? Or, praying?
15. Sometimes, Christians feel that their prayers never go higher than the ceiling. Sometimes, they might feel like they are just talking to themselves. Have you ever had that experience? If God already knows exactly what we need and why, why do we have to ask for anything?
16. What does it mean to pray “in the name of Jesus”? Is that essential to get an answer?
17. God always recognizes our freedom. In the setting of the great controversy, God limits His actions based on our freedom and the constant opposition of the Devil. Certainly, we would all recognize that God has the power to do anything He decides to do. He could eliminate the Devil. He could heal every sick or hurting Christian. He could perform miracles in response to every Christian’s prayer. But, that would distort the issues in the great controversy. In the setting of the great controversy, we need to learn what would happen if Satan were allowed to rule. We need to learn the consequences of sin. But, how often do we limit what God can do for us because of our own sinful desires and selfishness? And if we pray for something as an individual or even as a group, does that give God permission to do things—in the setting of the great controversy—which He “could not” do otherwise?
18. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. What are the powerful weapons that God gives us to use in this fight? What happens to our faith and our relationship with God when we stand through a difficult situation or perhaps even receive an answer to prayer? Can we think God’s thoughts?
19. Surely, prayer is a weapon that none of us can afford to do without.

We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should. Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509.
20. The battleground of the great controversy is in the minds of God’s children. Do you sometimes feel like you are in a battleground? Or, that you are a battleground?
21. What is the best way to pray? Do we need to kneel down? Do we need to have our Bibles open in front of us? Jesus offered prayer while standing up, (John 11:38-44) while sitting down, (John 6:10,11) and apparently, even while lying flat on the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:39)
22. Is there a standard pattern that God suggests and recommends for praying? On two different occasions, Jesus gave what we call the Lord’s Prayer as a sample prayer. What can we learn from those examples? (Matthew 6:7-13; Luke 11:2-4)
23. It is often very meaningful to pray to God as one is studying the Scriptures. You may want to praise His name after reading a particularly meaningful passage.
24. Prayers of supplication are also very appropriate. Read Daniel 9:8-19. Notice several important things about Daniel’s prayer. He almost certainly was not a part of the problem,

but he sought to be a part of the solution. As far as we know, he was not a great sinner; but, he recognized that the most important thing was to correctly represent God and His name before the nations of the world. How often do we pray for God's reputation? Do we tend to be a part of the problem? Or, a part of the solution? Is it more important what people think of us, or our church? Or, is it more important what people think of God?

25. Another very important part of prayer is giving thanks. (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6) A general outline for prayer might be something like this: 1) Begin with praise and adoration of God for His many blessings and kindnesses to us. 2) Confess your faults and shortcomings. 3) Thank God for His wonderful forgiveness. 4) Tell God what you believe your/our needs are. 5) Recognize that God knows best and that we submit all requests in an attitude of humility and trust.
26. 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. . . . 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 watch care, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 100.
27. Have we recognized the importance of prayer in our lives? Do we act as if we really believe that God has an intimate, personal relationship with each one of us if we are willing to let Him? Why is prayer such an essential part of spiritual revival? Do you feel like you have lost something if you fail to spend time in prayer with God each day?
28. Do you think the time will come when there will be experiences again like what happened on the day of Pentecost? The disciples had come together after spending about 10 days apparently fervently praying together, confessing their sins, acknowledging their dependence upon each other, and then turning to Jesus their Friend to ask for His help. What would happen if we did something like that in our day? Have we allowed our lives to become so busy, so full of things which are "urgent," that we do not have time for the "important"?
29. What limitations are there to the power of prayer? If enough people are praying for something, does God have to do it?
- Why do not believers feel a deeper, more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another?—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 21
30. What are the advantages of group prayer? Does it help us to focus on the most important issues? Does it help to bring us closer together as a Sabbath School class? Or, a church? Or, even a small group? Why do you think God especially recommends two or three coming together? Christ has promised to be present where two or three are gathered together. But, isn't the Holy Spirit present at all times? Everywhere?
31. What do you think? Do we need more prayer? Or perhaps, new kinds of prayer? Or perhaps, new attitudes in prayer?
32. What does the Devil do when he sees Christians praying? Does he regarded that as a loss for him? Or, a challenge? What could you do to improve your prayer life?

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