

VITAL *SKILLS*

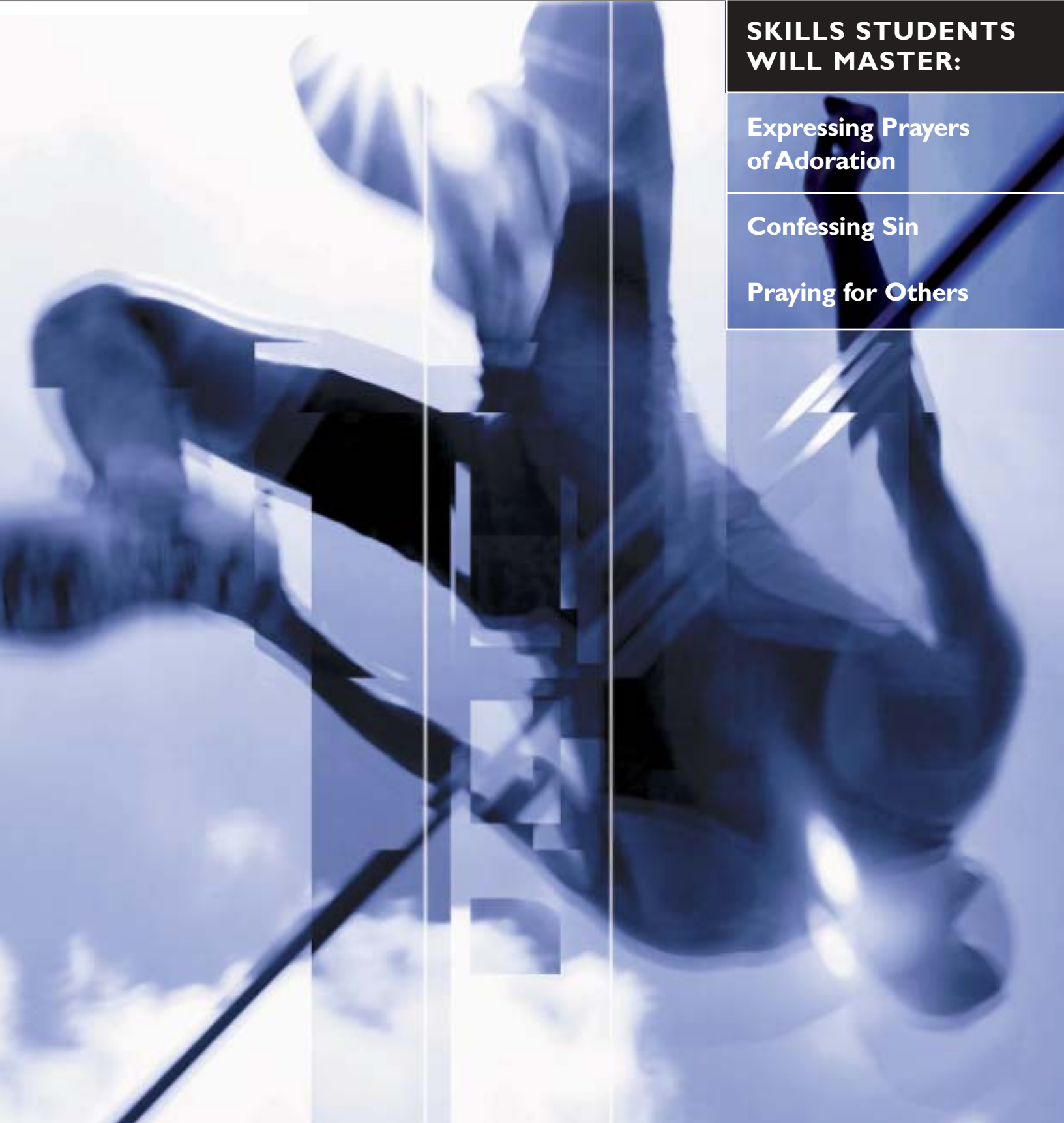
How to Pray Using Scripture

SKILLS STUDENTS WILL MASTER:

Expressing Prayers
of Adoration

Confessing Sin

Praying for Others



Praying Adoration

S E S S I O N T W O

AGENDA

1. Replay (10 minutes)
2. Playbook (10)
3. The Skill (15)
4. Practice (15)
5. Game Film (5)
6. Workouts (5)

NOTES

Purpose

Students will learn how praying Scriptures of adoration will help them recognize the lordship of Christ and affect their decision-making process.

