



*Notes for Adult discussion groups at
On-Line@9 Worship Service
on 1 February 2009*

Why Pray?

In our series on prayer, this week's focus is on why we pray, and on what we expect to happen when we do. Two Bible passages form the background: Genesis 32, and 1 Samuel 1 – 2:10. You might like to look at these at home later.

The Genesis passage is part of the story of Jacob. Jacob had taken the blessing his father had intended for Esau, his older brother, and had therefore fled. He had a dream where God promised him land and family. He married and prospered, but fell out with his in-laws and had to flee again. Our passage comes on the eve of a reconciliation meeting with Esau. It takes place in dangerous territory. For Jacob, it marked the boundary of the land promised by God; a new relationship with Esau; and most importantly a change in attitude from disobeying God to one of submission and faith in him. So we find Jacob wrestling with God: effectively in prayer. He had the chance to let go of God, or to cling on and let God be in control and grant him a blessing. He chose the latter.

In 1 Samuel, we read of Hannah: a wife desperate for a son. As a woman apparently unable to have children, she was considered a failure, an embarrassment to her husband, and a candidate for divorce. Her husband's other wife, who had children, ridiculed her, her husband could not help her, and the high priest misunderstood her motives. Instead of retaliating or giving up hope (although she did struggle with her sense of self-worth), Hannah prayed. She brought her problem honestly before God, and submitted to his will.

The sketch we saw earlier included a number of reasons why we might pray:

- Wrestling with a problem
- Giving thanks for something
- Another ordinary day
- For someone else
- A world situation
- To be quiet with God
- Desperate personal need
- Feeling good
- Just to say 'I love you'
- On behalf of someone else
- To listen to God
- With too much to do

There will be others! Think for a moment about other reasons why you (or why you might) pray, and then share them in the group.

Do you expect God to provide answers to your prayers?

Now we're going to share a time of prayer. At the end, when the music starts, you might like to write on a piece of paper a request for prayer – perhaps for you, for someone else, or for a situation. We will be giving these out to each other later in the service, so it might be best if your request didn't mention individuals' names.

Once the requests are given out, we will be asked to pray for the one we receive both in the service today, and throughout this week.

Some final thoughts for reflection before next week:

- What helps you meet with God?
- Do you pray regularly, or only when things are tough?
- Are there times when praying seems really difficult?
- Why might it be more difficult to pray only when things are difficult, if you don't pray regularly?
- How can we help each other to pray?