

# Walking in Prayer: Old Testament

## Lesson 1: Prayers from Adam to Abraham

### Vocabulary:

to get distracted	to forbid (adj. forbidden)	faithful (adj. faithfully, n. faithfulness)	to express
to meditate	to convince	to devote (adj. devoted)	respect (adj. respectfully)
to focus	fault	to proclaim	to assure / reassure
formula	to relate	to contrast	descendant
pattern	will (n.)	to expel	bold (adv. boldly)
to evolve	to blame	divine	to spare
index cards	to take responsibility	vision	to rescue
to categorize	to result in	on-going	to overcome
circa (i.e. c. 1500 B.C.E.)	to approve (n. approval)	ark	trustworthy
to intervene	to imitate	altar	to sacrifice (n. sacrifice)
to intercede (n. intercession)	presence	to inherit	ram
to cry out	to lack	shield	maturity

### Discussion:

How would you define prayer?

How would you describe a meaningful prayer?

Have you ever tried to pray, and you just don't know what to say? You really want to connect with God, but you just don't know how. Perhaps you **get distracted** with the phone or find yourself thinking more about what you have to do that day instead of **focusing** deeply on the Lord. For some of us, we may feel too busy to pray, or we feel we can only pray short prayers throughout the day and never really connect with our heavenly Father. Prayer takes time to focus and think seriously about what we want to say and how we want to say it.

For some of us, we can wonder if we're praying the "right" way. As we walk through the Bible, we will see that there is no "prayer **formula**," but we can find **patterns** in the prayers people pray that touch the heart of God. By examining the history of prayer, we can also learn how prayer has **evolved** and explore new ways to grow in our prayer lives. In this first lesson, we will study the prayers of three ancient men: Adam, Enoch, and Abraham to see by their examples the kind of prayers that please God.

Discuss your prayer life. What do you love about it? How do you want to grow?

During this course, we recommend using **index cards** for writing prayers. Prayer cards allow you to **categorize** your prayers, place your cards in a special order, and even add or remove cards as your thoughts change from season to season. You can carry your cards in your pocket or purse, take them to work, or take them on walks. Prayer cards allow you to walk in prayer with God throughout the day! If you don't wish to use cards, then you can also use a prayer journal or binder for writing your thoughts.

## The Prayer of Adam (Genesis 3)

What do you know about Adam in the Garden of Eden?

Man was made to pray. The first account of man and God can be found in the book of Genesis in the Old Testament, written [circa] c. 1500 B.C.E. In the third chapter, we see Adam praying. You might be thinking, “I remember Adam talking to God in the garden, but I don’t remember Adam ever praying to God.” The Hebrew word for prayer *palal* means to “intervene” or “intercede.” Both these terms refer to (1) coming in between people and events, or (2) changing the outcome of an event. “Intercede” relates specifically to intervening for another *person*.<sup>1</sup> In the Garden of Eden, we never see Adam on his knees crying out to God with his hands in the air, but we do see him intervening and interceding before God. Many people today define prayer as a conversation with God. So, by the ancient Hebrew and common modern definition of prayer, Adam’s conversations with God were, in fact, a form of prayer.

Let’s explore this conversation between Adam and God. Eve has just eaten the forbidden fruit, and God approaches Adam to find out what happened. “The Lord called to the man, ‘Where are you?... Have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat from?’” (3:9, NIV). Immediately, Adam intervenes – for Eve? No! For himself! He does everything he can to convince God that the situation is not his fault: “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (12). If Adam can just convince God that the situation is God and Eve’s fault, then he can convince God not to punish him!

This is our first example of prayer. Many of us can probably relate to Adam. We go to God not to seek his will or how to obey him but to ask God to approve our will and our understanding of a situation. Sometimes we get angry with God for problems that we ourselves have caused, or we want to blame others for our troubles, failing to take responsibility for our actions.

Think about some relationship problems in your life recently or in the past. Perhaps you had a disagreement with a friend, boss, teacher, parent, spouse, in-law, brother, or sister. In what ways did you blame them for the situation? Did you have a hard time seeing your role in the problem? Explain.

Have you ever blamed God or become angry with God about a situation that perhaps you were responsible for? Explain.

We see that Adam’s idea to blame Eve and even God for his problem doesn’t really work. In fact, Adam’s reaction results in God’s discipline, not his approval. Sadly, God removes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and they can never return. Even though they want to return, they cannot. God loves Adam, takes care of him, and even answers Adam’s prayer, but his answer is “No.”

