

gives a stone to a son who asks for a loaf, or a serpent instead of a fish, or a scorpion in place of an egg, and that accordingly our Father in heaven gives nothing but good gifts to His children, and is ready to bestow on them the most valuable of all His gifts. The Holy Spirit is God's best gift.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

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This is one of the lessons which, although containing almost nothing of narrative, is easy to teach; it is so picturesque, and withal so homely and so homelike. The very familiarity of it is an added help, for children like to hear about and talk about that with which they are familiar. Every child knows the Lord's Prayer by heart; the parable of the passage is as plain as day; the "ask," "seek," "knock" are an old story; but none the less, there are few lessons for which the teacher will find the scholars more eager.

As he was praying, v. 1. He praying? Praying to whom? What need of it? For what would *He* pray? A great cloud of questions spring out of these very first words.

When he ceased. Was there some unspeakable influence from the spiritual world upon Him and about Him, that held the disciples spellbound, until He was done? Or was it that there was something remarkable in His words—living, burning, achieving words, so unlike the set phrases of their formal prayers?

One of his disciples. A child's hand may open a palace door. What a door that unnamed disciple—was he one of the seventy or one of the twelve?—opened that day!

Teach us to pray. Was it a babe in Christ who thus spoke? Perhaps; for babes need teaching. But more likely, a disciple who had gone far; for those who have gone furthest in the Christian walk, feel most the need of some one to show them the way.

When ye pray, say. The prayer that follows is, oh, so simple; but how fathomless! Test the scholars a little on the depth of its words and phrases:—"Father" (with a big F)—"heaven." How far away? How near? How to be reached? "Which art in heaven" what is in that Father's hand to

bestow? In His heart? Or take the word "name"—God's name—the very utterance of the word carries one on wings of high imagination. "Hallowed be thy name"—we are in the presence of the angels and the redeemed in glory. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done." We see a redeemed race dwelling in heavenliness on this old earth, so weary with its sins. And so one might go through all the petitions: it is a good thing, now and then, to take long looks at big things; mountains make mountain climbers. But the teacher must pick out two or three of the petitions; to go over them all would be to consume all the time without reaching what is—

The main thought of the Lesson. What is this? Let the parable give the answer. It would be hard to find any where such a vivid picture in so few and simple words: the unexpected midnight guest—the empty cupboard—the loud pounding at the neighbor's door—the angry man at last roused from his first sleep—the blank refusal—impunity winning the day—the indignant thrusting out of the loaves to get rid of the intruder. Make all this as vivid as you can. But do it, only to lead up to those five peerless verses with which the Lesson ends. What do those verses say? First, they show, oh, so easy a way to get the best God has to give:—"ask," the movement of the lips; "seek," the going of the feet; "knock," the action of the hand. Secondly, they give a thrice-clinched promise. The promise, itself, thrice uttered, is in v. 9. Verse 10 repeats it with a mighty emphasis. Verses 11 and 12 illustrate it in a fashion that every child will understand, as well as every father. And verse 13 puts on the cap-sheaf. Children look with confidence to their parents; they may err, they may be unwise, but they will do the best they know for their children. They love; therefore they will give. Such are earthly fathers. But the heavenly Father! He loves, "so" loves (John 3:16); He has infinite wisdom and power. The "heavenly Father"! Think of it! every one that truly asks is God's child, and the gift which wraps up in itself all other gifts—God's Holy Spirit, God Himself—is to be had for the asking.