



BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER

You've Got Mail

October 8, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

One survey found that more than 60 percent of Americans are not familiar with the content of the Ten Commandments or with the names of the New Testament Gospels.

John 20:31 (NIV) • “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) • “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

John 21:24, 25 (NIV) • “This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NIV) • “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.”

1 Peter 5:12 (NIV) • “With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.”

1 John 1:3-5 (NIV) • “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

1 John 2:1, 2 (NIV) • “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 John 2:21-25 (NIV) • “I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. . . . See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—eternal life.”

1 John 2:26, 27 (NIV) • “I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.”

1 Peter 1:23-25 (NIV) • “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ‘All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ And this is the word that was preached to you.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER”

Ask any Christian from ages 5 to 50 what activities keep us close to God, and the masses will say, “Bible study and prayer.” All of the spiritual exercises grow out of a connection with God and His Spirit through Bible study and prayer. Since we know (cognitively) that God’s Word and time in conversation with the Father is the heart of the spiritual life, why don’t more people do it? One problem is that many don’t know how to take God’s Word and flesh it out in real life. As a result, God’s Word stays in the box labeled “important things to know but not necessarily useful.” The same is true with prayer. We repeat words and phrases because we don’t know what else to say. This lesson seeks to engage teens in studying the Bible as part of a two-way conversation with God about their sinful human nature, their life, and their role and purpose in the kingdom. Bible study and prayer is a two-way conversation—God speaks to us and to our hearts through Scripture and we respond to Him in prayer. We speak to God in conversation about His Word.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. See Bible study and prayer as a way of conversation with God.
2. Deepen their desire for communication with God.
3. Practice applying Scripture to their everyday lives.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) two adult volunteers OR cellphone (optional); (Activity B) bread, nut-free spread, * jelly, knife, paper towels, paper, pens or pencils, black marker (optional).

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Applying • Bibles, handout “What Is There to Talk About?” (p. 24).

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE’VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

At some point you should distribute or call their attention to their student lesson for this week.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • The purpose of this exercise is to get students to think about the different ways people tend to shut down their communication with God. During the group discussion you will have arranged for someone to interrupt the discussion with a conversation with someone else. Or you might have them enter the room talking loudly enough to distract the group and obviously oblivious to what is happening in the class. Have them continue until someone “shushes” them.

Get set • Get another teacher or perhaps a couple of dependable teens to interrupt the class at the time of a group discussion. Tell them to come in and talk as though they weren’t aware of what was happening. It is a good idea to have them talk about something trivial as well.

Go • As the interrupters enter the room, continue talking for a while as though you’re hoping they will stop when they notice you are having a conversation. It will become awkward when others have to quiet the two down.

The same can be done with a mobile phone call during the middle of your conversation if you stop to answer, saying, “Hold on guys, I have to take this call . . .” The students will be appalled.

Debriefing • Ask: In our communication with God, how do we do the same thing? (Other things are important. Other things take our attention. It is hard to focus or keep from distractions.) **When have you caught yourself rushing through a prayer or a devotional reading just to get done? How is this any different? Why do you think it is so hard to stay focused, attentive, and genuinely in tune with God in a conversation?**

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Students will write and follow instructions to make a sandwich.* Make sure the groups

of three or four have pen and paper to write their instructions. In addition to the instructions, you will need to have the ingredients (nut-free spread, jelly, bread, knife, etc.) available.

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

Go • Say: In groups of three or four, write out detailed instructions on how to make a sandwich. Be thorough.

After the students have finished their instructions, have them turn them in to you. Briefly look them over. You can read them out loud and discuss how the instructions are similar and how they are different.

Another direction you can go with the exercise is to black out with a black marker 50 percent of the instructions randomly. Then ask students to try to make the sandwich based upon the limited instructions. (This emphasizes how we try to live with a verse here and a verse there every once in a while. What percentage of the Bible have you read?)

Debriefing • Ask: What does the experience of writing instructions teach us about communication with words? How does following partial instructions illustrate our trying to live based upon a limited experience with God’s Word, or even a limited prayer time?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following illustration:

Taking time for communication with God is a lot like spending time with your best friend. In order to keep the relationship alive, you need to take time regularly to nurture the relationship. Keeping friendship alive is especially difficult in a long-distance relationship. When friends no longer see each other, they have to communicate through letters, phone calls, e-mails, and other means of communication. It is similar with our relationship with God. His letter to us is His Word, where we can learn of His plan for us. Our way of responding to Him is through prayer and Bible study. The more you spend time with God through the reading of His Word and prayer, the more you get to know His

will. The natural outcome will be that you will want to be more like Jesus and your prayers will be expressions of your trust in God.

