

Communicating with God

Prayer, Part 2

☑ **Target: Develop the praise and prayer habit!**

Key Verses

Psalm 34:1—I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Psalm 100:4—Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

1 Thessalonians 5:17—Pray without ceasing.

Suggested Bible Reading

- ☐ Matthew 5–9
- ☐ Psalms 139 and 145: Prayers from the Psalms
- ☐ Acts 10:1–43: Prayer results in God giving guidance

Other Recommended Reading

- ☐ Finish reading *Prayer Power*

Prayer and Praise: Before Reading God’s Word

Jesus, I’m just beginning to really understand that to love You means to love Your Word. Help me to realize, Jesus, that when I sit down to read the Bible, it’s not an academic exercise and it’s not so I can grow intellectually. I read Your Word so I can spend time with You and get to know You.

And when I neglect Your Word, I neglect You. The Bible is not just words on a page, they’re not just lessons or a collection of nice stories!—The Word is You, Jesus, it’s Your thoughts, it’s Your way of looking at things, it’s Your character, Your personality—everything about You is shown in Your Word.

Having special close time with You when I read the Word is like cuddling up in the arms of a dear friend and finding comfort, or walking hand in hand and talking heart to heart, sharing everything and drawing close to each other. I can ask You questions, and You can give me answers to the things that I wonder about. Or if I have a problem, I know I can talk it over with You. And it’s not just a one-way street; You are actually listening when I pray. And when I read Your Word, You talk to me. It’s a two-way conversation.

I want to know You, Jesus, so help me to know Your Word. I want to spend time with You so I can think Your thoughts and see things the way You see them.

Meditation: Turning Every Thought into a Prayer

We think thousands of thoughts every day and each thought can be turned into a prayer. This is a habit that has to be formed, but when you try it, you'll see how very wonderfully effective it can be in teaching you to truly "pray without ceasing." You don't have to think up things to pray for all day long; you just turn each of your thoughts into a prayer to the Lord!

For example, if you wake up in the morning and think, *Oh, I'm so tired, I don't know how I can get out of this bed*, you can immediately change that into a prayer: "Lord, You know how tired I am and how I need Your strength for this day!"

It can be a very fun exercise to see how many of your thoughts you can remember to turn into prayers. You just have to ask the Lord to help you make it a habit, and then give Him your cooperation by doing your best to bring your thoughts to Him in prayer.

Even if you have a critical thought about somebody, something like, *Why is he always late?* instead of just being critical, turn those thoughts into a prayer for the person—if he actually has a problem along those lines. And if the problem is you, rebuke the critical thoughts and ask the Lord to help you be more loving and merciful.

Even with your positive thoughts, like, *Oh, what a gorgeous day!* turn it into praise to the Lord, giving Him the glory!—"Thank You Jesus for giving us such a beautiful day!"

<To think about> *How could you make more of an effort to direct your thoughts towards the Lord, turning them into prayers?*

Putting the Word into Action: Pray for Others

1 Thessalonians 1:2—We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.

Don't neglect to pray for others! It helps to keep a list of those in special need of prayer. When you know somebody is struggling with problems—with health or employment or financial or personal problems, *any* problems—the very *best* you can do for that person is pray for him or her!

■ **For you to do:** Write up a prayer list and keep it in your Bible or next to your bed to remind you to pray for those people and situations.

Prayer, Our Relationship with the Lord

① *To benefit the most from this section, take the time to look up the Scriptures in your Bible.*

The Lord is always there, no matter how you feel

The Lord loves each of us very much and promises to be with us. Whether we feel we are close to Him or not, we can know from His Word that He is close to us! His Love for us is unchangeable, unwavering:

■ 2 Corinthians 5:7

■ Hebrews 13:5b

■ Isaiah 54:10

Three men were walking on the wall,
Feeling, Faith, and Fact.
Feeling had an awful fall.
Faith was taken back.
Only Fact remained.
So Fact pulled up Faith.
And Faith pulled up Feeling.
And they walked on the wall again.

How do you get close to Jesus?

You get close to Jesus by obeying His Word, yielding to His will, and taking time with Him.

■ John 14:23

■ Hebrews 10:22

The good habit of prayer

■ Luke 18:1

■ 1 Chronicles 16:11

■ 1 Thessalonians 5:17

■ Ephesians 6:18

■ Philippians 4:6–7

■ Proverbs 3:6

■ 1 Thessalonians 5:17

■ Prayer is a connecting link between human need and divine resources.

■ 17th-century physicist Isaac Newton, considered by many as the father of modern science and discoverer of the force of gravitation, said: "All my discoveries have been made in answer to prayer."

Pray!—And God will bless and answer!

