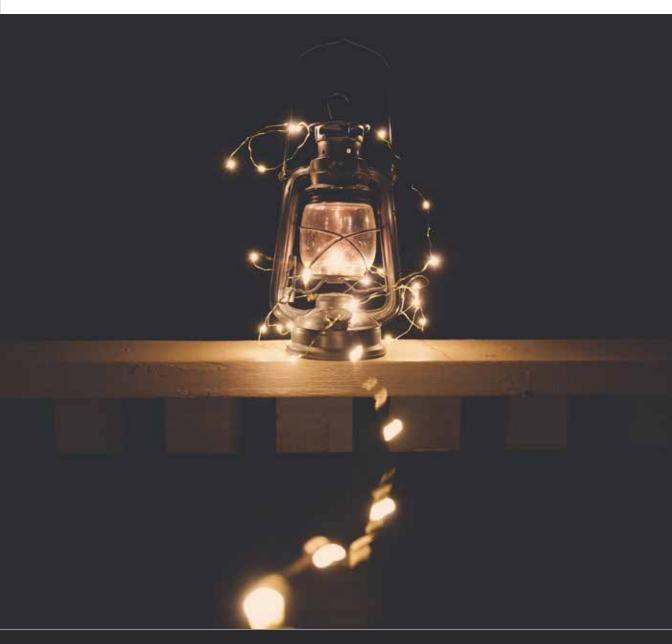
MASTERWORK. ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FROM GOD'S SERVANTS



Lessons from

IT HAPPENS AFTER PRAYER by H. B. Charles JESUS CONTINUED ... by J. D. Greear

2010 LifoWay Christian Posourcos

LifeWay | Adults

A STEP OF FAITH

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life? The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH.**

F Is for Forgiveness

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

${f A}$ Is for Available

- God's forgiveness is available for all: "God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

I Is for Impossible

• It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: "You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T Is for Turn

• Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6); "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

H Is for Heaven

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: "I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance" (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: "If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

MASTERWORK®

Lessons from IT HAPPENS AFTER PRAYER

by H. B. Charles, Jr.

JESUS CONTINUED ...

by J. D. Greear

WINTER 2019-20



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MasterWork: Essential Messages from God's Servants

Winter, 2019-20

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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF MASTERWORK

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

- 1. Read the daily assignments prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
- **2.** Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
- 3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

- **1.** Complete step 1 above.
- 2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the lesson. The main point of the lesson and the goal are printed on the teaching plan pages at the end of each lesson. (See p. 16.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.
- **3.** Read and study the key Bible passages listed in the margin of the teaching plan. Supplemental Bible commentary and Bible background articles are available in the MasterWork Leader Supplement. (See below.)
- **4.** Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book. One option is to follow the teaching plan at the end of each lesson. A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the lessons. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.
- **5.** Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at https://masterworkbylifeway.wordpress.com, to fit your group.
- **6.** Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
- **7.** Arrive early, praying for the group time.

MASTERWORK LEADER SUPPLEMENT

Bible commentary on key passages used in *MasterWork* lessons and related *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available for download at lifeway.com/masterwork. Look for "MasterWork Leader Supplement - Winter 2019-20."



It Happens After Prayer

Biblical Motivation for Believing Prayer

It was the longest Monday ever. I was a young pastor in the midst of congregational turmoil. A church meeting had been scheduled for that evening, and the formal agenda announced. But the meeting would be spent complaining about me.

I was at a crisis point. I felt alone. I fasted that day, but not on purpose. I couldn't eat.

I didn't want to talk to anyone. I just sat staring at the walls. In the quietness, I sensed the Lord telling me to pray. Honestly, that was the last thing I wanted to do. So I called a friend and asked for prayer. But as I listened to the prayer, I felt convicted. I was being disobedient. I needed to pray for myself.

It was a struggle, but I did it. For the rest of the afternoon, I wrestled with God in prayer. I didn't have the faith to ask Him to turn things in my favor. I was not sure I wanted Him to. But I finally decided I would serve and praise the Lord no matter what happened.

The weight of my anxieties lifted. I felt all would be well, even though I had no clue what would happen next.

I learned that day that it happens after prayer. It does not happen after you read about prayer, talk about prayer, or hear a stirring message about prayer. It happens after prayer.





ABOUT THE WRITERS

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A M Y

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It Happens After Prayer



DAY ONE

Life Happens

Life happens. Faith weakens. Temptations attack. Satan oppresses. Needs overwhelm. Sickness comes. Finances disappear. Divorce looms. Loneliness suffocates. Friends betray. In addition, decisions paralyze. Worries strangle. Careers stall.

