

# Helpful Habits for a Strong Prayer Life



## SABBATH—MAY 9

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Kings 19:1–18; Matthew 7:7; Matthew 6:5–15; Daniel 9:4–19; Romans 8:26, 27.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “People, trust God all the time. Tell him all your problems. God is our protection” (Psalm 62:8, ICB).



**Jesus is the same as the Vine. We are the same as branches.**

**HOW STRONG AND HEALTHY** is your prayer life? How often do you pray? Do you pray every day? Do you pray with all your heart? Do you expect God to answer your prayers? Or only in emergencies? Are you always asking God for something? Or do you praise God in your prayers, too?

Also, do you pray in the morning before you eat? Do you pray in the middle of your busy day? Maybe you are part of a prayer group that meets every week. Or maybe you pray all the time. Do you believe that God is with you when you pray? How does meeting with God in prayer change everything in your life?

Prayer is the unchanging connection between us and Jesus. Jesus is the same as the Vine. We are the same as branches. “Do you want your spiritual life to grow? Then you must get sap and food from the Living Vine. When we separate from the Vine, we don’t have strength.”—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 73, adapted. God hears us when we pray. God may not always answer in the way we expect. But He always answers in His time and in His perfect way.

This week, we will continue to study more examples of people in the Bible who prayed. We will look at some of the useful habits from their prayer lives. How can these daily habits help make our own prayer lives grow strong?

**ELIJAH: PRAYING IN HARD TIMES (1 Kings 19:1–18)**

Elijah lived in an evil time. Ahab was king of Israel during that time. King Ahab “did many bad things that made the LORD, Israel’s God, angry. He [Ahab] did more bad things than all the kings of Israel who lived before him” (1 Kings 16:33, EASY). Elijah challenged the leaders of the god Baal at Mount Carmel (read 1 Kings 18). For sure, Ahab and his kingdom saw that God answers prayer.

**Read Elijah’s prayers in 1 Kings 19:1–18. Why is Elijah so sad? What does God do for him? How is God’s answer different from what happened at Carmel?**

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God answers every one of Elijah’s prayers. But Elijah’s thoughts and feelings soon change. God gave Elijah a powerful victory that day. But Elijah is so tired. He allows his fear about death to cause him to lose trust in God. Elijah becomes discouraged and very sad in his heart. What does God do when that happens? He takes care of Elijah’s needs. The Lord gives Elijah food and water again (1 Kings 19:5, 6). “The meal made him [Elijah] strong enough to travel for 40 days and 40 nights” (1 Kings 19:8, EASY). When God finally announces Himself to Elijah, He does so in a very different way than He did for Moses.

Sometimes in our lives, God answers prayers in very powerful ways. His answers make our faith strong. We feel so close to God in our hearts during these times.

Other times, we may feel weak in our faith. We may think that following the Lord with strong faith is too hard. We also may look for God to answer our prayers only in ways that we expect. We must remember that our own thoughts and plans are not as wise and good as God’s thoughts and plans (Isaiah 55:8, 9). We don’t understand many things about the wonderful things that God made in nature. So, we shouldn’t be surprised that we also don’t understand everything that God does.

**God is our holy and loving Father. He knows just what we need. How can you learn to trust Him during the hard times of life? Ask Him now for the strength to help you trust Him during the hard times ahead.**



**God takes care of Elijah’s needs. The Lord gives Elijah food and water again (1 Kings 19:5, 6).**

## WAITING FOR ANSWERS (Matthew 7:7)

Did you pray for something for a long time and feel that God didn't hear you? The Bible tells us to "go on asking God for what you need. Then God will give it to you" (Matthew 7:7, EASY). And "when we ask for anything that he wants us to have, he listens to us" (1 John 5:14, EASY). What do these promises mean to you?

Hannah prayed for something she wanted (1 Samuel 1:10–17). At first, we may think that God didn't hear Hannah. But Hannah continued to pray. God answered at the right time. Often as we wait for God's answer, our faith grows strong. We learn to trust God more, too.

