

## LESSON 1: Prayer in Scripture



REFERENCE

Page 164 [KNOWLEDGE,  
UNDERSTANDING & INSIGHT]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (2)(3) Bibles

### AIMS

- To help learners know what the New Testament says about prayer in relation to the life of Jesus
- To encourage learners to model their own prayer lives on that of Jesus

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners know what the New Testament says about prayer in relation to the life of Jesus.
- DAP Learners model their own prayer lives on that of Jesus.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

This lesson asks learners to explore selected New Testament passages concerning prayer. The chosen passages are suggested by 'Scripture on prayer', 130 in *Connections* (Michael Burke. 1991. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 133). They look at how Jesus used prayer in his life, and consider what they might learn from this with regard to their own prayer lives.

It's preferable for each learner to have a Bible for the lesson activities but, if this is not possible, at least try for two or three per group. Alternatively, provide photocopies of the readings.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### 1 Introduction

Ask learners to discuss briefly the benefits of consulting Scripture concerning prayer. Perhaps the most obvious reason – since prayer is communication with God – is to get in touch with what God says about it. Our most obvious access to the Word of God is through Scripture.

#### 2 What Scripture Teaches

- Divide the learners into small groups
- Allocate one of the following passages per group or ask each group to choose one of the passages:

Matthew 6:5-15	Matthew 7:7-11
Matthew 7:21- 23	Matthew 18:19-20
Matthew 21:22	Luke 11:5-13
Mark 11:22-25	Colossians 4:2
Romans 12:12	

- iii. One learner in each group reads the passage aloud to the group twice. Learners discuss what the passage is teaching them about prayer.
- iv. After the discussion ask each group to give feedback to the whole class on what the main teaching in their passage on prayer is.
- v. Sum up all the points made by the learners stating that this is what some significant passages in the New Testament teach us about prayer.
- vi. Challenge them to find other reference to prayer in the Bible at home or see if there is anything else that they think should be added.

### 3 Jesus' Prayer Life

- In the same groups as above ask the learners to take one of the following readings (or others you have selected) about Jesus' prayer life:
  - Luke 4:42                      Luke 5:15-16
  - Luke 9:28                      Luke 11:1-13
  - John 17
- Ask each group to briefly summarise, in their own words, what they find out about Jesus' prayer life from these passages.
- After discussion ask the groups to give feedback to the class. From the feedback form a general summary that shows the main lessons that the prayer of Jesus can teach us.
- Conclude this section by challenging the learners to imitate Jesus' prayer life. Invite them to suggest simple, practical ways in which they might do this. (They may not be able to go up a mountain or onto a lake to pray, but they can sit in a quiet place to pray.)

### 4 Conclusion

- i. Invite learners to spend a few minutes in quiet considering their personal prayer lives:
  - What have I learnt or found inspiring about prayer in this lesson?
  - What single thing could I take out of this lesson to practice during the coming week?
- ii. Invite willing learners to share their responses to these questions.

## OTHER IDEAS

### 5 Gospel Treasure Hunt

Instead of giving the learners the references challenge them to a 'Gospel Treasure Hunt' – i.e. divide the class into small groups of 5 or 6 learners asking each group to take a Gospel or one of the Pauline Letters, to scan through it for references to prayer, and to discover what is being taught by their portion of Scripture about prayer.

### 6 Prayer Models in Other Religions

Just as Christians can look to Jesus as a model for life and prayer, so people of other faiths have their own exemplars. Invite the learners to find out something about such an exemplar in a faith other than their own. Muslims look to the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), Jews to Abraham and Moses, and Buddhists to the life of Gautama Buddha, for instance. In addition to this, each religious tradition has its saints. But remember that the focus, in this exercise, is on the chosen exemplar's practice of prayer.

### MATERIALS

- There are no further materials provided for this lesson.



## LESSON 2: Responding to Scripture



REFERENCE Page 162-163 [EXP], 165 [SKL]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Bible or Lectionary
- (3) Bibles

### AIMS

- To help learners understand that God speaks to them through Scripture
- To help learners respond to Scripture in their own private prayers and reflections

### OUTCOMES

- DAP Learners respond to Scripture in a prayerful way.
- EXP Learners experience the opportunity to respond to Scripture by praying in their own words.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

The lesson aims to make learners aware that God speaks to us through the scriptures. However, while Lesson 1 drew on New Testament passages to reflect on prayer, this lesson uses texts from one Old Testament book – Isaiah. In this lesson learners are still using written prayer – God's Word and our response, but they are now moving towards using their own words to respond to God.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### 1 Introduction

- Begin the lesson by asking the learners the following questions:
  - How do you feel about reading the Bible? (Encourage them to answer honestly.)
  - Why do you think some people are afraid to read the Bible? (Formal looking, old fashioned language, 'boring', etc)
- After listening to the learners' responses, tell them very briefly that although God had only a few men write the Bible, perhaps over a period of about a 1000 years or so and many thousands of kilometres away from South Africa, Christians view these writings as God's word to them. (You might remind learners that Christians share what they call the Old Testament with Jews; and that Jews, Christians and Muslims all view themselves in some way as 'children of Abraham'.)

#### 2 Dipping into the Bible

- Invite the learners to listen to a Scripture passage that you have chosen. To avoid your own personal preference in this regard, you could choose the First Reading of the day according to the Catholic Church's liturgical cycle.
- Before reading, give the learners the following advice:
  - Don't analyse, or wonder whether you agree or disagree.