Supplies

- hammer
- nail
- screwdriver
- screw
- nut
- bolt
- socket
- ratchet
- whistle
- stopwatch
- concordances
- tear sheets

Preparation

- Write the words (or phrases) of Ephesians 6:17-18 on separate sheets of paper.
- Post a tear sheet on a focal wall.
- Enlist four students to present the skit "Sands Through the Hourglass" and give each a copy of Strategic Play 6 (p. 24).
- Using tear sheets, create signs as described in the skit "Sands Through the Hourglass" (p. 24).
- Duplicate Strategic Play 4 (p. 22), Strategic Play 5 (p. 23), and the Workouts (pp. 42-43) to provide each student a copy.

Session

I **Replay**

Once students have arrived, give each person one of the construction items. Tell them that when you blow the whistle, they are to quickly (in 30 seconds) find someone with the item that is usually used with the one they are holding. Blow your whistle and start the stopwatch. When time is up, blow your whistle again to end the activity.

Note which items should be paired together (*hammer, nail; screw-driver, screw; nut, bolt; socket, ratchet*). Ask: **How did you know which items belong together?** (*Possible answers: They were made to go together; I've used them together before*) Say: **Last week we learned that the Bible is a tool to help us have effective prayer lives. God intends for us to learn how those two things, Scripture and prayer, go together.**

Mix the papers with the words of Ephesians 6:17-18 written on them. Give each student one or two of the papers, depending upon the size of your class. Instruct youth to work together to stand in order so that the verses read correctly. Once students have placed the papers in order, direct a teen to read aloud the two verses. Ask: **How might daily obedience to these two verses change the way you live?** Say: **When we learn to use the truths found in God's Word to shape our prayers, every moment of our lives becomes more meaningful and clear.**

2 Playbook

Direct students to work in pairs to create a "Top Ten Reasons to Praise God" list. After youth have had time to complete the lists, give pairs time to share and discuss what they wrote. Ask: **How might developing the habit of praising God in all things impact your life?** Lead youth to understand that our praise of God causes us to recognize His lordship in our lives and to think differently about our circumstances.

Say: **King David had plenty of difficult circumstances in life—persecution, ridicule, war, moral failure, and betrayal, just to name a few! But the Book of Psalms is filled with praises of adoration David wrote. Because David knew and treasured the Scripture, He could praise God for who He was, for what He had done, for what He was doing, and for what He would do one day.** Instruct a teen to read aloud Psalm 103, encouraging students to listen to David's list of reasons to praise God. Lead students to name David's reasons for praising God as you write them on the tear sheet posted on the wall.

Divide students into small groups. Distribute copies of Strategic Play 4. Direct groups to read the case studies and decide how praying a prayer like David's in Psalm 103 could help in each situation. Once groups have discussed the case studies, point out the importance of praying Scriptures of adoration to help keep our focus on Christ. Say: **Praying Scriptures of adoration causes us to recognize truth no matter what we may feel when tough circumstances come our way.**

3 The Skill

Remind students that prayer cannot be purposeful or effective if it simply becomes a repetition of words with no heart-felt intent. However, our feelings or circumstances often cause us to lose sight of who God really is and what He can do; so, at times, it is helpful to pray Scriptures that express what we ourselves are having difficulty believing or putting into words.

Distribute Strategic Play 5 and lead the students in understanding how to pray Scriptures of adoration.

1 Pray for God to open your eyes to His Word.

Pray that God will reveal Himself to you. Some people neglect to praise God at all. Some people praise God only when something of earthly value brings them pleasure. Some people aren't sure how to praise God because they don't really know who He is, what He's done, or how He is at work. Genuine praise, however, comes when we recognize His unchanging nature despite our changing circumstances.

2 Reflect on a character trait for which you can praise God.

There are many, many things for which to praise God. Narrow it down by choosing a character trait on which you'd like to focus. (Examples: God's holiness, goodness, faithfulness, mercy, patience)

3 Choose a Scripture from Strategic Play 5 or from your Bible's concordance.

Now that you've thought of a character trait, look it up in your concordance to find a verse or choose one from the chart provided.

