

## PRAYER

We are blessed as Believers to be able to walk into God's throne room any time of the day or night and have a conversation with the Master of the Universe. So why do I sometimes feel like I don't have much to say to God—even with the precarious state of our world and our nation, with the various health problems that I and others have, with the despair we can feel at seeing some of our loved ones walking in the wrong direction, etc., etc., etc.

Apparently, some of Jesus's disciples had this problem, too. In Matt 6, they asked Him to teach them how to pray. In verses 9-13, He gave them a format to follow as they carry on this intimate conversation with their Father: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." This is often called "The Model Prayer" because it should be used as a pattern in how we approach God. We acknowledge that we are His children, and that we hold Him in the highest respect. We tell Him that we desire to live in His kingdom and pray for Christ to return and set up that kingdom soon. We admit that He is the source of all of our blessings, including the physical needs we have daily. We recognize that, if He had not accepted Christ's sacrifice on our behalf and forgiven us for our sins, we are nothing but dead men and women walking. We ask Him to help us be merciful to others as He is to us. We beseech Him to help us live as holy, obedient children and to give us power to conquer temptation in our lives. We end as we began—by praising and glorifying Him. In between the lines, we include our personal prayers for other people and situations, as well as for ourselves.

I recently read a commentary on this prayer that was very thought-provoking, and I would like to share it with you. It is called "I Cannot Pray..."

I cannot say **OUR** if my beliefs have no room for others and their needs.

I cannot say **FATHER** if I do not demonstrate this relationship in my daily living.

I cannot say **WHO ART IN HEAVEN** if all my interests and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot say **HALLOWED BE THY NAME** if I, who am called to bear His Name, am not seeking to be holy.

I cannot say **THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE** if I am unwilling to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God.

I cannot say **ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN** unless I am truly ready to give myself to His service here and now.

I cannot say **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD** without expending honest effort for it, or if I ignore the genuine needs of others.

I cannot say **FORGIVE US OUR SINS AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US** if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say **LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION** if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I

am likely to be tempted.

I cannot say **DELIVER US FROM EVIL** if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE KINGDOM** if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE POWER** if I fear what my neighbors and friends may think or say about me.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE GLORY** if I am seeking my own glory first.

I cannot say **FOREVER** if I am too anxious about each day's events.

I cannot say **AMEN** unless I can honestly say "Cost what it may, this is my prayer."

Our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ is the most precious one we have, and we need to be renewing it daily through Bible study and prayer. This spiritual bond is the only help we have when things are falling apart all around us, and our hearts are broken. Heb 4:14-16: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Our conversations with God can be filled with joy and laughter and praise as well as cries for help. I imagine some of the things we bring to Him can cause Him to shake His head or even laugh uproariously at times. I often tell Him how grateful I am that He suffers long with us.

When I first started attending church and began to set aside time for daily prayer, I tried to stay on my knees for the whole prayer, but it was hard to do. Around the time I started thinking about how my back hurt more than about what I was talking to God about, I decided to sit down and keep talking. This weakness of mine bothered me for a long time, but I kept sitting and praying. My bad feelings about that ended one Pentecost when Dean Blackwell, an evangelist with WCG, visited our area and gave a sermon on prayer. I don't remember all the verses he used, but I did remember a poem he quoted that made an great impact on me. I hope you will find it enlightening, too.

"THE PROPER way for a man to pray,"  
Said Deacon Lemuel Keyes,  
"And the only proper attitude,  
Is down upon his knees."

"No, I should say the way to pray,"  
Said Reverend Doctor Wise,  
"Is standing straight, with outstretched arms,  
And rapt and upturned eyes."

"Oh no; no, no," said Elder Snow,  
"Such posture is too proud:

A man should pray with eyes fast closed  
And head contritely bowed.”

“It seems to me his hands should be  
Austerely clasped in front,  
With both thumbs pointing toward the ground,”  
Said Reverend Doctor Blunt.

“Las’ year I fell in Hodgkin’s well  
Head first,” said Cyrus Brown,  
“With both my heels a-stickin’ up,  
My head a-p’inting down;

“An’ I made a prayer right then an’ there—  
Best prayer I ever said,  
The prayingest prayer I ever prayed,  
A-standing on my head.”

Isa 57:15: “The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: “I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts”.

Let’s ask God to be giving us a humble and contrite spirit every day, so that even if we fall in a well, He will hear our prayers.