Today, we often describe prayer as a conversation with God. We speak to God, and he speaks to us. Yet, we would all probably agree that Adam’s “conversation” with God doesn’t look like a prayer that we should imitate, but perhaps learn from.

What advice would you give Adam?

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<sup>1</sup> “Intercede” *Oxford Languages*, Oxford University Press; “Intervene,” *Oxford Languages*.

On a prayer card or in your journal, write a short prayer to God about your situation where you blamed God or someone else, using the advice you would give Adam.

God wants a deep relationship with Adam, but he wants Adam to trust and obey him. Even if Adam failed to obey God, humbly confessing his sin could have touched God's heart and impacted his relationship with God. That doesn't mean that Adam could have stayed in the garden because Adam had sinned. But the conversation could have been more meaningful, and Adam could have experienced God in a different way.

Prayer and "talking" to God is all about having a relationship with him. In fact, God invites us to pray so that his will can be done *through us*. Prayer invites the power of God into our lives and allows us to experience the **presence** and work of God in a spiritual way. Prayer can invite God to go deeper into our lives as we connect deeply with him. Adam **lacked** this understanding of who God is and the role he was to play in Adam's life. But just like Adam, we have the chance to walk humbly with God and experience his power and presence every day!

### The Prayers of Enoch (Genesis 5)

Six generations after Adam, we meet Enoch, the great grandfather of Noah. In Genesis, we learn that Enoch started his relationship with God at the age of 65 and walked "**faithfully**" with God for 300 years.<sup>2</sup> Enoch was so **devoted** to his heavenly Father that God took him away from this earth without ever experiencing death. Enoch was a man known for pleasing God through his **faithful** obedience.<sup>3</sup> We see Enoch's heart for obedience through one of his prophecies found in the book of Jude. In this quote, Enoch **proclaims** that God will judge all people who chose a life of sin over obedience to God.<sup>4</sup>

How would you compare Enoch's relationship with God to Adam's?

What does it mean to "walk" with God?

The **contrast** between Adam and Enoch is an interesting one: they both walked with God, yet one man is **expelled** from the Garden of Eden while the other is taken directly to heaven. Enoch's walk with God is based on his obedience to God's truths and teachings and his **bold** willingness to teach an unpopular view – the Lord's judgment. Enoch's walk with God is focused on prayer and prophecy. One definition of prophecy can be found in the Bible: receiving a **divine** message or **vision**.<sup>5</sup> Enoch receives these messages and direction from God and shares them with the people in his land. This term "walking" suggests an **on-going** state or lifestyle of communicating with God. In other words, Enoch doesn't just pray a short prayer once a day. He seeks God deeply to hear God's messages **expressed** to him through

<sup>2</sup> Enoch lived among the ancient Sumerians sometime between 3500-3000 B.C.E. From the Sumerian Kings list, dated c. 1800 B.C.E. and housed in the Ashmolean Museum, we see similar lengthy ages for the kings listed. Why the Sumerians used these lengthy ages is uncertain; however, historical evidence from the Sumerian Kings list reveals that this aging system or length of ages was common.

<sup>3</sup> See also Hebrews 11:5.

<sup>4</sup> Jude 14-15 quotes 1 Enoch 1:9, *Fragments from the Book of Enoch*. 1 Enoch was discovered among the Essenes, the Jewish community in Qumran and home of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These earliest fragments are dated as early as 200-150 B.C.E. (see *Scrolls from the Dead Sea: The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Scholarship*, Library of Congress, (July 27, 2010), <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/scrolls/scr3.html>). While the book was circulated among ancient Jews and Christians, it was not accepted into the Jewish canon and was considered an apocryphal book, or book of spiritual education rather than divine scripture. The reliability of current complete versions is still debated.

<sup>5</sup> For a Biblical definition of prophecy, see also Numbers 24:15-16.

prayer. Today, we can read and know the prophecies and messages from God through reading the Bible. Like Enoch, we can walk with God in prayer by speaking to him, seeking his direction or will, and listening for messages that he sends to us through prayer and through his divine Word, the Holy Bible.

How does the Bible play a role in your prayer life and relationship with God?

Have you ever experienced a time in prayer when you heard God's voice, specific direction, or other message during your time of prayer or reading the Word, a message that you knew was meant specifically for you or someone else? Describe.

Write a prayer asking the Lord to speak to you about a situation in your life where you deeply need his message, specific direction, or will. Ask the Lord to send you his message clearly through his Word as you read, through a message at church, through other believers in your life, or through his voice.

