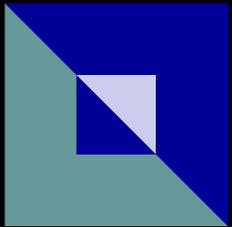


The Road to Damascus...

Pray, Talk to God

Lesson Two



The Road to Success in Christian Living

The Road To Damascus...Pray, Talk to God Page 2 of 5

COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
- that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, was buried, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to many people, ascended to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, and will one day return to earth taking all believers of all the ages to be with Him in Heaven forever.
- that when I made declaration of this, my belief, to God, I became His adopted child and His Holy Spirit came to be with my spirit forever.
- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

The Road to Damascus: Pray, Talk to God

Lesson Goal: To encourage believers to pray consistently.

Lesson Scripture: Acts 9:1-25, 22:1-21, 26:9-19

Memory Verse: “Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”
Jeremiah 29:12, 13

Paul, when his name was Saul and when he was leading the persecution against all Christians, decided to go to the town of Damascus. It is northeast of Jerusalem in modern day Syria. Damascus is, according to some, the oldest inhabited city in the world. Paul was working under the religious authorities of that time who considered Christianity a crime. He went with written instructions to bring the Christians, women and men, back to Jerusalem for punishment of imprisonment and death.

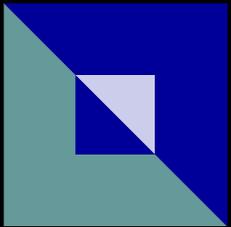
We know the story of one death as a result of this crusade. The person was stoned to death. His name was Stephen. He was accused of speaking against the Temple in Jerusalem and against the law of Moses. When the crowd picked up stones and began to throw them at Stephen, they piled their coats at the feet of Saul.

As Saul was nearing Damascus with his team, a bright light began to shine on them. It seems that everyone on the team could see the light. The light was so intense that everyone there fell to the ground. Then, God spoke to Saul. He identified Himself as the one Saul was persecuting. Saul had thought that he was helping God by killing Christians. Jesus, speaking to him on that day, identified Himself as the one Saul was really persecuting. At that moment, Jesus appointed Saul to be His special messenger, to “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God...”

Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul, spoke directly to God that day. When believers listen and respond to God, we call it prayer.

Why did Paul speak to God? He heard from God and knew that he had to respond. It is like that with all believers. First, God’s Holy Spirit speaks to us. That communication is spiritual and calls us to Him even before we become believers.

Christians should pray to God just like they converse with other respected people. Prayer is talking AND listening to God. Jesus spoke to Saul first. Saul confirmed the source of the voice he heard and responded with a request for more information. Jesus gave him specific instructions and Saul went forward to live a new life of ministry. Paul said, in Acts 26: 19, that he was not disobedient to the vision he had on the road to Damascus.



The Road to Success in Christian Living

The Road To Damascus...Pray, Talk to God Page 3 of 5

How are Christians to pray? Jesus gave us the example that comes directly from God. How often are Christians to pray? Paul, himself, tells us to “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ.” (I Thessalonians 5:17) You can see this in two ways. One is that we should live every minute in the awareness of God’s presence. The other is that we should speak each word, know each thought, and realize that our every act is to God...a prayer to Him. Our very thoughts are an offering to Him.

About what are Christians to pray? We are instructed by scripture to “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6) That means just what it says, we should pray about everything. Does that mean that we should get on our knees and thank God that the door to the car opened when we inserted and turned the key? Not necessarily. It does mean that when you get in the car, God is watching, and reliable transportation is something for which to be grateful.

So, is there ever a time to get on our knees, or, in the words of Scripture, “go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father...?” Absolutely! Prayer becomes personal between you and God when you shut out everything else in the world, and spend time alone with Him. That should be a very regular, probably at least a daily, happening. It should be a time to speak and to listen. Most of the time, God speaks to us best when we are quiet and the rest of the world is far away.

*Underlined sentences in the Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.