The challenges of life confront us all. You cannot cancel your appointment with trouble. And you do not know when pain will show up in your life. Just be sure it's coming. There is nothing you can do to stop it.

That's the bad news. Here is the good news: Though you may not be able to control what happens to you in life, you can control how you respond. This is the wonderful benefit of the Christian life. To trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord does not bring an end to all of your troubles, no matter what some high-profile religious personalities falsely teach. To the contrary, following Christ will produce trials you would never face otherwise.

Though you may not
be able to control what
happens to you in life,
you can control how
you respond. This is the
wonderful benefit of the
Christian life.

Discussion QuestionWhat percentage of

your life would you say

you control? Explain.

1. Read the following passages in your Bible and identify what every follower of Jesus can count on.				
John 16:33:	_			
Acts 14:22:	_			
2 Timothy 3:12:	_			

Christianity is a battleground, not a playground. But faith in God ensures that you will never have to stand and fight alone (Eph. 6:10-20). The believer can live with the assurance the Lord is there (Ps. 46:1).

Yes, Christianity is a battleground. Yet the presence of your divine Ally provides sufficient resources for every struggle you face.

I repeat. There is nothing you can do to stop bad things from happening in your life. But you can determine your response.

You can turn the other cheek, go the second mile, or love those who hate you. You can bless those who persecute you, forgive those who offend you seven times in one day, or overcome evil with good.

You can be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; give thanks in all circumstances; or count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds.

2. How have	e you been resp	onding to life lat	ely? Check all th	nat apply.
Fear	Self-pity _	Self-sacrifice _	_ Self-reliance _	Faith
Grace	Pessimism _	_ Optimism _	_ Hopeless _	Hopeful
Anger	Gratitude _	Resentment _	_ Forgiveness	

Being a Christian does not make me superior to the unbelievers around me. It does give me options the unbeliever does not have, or even know are available. Therefore, I do not have to respond to my problems as those who do not know God. I can choose to be happy, to trust, to love, to forgive, to hope again.



DAY TWO

Thermometer or Thermostat?

Some people are like thermometers. They only register the condition of their surroundings. Other people are like thermostats. They regulate the conditions they find themselves in. Their circumstances do not dictate how they think or feel or act. They have a spiritual "climate control" that enables them to be strong and stable and steadfast, whatever the situation.

The apostle Paul wrote to his friends in Philippi, "I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I

Discussion Question

How do you know what you control and what you can't control?

It Happens After Prayer

Discussion Question

How would you contrast a person who is a thermometer with a believer who is a thermostat?

have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:12-13). That is the testimony of a thermostat.

How do you respond to life's dangers, toils, and snares? Are you a thermometer or a thermostat? What do you do when life tumbles in on you? Do you try to manage the overwhelming circumstances of life with your own strength, wisdom, and resources? Do you endeavor to manage your pain and problems with work, money, toys, alcohol, drugs, entertainment, pleasure, or the myriad of other vanities the world offers?

Read 1 John 2:15-17 in your Bible. Why won't any of the options or managing life listed in the previous paragraph work?					

There is only one reliable option for responding to the things you would change if you could, but you've tried and cannot....
You ought to pray about these things.

There is only one reliable option for responding to the things you would change if you could, but you've tried and cannot. It is what Moses did when the burden of leading the children of Israel got the best of him. It is what King Jehoshaphat did when he did not know what to do about the coalition of nations planning to attack God's people. It is what Nehemiah did when he received the bad news about the broken down walls of Jerusalem. It is what David did as he hid in a cave to escape Saul who sought to take his life. It is what Daniel did before an open window, even though he knew it would land him in a lions' den. It is what the church did at Mary's house, the night before Peter was to be put to death by Herod. It is what Paul and Silas did in the middle of the night, as they sat in jail on trumped-up charges. It is what Jesus Himself did in Gethsemane, as He agonized in the shadow of the cross.

You ought to pray about these things.

Why Pray?

Why pray? Will God hear our prayers? Does He care? Does prayer really make a difference? What can we realistically expect from God when we pray?

2. In all honesty, do you feel you can adequately answer the questions posed above? YESNOI'M NOT SURE					
Briefly give a reason for your response:					

There are many good and important reasons why you should pray. It would be of great benefit for you to study the Scriptures to find out what they teach about why you should pray. But the focus of this study is not to explain the whys and hows of prayer. My goal is to simply challenge you to respond to the vicissitudes of life with prayer, to pray without ceasing, and to pray with great expectations. To that end, let me highlight just the two most essential reasons you should pray.



