

Lesson  
9

# The Power of Personal Prayer

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**Purpose** To assure class members that Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers and to encourage them to establish a regular pattern of sincere personal prayer.

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**Preparation**

1. Prayerfully study Matthew 6:9–13; 2 Nephi 32:8–9; Alma 34:17–28; 3 Nephi 18:15–18.
2. Materials needed: A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

*Note to the teacher* *Prayer is such a frequent practice in the Church that we often take it for granted. Remind class members that although we should pray daily, prayer is not merely an everyday routine to be taken lightly. It is an opportunity to sincerely thank Heavenly Father for our blessings and ask him for guidance in our lives. Heavenly Father loves to have us pray. He listens to our prayers and answers them.*

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**Suggested Lesson  
Development**

**Gaining a Testimony of Prayer**

**Story** Have someone read the following story, which is from Daniel 6:1–28:

Daniel was a young man of Jerusalem who depended on the Lord to guide him. When his country was invaded, he was among those taken captive by the Babylonian conquerors. The kings of Babylon gained confidence in Daniel because of his great wisdom, and he continued to be in favor among the Persians when they conquered Babylon. Darius, the Persian king who ruled over Babylon, gave Daniel a prominent position in the kingdom's government.

The Persian princes resented having Daniel, a Hebrew captive, rule over them, so they worked out a plan to remove Daniel. Knowing that Daniel prayed faithfully, they wrote a rule that for 30 days anyone making a request to anyone but the king should be cast into a den of lions. They took it to King Darius and tricked him into signing the decree and making it an unchangeable law.

Daniel knew about the new law, but he trusted the Lord and continued to pray as he had done before. The princes then ran to the king, saying, "Daniel . . . regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition [to his God] three times a day" (Daniel 6:13).

When Darius saw that he had been tricked, he tried to save Daniel. But the law was unchangeable, so Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. The king spent the night fasting. Early the next morning the king went to the den of lions and called out, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (Daniel 6:20).

Daniel replied, “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me” (Daniel 6:22).

Daniel was released immediately. Then King Darius made a law that all the people should respect the God of Daniel. Darius declared: “He is the living God. . . . He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth” (Daniel 6:26–27).

Discussion

- Why do you think Daniel continued to pray, even though he could have died because of it?

Invite class members to think about the following questions without answering them aloud:

- Is prayer as important to you as it was to Daniel? If not, what can you do to make prayer a more important part of your life?

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### How Do We Pray?

Scripture discussion

Have class members read, mark, and discuss Matthew 6:9 (you may want to use the first enrichment activity to conduct the discussion).

Explain that the Savior gave us the pattern of prayer, giving clear instructions: “After this manner therefore pray ye.” Point out that he showed us that we should address all our prayers to Heavenly Father. Also, by saying “hallowed [holy] be thy name,” Jesus taught us that we should show reverence for Heavenly Father. (You may also want to explain that we should close our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. See 2 Nephi 32:9.)

Have class members read and mark Matthew 6:10.

- In his prayer, Jesus said, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” What quality did Jesus demonstrate when he said this? (Willingness to accept Heavenly Father’s will.) How will our prayers be affected if we develop this quality?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to accept Heavenly Father’s will?

Point out that Heavenly Father knows what is best for us. He will answer our prayers according to our needs, not necessarily according to the things we want.

Story and discussion

Share the following story:

Sarah was riding her bicycle when she was hit by a car. She was critically injured, and her parents prayed that Heavenly Father would spare her life. After she had suffered for a week and it appeared that she would not recover, her family members gathered the courage to ask that Heavenly Father’s will be done. Within a few hours, Sarah died peacefully.

- Why is it important to accept Heavenly Father’s will?

Scripture discussion

Have class members read and mark Matthew 6:11–13. Then discuss the following questions:

- What could Jesus’ request to “give us this day our daily bread” teach us about what we should ask for when we pray? (We should pray daily for blessings we

need, not for luxuries. Our Heavenly Father, who knows our needs, will bless us accordingly.)

- What can we learn from Jesus' words "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"? (We should always pray with a repentant attitude. We must forgive others to be able to receive forgiveness ourselves.)
- The Savior prayed, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." (Note that in the Joseph Smith Translation of this verse, the Savior says, "Suffer [allow] us not to be led into temptation." Heavenly Father does not tempt us to sin.) What can we learn from this request that can help us in our personal prayers? (See 3 Nephi 18:15–18; we should ask for guidance and help to avoid falling into sin.) How does Heavenly Father help us avoid falling into sin?
- The Savior closed his prayer by saying, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." Why is it important that we recognize Heavenly Father's power as we pray?
- We should also express gratitude when we pray. How can we show our gratitude?

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### Heavenly Father Hears Our Prayers

Story

Have a class member read the following story:

When Jonathan saw that his friend Brian had left some money on a table at school, he took the money and quickly slipped it into his pocket.

Feeling bad about what he had done, Jonathan wanted to return the money. But he was afraid of the consequences. He could be expelled from school, and maybe Brian would never talk to him again.

Jonathan's parents had always taught him to pray for help in difficult situations, but he felt unworthy. He felt that Heavenly Father would not want to hear from someone so sinful.

Discussion and quotation

- Why does our sinfulness sometimes make us feel unworthy to pray? How can we overcome such feelings?

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "[God] is your Father; pray to him. If your life is in disarray and you feel uncomfortable and unworthy to pray because you are not clean, don't worry. He already knows about all of that. He is waiting for you to kneel in humility and take the first few steps. Pray for strength. Pray for others to be led to support you and guide you and lift you. Pray that the love of the Savior will pour into your heart. Pray that the miracle of the Atonement will bring forgiveness because you are willing to change. I know that those prayers will be answered, for God loves you. His Son gave his life for you. I know they will help you" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 77).

