



# PRAYER

## SOME THOUGHTS

*by Lay Minister Lyn Horscroft*

Recently, I went on a short retreat. During the quiet times, I did some investigation into 'prayer' – trying to understand why sometimes it is so easy to pray and at other times so appallingly difficult.

There are times when God seems really close and to call Him 'Father' seems perfectly natural. Then, there are moments when I really NEED to pray, but find it almost impossible!

Reading through books and magazine articles, I find I am not alone. I don't think anyone can honestly say that they have a perfect prayer life – mostly there are too many distractions. How many times have I tried to pray, only to find my mind wandering off in another direction or – more frequently – just falling asleep? Someone said, '*sleeping in the Spirit is fine*', but it frustrates me when I can't finish what I want to say!

I do know that I spend too much time ASKING God for things and not enough time THANKING Him or, indeed, LISTENING for His answer.



If we look on God as our Father, surely it should be one of the easiest things to be able to have a conversation with Him?

Someone once told me, *“You will never be able to pray everywhere, all the time, until you have learned to pray somewhere, some of the time.”* This is true: it doesn’t matter whether we are sitting, kneeling, lying or standing – just as long as we find a position that is comfy and quiet, somewhere we won’t be disturbed for a while and where we can concentrate on our time with God.

Another thing – do we pray to God or Jesus? That has often been a stumbling block. If we believe that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it really doesn’t matter; what does matter is how comfortable we are. Often, Jesus seems more accessible because HE became one of US! However, God is our FATHER, so if we prefer to use a father figure, God will be the one to whom we pray. Either way, we are praying to the SAME PERSON!

There are many situations where a short ‘arrow’ prayer during the day is a tremendous help and encouragement, especially at times when a difficult phone call or meeting is necessary. Confrontation is something that I try to avoid, so I find it helpful to say, *“Lord, if this is going to work, I think YOU had better take over from here.”*

You may say, *“If God knows the inmost workings of our heart, why do we have to pray at all?”* That’s a good question. We tend to ask too many times for what we THINK is absolutely right, only for something far better to happen, or to realise that we hadn’t understood what we were asking for.

I try to leave the solution to God: *“There is this problem, Lord, what is YOUR solution? You don’t need to tell me, just make it happen.”* Yes, God knows our hearts, but He still wants us to make contact.

However, periods of silence can be very helpful. Quiet meditation can be an art worth cultivating and is very beneficial:

- Some people are comfortable in small groups.
- Some are comfortable with a prayer partner.
- Some are comfortable on their own.
- Some prefer just to pray in church services.

Paul reminds us, *“When you can’t pray, the Spirit prays within you.”*

No one can ever claim to be ‘good at praying’, but we must keep trying. That is what makes for a successful prayer life.



## Is Prayer Necessary?

Simply expressed, prayer is communicating with God. Just like other types of communication, prayer is a two-way process. In this process, we enjoy fellowship with our heavenly Father, and our relationship with Him strengthens.

Our heavenly Father greatly desires us to spend time with Him in prayer every single day. Flowing from our private time with Him should be continued communion with Him throughout the day. So, He invites us:

*"Come to me all you, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and lean from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28–30)

It's absolutely necessary to spend time with God to experience His presence and to receive answers to our prayers. Prayer is critical to our Christian walk. It is through prayer that we draw from God's supply of resources. As we grow in God's grace, this becomes evident to those around us.

One of the primary purposes of prayer is to ask and receive from our heavenly Father. He promises in His Word that He will answer our call (Jeremiah 33:3). As we pray for ourselves and others, and receive answers to prayers, we become witnesses of what God can do in the lives of His people.

We can pray and expect answers to our prayers for:

- ✓ Personal and family needs. (Philippians 4:13)
- ✓ Each other. (James 5:16)
- ✓ The saints everywhere. (Ephesians 16:18)
- ✓ Ministers of Christ. (Romans 15:30)
- ✓ Christian workers. (2 Corinthians 1:11)
- ✓ Leaders and those in authority. (1 Timothy 2:1–3)
- ✓ More workers. (Matthew 9:38)