

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 1.3



This month, the Dawn Treader is sailing on through the subject of prayer. Parents can sow the seeds for a lifetime of blessing for their children by introducing them early to the joys of prayer and communion with God. Prayer is an important aspect of discipleship, which is why the Aslan Academy program places a strong focus on developing a healthy family prayer life.

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: PRAYING TO GOD

Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children with important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

For week one, ask the first question over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the different reasons highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance.) Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.

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Resource of the Month

The Power of the Prayer Covenant for Kids
– Candy Marballi and Stephen Eyre, with
illustrations by Luke Flowers



The *Power of the Prayer Covenant for Kids* shows how Jesus speaks to children words of truth, love and comfort. This book is an invitation for children to experience prayer like never before. It explains how Jesus invites them into the presence of their heavenly Father, reassuring them of His never-ending love and his desire to hear from them daily. The second half of the book is a Teaching Guide for parents, teachers and ministry leaders that will not only help them to ignite a passion for prayer in the hearts and minds of the children but also encourage them to minister to others through prayer. (Parents may also wish to read the original *The Prayer Covenant* by Jerry Kirk and Stephen Eyre to help ground them for teaching the Prayer Covenant to their kids).

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: PRAYING TO GOD

Week One: Why should we pray? (Mark 11:22-26 and 14:38, John 16:26-28)

- God wants to have fellowship with us—He wants us to spend time talking with Him, just like we would with our closest human friends and family members.
- Prayer is part of the Great Commission, to share Christ's message of salvation with the world. God allows us to actively influence the lives of others for good through prayer, interceding for others and giving thanks for them as well as for ourselves (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- When we pray, whether for ourselves or others, we acknowledge our dependence on God for His mercy and care, and show our gratitude for what He does for us.
- Prayer is also an exercise of faith—just as we do not doubt that our parents will give us the things we ask for, if they are in accordance with what is best for us, so we should come to God in faith when we pray, knowing that He is already planning great blessings for us.

Week Two: How do we pray? (Matthew 6:6-13, Luke 11:1-4)

- Jesus outlined prayer for us in the Lord's Prayer
- Reverence for God and communion with Him as our Father is central to prayer.
- We pray for His Will to be done, rather than for our own selfish, limited aims.
- We make our petitions to Him in confidence, relying completely on His goodness.
- Confession and forgiveness, constant reminders of our salvation in Christ, form a key part of prayer.
- We are grateful to God and praise Him for His glory; prayer is a time for us to remember how great God is and tell Him how wonderful we think He is and how much we love Him, knowing how He loves us.

Week Three: How does God respond when we pray? (Matthew 6:25-34 and 7:7-11, Luke 18:1-8)

- God always hears our prayers—nothing is too small or too great to pray about; He is interested in everything about us and in helping us with all our concerns.
- God answers our prayers according to His great, all-seeing wisdom. We cannot see the future, so we sometimes expect God to answer a prayer right away, when He may be using that time of waiting to prepare us and our circumstances so that the answer to our prayers comes at the very best possible time for everyone.
- Sometimes God does not answer our prayers the way we want, but He never says no without having something even better planned. A refused prayer can be an exciting opening for a greater surprise blessing to come.
- God answers our prayers according to our faith. He knows when we are really trusting Him and when we are merely asking as a matter of routine and don't expect anything to happen. We have to believe in His Grace in order to receive His Grace—this happens with salvation as well as with smaller requests.

Week Four: What should we pray for, and when? (Psalm 55:16-17, Matthew 10:29-32, 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)

- Pray about everything! God wants to be involved in every aspect of our lives.
- We can pray at any time, and whenever some special need or cause of thanksgiving comes up, it is a good idea to pray about it right then, instead of waiting for an "official" prayer time. But it is good to have particular times set aside to talk with God—just like you might talk with your best friend anytime, but will still set a certain time to call or go out together to have a free, uninterrupted time to talk. Quiet time alone with God is the best time to pray specially, but we don't have to stop praying just because there are other things going on around us.
- Thanking God is a part of prayer that is often overlooked. While it is important and necessary to ask for His help, it is even more important to thank Him for all the blessings He gives us, especially those we didn't ask for. Considering that God spends most of His time doing things "above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20) for us, it is a small return to thank Him for it constantly!

Theologian Theodore

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHY DO WE NEED TO PRAY IF GOD ALREADY KNOWS ALL OUR NEEDS?

Theodore: Splendid day, isn't it, Albert? I hope it stays this nice for the church picnic tomorrow; I'm praying it will.