Debriefing • Ask: Do you agree or disagree with this comparison? Have students discuss how this metaphor is an illustration of Bible study and prayer.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

In every book on how to have a good marriage there is a chapter or two on communication. In every book on business or politics the power and necessity of communication is included as well. Teachers have to know how best to communicate with their students. Communication is the skeleton of all relationships. A conversation back and forth with the King is not suggested; it is required. The Scriptures have a purpose and a message to communicate.

Ask for volunteers to read the following verses, or have students pair up and read them together in small groups. Ask them to look for the reason this letter was penned long ago. Explain that knowing why someone writes is a big part of understanding what they are trying to say. After reading, have the students share the “purpose” with the class. You can write the answers on the board or a large sheet of paper so everyone can see.

John 20:30–21:1

John 21:24, 25

1 Peter 5:12

1 John 1:3–6

1 John 2:1, 2

1 John 2:21

1 John 2:26, 27

Say: The purpose of Scripture is clear—communication. Writers wrote as God guided them to share a message with people about

their relationship to God. That message isn’t always easy to “get” or “perceive.”

In the student lesson under How Does it Work? there are some questions about a passage of Scripture that may have helped in a conversation with God. Have students, in groups of two or three, follow the steps given, using one of the following Scripture passages: 1 Peter 1:8, 9; John 16:12–15; Romans 15:4; Matthew 26:40, 41; Psalm 119:4, 5; Romans 7:18, 19; 1 Samuel 12:23; Romans 8:26, 27.

When they have answered the questions, have students share the insights they gained and the struggles they had. It is important to remind young people that this is not always easy. The more they do it the easier it will be for them to “get the message.”

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

The illustration of James and Sallie’s lost love letter conveys a truth about the power of prayer and Bible study to steady and strengthen our relationship. While they were happily married, there were words that went unspoken. **Ask:** How does this story illustrate the role of Scripture in our relationship with God? (If you don’t read it, you don’t know God as well or in the same way. You might get parts, but you will miss some things that might be important.) **How is it different?** (It is different in that the story shows the two together in spite of the lost letter. If we didn’t have communication with God we would be lost. The letter is essential!)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

What if you found out that you were adopted and your adopted parents presented you with a large envelope that contained all the pictures, newspaper clippings, stories, letters, poetry, songs, family trees, and home videos of your entire family history—even the events that led to your adoption? What if it contained instructions about how to claim your inheritance or directions to meet your family members? What do you think you would do with

the envelope? Set it aside until you had time to go through it? How do you think you would approach such a discovery? What do you think your experience in prayer and study of the Scripture would be like if you looked at it from this perspective?

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

The goal of this exercise is to show a variety of ways to pray and things you can talk to God about.

Say: Some of the most powerful prayers in the Bible are simply people having a conversation with God about what He has said or something He has done. Sometimes the conversation has to do with what He is not doing and what we hope He will do.

Divide the students into six groups and provide each with a handout (p. 24). (If you have only six people, give each person a prayer to read and examine.) Each group is to read the prayer you assign them from the list below. Then they are to answer the questions on the handout.

1. Prayer for Sodom: **Genesis 18:20-33**
2. Prayer that destroys an army: **2 Kings 19:15-20, 32-35**
3. Prayer from David's heart: **2 Samuel 7:18-29**
4. Prayer of the stressed-out: **Psalms 1:1-6**
5. Prayer of repentance: **Psalms 51:1-13**
6. Prayer of worship: **Psalms 138:1-8**

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think people tend to avoid regular Bible study?
2. What is more difficult—to talk to God honestly and openly or to listen to God with an attentive heart? Why?
3. Do you think some parts of the Bible are more relevant or easier to study than others? Which ones and why?
4. In what ways do you think studying the Bible really changes people? How?
5. When is the best time of the day for you to read the Bible? Why?

6. What do you tend to struggle with the most when it comes to taking time with God's Word: spending the time, mustering the motivation, or staying focused and attentive?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

The key to strengthening your spiritual life lies with the communication between you and God. How do you communicate with others around you? In the book *Steps to Christ* we are reminded that prayer is really about talking to God as though you were talking to a friend. You know what to talk about if you can see (or you want to see) what God is doing in some situation in your life or the world around you.