DAY THREE

God Commands We Pray

You should pray because the Word of God commands you to pray. This should be all the reasoning we need to govern our attitude and actions toward prayer. As Christians, our chief concern in determining how we should view a subject is to answer this question: "What does the Word of God say about it?" If you are like me, you have a long way to go in submitting every area of your life to the authority of Christ. But our attitude must be there before our actions can catch up.

I am committed to be steadfast in prayer, even though my flesh constantly struggles against it. Prayer is an act of obedience to God. Even if there were no practical benefits to prayer (and there are many), we should be devoted to prayer simply because the Word of God commands it.

Scripture does not present prayer as an optional response to life's challenges. Prayer is a divine mandate. "Seek the Lord while he may be found;

It Happens After Prayer

call upon him while he is near" (Isa. 55:6). "Call to me and I will answer you," says the Lord, "and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known" (Jer. 33:3). "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). James asked, "Is anyone ... suffering?" Then he advised, "Let him pray" (Jas. 5:13).

Things you pray about are things you trust God to handle. Things you neglect to pray about are things you trust you can handle on your own.

Prayer is our Christian duty, an expression of submission to God and dependence upon Him. It is arguably the most objective measurement of our dependence upon God. Think of it this way. Things you pray about are things you trust God to handle. Things you neglect to pray about are things you trust you can handle on your own.

Can you see why God commands us to pray? Prayer reflects our confidence in the heavenly Father to care for our needs. When my kids ask me for something, I typically remind them their dad is a "poor black preacher." But this does not discourage them in the least, even when they are asking for something I really can't afford. Their confidence in their father's ability to provide for them brings me so much joy. Moreover, the Father delights in His children bringing their needs and wants to Him in prayer. It brings glory to Him to respond to His children who pray in faith. But it grieves the Father when we take our problems to others but refuse to pray.

 Read Matthew 7:7-11 in your Bible and What logic did Jesus use regarding prayer 	
What are we saying about God when we refuse, or neglect, to pray	efuse, or neglect, to pray?

Believing prayer is our sacred duty to the heavenly Father. "Continuing steadfastly in prayer," instructed Paul, "being watchful in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). What does it mean to "continue steadfastly in prayer"?

It means to be devoted, fervent, and persistent in prayer. Let me bottomline that for you: Don't stop praying!

Be constant in prayer. Do whatever it takes to maintain and sustain your prayer life. Keep your heart in a posture of prayer before God. Pray for the will of God by praying according to the Word of God. Set a time every day for prayer and Scripture intake. Establish a personal prayer list. Develop friendships with other believers with whom you can partner in prayer. Pray when you feel like it. Pray when you don't feel like it. Pray until you feel like it.

I have lived long enough to know and accept that some pain is necessary, inevitable, and even beneficial. But I have determined that I do not want to experience any needless pains. If I do not *have* to experience it, I don't want to. Yet the truth is we have all suffered unnecessarily, because we did not take everything to God in prayer.

Before you read another paragraph, pause and simply renew your commitment to the duty of prayer. Ask the Lord to help you continue steadfastly in prayer.

2. Before you read another paragraph, pause and simply renew your commitment to the duty of prayer. Ask the Lord to help you continue steadfastly in prayer. If desired, write your prayer in the space below.					
space below.					



DAY FOUR

Prayer Is a Privilege

After obedience to the Word of God, there is another essential reason you should be devoted to prayer, and is what the rest of this study is about. I hope you will read to the end. But here's the point right up front. I can't resist; this news is almost too good to be true. Better yet, it's too good not to

Discussion Question

Why must we, and how can we, continue steadfast in prayer?

Discussion Question

How could viewing prayer as something we GET to do, rather than HAVE to do, totally revolutionize our prayer lives?

It Happens After Prayer

Only a good, wise, and sovereign God like ours would make prayer a duty and a privilege at the same time.

be true: Only a good, wise, and sovereign God like ours would make prayer a duty and a privilege at the same time.

Let me say that again. Prayer is a privilege, not a burdensome duty. It is a wonderful privilege. Even though Scripture commands us to pray, we should not view prayer as something we *have* to do but as something we *get* to do.

What would it take for you to view prayer more as a privilege rather than a burdensome duty?

It is a privilege to have an audience before the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ has given us access to the throne of grace. Every redeemed follower of Christ is granted an open door before the Lord Almighty. We can approach God in prayer with confidence. There we can obtain the grace and mercy we need (see Heb. 4:16).

Yet the privilege of prayer is greater still. Not only does God command us to bring our needs to Him; He also promises to hear and answer our prayers.

"Why should I pray?" you ask. Answer: Prayer works! More accurately, God works when we pray.