Psalms 62:8 says, "People, trust God all the time. Tell him all your problems. God is our protection" (ICB). We may not see our prayers answered right away. But do we continue to trust that God will answer at the right time?

Sometimes God may not answer our prayers as fast as we want. Or in the way that we expect or hope for. What advice does the Bible give us when we feel this way?

- **Seek God's plan, and not your own** (Matthew 6:10; 1 John 5:14, 15).
- **Think about your reasons for asking God to answer your prayer** (Proverbs 16:2; James 4:3).
- **Are you holding on to any sin in your life** (Psalm 66:18; 1 Peter 3:12; Proverbs 15:29)?
- **Live in God and obey His Word, the Bible** (John 15:7).
- **Pray with faith** (Hebrews 11:6; James 1:6; Mark 11:24; Matthew 21:22).
- **Ask God to show you what may be getting in the way of His answering your prayer** (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:6).
- **Continue to pray. Don't give up!** (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18).
- **Forgive other people** (Mark 11:25, 26).
- **Trust that God knows what's best** (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 3:20; Jeremiah 29:11–13). **Sometimes God's answer is the same as His answer to Paul: "My grace [mercy] is all you need"** (2 Corinthians 12:9, ERV).

What is your picture of God? If we think God doesn't care about us, we may believe He doesn't hear us. During these times, search the Bible for proof of God's love for you. Pray that your picture of Him will become more loving.



At first, we may think that God didn't hear Hannah. But Hannah continued to pray.

## JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO PRAY (Matthew 6:5–15)

In Jesus' day, people prayed long prayers with big words. The people in Jesus' day respected these prayers. But Jesus had nothing good to say about these prayers (read Matthew 6:5–8). Jesus said that people who prayed these prayers were showing off and pretending to be holy.

Jesus' followers saw Him pray (read Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:18; Luke 22:41; Luke 24:30; Mark 1:35; Mark 6:46). As the followers watched Jesus, they saw that His prayers were so very different from the prayers of the religious leaders. So, the followers came to Jesus and asked, " 'Lord, teach us how to pray' " (Luke 11:1, ERV).

Jesus showed His followers (and us) that we can pray in everyday language. He showed us that our prayers should be honest and come from our hearts.

Read Luke 11:2–4 and Matthew 6:5–15 (ICB). Notice the different parts of the prayer that Jesus taught us:

- **Our Father in heaven.** Honor your personal relationship with the Father who made everyone and everything.
- **We pray that your name will always be kept holy.** When we understand that God is holy, we will respect Him.
- **We pray that your kingdom will come.** We want God to come back. We pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us until Jesus comes again.
- **We pray that what you want will be done, here on earth as it [what you want] is [done] in heaven.** We give our lives to God. We do not pray just for the things we want. We trust that God knows what is best.
- **Give us the food we need for each day.** Ask God for what we need to live (food and water) and for what our hearts need (Jesus and His living Word, the Bible.)
- **Forgive the sins we have done, just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us.** Confess our sins. Stop sinning. Ask for forgiveness. Remember to forgive the people who hurt us.
- **Do not cause us to be tested; but save us from the Evil One.** Ask God to protect us from Satan (Psalm 91).
- **The kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours forever. Amen.** Know that all we are, have, and do belongs to God. He is the only Person we should praise and honor (1 Chronicles 29:11).

**Take time right now to pray to God as Jesus taught us.**



**As the followers watched Jesus, they saw that His prayers were so very different from the prayers of the religious leaders.**

**PRAISE, CONFESS, FORGIVE, ASK, AND THANK  
(Daniel 9:4–19)**

We can use Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6:5–15 as an example or copy for our own prayers. We can copy this prayer when we come to God in private. We can copy this prayer when we come together as a church. Remember, prayer is talking to God as a Friend. Too often our prayers are filled with what we want and need. Jesus taught us to pray for so much more!