Studying the Bible can be awkward because it's hard to find a place to begin and we are not sure what to look for. When the lightning bolt of insight doesn't appear, we close the book. We have to remember what the Book says about those who seek God. If you seek with all your heart . . . then you will find Him. The Bible was never meant to be read as a novel. You have to dig through the history and the culture and seek to understand what God was trying to say to people back then, and how that fits in your life today.

The bottom line is, as it is with any exercise, the results don't come overnight. The growth comes as you continue the practice of taking time to have a two-way conversation with God—talking, listening, and responding to what you hear.

FOR LESSON TWO:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE APPLICATION ACTIVITY.

What Is There to Talk About?

Questions to ask yourself and the rest of the group:

- **What is prayer** (in this passage)? According to this particular prayer, how would you define/describe prayer?
- **Who is the pray-er?** What do you know about the person praying? Character traits, strengths/weaknesses, especially their attitude in prayer?
- **What is the main reason for the prayer?** Why are they praying? Why do you think this prayer is even recorded? (Obviously there are many prayers that have been prayed—why is this one mentioned in the Scriptures?)
- **What details, phrases, or words** in this passage really capture what meaningful praying is all about?
- **When you pray**, how would you characterize what your prayers are about? What do you pray for the most? What do you pray for the least?
- **What can you begin to talk about with God** that you don't usually talk to Him about now? Have you ever prayed about a passage of Scripture you read or something someone said in a sermon?
- **To what extent can we talk to God** about the things we hear other people say?



STUDENT LESSON

BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER

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Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 1, The Holy Scriptures:** "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 130-134

YOU'VE GOT MAIL

The story is told of a soldier who was stationed thousands of miles away from his bride-to-be. James would pour his heart out to Sallie on the pages as though she were right there with him. The only thing that kept the two connected were the letters they would write to each other. The mail was often inconsistent, and there were times Sallie wondered what James was thinking and what he was doing. There were even times she wondered if he still loved her. James wrote faithfully, but often the messages would get lost or misplaced or even misdelivered. On one occasion he spelled out his commitment and love to her with unmistakable passion and certainty. But the letter that could have really deepened their love for each other got lost somehow in the mail

room in San Francisco. The loving words were lost in the cracks of the shelves in the post office.

James and Sallie married. On their fiftieth wedding anniversary they talked about how during those years apart they would anxiously wait for the other person to write or call. They reflected on the disappointment when the other person seemed to be silent.

Meanwhile, the old post office was disassembled, and the letter written more than 50 years ago was discovered by a postal worker named Bob. Bob searched for an updated address and made sure the 50-year-old love letter was delivered. Upon delivery, Sallie opened the letter and burst into tears of joy at the words that she read. She checked the date and realized that even during the times of silence James was still communicating his love to her. The message simply never got through.

In what sense is God's message in Scripture like a love letter to us?

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 7:7, 8.
- » Benjamin wants to start studying the Bible regularly and living what it says in his everyday life. He hasn't done this before and is a bit skeptical about being able to be consistent. He doesn't really know where to begin or whom to talk to. Most of his friends don't seem to have an interest in spiritual things. His family goes to church only occasionally. Where does he begin? What would you say to him?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

- » Read Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 30:5, 6; John 17:17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.
- » What do these passages say about the Word of God? Why is it important that you study the Bible daily as you seek to understand God's will for your life?

- » The Bible is God's love letter to us. The Holy Scriptures contain the revelation of God's will to us. While God speaks to us through His Word, we can communicate with Him through prayer. He instructs us to "ask," "seek," and "knock" (see Matthew 7:7,8). If we "hunger and thirst" after His righteousness, He will honor our requests as He sees best.
- » Explain in your own words what the Bible passage in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 means to you. How can you gain wisdom from the Bible?



See activity at the end of this lesson.

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » "Every promise in the Word of God furnishes us with subject matter for prayer, presenting the pledged word of Jehovah as our assurance. Whatever spiritual blessing we need, it is our privilege to claim through Jesus. We may tell the Lord, with the simplicity of a child, exactly what we need." "It is through the name of Jesus that every favor is received. God will honor that name, and will supply your necessities from the riches of His liberality" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 133).
- » How can having a conversation with someone help you grow closer to him or her? For

instance, how does having a daily conversation with the person who has a locker next to yours make you better friends? Why is it important to speak to your parents every day?