- 2 Chronicles 26:5
- Psalm 62:8
- Isaiah 30:19b
- Jeremiah 29:13
- Jeremiah 33:3
- Matthew 7:7–8
- Isaiah 55:6

Waiting for the Lord to work

God's delays are not denials.

- James 1:3–4
- James 5:10

The Lord's answers to prayer are infinitely perfect, and they will show that often when we were asking for a stone that looked like bread, He was giving us bread that to our shortsightedness looked like a stone (Matthew 7:7–11).

The importance of praying for others

- 1 Samuel 12:23a
- Romans 15:30
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2

Thoughts on Praise

- There are two times to praise the Lord: When you feel like it and when you don't feel like it!
- As long as you're thinking about the Scripture and the Lord and you've got a song or a praise in your mouth, you can't complain and murmur and groan and bemoan about how bad you feel!
- Give God all the glory! Remind yourself that you're nothing without Him!
- Please Him by praising Him.
- We can complain because the rose bushes have thorns—or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses!
- Give God all the credit all the time at every turn for every little thing.
- It's healthy to praise the Lord!
- Praise and prayer, which are companions, sustain our spiritual life.
- The fragrance of the Lord is in the perfume of the praises of His people!
- The only excuse for not praising the Lord is if you are out of breath: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6).
- The Christian life is divided primarily into three spheres: praise, prayer, and performance!

- God gets His greatest victories out of seeming defeat, and He often brings them along the neglected path of praise!
- Praise is the voice of faith!
- If we pause to think, we will have cause to thank.
- If you don't thank Him for the blessings He's already given you, He's not going to feel much like answering your prayers to give you something else you want.
- The Lord loves praise. The High and the Holy One dwelleth in the praises of His people.

Key Praise Verses

- Psalm 33:1
- Psalm 34:1
- Psalm 35:28
- Psalm 50:23
- Psalm 86:12
- Psalm 92:1–2
- Psalm 98:1
- Psalm 103:1–2
- Psalm 105:1–2
- Psalm 107:8
- Psalm 113:3
- Psalm 118:21
- Psalm 118:24
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- Hebrews 13:5
- See also: 2 Chronicles 20: The battle won through praise!

Meditation Moments: "But One Thing Is Needful"

By Virginia Brandt Berg

God's Word speaks of this "secret place," the inner chamber of prayer within the secret of His presence, where Mary found rest. We read the story in Luke 10:38–42, where she sat at Jesus' feet to learn of Him, while others rushed about, bothered with much serving. That's why Mary's name has gone down in history as a wise woman, because Jesus said, "Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42b). At the beginning of that verse, Jesus said to Martha, who was distracted with the things that can be taken away, "But one thing is needed"—one thing.

I believe with all my heart that all things are possible with God.—And I mean *all* things. "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). It makes no difference what it is.—God says

“all things” and God’s Word is true! That includes your present need. Don’t say “except this” or “except that”—God says “all things.”

What vistas of hope! What possibilities this word “all” opens to every one of us! And what power and privileges lies at our command! But as we meditate about this, and read what Jesus said, we see that there’s something that is in contrast to this, and it is the only thing that’s really needful.

“All things are possible” but only “one thing is needful.” This verse is a real tranquilizer. It’s so restful in its sweet simplicity, its humble requirement: “But one thing is needful.” Many things are worthy of our effort, some things are worth sacrificing and striving for, but only “one thing is needful.” Jesus said to meet Him alone like this, in the secret place of prayer, and learn of Him. This one needful thing, as we sit at His feet, transcends all else. Mary’s sister, Martha, was fussing over the big dinner, and Jesus said she was troubled, distracted, and anxious about many things.

She wanted to please the Lord with the work of her hands, but He wanted the worship of her heart. She didn’t realize that before the “all things possible,” that “one thing is needful”; that she couldn’t possibly expect the “all things” until she had practiced the “one thing.”

There are professing Christians today who are neglecting the secret place of prayer, the one thing needful, and they think they will, by their works, their “much serving,” please the Lord and gain a higher place in His Work and in His Kingdom. They don’t seem to understand that the surest way of being lifted up into the “all things” and the place of responsibility and power is to first take the lowly place in the “one thing,” for God’s way up is down.

A pastor once came to me for counseling. He had been a pastor, but was crowded out of his field and replaced by a more successful, sincere pastor. He had been himself an untiring worker, and had often written to his Home Board that there was too much work, to send others to help him. Like Martha, his cry was, “Lord, bid someone come and help me!” But with all his work, which was constantly rushing here and there in a feverish flurry, he bore no fruit. And now defeated and with frustrated plans, he was back in his home field, laid aside.