4 Read the passage through.

As you read the passage, think about what it says to you about who God is. You may want to read the passage aloud or read it in several different translations. Let the truth of what God is showing you about His character sink in and focus your thoughts.

5 Rewrite the passage in the form of a prayer.

In your journal, turn the words in the Scripture into a personal prayer of praise. Here is a sample prayer, based on Romans 8:35: "God, I praise You because You are love. It is the most wonderful thing that I know because it will never go away and there is absolutely nothing that can separate me from it." Whatever you feel in response to the verse you read, write! Your praise will automatically flow from your understanding of the nature of God.

6 Pray the prayer throughout the course of the day.

As you go through the day, meditate on the verse you read and prayed. Using the example above, you would then be more inclined to extend God's love to others, even those you'd normally consider "unlovable." If you run into a difficult circumstance, your prayers of adoration will help you remember what matters most. Let the truths of who He is direct your thoughts and actions as you praise Him throughout the day.

To demonstrate the skill, call on the enlisted students to present the skit on Strategic Play 6. Lead youth to discuss the differences in the two scenarios presented. Ask and discuss the following questions: **Does Thad's response to the difficulties he faces throughout the day seem unrealistic? Why or why not? Which character do you identify with most? Why? How would your life be changed if you began to praise God in all things like Thad?**

4 Practice

Direct youth to get into pairs. Invite them to practice this process together. Make sure each pair has a Bible with a concordance. Direct students to "A Plan for Praying His Praises" on Strategic Play 5. Lead youth to each choose a character trait for which to praise God and then work together on the rest of the steps. Encourage youth to practice using a concordance this time, rather than relying on the provided list of verses. Note that unlike personal prayer time, they're working with a partner to get used to the process. Allow 10 minutes for partners to work on steps 3-5; then invite each to share ways the process might help them throughout the course of a day.

5 Game Film

Read or tell the following story:

Though singing and leading worship is a tremendous blessing, it also has its difficulties. When singer Jami Smith first started traveling, she spent many days and nights on the road by herself. It was a very difficult and lonely time for her. One day, as she asked God for help, she opened up her Bible to Psalm 16. From the first verse to the last, Jami says the chapter said exactly what she needed to hear. God spoke to her heart, and she understood. Because of this experience and others like it, Jami understands the importance of lifting up Scriptures of adoration to God. That's why Jami loves to watch students singing Scripture at the top of their lungs. Another worship leader once said that the best thing songwriters can do is to plagiarize the Bible. Jami agrees completely! Though it should never replace personal Bible study, Jami's hope is that through the gift of music, life-giving words may be discovered. Jami wishes this experience for everyone, saying, "If we can begin to contradict our thinking by reciting His words, then slowly our mind set begins to change and feed on the words of Life rather than the lies that imprison us." So very often, the lyrics in Jami's songs come directly from God's Word. Her prayer for you and everyone else who listens to her music is that we would "quiet our worlds often enough to hear His convincing words of truth and love."

6 Workouts

Distribute the Workouts. Encourage the students to work through the six-step process during their quiet times this week. Close in a prayer of adoration and thanks that God will be faithful to complete the good work that He has started in each person in your group (Phil. 1:6).

CASE STUDIES

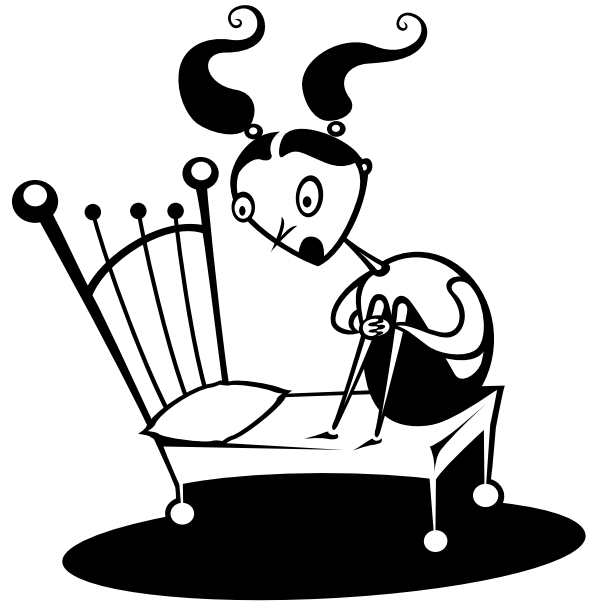
Read the following case studies and answer the questions that follow.