Scripture discussion

Have class members read and mark 2 Nephi 32:8–9.

- Who prompts people to believe that they are not worthy to pray? Why do you think Satan does not want us to pray?

Story	<p>Ask a class member to read the following story:</p> <p>Andy never did as well in school as he knew he could. He got nervous when he took tests. Even when he studied and felt confident about his knowledge of the information that would be on a test, he seemed to forget it all as soon as he got the test. He discussed the problem with his father. His father suggested that, after careful study and before taking his tests, he pray for help to recall what he had studied.</p>
Scripture discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is it appropriate to pray for help with tests and other things that might not seem important spiritually?</li> </ul> <p>After class members have discussed answers to this question, have them read Alma 34:20–27. Point out that the words “cry unto the Lord” refer to our prayers to Heavenly Father. Note Amulek’s counsel to pray for temporal things, such as fields and flocks, in addition to spiritual things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After we pray for help, what should we do?</li> </ul> <p>Explain that like Andy in the story, we should not simply wait to be blessed; we should work toward receiving the blessings we have prayed for.</p> <p>Testify that Heavenly Father always hears our prayers—even about small things and even if we feel unworthy.</p>

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### Heavenly Father Answers Our Prayers

Story	<p>Have a class member read the following story:</p> <p>Stacey accepted a request to baby-sit for a family she did not know. She was comfortable while she was caring for the children, but when the children had gone to sleep and Stacey was alone in the house, she began to feel uneasy. The creaks of an unfamiliar house and the sound of fighting neighbors made her too frightened to sleep. Remembering the experience, Stacey later said:</p> <p>“The thought came to my mind that my father, who was a fireman, might still be awake and that I could call him on his private line at the station. Within seconds my father was on the phone speaking to me with a comforting voice. He suggested that I lie down on the couch and try to rest. I fought his counsel, telling him over and over again that I was too afraid to ever rest in that environment.</p> <p>“My father calmed my fears with a promise that he would stay on the line and not hang up. I did lie down and rest. However, I awoke with a bolt of fear several times during the following two hours, each time calling, ‘Dad, are you there?’ And every time my father was there, still holding on the line, never leaving me alone.”</p>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was Stacey’s communication with her father like our communication with our Heavenly Father?</li> </ul>
Story continued	<p>Share Stacey’s comments about the experience:</p> <p>“I continue to find that life can be scary and uncertain. . . . The lesson in faith and trust [my father] taught me on that night years ago still comforts me. Now, when I need comfort and reassurance, I pray to my Heavenly Father, ‘Father,</p>

are you there?’ And I am comforted, knowing that he loves me and is still on the line, aware of my situation and ‘a very present help in trouble’ (Ps. 46:1)” (Stacey Child Weeks, “Dad, Are You There?” *Ensign*, June 1996, 53).

Discussion  
and quotations

- Stacey said that sometimes Heavenly Father answers her prayers by blessing her with comforting, peaceful feelings. What are some other ways that prayers are answered?

The following quotations may help you lead a discussion of this question:

Elder Richard G. Scott taught: “Talk to your Father. He hears every prayer and answers it in His way. When we explain a problem and a proposed solution, sometimes He answers yes, sometimes no. Often He withholds an answer, not for lack of concern, but because He loves us—perfectly. He wants us to apply truths He has given us. For us to grow, we need to trust our ability to make correct decisions. We need to do what we *feel* is right. In time, He will answer. He will not fail us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 38; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 31).

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs” (“Small Acts of Service,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1974, 5).

- How have you been blessed by answers to your prayers? (You may want to share an experience you have had with prayer.)

Testimony

Bear your testimony of prayer, and encourage class members to establish a regular pattern of sincere personal prayer.

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### Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Write the following scripture references on separate strips of paper and put them in a bowl. Have class members take turns choosing a strip of paper from the bowl, reading the passage of scripture cited on the strip of paper and explaining what that passage teaches us about how we should pray. (You may want to use this activity with the section of the lesson called “How Do We Pray?”)

Matthew 6:9

Matthew 6:10

Matthew 6:11

Matthew 6:12

Matthew 6:13

2 Nephi 32:9

3 Nephi 18:15–18

2. Ask class members to list things they usually ask for when saying a prayer in Sunday School class. Have one class member write the responses on the chalkboard. Then discuss the responses. The following questions may help you lead the discussion:
  - Do we view an invitation to pray as a burden or a privilege?
  - Do we express gratitude for things that we are truly grateful for, or do we just say the same things that everyone else says?

- Heavenly Father often answers prayers in behalf of others by inspiring us to serve. When we ask Heavenly Father to bless others, are we willing to help those people? (For example, when we ask him to bless absent class members to come to church next week, do we know who is absent? Are we willing to help them come to church?)
- We often ask Heavenly Father to bless us with his Spirit. After saying such prayers, do we act and speak in a way that will invite the influence of the Holy Ghost?

Have class members read and mark Moroni 7:9.

- What do you think it means to pray “with real intent of heart”? (To be sincere in thanking Heavenly Father and asking him to bless you and others.)

Encourage class members to evaluate their personal prayers by silently asking themselves, “Do I pray with real intent?”

3. Sing or read with class members “Did You Think to Pray?” (*Hymns*, no. 140).
4. If *Family Home Evening Video Supplement 2* (53277) is available, show “Heavenly Father Answers Prayers,” a three-minute segment.