If only he had stopped in his mad rush each day and sat at Jesus’ feet and learned of Him Who is meek and quiet in Spirit, he would have gone out there on the field in due time, to speak with gumption, and labored with power, and to work with the Lord. Not just *for* Him, but also *with* Him.—If he had gone to the secret place and sat at Jesus’ feet. It isn’t a crowded place!

But there he sat, an unfruitful, disappointed servant, because he hadn’t realized that “one thing is needed” in order to make “all things possible.”

He was distracted with so much serving, serving, that he neglected the better part, his prayer life, the sitting quietly and learning of Christ. He had tried to climb up some other way (John 10:1).

Have you done so?—Or have you chosen the better part, which can never be taken away? Have you humbled yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time? (1 Peter 5:6). Or do you fret yourself, and become troubled over “‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” (Matthew 6:31).

Martha was busy and hurried,
Serving the Friend Divine,
Cleansing the cups and platters,
Bringing the bread and the wine.

But Martha was careful and anxious,
Fretted in thought and word.
She had no time to be sitting
While she was serving the Lord.

For Martha was "cumbered" with "serving,"
Martha was "troubled" with "things" —
Those that would pass with the using —
She was forgetting her wings.

Mary was quiet and peaceful,
Learning to love and to live.
Mary was hearing His precepts,
Mary was letting Him give—

Give of the riches eternal,
Treasures of mind and of heart,
Learning the mind of the Master,
Choosing the better part.

Do we ever labor at serving
Till voices grow fretful and shrill?
Forgetting how to be loving,
Forgetting how to be still?

Do we strive for "things" in possession,
And toil for the perishing meat?
Neglecting the one thing needful—
Sitting at Jesus' feet?

Service is good when He asks it,
Labor is right in its place,
But there is one thing better—
Looking up in His face;

There is so much He can tell us,
Truths that are precious and deep;
This is the place where He wants us,
These are the things we can keep!

—Annie Johnson Flint

Before my back was broken and God brought me to Himself the hard way, and I was ill so long, I was like that fretful pastor, and this poem which I wrote, describes what happened to me:

I was longing to serve the Master,
But alas, I was laid aside
From the busy field of workers

In the harvest field so wide.
There were few, yes, few in number,
And I couldn't understand
Why I should be left inactive,
It was not as I had planned.

I was longing to serve the Master
And the need indeed was great.
For me it was easy to labor,
But, oh, it was hard to wait.
To lie quite still and be silent
While the song was borne to my ear
From the busy field of workers
In the harvest field so dear.

I was longing to serve, just to serve the Master,
But He led to a desert place,
And there as we stopped and rested,
His eyes looked down in my face
So full of tender reproaching,
They filled me with sad surprise!
Did He think I had grudged my service,
Or counted it sacrifice?

"Oh Master, I long to serve Thee!
There are so few at the best.
Let me off to the field!" I pleaded,
"I care not to stay and rest."
I knelt at His feet, imploring,
I gazed in His face above,
"My child," He said, "don't you know
Your service is nothing without your love?"

I was longing to serve, to serve my Master,
Oh, this was my one fond thought;
For this I was ever pleading
As His footstool in prayer I sought.
But there in that lonely desert,
Apart from the busy scene,
It dawned on me slowly and clearly
Where my great mistake had been.

My mind was so full of service, just service,

I had drifted from Him apart,
And He longed for that sweet communion,
That union of heart with heart!
Well, I sought and I found forgiveness
While mine eyes with pain were dim;
And now, though His Work is still precious,
The first place is kept for Him!

Let's remember that, and that God is still on the throne and prayer does truly change things.

Faith in Action: "He's with Me"

By Phyllis I. Martin

Storm clouds and strong gusts of wind had come up suddenly over the Alpine Elementary School. The radio blared tornado warnings. It was too dangerous to send the children home. Instead, they were taken to the basement, where they huddled together in fear.

We teachers were worried too. To help ease tensions, the principal suggested a sing-along. But the voices were weak and unenthusiastic. Child after child began to cry.—We could not calm them.

Then a teacher, whose faith seemed equal to any emergency, whispered to the child closest to her, "Aren't you forgetting something, Kathie? There is a power greater than the storm that will protect us. Just say to yourself, 'God is with me now.' Then pass the words on to the child next to you."

As the thought was whispered from child to child, a sense of peace settled over the group. I could hear the wind outside still blowing with the same ferocity as the moment before, but it didn't seem to matter now. Inside, fear subsided and tears faded away.

When the all-clear signal came over the radio sometime later, students and staff returned to their classrooms without their usual jostling and talking.

Through the years I have remembered those calming words. In times of stress and trouble, I have again been able to find release from fear and tension by repeating, "He's with me now."