

Aim:**Refer:****Resources:** Pictures of Pilgrims Progress are available here: <http://www.bunyanministries.org/>

Read Matthew 6:1-18 verse by verse and discuss each verse as you read.

- Verse 2 - What we do is not as important as why we do it. God sees what is in our hearts.
- Verse 3 - Discuss what Jesus means by "don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" – (He is exaggerating to make a point. In other words don't tell others (although it is a good idea until you are an adult, to tell your parents everything))
- Verse 5 – Discuss why might someone be praying on a street corner? (To make people look at them, to make a statement...)
- Verse 6 – Ask: Does that mean we shouldn't pray in front of groups like church? (Answer: No. Jesus sometimes prayed in front of groups, like when He raised Lazarus and when He fed the 5000; but Jesus also spent a lot more time in private prayer to His Father.)
- Verse 13 - Would you call Jesus prayer complicated or simple?
- What sort of topics does Jesus prayer cover?

Luke 11 is similar to Matthew 7. It starts off with the Lords Prayer, like Matthew's book does but then it has another story.

They both say that we should keep asking for what we need but Luke includes a story to show how much we should ask.
Read Luke 11:5-8

Does that mean we should keep asking till we get exactly what we want?

Sometimes people get what they want and then find they are not happy with it. The best way to pray is like Jesus did in Luke 22:42

Read Luke 11:13 – God wants to give you the Holy Spirit to live in you and help you have the fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus told another parable about prayer in Luke 18:1-8 Read and Discuss.

This term we are learning about the object lessons in John Bunyan's book Pilgrims Progress. The English they spoke back then was very different from today so if there are any words you don't understand, ask.

Last week you left Christian and Pliable talking as they walked towards the wicket-gate. Pilgrims Progress continues: Now I saw in my dream that they drew near to a very miry slough that was in the midst of the plain; and they, being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog. The name of the slough was Despond. Here, therefore, they wallowed for a time, covered with the dirt and Christian, because of the burden that was on his back, began to sink in the mire. Then said Pliable, "Ah! Neighbour Christian, where are you now?" "Truly," said Christian, "I do not know."

Can you guess what the Slough of Despond is named for? Think of words that sound similar)

Despond is short for despondency which means hopelessness, sadness or depression. We'll come back to this in a few minutes.

At that Pliable began to be offended, and angrily said to his fellow, "Is this the happiness you have told me all this while of? If I get out again with my life you shall possess the brave country alone for me." And with that he gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house; so away he went and Christian saw him no more.

Is Pliable living up to his name? (Last week you should have talked about how a pliable person changes their mind easily)

Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone; but still he struggled to that side of the slough that was still further from his own house, and next to the wicket-gate; this he finally did, but could not get out, because of the burden that was upon his back. But I beheld in my dream that a man came to him, whose name was Help, and asked him what he did there? "Sir," said Christian, "I was told to go this way by a man called Evangelist, who directed me also to yonder gate that I might escape the wrath to come. And as I was going I fell in here." "But why did not you look for the steps?" "Fear followed me so hard, that I fled, and fell in." Then said he, "Give me thy hand." He gave him his hand and Help drew him out and set him upon sound ground, and bid him go on his way.

Why did Christian fall in? (Because he was so afraid that he wasn't really watching where he was going)

Read Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 40:2

John Bunyan has used King David's object lesson.

Then I stepped to him that pulled him out, and said, "Sir, wherefore is it that this place is not mended, that poor travellers might go with more security?" And he said unto me, "This miry slough is such a place as cannot be mended. It is the hole where the scum and filth that comes with conviction for sin, does continually run and therefore it is called the Slough of Despond; for as the sinner is awakened about his

lost condition, there ariseth in his soul many fears, and doubts, and discouraging concerns, which all of them get together, and settle in this place. And this is the reason of the badness of this ground.

Each week as we learn more about Pilgrims Progress you will see that each thing that happens to Christian in the story represents spiritual and emotional things that happen to real Christians as they grow spiritually. John Bunyan experienced the fears, doubts and concerns that Help is talking about. And, in the same way that Christian did not watch where he was going and what he was doing because of his fear, fear in our hearts, stops us from thinking clearly.

Read 1 John 4:9, 10, 18 (God loves us, love drives out fear)

It is not the pleasure of the King that this place should remain so bad; his labourers, also, have, by the directions of his Majesty's surveyors, been, for above these 1,600 years, employed about this patch of ground, if, perhaps, it might have been mended; yea, and to my knowledge," said he, "here have been swallowed up at least 20,000 cart-loads; yea, millions of wholesome instructions, that have, at all seasons, been brought from all places of the King's dominions, and they that know, say they are the best materials to make good ground of the place, if so be it might have been mended; but it is the Slough of Despond still...

Discuss: Why does he say they are trying to fill the slough with wholesome instructions? (Where do we find the best instructions for life?)

The Bible. The Bible has the answer to all of our questions but many people don't read it, or don't understand what they are reading. The book "40 days of Prayer" by Dennis Smith points out that there are two works of the Holy Spirit; one is to fill Christians with the Fruit of the Spirit, but the other is to work on people's minds to make them think about God. If we do not have the help of the Holy Spirit when we read the Bible we will not understand it. When Evangelist first directed Christian to go to the gate, he said to keep his eye on the light; meaning we should not be distracted by other things, but for our safety, God should have first place in our lives.

True, there are, by the direction of the Lawgiver, certain good steps, placed even through the very midst of this slough; but sometimes as this place doth spew out its filth these steps are hardly seen; or if they be, men step besides, and then they are bemired."

God has the answer to our fears if we will only look to Him for the answers, like Christian should have looked for the steps.

Now I saw in my dream, that, by this time, Pliable was got home to his house again so that his neighbours came to visit him and some of them called him wise for coming back, and some called him fool for going with Christian; others, did mock at his cowardliness, saying, "Surely, since you began to venture, I would not have given out for a few difficulties." So Pliable sat sneaking among them. But, at last they all turned their tales and began to deride poor Christian behind his back.

Often when a person starts being interested in Spiritual things, if their friends are not already Christians, they won't understand and may tease them.

Revise: So what do we need to do to avoid falling into Satan's traps? (Keep Jesus first place in our lives)