

LEARNING TO PRAY

Examples in Prayer

PRIMARY TEXTS: 1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:11, Daniel 9:1-27, 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

INTRODUCTION: We often learn not merely by instruction but by example. In this lesson we will study the example of people who prayed.

I. BIBLE PRAY-ERS

A. Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:11)

Background: 1 Sam. 1:1-8 – Hannah was barren and longed for a son.

There are three prayers here.

1. The first prayed aloud.

1 Sam. 1:9-11 ⁹ So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD. ¹⁰ And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish. ¹¹ Then she made a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

2. The second prayed silent.

1 Sam. 1:12-13 ¹² And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth. ¹³ Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.

The result of her praying: 1 Sam. 1:14-28

3. The third prayed aloud.

1 Sam. 2:1-10 ¹ And Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. ² “No one is holy like the LORD, For *there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.* ³ “Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the LORD *is* the God of

knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed. ⁴ “The bows of the mighty men are broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength. ⁵ *Those who were full* have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, And she who has many children has become feeble. ⁶ “The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. ⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. ⁸ He raises the poor from the dust *And* lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set *them* among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. “For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, And He has set the world upon them. ⁹ He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. “For by strength no man shall prevail. ¹⁰ The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed.”

In what way did Hannah enter into partnership with God?

1 Sam. 1:11 Then she made a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

Hannah partnered with God in that she promised to give the son back to God.

What does the fact that Eli thought her to be drunk indicate?

The intensity of her prayer. She did not care what others thought, only what God thought.

What is the character of her third prayer?

It is a prayer of thanksgiving and praise, but **mostly** of **praise**. It gives us a good model for prayers of praise. See how **she recites Who the Lord is and what the Lord has done**.

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of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed. ⁴ “The bows of the mighty men *are* broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength. ⁵ *Those who were* full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased *to hunger*. Even the barren has borne seven, And she who has many children has become feeble. ⁶ “The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. ⁷ **The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.** ⁸ He raises the poor from the dust *And* lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set *them* among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. **“For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, And He has set the world upon them.** ⁹ **He will guard the feet of His saints,** But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. “For by strength no man shall prevail. ¹⁰ **The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces;** From heaven He will thunder against them. **The LORD will judge the ends of the earth.** “He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed.”

B. Daniel (Daniel 9:1-27)

What prompted Daniel to pray? What he discovered in studying God’s Word.

As we saw this morning, Daniel 9:24-27 is one of the greatest of the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. But notice that it came as an answer to prayer.

Was Daniel praying in partnership with God? Absolutely. He had discovered God’s will in His Word and then prayed consistent with it.

C. Jesus

Consider the following list of some of the times Jesus prayed.

Praying in obedience.	Hebrews 10:5, 7
Praying at His baptism.	Luke 3:21-22
Praying before His first trip of ministry.	Mark 1:35-39
In prayer before choosing the disciples.	Luke 6:12-13
Praying after healing the leper.	Luke 5:12-16
Blessing the loaves and fishes in feeding the five thousand.	John 6:11
Praying after the feeding of the five thousand	Matthew 14:22-23
Praying at the healing of the deaf and dumb man.	Mark 7:31-37
Praying prior to the feeding of the four thousand.	Mark 8:6
Praying at Peter’s great confession.	Luke 9:18; Matthew 16:14-17
Praying at the Transfiguration.	Luke 9:28-35
Praying after the hearing of the report of the	Luke 10:17-19

seventy.	
Praying after being rejected in cities of Galilee.	Matthew 11:25
Praying before teaching the model of disciple's prayer.	Luke 11:1
Praying at the grave of Lazarus.	John 11:41-42
Praying over the little children.	Mark 10:13-16
Praying in the temple on Palm Sunday.	John 12:20-28
Praying over Jerusalem.	Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44
Praying in the Upper Room.	Matthew 26:26-28
Praying for Peter.	Luke 22:31-34
Praying His High Priestly Prayer.	John 17
Praying in the Garden.	Matthew 26:39-46; Mark 14:32-34
Praying on the Cross.	Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:43, 46; John 19:30
Praying at His resurrection.	John 20:17; Hebrews 2:12-13
Praying at Emmaus.	Luke 24:13-35
Praying at the Ascension.	Luke 24:50-53
Praying today for all believers.	Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25, 9:24

Does the prayer as partnership with God apply to Jesus? Consider these verses.

John 5:17-19 ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." ¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. ¹⁹ Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

John 8:25-29 ²⁵ Then they said to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. ²⁶ I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him." ²⁷ They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. ²⁸ Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. ²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

Jesus simply did what He saw the Father doing.

He said only what He heard from the Father. Now that is a simple relationship.

He saw what God was up to and got in on it.

He heard what God was saying and repeated it. And thus He did the works of God. ¹

II. OTHER PRAY-ERS

W.B. Walker in The Power of Prayer introduces us to several men across the years who gladly testify concerning prayer.