Albert: Mm-hmm.

Theo: Aren't you praying, too?

Al: I haven't been. I feel silly praying about such small things. Besides, doesn't the Bible say that God knows what we want before we ask Him, anyway?

Theo: Yes. "For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8), and "before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

Al: But then why do we ever need to pray at all, if God already knows everything? Why would He command us to do something so unnecessary? It makes God seem very arbitrary. How can I trust that any of His commands make sense if I know some of them don't?

Theo: It might be better to put that the other way around: if you know that most of His commands make sense, which is part of the reason you trusted in Him in the first place, wouldn't you trust that even the commands that we don't immediately understand also make sense? And you do know that God's commands are consistently reasonable: prohibitions on stealing and lying are accepted as social common sense by all civilizations; and loving God and one's neighbor, although not what we fallen humans always do instinctively, is what we all long for—by far the majority of all the stories ever written and dreams ever pursued and influential deeds ever done have arisen from the human longing for relationship, which is only fulfilled by God's primary commands of loving Him and loving our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40).

Al: Yes, but just because some commands are reasonable does not mean they all are.

Theo: But if you don't believe in God's perfect knowledge and wisdom, in giving only righteous and reasonable commands, then you have no reason to believe that He is all-knowing in foreknowledge of our prayers, either, and this conversation is hence unnecessary. So a foundation question is: do you believe that God does know everything, even before it happens?

Al: Yes, of course I do. If He wasn't, He wouldn't be God at all, at least not the God of the Bible.

Theo: Right, I completely agree with you.

Al: So then why does He want us to pray? Can't you see the conflict here? If God knows everything, He doesn't need us to pray; but if He doesn't give unreasonable commands since He knows everything and thus wouldn't make a mistake, why does He command us to pray when it is unnecessary?

Theo: Well, before I try to answer that, I'd like to know what you mean by necessary. Necessary for God, or *necessary* for us?

Al: I'm not sure I understand what you mean, Theo.

Theo: Of course it isn't necessary for God—in the sense that it gives Him something He needs that He wouldn't otherwise have; God has no needs in that sense—to have us ask Him for things before He can give them to us. In fact, He very frequently pours out blessings upon us that we never thought to ask for, even on people who are complete ingrates and refuse even to recognize His involvement in their lives. God doesn't command us to pray because He needs to know what we want; He commands it because we need to ask Him for what we want and thank Him for His gifts, if we are to live like the people He intends us to be. Prayer is



¹ Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, Heirloom ed., retold by Jane Parker Resnick (Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 2002), p.12.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHY DO WE NEED TO PRAY IF GOD ALREADY KNOWS ALL OUR NEEDS?



necessary for *us*, Albert; it's part of God's plan for bringing us into full communion with Him, the perfect end of His gift of salvation. God wants us to learn to trust Him, to depend upon Him as the One Who gives us all things. That's why the Bible is so full of prohibitions against idols—God doesn't want us to trust any fallible created thing to take care of us, but only Him. Prayer, whether we are asking or thanking, is an act of faith, a sign of our trust and gratitude—how we show that we have noticed that God is doing everything for us. Of course God knows all of our needs “without being asked . . . But I've a sort of idea [He] likes to be asked”¹. God wants to interact with us as Father, not just rule and provide for us as King. He's both.

AI: But how does prayer come into that?

Theo: If God didn't want us to pray, how would we ever communicate with Him? He would still speak to us through Scripture, and in our consciences and hearts as He often does, but it would be a one-sided conversation. Unless we talk to God as well as Him talking to us, we can't say

we have a personal relationship with Him. And having that relationship is precisely what we were created for, and so prayer is commanded as an essential part of that relationship. When we pray, “we treat ourselves, in relation to God, not as things but as persons . . . Instead of merely being known, we show, we tell, we offer ourselves to view . . . it is by the Holy Spirit that we cry ‘Father.’ By unveiling, by confessing our sins and ‘making known’ our requests, we assume the high rank of persons before Him. And He, descending, becomes a Person to us”².

AI: Well, I never thought of it like that!

Theo: And there's more to it than that, even. Prayer is not only a way to deepen our relationship with God Himself, but it is also how we come to better love and help our fellow men as Christians. Very often in this world, there is nothing that one human being, as a human being, can do to help someone else—we can't fully comfort or cure or reform anyone entirely on our own; we always need God's grace in addition to our own efforts of kind words or medicine or corrective punishment. And sometimes we aren't even in a position to give those things. But we can always pray. That is one of the key ways how we take part in God's work. It is why Jesus said, in John 16:7: “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” Through the Holy Spirit and prayer, Christians have the tremendous glory and privilege—and almost overwhelming responsibility—to share in Christ's work of redemption by bringing the Gospel to the whole world: that's the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. Practically and spiritually, we have been appointed to share the Gospel with others, and it's impossible to do that without prayer, without communicating with the One Whose work it really all is.