The Road to Success in Christian Living

The Road To Damascus...Pray, Talk to God Page 4 of 5

COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
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- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

The Road to Success in Christian Living *The Road to Damascus: Pray, Talk to God*

Memory Verse:

“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:12, 13

Pray, Talk to God:

>Saul, later named Paul, met Jesus on the road to Damascus. It was a miraculous event. Jesus spoke to Saul and then Saul spoke to Jesus. We don't have to hear Jesus speak out loud to know that He would welcome our prayer.

>Our Model Prayer: “Our _____ in Heaven, hallowed

be your _____, your kingdom come, your _____ be done on

earth as it is in _____ . Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our _____ as we also have forgiven our

_____ . And lead us not into _____ , but deliver us

from the _____ .” (Matthew 6:9b-13)

>Paul tells us how often to pray: “...pray _____ ; give thanks

in all _____ .” (I Thessalonians 5:17)

>We are to pray about _____ . “...in everything, by

_____ and _____ , with thanksgiving, present your

_____ to God.” (Philippians 4:6)

>Prayer becomes personal between _____ and _____ when your shut out

_____ else in the world, and _____ time alone with _____ .

>Prayer is talking to God and then listening for God to talk to us. Every Christian should pray regularly.

The Lord's Prayer

Clovis Chapel, outstanding American preacher, said of the disciples who came to Jesus asking Him to teach them to pray:

“It is heartening to remember that when these disciples came with this wise request, Jesus did not rebuke them. He did not turn them away. He taught them to pray. He taught them by giving them this form of prayer. In fact this prayer gives us a deep insight into the mind and heart of our Master. Here we find His conceptions of God. Here we find those values that He thought most worth living for and most worth of dying for. Here we find His dearest hopes and dreams. Here we see the faith that steadied Him and enabled Him to die alone. Jesus lived this prayer. It was wrought out in His life before it became articulate upon His lips. And, He is eager to share its treasures with you and me.

It is also encouraging to remember that these faulty disciples did finally learn how to pray. There came a time when they could make this prayer their very own. And that is about the highest human achievement. Of course, there were many failures. Once when a desperate father brought his son to be cured, they fumbled the task miserably, changed their opportunity into scorn from their enemies, humiliation for themselves, and despair for the one whom they were seeking to help. When Jesus came upon the scene and brought victory out of defeat, He told them that the reason for their failure was their lack of prayer. (Mark 9:14-29) Then there came another day when the skies were full of clouds and they faced other opportunities that threatened to become big impossibilities. But they had in some measure learned their lesson. They began to pray, and their weakness became strength and their bewilderment became wisdom. ‘When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 4:31)

Real Praying

Prayer is not just something to do before meals, to begin a meeting, or to end a meeting. Prayer, **real prayer**, is recognizing the presence of God, speaking directly to Him and listening for His communication. Real praying involves:

Honesty—God knows everything; therefore we can't tell Him something new or hide something from Him. When we speak to God, every word must be truth and every thought sincere.

God-awareness—When we pray, our mind should be on nothing else but God. Those who pray in public run the risk of praying to their audience, not to God. Jesus warned against praying just to be heard. (Matthew 6:7) Remember that all things you say and do are in God's presence. Paul said that we should pray without ceasing. (I Thessalonians 5:17) That means that there is never a moment that we can't share with God.

Preparation—Those who pray most effectively have thought about that which they pray before they begin. One doesn't speak to a dignitary without some thought as to what they should say. Prayer is to the creator and ruler of the universe. Rushing into His presence with no thought of what one says, borders on irreverence.

Sincerity—We have said every thought must be sincere. That means when we speak to God, there is no pretense, no drama, just genuine, unreserved sharing of our soul.

Humility—Prayer is not putting on a show for God and certainly not “showing off” for those in whose presence we pray. Churchy words may communicate your feelings. However, your own words will probably convey your feelings, needs, and gratitude much better. Churchy words tend to be “fill words,” not true prayer.

Expectation—Jesus said that we should pray “believing.” That means that our prayers should be something that we expect God to hear and from which we expect a response from God. Another word for this is faith.

Gratitude—The very idea that a human, farther from God than a gnat is from a human, can approach Him should engender thanksgiving. There are always many things for which we can be grateful when we address God in prayer, including, and especially, the privilege of calling His name.