

Week 1

OPEN YOUR HEART



Children teach us powerful truths about prayer! When our son Kevin was nearly four years old, he asked me one night at bedtime prayers to tell Jesus not to come into his heart because he was afraid it might hurt. This became a nightly request as he locked his arms tightly over his heart. I assured Kevin that Jesus would not come until he invited Him, and amazingly, it would not hurt at all. Then I prayed, “Jesus, you understand that Kevin is afraid to have you come into his heart. It seems to him it would hurt. I’ve assured him you will not come until he is ready, and it really won’t hurt, but it helps us to talk to you about it.” Night after night, we continued this ritual until one bedtime Kevin said, “I’m ready to ask Jesus into my heart tonight.” We prayed a totally different prayer that night.

When Kevin was five, he came home from church one Sunday and reported that some of his friends had asked Jesus into their hearts during children’s church that morning. I thought perhaps he was trying to tell me that he, too, had prayed. When I asked him if he was one of those who had asked Jesus into his heart, he emphatically replied, “No, remember, I did that one night when we lived in Champaign!” I assured him that I did remember that night very well, but sometimes people pray again to reassure themselves that

Jesus is still there. Little Kevin turned and put his head down on the kitchen counter where I was preparing lunch, and I asked him if something was wrong. He shook his head no, but he kept his head down resting on his arms. Before long he snapped his head up and quipped cheerfully, “I was just checking to see if He’s still there, and He is!”

My son demonstrated several truths about prayer that day:

- We can tell God our fears, doubts, worries, concerns, anything.
- When we listen, we can hear Him.
- Simple prayers are heard and answered.

Perhaps you fear asking Christ Jesus into your heart. I assure you that He will come when you invite Him, and it will not hurt. He brings only peace, freedom, and forgiveness of your sins. If you have never asked Jesus to forgive your sins and come into your heart, that is your first step toward an intimate relationship with Him. Revelation 3:20 says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

If you have asked Christ into your heart, spend this week reflecting on the first time you sensed God calling you to come to Him. Allow yourself to remember the time when you opened your heart and life to Him. Give thanks for the lessons He has taught you along the journey, for answered prayer, and for the times He has spoken to your heart through scripture, sermons, songs, books, and in your quiet moments with Him.

Read Rev. 3:20 again. The scripture surrounding that verse helps us realize that the passage was written to followers of Christ at the Laodicean Church. Envision Christ knocking at your heart’s

door to invite you to spend time with Him. He truly is waiting to fellowship with you and impart truth to you. It is important to record the lessons He teaches you on this great adventure with Him.

Increase Your Spiritual Awareness

Today or tomorrow, purchase a spiral notebook or bound journal. Beautiful journals can be purchased at any bookstore and most discount stores. Begin writing the story of your journey with God.

- Start with your first recollection of His grace extended to you.
- Write about the events surrounding your invitation to Him to come into your life.
- Add details of the highlights of your walk with Christ.
- Include some of the spiritual lessons you have learned along the way.
- Conclude with a paragraph of how you picture your relationship with Christ at the present time.
- Read your story through again, and then share it with someone else.

Scripture for This Week

(PS. 139)

Read this chapter, or at least a few verses, each day.

Write verses 23-24 on a card to carry with you, and try to memorize them.

Praying Scripture

(REV. 3:20 AND PS. 139:23-24)

Dear God,

Thank you for inviting me to open my heart for your coming. It humbles me to think that you desire to fellowship with me, that your spirit surrounds me and is within me. I give you permission to examine my heart, even my thoughts. Since you know everything there is to know about me, which is both a frightening and awesome revelation, I desire to have you reveal truth to me. Tell me if there is any wickedness in me that needs your cleansing; I am listening. Lead me on the path to eternal life. Thank you for extending your hand of blessing to me. Amen.

Prayer Song from Psalm 139:1-7

O Lord, you have examined my heart.
You know everything there is to know about me.
You know when I stand or sit.
You know every word I speak.
When far away, you know my every thought.
Your Spirit surrounds me every moment of my life.
You chart the path ahead and tell me where to rest.
Every moment, you know where I am.
You both precede me and follow.
You extend your hand of blessing.
This is too glorious, too wonderful to know.
Your spirit surrounds me every moment of my life.