Juan made a big mistake. He gave in to a temptation that he knew was wrong. As soon as he went home that night, he prayed and asked God to forgive him. He has since lived differently but is still plagued by feelings of guilt. He's been a little down, feeling like his sin is really too terrible for God to forgive and forget. **Read Psalm 103:11-12. How could remembering and praising God for the truths in these verses help Juan?**

Jordan's family has been going through a tough time financially. Her dad has been out of work for several months, and money is tight. Her friends, though, spend freely, enjoying new CDs, clothes, and trips to the movies regularly. She has found herself having feelings of anger, wishing that she could have the money to buy the things she wants. **Read Psalm 103:5. How could remembering and praising God for the truths in this verse help Jordan?**

Zachary's family is large. He has one brother already in college, three teenage sisters, and a baby sister only six months old. He understands that his parents have a lot on their minds and that an infant requires a lot of attention, but he was a little upset when no one seemed to care that he had won the science fair at school last week. **Read Psalm 103:15-18. How could remembering and praising God for the truths in these verses help Zachary?**

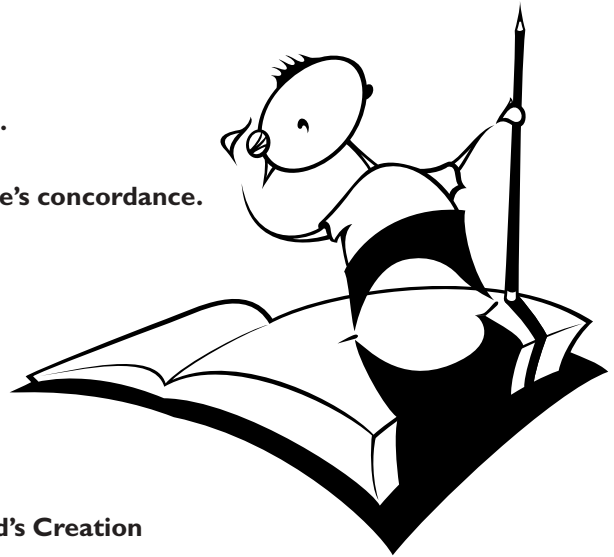
Abby's grandfather died several months ago. He was a Christian, and she knows he's in heaven; but, lately, she's been having a lot of anxiety and fear about death and dying. She's sure of her own salvation but is afraid to die. She's even having trouble sleeping at night. **Read Psalm 103:19. How could remembering and praising God for the truths in this verse help Abby?**



Jason has had the best week of his life. He scored the winning touchdown for his high school's football team, his grades are great, he just got a car for his birthday, and he asked a girl out on a date and she said yes. Life has always been pretty easy for Jason, but lately he can't think of one thing that hasn't been good. **Read Psalm 103:1-2,15-18. How could remembering and praising God for the truths in these verses help Jason, even during this time when he might not think he needs help?**

A PLAN FOR PRAYING HIS PRAISES

- 1 Pray for God to open your eyes to His Word.
- 2 Reflect on a character trait for which you can praise God.
- 3 Choose a Scripture from the list below or from your Bible's concordance.
- 4 Read the passage through.
- 5 Rewrite the passage in the form of a prayer.
- 6 Pray the prayer throughout the course of the day.



God's Faithfulness

Deuteronomy 7:9
Psalm 18:25
Psalm 33:4
Psalm 57:10
Psalm 111:7-8
Psalm 145:13
1 Corinthians 10:13
2 Thessalonians 3:3
2 Timothy 2:13
1 John 1:9
God's Love
Exodus 20:6
Exodus 34:6-7
1 Chronicles 16:34
Psalm 23:6
Psalm 33:5
Psalm 36:7
Psalm 63:3
Psalm 66:20
Psalm 86:13
Psalm 119:64
John 3:16
Romans 8:38-39

