



Prayer

By Rev. Dr. Marilyn Johnson-Kozlow

Hello and thank you for being here. Today I want to talk about prayer. I am speaking from my experiences – which may relate to you as well. I hope you find ideas here that resonate, inspire, or move you.

I think we are dealing to greater or lesser degree with the effects of the pandemic, and we have been dealing with it for too long. We are not sure when life will go back to normal, or if it will. I have tremendous faith in the Universe and believe that all is in Divine Order. But I think that prayer can help us at this time.

I would like to talk about three kinds of prayers: the well-known prayer, the daily prayer for guidance, and the kind of prayer that we pray when we need help. My hope is that we can consider the role of prayer in our life.

It seems like prayer has a lot of baggage: there may be many misconceptions about what it is and judgments about how to pray correctly, etc. I have also felt like there is something I have been missing about prayer and that I have some undefined misconception about it. I have been thinking about this for some number of months. For example, perhaps you learned as a child to ask God in a prayer for something you wanted, such as a toy, as though God was a great Santa Claus in the sky. But that seems like the least of the uses for prayer. And yet, that may have been our background. I am thinking that it may be a good idea to let go of past opinions and to open to new ideas about prayer.



I believe that prayer is much, much deeper, and more profound than perhaps I can even understand. One way to approach prayer may be to think about well-known prayers. I do not know for sure, but I would guess that in the U.S. the most used prayer is "The Lord's Prayer." I read many years ago that when we speak the words of a well-known prayer, such as The Lord's Prayer, that we release that vibration into the universe, and I believe that. I believe that the use of well-known prayers is powerful and that when we say the words "Hallowed be thy name," for example, we are speaking them into existence and that this statement is amplified by the countless times and people

who have repeated the words. For this reason, I think it is a good thing to find our favorite prayers: the ones that we like to say, and which express our feelings and needs best. And then use them!

I have four favorite prayers: The Lord's Prayer (Our Father Who Art in Heaven), the Unity Prayer (The Light of God Surrounds Me), the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (Lord, Make Me An Instrument of Your Peace), and the Great Invocation (From the Point of Light within the Mind of God). Recently I have also come to love the traditional Navajo prayer, "As I Walk with Beauty." Here is how it goes:



As I walk, as I walk, The universe is walking with me, In beauty it walks before me, In beauty it walks behind me, In beauty it walks below me, In beauty it walks above me, Beauty is on every side, As I walk, I walk with beauty.

Each prayer has its own tone and feeling—unique to each of us. When I read the Navajo prayer it calms me and brings me peace, and I feel surrounded by beauty. One way to use prayer is to keep a hard copy close by. In this way we can easily say the prayer prior to meditating or doing other spiritual work. Praying creates a holy and sacred space.



Another kind of prayer is to ask for guidance. Oftentimes the only prayer I say, as I open my meditation, is the Unity Prayer. It is short and surrounds me with light, love, and protection and affirms that God is always with me. Then I open to Infinite Source, Angels, Guides, and Light Beings and ask for guidance. This is often helpful when I am feeling somewhat overwhelmed by daily cares, detached from my spiritual journey, or just want a greater Source to guide me. After I ask for guidance I wait in silence. I feel their support like a warm cloak and receive their guidance. Today's message, for example, was to remind me that I am always cared for – and the passage from the Bible that came to me was "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" I felt immediately surrounded by infinite care and love. This message helps me to start the day from a positive frame of mind.



And finally, there is the prayer in which we reach out and talk to God from our deepest need. Those are the prayers that can come at a dark time, when we feel we have no one to hear us. Perhaps some of us have recently felt the need to reach out for help in this way.

During a dark time, it seems like there is no better source than Infinite Intelligence. But sometimes we may feel reluctant to pray. Perhaps we have lost our faith in a higher power. Maybe we are reluctant to admit that we feel powerless. But we can surrender and allow a greater power to help us. The truth is

that it does not matter what words we use, only that we ask from the heart. Such prayers have a certain brilliance and focus. I believe that when those prayers are uttered that God and all the Angels bend near to us. Then they set about creating the perfect aid for us. I believe those prayers create miracles.



There are many beautiful sources of information about prayer. One source is Emmet Fox, who amplified our understanding of the Bible from a broad spiritual viewpoint. He said that prayer is a direct connection with Source and with all the Angels and Beings of Light. He talked about how prayer is a *communion* with God—that through prayer we are touching and sharing our space with the light of God. Each time we pray we absorb some of that light! He said that prayer fundamentally changes our character because by connecting to Source, we incrementally change our Soul. By connecting with God, we are opening ourselves to becoming a different person: more light-filled and more present for soul growth. Prayer is a cornerstone of the spiritual path.

What I learned from this talk about prayer is that each time I pray, I deepen my connection with All That Is. Each time I pray, my Soul is shaped a little bit more into my true self: a light-filled being. Each time I pray, my spiritual doorway is opened a little bit wider and I can hear, feel, and see my Soul Self a little bit clearer. I also do not feel alone.

In closing, I hope you might be more conscious of your relationship with prayer in your life. I hope that you feel supported in whatever practice resonates best for you.

I thank you for sharing in my experiences with prayer. I hope you have a peaceful day.

Marilyn