

## Prayer

### The purpose of prayer

- **What is the most fundamental reason for prayer? To communicate with God.**

- This assumes that we believe that God hears our prayers. We need to be clear on this point before we can pray effectually.
  - If we are to pray the type of prayers that will change our lives and the lives of others, we must believe that God is really out there listening to every word that we pray.
- **Psa. 6:9** *The LORD has heard my supplication, the LORD receives my prayer.*
- **GW, 258** *It is a wonderful thing that we can pray effectually; that unworthy, erring mortals possess the power of offering their requests to God. What higher power can man desire than this, -- to be linked with the infinite God? Feeble, sinful man has the privilege of speaking to his Maker. We may utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. We may speak with Jesus as we walk by the way, and He says, I am at thy right hand. We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart's desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. Ask, then; ask, and ye shall receive. Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith. To every sincere prayer an answer will come. It may not come just as you desire, or at the time you look for it; but it will come in the way and at the time that will best meet your need. The prayers you offer in loneliness, in weariness, in trial, God answers, not always according to your expectations, but always for your good.*
- **Ministry of Healing, 226, 227** God hears prayer. Christ has said, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Again He says, "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." John 14:14; 12:26. If we live according to His word, every precious promise He has given will be fulfilled to us. We are undeserving of His mercy, but as we give ourselves to Him, He receives us. He will work for and through those who follow Him.
- If God already knows everything in our hearts, why must we pray?
  - **Steps to Christ, 93** *Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught His disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon Him. And the assurance He gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.*

- The purpose of prayer is not to inform God of our needs but to prepare our hearts and minds to receive the blessings that God wants to give us.
  - What happens when you give a child everything he or she wants before he or she asks you?
    - They don't appreciate the gift. They take you for granted.
- **The Great Controversy, 525** *It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.*
  - In order to benefit from God's gifts, we must first feel our need for them and ask for them in prayer.

- **To develop a relationship with God**

- Who do you love most on earth? Why do you love them? Did you just decide one day, "These are the people I'm going to love"?
  - The ones we love most are the ones we've spent the most time with.
  - Our earthly relationships require investments in time in order to grow. The same is true of our relationship with our Heavenly Father.
- **SC, 99, 100** *Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds. He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. . . . The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.*
- Have you ever felt discouraged because you couldn't feel your faith? Have you ever listened to an inspiring message or read a beautiful passage but noticed that it didn't touch you like it used to?
- Have you ever felt like your spiritual senses were blunted and that you were just going through the motions of religion without any spark or zeal?
- Without a living, vibrant relationship with God, our religion will be lifeless. If you don't experience God in a personal way, it will be impossible to love Him.
  - This experience is promised to us through prayer.
  - **COL, 129, 130** *Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant*

treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him.

- If our relationship with Christ is real, then living the Christian life will come naturally to us. However, if we don't know Christ as we should, we will find it exhausting to display the appearance of Christianity.

## The example of Jesus

- The best way to learn about prayer is to study the example of Jesus.
- **Steps to Christ, 93, 94** Jesus Himself, while He dwelt among men, was often in prayer. Our Saviour identified Himself with our needs and weakness, in that He became a suppliant, a petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, that He might come forth braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, "in all points tempted like as we are;" but as the sinless one His nature recoiled from evil; He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin. His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer.
- **Christ's Object Lessons, 142** Christ's lessons in regard to prayer should be carefully considered. There is a divine science in prayer, and His illustration brings to view principles that all need to understand. He shows what is the true spirit of prayer, He teaches the necessity of perseverance in presenting our requests to God, and assures us of His willingness to hear and answer prayer.
- **Jesus spent time alone in prayer in order to receive strength.**
  - **Matt. 14:23** After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.
  - **Luke 5:16** But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.
  - **Luke 6:12** It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.
  - **Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 102** His days were passed in ministry to the crowds that pressed upon Him, and in unveiling the treacherous sophistry of the rabbis, and this incessant labor often left Him so utterly wearied that His mother and brothers, and even His disciples, had feared that His life would be sacrificed. But as He returned from the hours of prayer that closed the toilsome day, they

marked the look of peace upon His face, the sense of refreshment that seemed to pervade His presence. It was from hours spent with God that He came forth, morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men.

- **Ed 258-259** Prayer is a necessity; for it is the life of the soul. Family prayer, public prayer, have their place; but it is secret communion with God that sustains the soul life. It was in the mount with God that Moses beheld the pattern of that wonderful building which was to be the abiding place of His glory. It is in the mount with God "in the secret place of communion" that we are to contemplate His glorious ideal for humanity. Thus we shall be enabled so to fashion our character building that to us may be fulfilled His promise, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:16.
  - Just as God instructed Moses on the pattern of the tabernacle when he was alone on the mountain, God will also instruct us when we spend time alone with Him on how to model the living temple of our bodies according to the pattern of Christ so that He may dwell in us.
- **The Youth's Instructor, April 1, 1873** The strength of Christ was in prayer. He had taken humanity, and He bore our infirmities and became sin for us. Christ retired to the groves or mountains with the world and everything else shut out. He was alone with His Father. With intense earnestness, He poured out His supplications, and put forth all the strength of His soul in grasping the hand of the Infinite. When new and great trials were before Him, He would steal away to the solitude of the mountains, and pass the entire night in prayer to His Heavenly Father. As Christ is our example in all things, if we imitate His example in earnest, importunate prayer to God that we may have strength in His name who never yielded to the temptations of Satan to resist the devices of the wily foe, we shall not be overcome by him.
- **Messages to Young People, 115** Daily prayer is as essential to growth in grace, and even to spiritual life itself, as is temporal food to physical well-being. We should accustom ourselves to often lift the thoughts to God in prayer. If the mind wanders, we must bring it back; by persevering effort, habit will finally make it easy. We cannot for one moment separate ourselves from Christ with safety. We may have His presence to attend us at every step, but only by observing the conditions which He has Himself laid down.
- **Messages to Young People, 249, 250** Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted and the health of the soul be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Wellspring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience. Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God. The spiritual