- Do wonder which words seem directly spoken to you and connect most directly with your personal story – let the words penetrate into the most hidden corners of your heart (from Nouwen)

(Michael Burke. 1991. 'How to read Scripture in a contemplative way' 118 in *Connections*. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 130)

- iii Read the passage to the class twice, slowly and reflectively.
- iv Ask a few learners to share what the passage is saying to them. If you feel it is appropriate, share what you feel the passage is saying to you.
- v One learner reads the passage again as a prayer.

### 3 Listening to Scripture

- i Ask the learners to choose one of the following Scriptural texts.

Isaiah 41:10

Isaiah 45:22 – 24

Isaiah 48:17

Isaiah 51:7 – 8

Isaiah 55:8 – 9

Isaiah 58:6 – 9

Isaiah 43:1 – 5

Isaiah 46:3 – 4

Isaiah 49:15 – 16

Isaiah 51:12 – 13

Isaiah 55:10 – 11

- ii They read the text through several times and reflect on it
- iii Learners pray in their own words in response to the Scripture passages. You may invite them to write their prayer down.

### 4 Conclusion

Ask a few learners to describe how they found the above exercise.

## OTHER IDEAS

### 5 Scriptural Prayers

Ask the learners to search out prayers in the scriptures of their own religious tradition. Once they have found two or three, suggest that they choose one that is closest to being a prayer they can make their own. If the words don't quite seem to 'fit', suggest that they rewrite the prayer, with small adaptations for their own situation or need, in their own words.

### MATERIALS

- There are no further materials provided for this lesson.



## LESSON 3: Paraphrasing Prayers



REFERENCE

Page 162 [EXP], 165 [SKL]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) Song sheets or CD player and recording
- (2) Poster
- (2) Bibles

### AIMS

- To help learners develop the skill of praying in their own words
- To help learners paraphrase well-known prayers and psalms so that they fit their own context, thus making them more accessible.

### OUTCOMES

- DAP Learners show willingness to experiment in paraphrasing well-known prayers.
- SKL Learners are able to pray in their own words.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

In this lesson learners are given an opportunity to paraphrase and write their own prayers. Where possible allow them to choose which traditional prayer or psalm they paraphrase.

Paraphrasing is primarily about putting something into your own words. It demonstrates your own understanding of the original intention or meaning, while (ideally) making this closer to your own experience. Sometimes – perhaps intended here – ‘paraphrase’ is used more loosely and expansively to mean both ‘use your own words’ and ‘relate it to your own situation or context’. Thus, if you want to rewrite Psalm 23, and live in an urban context, then you need to consider what you can do to shift the imagery from its rural to an urban context. Who, or what, might take the place of a shepherd in an urban context? A taxi driver? A street-wise guide? And what kind of threats is one now hoping to be protected from?

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### 1 Introduction

- i Begin the lesson by asking the learners to sing the Our Father or Psalm 23 as an opening prayer (using the traditional words and a well-known melody). Alternatively, you could play a CD or tape recording of the prayer or psalm. If using the recording, ask the learners to listen and pray with the singer.
- ii Introduce the idea of ‘paraphrasing’. Invite few learners to share with the class what they understand by this term. Take a few responses. You might need to draw on some of the ideas in the Teacher’s Note above.

#### 2 Paraphrasing a Prayer

- i Give the learners an example of a paraphrased ‘Our Father’, such as the following one in the English-based Black American language called ebonics. Use this example wisely – it is

not intended to make fun of the prayer! Some explanations are given in brackets. You might display it on a poster.

Big Daddy's Rap

Yo, Big Daddy upstairs,  
 You be chillin (relaxing)  
 So be yo hood (neighbourhood)  
 In this here hood and yo's  
 Gimme some eats  
 And cut me some slack, Blood  
 Sos I be doin' it to dem dat diss (harass) me  
 Don't be pushing me into no jive  
 And keep dem Crips away  
 'Cause you always be da Man  
 Aaa-men

- ii Now ask the learners to re-write the Lord's Prayer, and Psalm 23 (or their favourite psalm), making it more personal by:
  - replacing old fashioned words
  - changing the word order to a more modern language usage
  - replacing clauses such as 'your kingdom come' with what you understand – for example 'let justice and peace come to the world (or to a particular situation of conflict that is affecting one), or 'our daily bread' with the specific things you need – for example food, love of family, health, ability to learn/sleep/walk/sing, etc.

**3 Feedback**

- i Ask learners, in pairs, to share their paraphrased prayers with each other.
- ii In conclusion, ask the learners to share how they found the experience of paraphrasing the traditional prayer or psalm. Has it made the prayer/psalm more meaningful for them?

**OTHER IDEAS**

**4 Act of Contrition**

Ask the learners to compose their own Act of Contrition in small groups or individually.

**5 Do-it-yourself Prayer**

- i Bring three or four unusual objects to the lesson. Present them to the class e.g. a bottle of glue, a plastic spider, a picture of a pig and a small plant, and ask what sort of prayer could be made out of these objects. If no suggestions are forthcoming, suggest "O God, please stick (glue) with me when I act like monster (spider) or a pig, and please help me to keep growing (plant) in my love for you ..."
- ii Give the learners a few more lists of unusual objects and ask them to create prayers around them. Suggested objects could be: a can opener, a board eraser, a shoe and a sandwich or a pen, a pencil sharpener, a CD and a spoon.
- iii Conclude by inviting the learners to share with the class their prayers.

(Betsy Caprio. 1973. Exercise 11 in *Experiments in Prayer*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, p 60-61 – adapted)

**MATERIALS**

- There are no further materials provided for this lesson.