In Ephesians 3:14-19, Paul made some incredible requests on behalf of the saints. In a prayer for spiritual enablement, he asked that the saints would be able to "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge" (v. 19).

Come again? How can you know something that is beyond knowledge? However, Paul's remarkable requests begin to make sense when you read the doxology in the next verse: "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us" (v. 20). This truth applies to every prayer you pray. God is more

Session 1

than able to answer your prayers. What a promise! Whatever you are thinking about or asking for, God is able to do far more than that.

2. Identify some things for which you have been longing and/or praying.					

Say out loud, "God is able to do far more than that." Then read Ephesians 3:20-21 out loud as a prayer of praise.

Do not misunderstand me. Prayer is not some rigged slot machine that gives you a jackpot every time you make a request. I'm not advocating a prosperity theology. You can not write your own ticket with God by faith. Prayer does not guarantee your life will be an unbroken cycle of health, wealth, success, and happiness. Prayer doesn't work that way.



DAY FIVE

God Answers Prayers According to His Will

1. Read 1 John 5:14-15 in your Bible. What are the promise and the condition of prayer?				

I believe in the exhaustive sovereignty of God, which is just a fancy way of saying that God is God. That is, God is God alone. This means our prayers do not put God under obligation to do whatever we ask. It does not matter how long you pray, how loud you cry, how many verses you quote or promises you claim. It does not matter how many so-called positive confessions

Discussion Question

Why do many believers not take full advantage of the great privilege of prayer? you make. As you pray, you must remember who God is. This is the basis upon which God answers prayer. God works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11).

I had a head-on collision with this reality when I was sixteen years old. I was invited to Detroit to preach a week-long youth revival. This was a big deal. I had never been that far away from home for that long to preach. I was beyond excited. But when it was time to leave, I had mixed emotions. My father was in the hospital. It was the first time in my life my father had ever been admitted to the hospital. He would be in the hospital the entire week. He was scheduled to come home the day I would return from Detroit.

A week later, as I was flying back home, my dad died. My brother and a friend waited for me at the airport, unaware of his passing. They had been instructed to rush me to the hospital to see my dad, hoping to get me there before it was too late. When we arrived and asked for my father's room, I was told someone would come out to speak with me. Before they could come, I was being rushed home. I sensed something was terribly wrong.

During that ride home, I prayed harder than I have ever prayed about anything in my life. I quickly came to grips with the fact that it was my father's last day in this world. Yet I had what I thought to be a simple request. "Lord, please let me say goodbye to my father." With everything that was in me, I pleaded with the Lord to give me the opportunity to give my love to my dad before he was taken away from me. But when we pulled into the driveway, a family friend was there to break the news to me.

This was the most fervent prayer I had ever prayed. And the answer was no. But I write the next sentence without any hesitation, reservation, or qualification. God answers prayer. Today I am several decades removed from my father's death. And in the intervening years, God has done far more for me than I could ask or think. As I look at that experience in the rearview mirror of life, I thank God He did not give me what I desperately requested that day. Before that experience, I believed prayer changes things. After it, I learned prayer changes me. My life and relationship with the Lord were never the same since that day the Lord told me no. I am convinced prayer works, even when it does not work the way you want it to work.

This is what Paul learned when he was "given a thorn in [the] flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7, NIV). We do not know what this thorn was. But the language conveys that it hurt. Paul responded with prayer. He asked the Lord three

Discussion Question

If God may answer nforo to some of our most fervent prayers, why pray?

Prayer works, even when it does not work the way you want it to work.

times to remove the thorn. The Lord refused. He did not give Paul what he asked. But He gave him something better. "'My grace is sufficient for you,' said the Lord, 'for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 in your Bible. Do you think God answered Paul's prayer? Explain your reasoning.				

This transformed Paul's perspective. He concluded, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (vv. 9-10).

This can be your experience, too. It happens after prayer! What happens after prayer? I'm glad you asked. "It" is a fill-in-the-blank you can complete with any issue in your life. Whatever that special thing is you need the Lord to do in your life, it happens after prayer.

Do you need ... faith to see beyond your circumstances? divine intervention for a difficult situation? relief from pain, grief, or sorrow? strength to resist a temptation? victory over some besetting sin in your life? wisdom for a tough decision you have to make? a door of opportunity opened for you? healing or restoration of health? reconciliation in some broken relationship? grace to be faithful in a hard assignment? assurance God is on your side?

Each one of these happens after prayer! There are a lot of things you can do to fix your situation after you pray. But there is nothing you can do to fix the situation until you pray. Whatever you need God to do in your life, it happens after prayer.