*faculties lose their vitality, the religious experience lacks health and vigor. . .*

- **Jesus had specific places for prayer**
  - Judas knew that he would find Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane because He frequently went there to pray.
  - **MB 84** *Have a place for secret prayer. Jesus had select places for communion with God, and so should we. We need often to retire to some spot, however humble, where we can be alone with God.*
- **Jesus prayed early in the morning**
  - **Mark 1:35** *In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.*
  - There is something about the early morning hours that make them especially effective for times of prayer.
  - Before the cares and concerns of the day assail our minds, we should give the first fruits of our time to God.
    - When give our tithe to God, we don't pay our bills first and then see what's left over. We set it apart first. We should do the same with our time.
    - Quote from Martin Luther: *"I have so much to do today that I need to spend an additional four hours in prayer."*
- **Jesus yielded to the will of His Father**
  - **Matt. 26:36-39** *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: yet not as I will, but as You will."*
  - **This Day With God 154.5** *You must learn to give up your will and your way, and to receive light from those whom God has made His helping hand, those by whom He designs that you shall be helped. Go to Christ for relief. Cling to Him. Stay long enough to yield up your will to the will of God. Many are in too great a hurry to pray. With hurried steps they pass through the shadow of Christ's loving presence, pausing perhaps for a few moments within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to sit down, no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens, they return to their work. . . .*
  - If we pray to God for guidance but know in our hearts what we plan to do, we are not qualified to know God's will.
- **Jesus entreated God multiple times about the same thing**
  - **Matt. 26:44** *And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.*
  - **Christ's Object Lessons, 145, 146** *God does not say, Ask once, and you shall receive. He bids us ask. Unwearingly persist in prayer. The persistent asking brings the petitioner into a more earnest attitude,*

*and gives him an increased desire to receive the things for which he asks...But many have not a living faith. This is why they do not see more of the power of God. Their weakness is the result of their unbelief. They have more faith in their own working than in the working of God for them. They take themselves into their own keeping. They plan and devise, but pray little, and have little real trust in God. They think they have faith, but it is only the impulse of the moment. Failing to realize their own need, or God's willingness to give, they do not persevere in keeping their requests before the Lord. Our prayers are to be as earnest and persistent as was the petition of the needy friend who asked for the loaves at midnight. The more earnestly and steadfastly we ask, the closer will be our spiritual union with Christ. We shall receive increased blessings because we have increased faith.*

## The Lord's Prayer

- **Signs of the Times, December 3, 1896** *Jesus taught His disciples that only that prayer which arises from unfeigned lips, prompted by the actual wants of the soul, is genuine, and will bring heaven's blessing to the petitioner. He gave a brief, comprehensive prayer to His disciples. This prayer, for its beautiful simplicity, is without a parallel. It is a perfect prayer for public and private life; it is dignified and elevated, yet so simple that the child at its mother's knee can understand it. The children of God have repeated this prayer for centuries, and yet its luster has not dimmed. Like a gem of value it continues to be loved and cherished. This prayer is a wonderful production. None will pray in vain if in their prayers are incorporated the principles contained therein.*
- **"When ye pray, say Our Father Which art in heaven"**
  - In teaching us to call God "Our Father", Christ shows that He considers us to be His brethren.
    - **Heb. 2:11** *For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,*
  - If we are children of God, we must follow the example of Jesus and be conformed into the image and will of our Father.
    - **1John 3:2** *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*
    - **MB 105.3** *But if you call God your Father you acknowledge yourselves His children, to be guided by His wisdom and to be obedient in all things, knowing that His love is changeless. You will accept His plan for your life. As children of God, you will hold His honor, His character, His family, His work, as the objects of your highest interest. It will be your joy to recognize and honor your relation to your Father and to every member of His family. You will rejoice to do any act, however humble, that will tend to His glory or to the well-being of your kindred.*



everlasting. Jesus bids us, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." John 6:27.

- **"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us."**
  - Jesus teaches that we can receive forgiveness from God only as we forgive others. It is the love of God that draws us unto Him, and that love cannot touch our hearts without creating love for our brethren. **{MB 113.2}**
  - God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12. **{MB 114.1}**
    - If we have truly experienced the forgiveness that Christ offers, our lives will show evidence of it.
- **"Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"**
  - **MB 118.2** *The prayer, "Bring us not into temptation," is itself a promise. If we commit ourselves to God we have the assurance, He "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13.*
  - **The Acts of the Apostles, 563, 564** *Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive."*
  - **Lift Him Up, 372** *When we feel the least inclined to commune with Jesus, let us pray the most. By so doing we shall break Satan's snare, the clouds of darkness will disappear, and we shall realize the sweet presence of Jesus.*
- **"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."**
  - **MB 120** *The last like the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer, points to our Father as above all power and authority and every name that is named.*
  - **MB 120.1** *In the prayer that breathes their daily wants, the disciples of Christ were directed to look above all the power and dominion of evil, unto the Lord their God, whose kingdom ruleth over all and who is their Father and everlasting Friend.*