Think about how you can include the different parts of Daniel's prayer in your own prayers.

**Read Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:4–19. What are the different parts of Daniel's prayer?**

Think about how you can include the different parts of Daniel's prayer in your own prayers:

**Praise:** Praise is our saying how much we love God for who and what He is. Read Psalm 100. This beautiful poem is a praise song to God. Think about God's many names and His wonderful love. Praise Him for being your Savior, Helper, Healer, Good Shepherd, and Rock.

**Confess and Forgive:** When we talk with God and live in Him, what happens? We will want to let go of whatever separates us from Him. The closer we are to God in our hearts, the more we see that we need Him. When we see our need, we will want Him to remove our sins. We will ask Him to fill us with His love. We will ask Him to change our hearts for the better. If we expect God to forgive us, we must be ready to forgive other people. "So you should tell each other about any wrong things that you have done. Then you will be able to [can] pray for each other, so that God makes you well again. When a good person prays to God, God does powerful things" (James 5:16, EASY).

**Ask:** Do you have problems with your family? Friends? Health? Money? Work? Study? If yes, what are they? Where do you need God's advice to help you? Who needs your support? How can you best give it? Pray about these people. Ask God to lead you.

**Thank God:** Read Philippians 4:6. Think about the blessings in your life. What are they, big and small? God always blesses us. How often do we remember to thank Him for these blessings? Not as much as we should, right?

**What things do you need to praise God for? What sins do you need to confess to Him? What things do you need to ask God for? What do you need to thank Him for? Why not do these things right now?**

## OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT PRAYER (Romans 8:26, 27)

**Do we need to pray if God already knows everything?**

Ellen G. White answers this question: “We do not need to tell God what we are. We pray so that we may accept God into our hearts. Prayer doesn’t bring God down to us. Prayer brings us up to Him.”—*Steps to Christ*, page 93, adapted. Yes, God knows what we want and need. God knows everything we plan to do. So, why pray? Prayer invites us to stop and remember that God is in control. When we pray, we bow at Jesus’ feet. God can solve our problems when we invite Him to do so. The Holy Spirit helps us when we don’t know the right words to pray (Romans 8:26, 27).

**Why do we need to pray if everything is okay?** Pride can be one of the worst things that separates us from God. If we knew how much we need God, we’d come to Him much more! Perfect angels love and worship God. So, why should we sinners think that we need God less than His angels do? What do Matthew 5:6 and Isaiah 44:3 say about this idea?

**What is the connection of faith with prayer?** Read Hebrews 11:6 and then think about this quote: “Prayer and faith are closely connected. . . . Jesus says, ‘Whatever you ask for when you pray, have faith that you will receive [get] it. Then you will get it.’ Mark 11:24 [NLV]. Jesus helps us understand that we must ask for the things that God promises. Whatever we get, we must use it to honor God. When we follow these important rules, God will keep His promises to us. . . . We don’t need to look for proof of the blessing that God promised.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, pages 257, 258, adapted.

**Should I pray with anyone?** First, you should pray in private (just God and you). Make time to look into your heart as you talk and listen to God (Matthew 6:6). Next, you also should pray with your family or in small groups (Acts 12:12). When two or three people meet together to pray, Jesus is with them (Matthew 18:20). Finally, you should pray with your church family (James 5:13–16).

**How do I listen?** Prayer is more than talking to God. We must allow Him to talk with us. The best way to do that is to read the Bible as you pray and spend time with God. Be careful. Don’t empty your mind or just listen to your own thoughts. Search the Bible. Fill your mind with its verses.

**Which one of the parts above do you need to work on the most?**



**When we pray,  
we bow at Jesus’ feet.**



**So, let joy fill your heart as you come to the God who made you.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “We should think less about self. We should think more and talk more about Jesus. Then Jesus will fill our hearts and lives more. We will have much more of Him than we do now.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 102, adapted.