God's Unchanging Nature

Psalm 102:27
Malachi 3:6
Hebrews 13:8
James 1:17

God's Wisdom

Job 12:13
Psalm 94:11
Psalm 104:24
Proverbs 2:6
James 1:5

1 John 3:20

God's Forgiveness

Psalm 103:12
Psalm 130:3-4
Isaiah 1:18
Daniel 9:9
1 John 1:9

God's Creation

Genesis 1:1
Psalm 8
Psalm 136:4-9
Psalm 139:13
Isaiah 42:5
Ephesians 2:10
Colossians 1:16
James 1:18

God's Holiness

Exodus 15:11
Psalm 22:3
Psalm 29:2
Psalm 77:13
Psalm 99:5
Revelation 4:8
Revelation 15:4

God's Righteousness/Justice

Deuteronomy 32:4
Psalm 9:8
Psalm 11:7
Psalm 19:9
Psalm 33:5
Psalm 36:6
Psalm 111:7
Psalm 119:137-138
2 Thessalonians 1:6-7

God's Power

1 Chronicles 29:11-12
2 Chronicles 20:6
Psalm 66:3
Psalm 66:7
Psalm 68:35
Isaiah 40:26
Jeremiah 10:6
Mark 13:26
Revelation 5:12

SANDS THROUGH THE HOURGLASS, PART 1

Scene 1

Actor walks across stage area with poster that says, "Cock-a-doodle-doo. 7:55 a.m."

Marci wakes with a start, looks at her watch, and shouts "MOM! I'm SO in trouble. I overslept! Pop a Pop-Tart® for me, will you?" Hurried and frustrated, she checks the mirror, grunts, and stomps out of her room saying sarcastically, "This day is off to a GREAT start."

Scene 1A

Thad wakes with a start, looks at his watch, and shouts, "Oh no! I'm late!" Hurriedly, Thad presses his clothes and hair with his hands, grabs a box of granola bars, and heads out the door. He stops short, though, when he spots his Bible. "God, show me more of You today." He mumbles as he flips a few pages and reads Psalm 106:1: "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His faithful love endures forever.' Father, I do praise and give You thanks today. You are so good to me, and I know that Your love will never leave me." Thad smiles and exits his room.

Scene 2

Actor walks across stage area with poster that says, "Later that same day..."

Marci and Thad are sitting in class together. Marci is about to fall asleep.

Teacher: Class, it's time to go, but be prepared for a major quiz tomorrow on the brand new material that you've been presented today, found in chapters 5-12. Have a nice day.

Marci mutters to herself as she prepares to leave: "You've got to be kidding me! With my schedule tonight, there's no possible way I can get ready for a quiz. (sarcastically) This day just gets better all the time."

Thad with a thoughtful expression says: "God, You know that I don't have much time tonight. But I

know that even when life seems bad, You are still good. I know that no matter what, You are with me. Thank You, Father."

Scene 3

Actor walks across stage area with a poster that says, "From bad to worse..."

It's late at night. Marci opens a textbook, still angry about the quiz, and the phone rings. "Hello. (pause) Oh, hi, Josh. I'm glad it's you. I've had a horrible day. (pause) What? You want to break up with me? (pause) You're taking someone else to the dance tomorrow night instead of me? (pause) (sarcastically) Well, sure ... it makes PERFECT sense that you'd do that since we've ONLY been dating for 10 months. (pause) Whatever, Josh. I have to study." (slams phone down, buries face in hands and begins to cry) "Jerk. I can't believe I bought him a new shirt for that dance. My life STINKS!"

Scene 3A

Late at night, Thad opens his textbook, rubs tired eyes, and the phone rings. He picks it up. "Hello. (pause) Oh, hi, Cindy. Glad you called. This has been one rough day. (pause) Really? You think we need a break? (pause) And you want to go out with my best friend? (pause) Well, sure I'm upset. We've been dating for six months. (pause) Whatever, Cindy. Listen, I really need to study. (hangs up phone, buries face in hands)

Thad: "Father, this day has been HORRIBLE!"

Flips Bible back open and reads "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His faithful love endures forever" (Ps. 106:1). "Sometimes I can't feel it, God, but I know that You are good. People will let me down, and they might even make me feel unloved; but You will always love me. Thanks, God." (gets textbook and starts to study)



Day 5

Read James 5:13-16. You will never run out of things to pray if you learn the truth of this passage. James says to pray when you're suffering and when you are happy. Pray when you're sick and when you have sinned. Pray for yourself and pray for others. In other words, pray all the time! In regards to prayer, you've now checked your motives, learned its benefits, recognized the importance of Scripture in it, and committed to seek God's wisdom. So, let's get going! Try God in this today. Pray about everything. Before school, during school, at work, at play, on a date, doing your chores, while you're eating, and going to sleep, set your heart and mind on Christ in prayer. You don't even have to bow your head and close your eyes. Just keep your thoughts focused on Him, and you will find you have more to pray about than you ever imagined!

