

Maranatha

Christian Prayer



By Dennis Wrigley

What We Believe

Christians believe that the world and people have not come about by chance. We believe there is an order and a purpose in life. We believe there is one source of all life and matter, one Creator, one God. We do not believe that God is a remote, blind, impersonal force. We believe that God is a real being who provides the purpose of our existence.

The Encounter With God

We dare to believe that God knows us intimately one by one and that he loves us, one by one, and that His nature and real presence can be seen and experienced in the life of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God can be encountered by man, that He is directly accessible to man, and they practise this belief in the act of prayer.

God Is Real

When the Christian prays to God as He is described by Christ and in the manner explained by Christ, he discovers, in his own personal experience that God is real, that He is alive, and that He is near. When we encounter God in prayer we hear His words, we feel His love, and we receive His cleansing, His guidance and His power.

The Evidence

Throughout the ages Christians have prayed in different ways, in different words, and in different places, and they have produced overwhelming evidence that prayer is a healing process, that we are made whole when we pray in faith. Through prayer God breaks down the barriers which separate us from him and separate us from our fellow men. In prayer we come into the knowledge that "we are all one in Christ".

The Way To Pray

Jesus gives the clearest indication of what our attitude should be to God when we pray.

We must recognise He is alive. Jesus declares "He is not the God of the dead but of the living".

We must approach God in prayer as a child approaches a loving father. Jesus teaches us to address God in prayer as 'Our Father'. Jesus even uses the familiar expression 'Abba' about God, even though this is the word a child would use for 'Daddy'. The relationship with God in prayer, therefore, is based upon complete mutual trust and love.

God Knows Us

We must recognise that God knows everything there is to know about each one of us. Jesus declares that there is no limit to the knowledge of God and says "even the hairs on your head have all been counted". Jesus says that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father knowing about it. His message is clear - "so, then, don't be afraid. You are more valuable than a whole collection of sparrows".

Often people do not find it easy to pray and Jesus gave what we now call the Lord's Prayer in direct response to the request "Teach us how to pray". The most effective way to pray is to look at Jesus himself who says "to have seen me is to have seen the Father".

The Invitation Of Jesus

Jesus specifically invites us - "come to me". To those who are tired he promises rest. To those who have lost their way he says "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life". To the lost he says "I am the way". To those who hunger for something satisfying in life he promises "I am the Bread of Life; he who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall not thirst".

Man Listens - God Speaks

When a Christian prays in the noise and confusion of the world he hears the words of his Lord, "be still and know that I am God". He discovers the truth in the words of the prophet long ago - "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength".

We know that Jesus prayed. We know that the lives of the early Christians were full of prayer. We know that throughout the centuries the Church has known the truth in the words of Jesus - "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst". Countless Christians in all ages have approached God in prayer and He has come into their lives and brought peace and forgiveness.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in ...". In prayer we take a bold step of faith and open our lives to God. We search for the truth about ourselves and about the world. We discover that the promise of Jesus holds fast - "Seek and you will find".

A Relationship

Prayer is a relationship between God and us. It is in a sense a conversation between the God within us and the God around us. We pray to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit, in Jesus Christ. The movement to pray is in itself a gift and no one can pray unless he is moved by the Holy Spirit who in prayer makes us cry out 'Abba, Father!'. Romans 8:15.

Prayer is loving God while thinking about him. This loving relationship can be expressed in silence or in words. There are some deep emotions of the spirit which defy verbal expression.

We may pray privately or in groups. From the earliest days of the church the disciples of Jesus used to pray, as was the Jewish custom, at certain hours of the day: 'They went as a body to the Temple every day'. (Acts 2.46.) There is no substitute for personal prayer which bears the stamp of our individual and unique relationship with God.

Prayer, is a dynamic activity which defies analysis. it can, however, be put into five categories,; invocation, confession, thanksgiving, petition and intercession.

INVOCATION: we not only call God to be present to us but remind ourselves that God is always present to us when we call on his name.

CONFESSION: we tell God of our sins of commission and omission.

THANKSGIVING: we praise and thank God for his goodness in creation and redemption.

INTERCESSION: we bring the wider needs of the Church and world to God who will provide for them.

PETITION: we ask God for the things we need for our lives.

*A word from **Mother Teresa** - "Love to pray - feel often during the day the need for prayer, and take trouble to pray. Prayer enlarges the heart until it is capable of containing God's gift of himself. Ask and seek, and your heart will grow big enough to receive him and keep him as your own".*

Let Us Share The Prayers Of Other Christians

O Lord, take away all coldness, all wanderings of the thoughts, and fix our souls upon you and your love, O merciful Lord and Saviour, in this our hour of prayer.

Edward Benson

I am certain that it is only by trusting that I can have peace and joy. Let me believe in you and let me know you in some way so I may be able to trust. Help me to believe and drive away my unbelief, and give me your peace.

Etta Gullick

*Teach us good Lord, to serve you as you deserve,
To give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labour and not to ask for any reward,
Except that of knowing that we do your will,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

St. Ignatius

O Peaceful King of Peace, Jesus Christ, give unto us your peace and confirm in us your peace, and forgive us our sins, so that we may be worthy to come and go in peace.

Ethiopian Liturgy

O Great Chief, light a candle in my heart, that I may see what is therein, and sweep the rubbish from your dwelling place.

An African schoolgirl

*Lord Jesus, so real, so near, so dear,
To all whom I love,
To all whom I meet,
To all for whom I pray,
Be real, be near, be dear today,
Increasingly, for ever.*

A North Indian Prayer

*God is truth and God is love,
So sin is whatever wounds truth and whatever offends against love,
I confess that I have hurt God and I have harmed others.*

In the things I have done or failed to do.

In the things I have said or failed to say.

In the things I have thought or failed to think.

Through lack of love and truth.

Consciously, deliberately, repeatedly.

A Welsh Prayer

Lord, open my eyes so that I may see you; open my heart so I may experience your love. My eyes will be blinded by the vision of you, and my heart will be overwhelmed by the fire of your love. Let me not be afraid of dying to myself so that you may become my vision and the be-all and end-all of my life.

Etta Gullick

O come, O Holy Spirit, come!

Come as holy fire and burn in us,

Come as holy wind and cleanse us,

Come as holy light and lead us,

Come as holy truth and teach us,

Come as holy forgiveness and free us,

Come as holy love and enfold us,

Come as holy power and enable us,

Come as holy life and dwell in us.

Convict us, convert us,

Consecrate us until we are wholly yours.

For your using, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ancient Prayer adapted by Charles Whiston

Lord by Your divine silence, by Your wondrous patience, by Your adorable humility, keep me quiet and still, and possess me with Your peace.

Father Andrew

*We are the mediocre, we are the half givers,
we are the half lovers, we are the savourless salt.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, restore us now,
to the primal splendour of first love.*

To the austere light of the breaking day.

Let us hunger and thirst, let us burn in the flame.

Break the hard crust of complacency.

Quicken in us the sharp grace of desire.

Caryll Houselander

Lord, I am silent before you and I offer myself to you; do what you want with me. Help me to be open when you speak to me in the silence; keep my mind quiet and my body relaxed, so that I may truly be still and know that you are God, know that you are all that I could possibly desire and know the wonder of your love, my Lord and my God. Lord, my love makes me speechless before you. Accept this dumb gift of myself.

Etta Gullick