“Don’t talk about your doubts and fears. Don’t try to solve all your troubles and problems. You can’t see how they will be solved. Don’t wait for your troubles to be solved before you have faith. If you do, then your troubles will get worse. Come to God first. Come as you really are. You are helpless. You need Him. Empty your heart of all pride. With trust and faith, tell God what you need. God knows everything. He sees everything in heaven and on earth. God controls everything, too. God can help us. He hears our prayers. He will cause Bible truth to shine in our hearts, the same as light.”—*Steps to Christ*, pages 96, 97, adapted.

“You can come closer to God when you praise Him. The angels in heaven worship God with song and music. When we thank God for our blessings, we worship Him in the way that angels worship Him above. . . . So, let joy fill your heart as you come to the God who made you. ‘Give thanks and sing songs of praise’ to God. Isaiah 51:3 [ICB].”—*Steps to Christ*, page 104, adapted.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- ① Which ideas in the quotes do you like the most? Which parts fill your heart with hope? Which ideas in the quotes above show you things about yourself that you need to change and improve?
- ② Read the following verses about people in the Bible who prayed: Ezra 10:1; 2 Kings 13:4; Jonah 4:2, 3; Habakkuk 3:1; 2 Kings 19:14–19; Jeremiah 32:16–25; Nehemiah 1:4–11; and 1 Kings 8:22–54. What can we learn from their prayer lives?
- ③ How is prayer connected with fasting? Fasting is going for a short time without any food for religious reasons.
- ④ Is there any new idea that you learned this week that you want to add to your prayer life? Why not ask God right now to help you make that change?

## GIVING HOPE TO MAASAI PEOPLE

Rompas was a 16-year-old Maasai boy in Kenya. Rompas decided to go to school after being baptized. More than anything, Rompas wanted to read the Bible for himself.

Rompas's father and many of his 82 brothers and sisters didn't see any need for a Maasai boy to get an education. But Rompas became the first person in his family to complete grade school and then high school. After that, he decided to study at Bugema University to become a pastor. The university was a Seventh-day Adventist school in Uganda. But Rompas needed money.

Rompas asked his brothers and sisters who kept the Sabbath to pray. Rompas asked them to pray for 7,000 Kenyan shillings or pieces of money. With the money, Rompas could afford to travel to Uganda and go to school at Bugema University. Rompas's brothers and sisters prayed as Rompas knelt on the floor. After they said "Amen," someone knocked on the door. A government leader named Alex stood at the door. Alex came to visit Rompas's father. Government leaders liked to visit because Rompas's large family could give many votes for them at election time. This government leader wasn't Seventh-day Adventist. So, his question surprised Rompas. "Does this family have a pastor?"

Rompas's family told Alex that they named Rompas "Pastor" when he was a child because he liked to preach.

Alex asked Rompas, "What is your biggest need?"

Rompas said, "I need to go to Bugema University."

Alex put his hand into his pocket and pulled out 15,000 Kenyan shillings. This amount was more than double the money that Rompas asked for in prayer!

Rompas traveled to the university in Uganda. Then he came back home to wait for classes to start. On the same day that Rompas arrived home, Alex came for another visit. When Alex heard that Rompas got into the school, Alex gave Rompas some US money this time. Rompas never saw US dollars before. The money was enough to pay for three years at the university!

Today, Rompas Josphat Lekishon is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor with a heart for serving Jesus. Because of Rompas's efforts, six churches accepted the Seventh-day Adventist truth. Rompas also started a church on some land that his father gave the church. 33 family members worship there every Sabbath.

Part of this quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering will support work in Kenya and elsewhere in East Africa. Watch a YouTube show about him at: [bit.ly/Rompas-IS](http://bit.ly/Rompas-IS).

## INSIDE *Story*



**The money was enough to pay for three years at the university!**



**Rompas Josphat Lekishon**