Get started right now. Rewrite James 5:13-16 in your journal as a prayer. Now get going about your day, continually thanking and seeking Him along the way!

Day 1

Read Matthew 6:5-8. Sometimes even good things can be twisted into something bad because they are abused by selfish purposes. Prayer is no exception. Jesus said that fancy words don't cut it; our purpose in praying must be right. What is your purpose in learning to pray the Scriptures? Jesus addressed people who prayed to impress others. They wanted to be good at praying when someone called on them. They wanted to sound "holy" and even thought they could manipulate God by their impressive speeches. But Jesus doesn't want you to be like them; their prayers were meaningless.

Instead, God wants us to incorporate His Word into our prayer lives so that we can better know who He is. He wants us to treasure the Scriptures so that when we pray, our hearts and minds can be directed by truth. He wants us to know how to combat temptation and how to pray for others.

Before you plunge into this study, take some time to examine your motives in prayer. Write a prayer in your journal thanking God for already knowing your needs. Ask Him to help you learn what it means to pray effectively, with a heart that is pleasing to Him.

WEEK 1

Day 2

Read John 10:10. Every single command that God gives us is meant to help us have the very best life here on earth—abundant life! But what God intends for our benefit, Satan attempts to twist into a lie until we no longer see, understand, or believe truth. He wants to destroy the life that God offers. If you're a Christian, Satan can't change your eternity; but he can sure wreak havoc with your life here on earth if you let him.

You might already have fallen into the trap of thinking that prayer is good but not really necessary for daily living. First Thessalonians 5:17 says that we should pray all the time. When you don't pray, you might not really understand how God can help you through the difficulties you're currently facing. But Philippians 4:6-7 assures us that by prayer, God's peace can overtake any earthly worry. God's Word is full of instruction for believers to help us have a full and incredible life, but we must learn to believe it. Spend some time now asking God to reveal any lies you might currently believe about prayer. Ask Him to help you know and believe truth.

Day 3

Read 1 Peter 4:7. Have you ever tried to pray when you were distracted? Maybe you were tired, anxious about something, or just flat-out bored. Don't worry; we've all been there! Even the disciples fell asleep while praying (Matt. 26:43). That's probably why Peter wrote this verse—he'd learned from experience! Time is short; God has a purpose for each of us each day, so we should pray. How can we pray without being distracted? Peter said to be "clear-headed and disciplined." What's the best way to be clear headed, completely focused on God's purpose for you each and every moment? Know and believe His Word! When truth is treasured in our hearts, we recognize the impor-

WEEK 1

tance of every moment. When we recognize the importance of every moment, we must pray! Another way to be clear headed is to be disciplined in prayer, which is the second half of Peter's command.

Journal a prayer recognizing the importance of today and thanking God for it. Ask Him to help you treasure the Scripture so that you can be clear-headed, disciplined, and prayerful all day long.

Day 4

Read Proverbs 2:1-6 to better understand the dynamic duo of prayer and God's Word. Sometimes it's tough to know what to pray. The writer of this proverb, though, explained beautifully that the wisdom of all-knowing God can be found. It's not easy, though. It won't come from a duty-driven, once-a-day dinnertime prayer. It also won't come from a casual flip through the pages of your Bible once or twice a week. Notice the active words and phrases in the passage: accept, store up, listening closely, call out, lift your voice, seek it, and search. Those who actively seek the awesome treasures found in His Word and call out to Him for understanding will gain wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. It can be yours!

In your Bible, circle the active words and phrases in this passage. Pray a prayer based on Proverbs 2:1-6, such as the one below, to commit to actively seek God during this study.

God, I want to accept Your words and learn them. I want to listen and set my heart on understanding truth. I need Your help. Your wisdom is a treasure that I want to possess. You promise, God, that if I will seek it with all my heart, You will give to me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. I love You, God, and thank You for Your promises.