### **The Prayers of Abraham** (Genesis 13-22)

We see other spiritual men like Noah and Abraham walking with God and obeying him. Noah obeys the Lord's message to build an **ark** during the time of the great flood of Mesopotamia, while Abraham leaves his home to go to a foreign land because the Lord promises him many children who will **inherit** that new land. Abraham builds the first **altar** at Hebron (modern West Bank Israel), where he worships the Lord. In Genesis 15, we see God speaking to Abraham saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your **shield**, your very great reward" (15:1). To this Abram, who is later called Abraham, honestly expresses his doubt about the Lord's promise. **Respectfully**, he replies, "Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless?" (2). God **assures** Abraham with these words: "A son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir" (4), and God promises Abraham that his **descendants** will be as numerous as the stars. The account of Genesis tells us that Abraham believed God, and God proclaims Abraham to be righteous for trusting in his promises.

Do you have any situation or area in your life where you are doubting God's direction or promise? Explain.

Write a prayer that openly expresses your doubts about God's direction or promises for your life. What verses in the Bible or other messages from the Lord have you received that could strengthen your faith? Include those in your prayer.

As God assures Abraham of the promises for his life, Abraham begins caring for this nation of children that God is promising him. When the Lord tells Abraham that he will destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sin and rebellion, Abraham remembers his nephew Lot living in Sodom and cries out to God for the people there. He stands before the Lord and respectfully, yet **boldly**, begs God to **spare** the cities if there are at least ten righteous men living there. The Lord listens to Abraham's intercession for these cities, and he agrees to save the cities if ten righteous men can be found. Sadly, the cities are so sinful that even ten righteous men cannot be found. The cities are destroyed.<sup>6</sup> Out of his great mercy, however, the Lord sends angels to **rescue** Lot from the destruction.

<sup>6</sup> Reasonable evidence for this destruction was published in September 2021 by Nature Portfolio's *Scientific Reports*, placing the date of the destruction in c. 1650 B.C.E. See page 53 of Ted E. Bunch, et al, "A Tunguska sized airburst destroyed Tall el-Hammam a Middle Bronze Age city in the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea," *Scientific Reports*, Nature Portfolio (2021), 1, 53, 57, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-97778-3>.

Have you ever been rescued by God? Write a prayer of praise and thanks to God for what he did for you in the past to help you to **overcome** your doubts.

Do you know someone who needs God to rescue them? What do you want God to do for them? Write a prayer honoring God as the one who rescues us, and pray for the person that you know who needs rescuing.

As Abraham sees God's **faithfulness**, he grows in his belief that God is both just and **trustworthy**. Abraham grows so much in trust that he is even willing to **sacrifice** his own son Isaac when the Lord asks this of him. Even though God asks Abraham to do what seems impossible, Abraham believes that somehow God will rescue Isaac, even raising him from the dead.<sup>7</sup> At the last minute, the Lord intervenes saying, "Don't kill your son or hurt him in any way. Now I can see that you do respect and obey God. I see that you are ready to kill your son, your only son, for me." (22:12, ERV). In faithfulness, God provides Abraham with a **ram** to sacrifice instead, and Abraham worships the Lord. In response, God **reassures** Abraham of the promise he made: Abraham's children will be "as numerous as the stars in the sky and as sand on the seashore" (22:17, NIV).

Take a moment to consider the greatest sacrifice God could ask you to make. Write a prayer that expresses how you would feel making that sacrifice, and ask God to increase your faith.

In Abraham's walk with the Lord, we see that God tests Abraham's faithfulness. At times, Abraham asks questions of God when he doesn't understand God's direction, yet he does this with great respect and humility. Abraham boldly prays to God for the protection of people and yet trusts God when his answer is "No." Abraham grows to respect and trust God so much that he is even willing to give up his only son. Abraham's walk with God reaches beyond that of Adam and Enoch, as it is strengthened through testing – testing that develops Abraham's trust in God and spiritual **maturity** to be the father of many nations.

What is the most important lesson you learned from the prayers of Adam, Enoch, or Abraham?

### This Week:

1. Pray through the prayers you wrote today on prayer cards or in your journal.
2. Take time to read the Word of God, go to church, and talk with a close Christian friend. Listen for God's direction or will for the prayers you prayed. Write down any answers you receive on your card or in your journal.
3. Reach out in love to the person who needs rescuing. If you are able, share with them something you learned this week from this study or from your times with God to encourage them.

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<sup>7</sup> See Hebrews 11:19.