A. John Knox

“Of course there are many Christians who will rise to take the witness stand here – but we can only let three or four speak, and that briefly. First, I call John Knox, but he is too weak to answer. It is about two o’clock in the afternoon. He raises two fingers and says, “Now for the last time I commend my spirit, soul, and body into Thy hands, O Lord.” About five o’clock he said to his beloved wife – and they were his last words – “Go read where I cast my first anchor.” And what did she read? The 17th chapter of John. And why did he cast his first anchor there? Because of the day when he saw George Wishart burned at the stake, - and who was George Wishart? He was a man who carried on regular correspondence with the Lord. The post office of prayer was busy with him. Doubtless John Knox had read of that awful day when the black plague lay over Scotland. The people of Dundee saw it approach from the west in the form of a great black cloud. They fell on their knees and cried to the cloud to pass them by, but it came ever nearer. Then the people looked around for the most holy man among them to intervene with God on their behalf. They wanted a holy man – somebody whose prayer handwriting God was acquainted with – somebody who didn’t have to be introduced to God. Yes, they wanted a man to talk to the Lord for them that did not pray just because he was in a tight place. Too much of our praying is like the fellow on his knees in time of storm who prayed for deliverance, but when delivered went on the same old sinful way as before. During those testing days of the plague all eyes seemed to be turned to George Wishart. The old account tells us that this venerable man of God stood up, stretched out his arms to the cloud and prayed, and it rolled back. Such was George Wishart and such was John Knox. “Go, read where I cast my first anchor.” Yes, the anchor of prayer.”

B. Chaplain McCabe

“I shall call your attention to Chaplain McCabe of the Civil War days. He had proved God also and knew that He would hear and answer prayer. He was in Libby prison, ill with typhoid fever. Major-General Powell sitting by his bedside

said, "Chaplain, here is a letter for you – I will read it." The letter was from Dr. Isaac Cook, a brother minister, who was telling the Chaplain that a session of the conference had just been held. When McCabe's name was called out, somebody answered, "He is in Libby Prison." The presiding Bishop reminded the conference that Paul and Silas were prayed out of prison and suggested that prayer be offered for Chaplain McCabe. Two hundred and fifty preachers went down on their knees and asked for the release of their brother. McCabe said afterwards, "I was used to suffering and loneliness but I wasn't used to tenderness and that letter broke me down. The tears rolled down my cheeks like rain. As soon as I could control myself, I began to sing. I broke into a profuse perspiration and the tide was turned. In the evening, the doctor came and felt my pulse and started back in surprise." "Why," he said, "there is a big change in you. That medicine has helped you wonderfully." The recovery was rapid, and twelve days later, McCabe was informed of his discharge and he was able to leave the hospital. Thus did God answer the prayer of that Methodist Conference in a most wonderful way."

C. **Henry Stanley**

"Whom shall I call next? Well, I will call Henry M. Stanley, the great African explorer. He was one of the hardest headed men of his generation. He admitted he had scoffed at prayer and called it children's food, but later his eyes were opened and his opinions changed. Here is a statement from his own hand: "I have evidence, satisfactory to myself, that prayers are granted. By prayer, the road sought for has become visible and the danger immediately lessened, not once or twice but repeatedly, until the cold, unbelieving heart was impressed. When I have been earnest I have been answered."

D. **Abraham Lincoln**

"May I summon Abraham Lincoln as our next witness on this point? In the darkest hour of the nation's history, Bishop Simpson called upon him. He said, "Bishop, I feel the need of prayer. Will you pray with me?" The two men fell to their knees before God and implored His help. Audible "Amens" were uttered by Lincoln while the Bishop was praying. He said he felt confident that things would go all right at Gettysburg. He said to General Sickles, "I told God if we were to win the battle, He must do it, for I had done all I could. I told Him that this was His war and our cause was His cause." Then having put the whole matter in the hands of the heavenly Father, he admitted that confidence and peace came to him."

He concludes, "Well, what do you think of the evidence presented by these witnesses? Don't you think it is rather strong? You will at least admit that it is sincere. A man might be mistaken once or twice. There might be a number of coincidences or accidental combinations of events. But when repeatedly, throughout a long life, one receives evidences of God's open ear and kindly hand, one is justified in drawing out of these scattered experiences, along with numerous others not mentioned, a general law that – God Answers Prayer."²

CONCLUSION: Finally consider one last man, a man from Scripture but probably totally unknown to most of us until Bruce Wilkenson wrote a book about him. His name is **Jabez**.

1 Chronicles 4:9-10⁹ Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore *him* in pain."¹⁰ And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep *me* from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

Look at the hundreds of names before and after his about whom nothing is said. But when the Holy Spirit inspired the chronicler to write Jabez' name, something had to be said. **Jack Taylor says of this passage:**

"And Jabez called upon the God of Israel..." Now don't pass over this too quickly. This is rather amazing. **A man is known for what he does the most.** If he does not do much of anything, he is known for nothing. And if a man is to achieve notice in any given area, he must do more of it than anyone else. A man will never be designated as a man who loves God who seems to love Him less than others. His love must exceed that of others. Jabez called on God – he prayed.

"Notice the certainty of his praying. If a man prays some, he will perhaps be noticed. To be honored for it, he must pray much. As we read this brief biography, we catch a note of concluding finality. He prayed! It is as simple as that! He was prominent because he prayed. There need be no other reason. He prayed!

"Notice the consistency of his praying. The implication is easy to see. That he prayed was important. That he prayed much and regularly is monumental. **The construction is such as to suggest that he called, and called upon the God of Israel until he was recognized as one who always prayed.**"³

Oh, that we might be so remembered.

¹ Jack R. Taylor, *Prayer: Life's Limitless Reach*, p. 44.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-15.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.