- » How can having a conversation with God on a daily basis bring you closer to Him?

- » How would you describe your communication with God? Explain. See **1 Peter 1:8, 9**.

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS



See activity at the end of this lesson.

Thursday

CONNECTING

- » Review the memory text.
- » Just like spending time with your best friend, you need to spend time communicating with God. In order to keep the relationship alive, you need to take time regularly to nurture the relationship. Friends who do not see each other communicate through letters, phone calls, e-mails, and other ways. How is your communication with God? Are you reading the Bible, His letter for you? What is your response to God as you pray and study the Bible? The more you spend time with God, the more you get to know His will. The natural outcome will be that you will want to be more like Jesus, and your prayers will be expressions of your trust in God. The fact that He will never stop loving you is right there in His Word (**Jeremiah 31:3; Psalm 139; Isaiah 1; Ephesians 1**).
- » The Bible is full of messages for you, not simply to tell you what to do, but to encourage you and strengthen you (**Romans 15:4**). There is a message in Scripture reminding you that you are God's child. It's in there. You just have to study, and as you do, God's Word will change you.

Friday APPLYING

- » The following questions will help you study and understand the Bible and have a prayerful conversation with God.
- » **Step 1** Take time to pray quietly and invite God to speak to you.
- » **Step 2** As you read the Bible passages listed for today, pray for a deeper understanding of their meaning. Look at each word. Observe the details.
- » Read the following passages: Romans 15:4; Matthew 26:40, 41; Psalm 119:4, 5; Romans 8:26, 27.
- » Answer the questions listed below:
 1. Is there an instruction to follow?
 2. Is there a promise to claim?
 3. Is this passage calling us to praise or thank God for something?
 4. Is there an example to follow?
 5. Is there a truth to believe?
 6. Is there a rule or counsel to guide my life?
 7. Is there a challenge for me?
 8. What is the passage saying to those of us who read it?
Put it in your own words.
- » **Step 3** What is the message God has for me in the passage? What do I hear Him saying to me?
- » **Step 4** How can I live differently today in light of my conversation with God?

Monday activity

Find the hidden words within the grid of letters.

X C K K D E R O L P M I E Y U
 C M E P M E E E B D P Y V D Z
 Z O E T Q A N K C O N K E U N
 M T R U I U P R A Y E R I T H
 Z G E R M R K D C M M S L S Z
 Q S D M E N W W O Z Z J E E M
 T Z O T A S A Y M U N T B E T
 X C Q H C L P O M L P R A Y K
 S Q T M K A C O U N I K S A P
 P Y P C B R T B N B V S D N W
 E A A T A S F N I D L S T K P
 A T E V D P R Y O U X H S E Z
 K A E C S W N O N C E A S G N
 O L U S M K A C I Z D S E V S
 R K I M O V E K Q E J D R W L

ASK
 BELIEVE
 COMMUNE
 COMMUNION
 CONTACT
 CORRESPOND
 CRAVE
 KNOCK
 LISTEN
 PRAY
 PRAYER
 REQUEST
 SEEK
 SPEAK
 TALK
 THANK
 WALK

- » According to this activity, how can you make Jesus your best friend? Can you explain?

Wednesday activity

Decode the message by finding each substitute letter or symbol.
A few of the letters are given to help you get started. List the
Scripture reference on the line below.

Q = T
C = W
L = S
Z = P
M = H

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
		W								S	H				T										P

Q M Y L Z U G U Q M Y S Z L P L U T D P G

C Y N R T Y L L C Y X D T D Q R T D C C M N Q

C Y D P H M Q Q D Z G N J E D G K P Q Q M Y

L Z U G U Q M U B L Y S E U T Q Y G O Y X Y L E D G

P L Q M G D P H M C D G X S Y L L H G D N T L

N T X M Y C M D L Y N G O M Y L D P G M Y N G Q L

R T D C L Q M Y B U T X D E Q M Y L Z U G U Q

K Y O N P L Y Q M Y L Z U G U Q U T Q Y G O Y X Y L

E D G H D X L Z Y D Z S Y U T N O O D G X N T O Y

C U Q M Q M Y C U S S D E H D X
