



# PRAYER

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### Lesson 1

## THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

**Scripture to be studied:** Matthew 23:1-30; Luke 18:9-14; Isaiah 40:19; 44:14-19

**The aim of the lesson:** To answer the questions: (1) What is prayer? (2) To whom should we pray? (3) Who can pray?

**What your students should know:** The true and living God hears and answers the prayers of those who have been forgiven of their sins.

**What your students should feel:** A desire to pray to God.

**What your students should do:** Pray, confessing their sins to God and asking His forgiveness.

**Lesson outline (for the teacher's and students' notebooks):**

1. Many people pray to idols (Isaiah 40:19; 44:14-19).
2. The Pharisee spoke proudly of himself (Matthew 23:1-30; Luke 18:9-12).
3. The tax collector prayed humbly to God (Luke 18:13).
4. God hears the prayers of those who confess their sins and seek forgiveness (Luke 18:14).

**The verse to be memorized:**

*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers.* (1 Peter 3:12a)

### NOTE TO THE TEACHER

The Word of God has much to say about prayer. It is important to study and teach the blessed truths concerning prayer. We must experience these truths in our daily lives. Prayer is a priceless privilege. If the power of prayer is a reality to you, teacher, these lessons will live to your class.

The main reason for teaching these four lessons is to help each of your students to learn to pray.

### THE LESSON

Who can tell me the name of the ruler of this country? How many of you have ever seen him in person? Have you ever talked to him? Suppose you desire to speak to the ruler of this land. Can you walk right into his home at any time and say whatever you wish? Of course not. He is a busy person. You would have to have a very important reason for wanting to talk to him. And even then you probably would not be allowed into his presence without special permission.

There is Someone who is higher and much greater than any ruler on earth. Who is this One? He is the living God, the Creator of Heaven and earth. He is great and wise and almighty. Does He allow people to come into His presence at any time to talk with Him? And even better than *allowing* people to come, He actually *invites* them to come! The very One who made the world—the trees, grass, flowers, mountains, animals and people—wants people to talk to Him. God, who knows everything and can do everything is always ready to listen to those who talk to Him. Talking to God seems simple enough. Yet numbers of people in the world know little or nothing about true prayer. Others do not know that God has set certain rules that must be followed if prayer is to be answered.

### 1. MANY PEOPLE PRAY TO IDOLS

Isaiah 40:19; 44:14-19

Many pray but not to the true and living God. Why? Because they do not know Him. The Bible says that some people pray to idols which they themselves have made and trimmed with gold and silver. (See Isaiah 40:19.)



#### Show Illustration #1

If a man is too poor to buy an expensive gold idol, he may cut down a tree—perhaps a tree which he himself had planted. He will use some of the wood to make a fire to warm himself. He may burn some of that same wood to bake his bread. And he will use the rest of the wood to have a face carved on it. Then, falling down before it, he worships and prays to it saying, “Help me, for you are my god.”

(See Isaiah 44:14-19.)

He will not stop to think: *This is only a piece of wood. I have burned part of it to keep me warm. I have used some of it to bake my bread. How can the rest of it be a god? Why should I pray to a piece of wood? Can my wooden god hear me?* No, he does not ask such questions. He simply prays to his piece of wood as if it really were a god who could hear and answer prayer. How foolish!

Some men and women climb the steps of temples on their hands and knees. They think that by doing this, their god (it may be a gold one) will hear their prayers. Others write their