AI: And furthermore, if the most important consideration in human life is our relationship of trust in and salvation from God, obedience is a key part of that relationship. So obeying His command to pray is certainly extremely important!

Theo: Right you are. Come on; let's go help set up the picnic grounds.

AI: And praying for good weather is one of the ways we can help!

Ask your children: What do you think about Theo's answers to Albert's questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give, if someone asked them a question like Albert's.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1955), p. 163

² C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc., 1963), p. 21

Prayer of the Month

DAILY DEVOTIONS

The prayer for this month is a long one, which could be used as a starting point for a child's daily devotions. Following the directions given in 1 Timothy 2:1-4, it covers all the areas we often need to pray about, but can't think of the right words to express what we mean.

Dear God,

You have commanded us in Your Word to pray and give thanks for all people.

Please bless everyone who belongs to Your family, and help us to act and think and rejoice as followers of Christ should, in everything we do, so we can help to bring others into Your Kingdom.

Bless those who do not yet know You, and help them to discover Your Truth. And please help me to help them, especially those I do not really like. Help me to forgive like You do.

Please show me what I ought to be when I grow up, and help me to study and learn so that I can best serve You with the gifts and talents You have given me. Thank You for all the people who work so hard at so many different careers; please bless their work, protect those whose jobs are dangerous, and make sure that they fairly earn enough to make a living and help others. Bless all those who must work together, giving them a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect and kindness toward each other.

Bless everybody who is in charge and responsible for others—parents, teachers, government officials, military leaders, and police officers. Help our lawmakers to make wise laws and decisions that will keep society well ordered and peaceful. Please bless all the soldiers fighting for peace and freedom around the world, and bring all wars to an end that will uphold Your justice and righteousness.

Bless everybody who is poor or sick or in any other kind of trouble. Make them so joyful in You that their problems seem less troublesome, even before they completely go away. Help us to remember to help and comfort those who are having troubles, and please give us the ability to do so wisely.

Bless everybody who is growing old or in danger of dying, and give them an opportunity to come to You before they leave this world, so that they will live forever in the next.

Bless all my family and friends. Help us to live and learn and have fun together in love, being an example of the love and consideration for others that You want everyone to have for each other in the one great family of Your Kingdom.

Bless all of those who have done nice things for me today, and forgive all those who have been mean to me, and help them to repent and make friends. Forgive me for all the wrong things I have done and the unkind things I have thought, and fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I may think and love in a Christlike way.

Thank You, Jesus, for saving me on the Cross, and blessing me with Your love all my life.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

Amen

Activity of the Month

ONE ON ONE



Many Christians celebrate Lent, the season of fasting and prayer before the celebration of Easter. Lent actually began in the very earliest days of Christianity; it was customary for new converts to be baptized on Easter, since that emphasized the connection between Jesus' rising again and their new life as His disciples. So previous to baptism, Christian converts would spend a forty-day period of fasting and prayer, patterned after Jesus' preparation for His earthy ministry in the desert, to demonstrate genuine repentance and desire to pursue God's spiritual gifts rather than worldly advantages. All the other members of the Church would fast with them, in brotherly love and support. And so we can continue to follow this tradition today with our children, taking time over Lent to spend more time enjoying God's Presence and helping others, and less time preoccupied with worldly pressures and pleasures. In the early days, fasting from meat was the most common practice—it would not only have shown spiritual restraint, but the simple meal preparation would have saved time (for prayer) and money (for giving to the poor), since meat was so expensive. Today, there are other foods and practices that tend to preoccupy us more and pull us away from total dependence on God. One idea is to fast from the Internet, other than what is absolutely necessary for school and work, during Lent. (Lent has never been a time of total abstinence, merely of enforced moderation, "going the right length and no further" [C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), p. 78], as C.S. Lewis described the virtue of temperance). Or make a switch to bringing homemade bag lunches to school and work, instead of fast food from the cafeteria or vending machines. Discuss as a family what you wish to exchange for quality time with God during this Lent, setting new priorities in your spiritual life. you can see how your child will come to understand more fully over time.



**KEEPING THE
FAITH**

What is Keeping the Faith?

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