What is the obstacle in your path? What is it you have tried to move without success? Have you used all of your strength? No you haven't—if you have not asked for God's help and prayed about it sincerely, diligently, and persistently.

It happens after prayer.

Discussion Questions

What happens after prayer? Do you think any of these can happen before prayer? Explain.

LEADER GUIDE



The main point of this lesson is: The Bible highlights the value and importance of prayer.

Focus on this goal: To help adults take a fresh look at what prayer is and why we pray

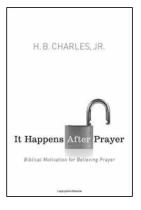
Key Bible Passage: Jeremiah 33:3

During the Session

- 1. Ask: Why do we freshen up ourselves or our homes, or take a refresher course for our careers or hobbies? State: Often it's not our kitchens or knowledge that gets outdated or caught in a rut; it's our spirits. We go through the motions, without putting effort or enthusiasm into anything, including prayer. Note this study of It Happens After Prayer will help adults take a fresh look at what prayer is and why we pray. The purpose isn't to learn more information about prayer, but to be motivated to pray and experience God's best that happens after prayer.
- 2. First, we need a fresh look at the Christian life to understand it's not a playground; it's a battleground. Discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 6). Evaluate what can happen in believers' lives when they don't live with the awareness that Christianity is a battleground. (Sample responses: won't seek God's presence or access His resources; won't be prepared to stand when life happens; unable to respond to trials in biblical, victorious ways.) Stress that we need a refresher course on how to respond to life's challenges.
- 3. Guide the group to explore what the author means by saying some people respond to life like a thermometer while other people choose to be a thermostat with control (p. 7). Brainstorm ways people try to control their lives. Discuss Day Two, activity 1 (p. 8). Declare: We need a fresh look at who's really in control. We must not seek to control the thermostat, but be thermostats God controls. Invite someone to read the Day Two pull quote (p. 8). Assert when we do pray, we can have the same thermostat testimony as Paul. Invite a volunteer to read Philippians 4:12-13. Point out Paul's choice to pray about everything certainly played a role in his learning to be a thermostat. Request a volunteer read the questions listed under the heading "Why Pray?" (p. 8). Analyze why believers need to occasionally take a fresh look at those questions. This study highlights two main reasons we should pray.

- 4. Request adults identify from Day Three (pp. 9-11) the first reason believers should pray. Acknowledge we tend to get uptight when we're told something is our duty. That's why it's important to take a fresh look at why God commands us to pray. Invite volunteers to read the verses printed in the third paragraph of Day Three (p. 10). Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (p. 10). Ask: Based on the Scriptures we've just examined, why does God's Word command us to pray? Why would we embrace our duty of prayer if we really grasped these reasons? How can we demonstrate that we embrace our duty of prayer? Read the Day Three paragraph (p. 11) that begins: "Be constant in prayer." (OPTION: Distribute hymnals or lyrics to "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," No. 154 in The Baptist Hymnal, 2008 ed. Invite the group to read the lyrics and explore how they emphasize why God commands us to pray. For a fuller story behind the hymn, see: https://www.godtube.com/popular-hymns/what-a-friend-we-have-in-jesus/)
- 5. Guide the group to determine things that are both duties and privileges (parenting, working, sharing, loving). Read the second paragraph of Day Four (p. 12). Assert we need a fresh look at the privilege of prayer. Invite volunteers to read Hebrews 4:16 and 10:19-22. Draw from these passages some reasons prayer is such a great privilege. Request adults skim the Day Four paragraph (p. 12) that begins "Yet the privilege of prayer) and identify another reason prayer is a great privilege. Encourage adults to state from Ephesians 3:20 an amazing truth about prayer.
- **6.** Complete Day Five, activity 1 (p. 13). Evaluate how 1 John 5:14-15 guards us from regarding prayer as a rigged slot machine. Relate the author's testimony (p. 14) from Day Five, emphasizing what he learned when God told him no. Discuss Day Five, activity 2 (p. 15). Note God answered Paul's verbalized prayer with "No," but answered Paul's heart-prayer for strength to minister with "Yes." Declare: When we take a fresh look at why we pray, we gain a fresh look at what happens after we pray. Encourage adults to underline the three sentences near the end of Day Five (p. 15, paragraph begins "Each one of") that begin with: "There are a lot of things you can do"
- 7. Invite volunteers to share how this study helped them gain refreshed answers to the questions asked at the conclusion of Day Two under "Why Pray?" (p. 8). Urge adults to set aside time to pray every day this week and to approach that time with a fresh attitude about prayer. Read Ephesians 3:20-21 as your closing benediction.

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