

Father, also knew times when there was no sense of His Father's presence and He felt totally alone and abandoned. Yet, through the emptiness He maintained a spirit of trust and obedience, thereby showing us His understanding that God is with us as much in darkness as in light and is present at all times.

Lo, I am with you always.
Matthew 28:20

Perhaps most important then, is the notion that prayer is not something we can "fail" at. Many people speak of techniques, ways of approaching God, specific ways of praying. These may or may not be helpful, but when it comes down to it, prayer is about our relationship with God and, if we go simply and humbly to our Father and if we place our trust in Him, then we enter into relationship and then, let us remember, God's Spirit will pray in our hearts. Simply come, openly and honestly, be ourselves (for God knows anyway) and let the relationship grow, let the Love grow, let the Spirit teach us how to pray. Let the Father pray in us.

***My Father will love them
and we will come and make our home with him***
John 14:23

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A Prayer

**Lord, help us to understand
You are always with us
Whether we know it or not.**

**Help us to have faith to open ourselves to You
And to trust in Your Love.**

**May we know Your Light as it shines
In the midst of our darkness.**

**And may we follow in Your Footsteps
As we journey through our life.**

**Until the day comes when our life is done
And You are there to welcome us Home.**

Amen

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The Churches' Fellowship

for Psychological and Spiritual Studies



Occasional Leaflet 8

Prayer

by Elizabeth Mills

***Whenever you pray,
go into your room and shut the door
and pray to your Father who is in secret,
and your Father who sees in secret
will reward you.***

Matthew 6:6

Prayer is about our relationship with God.

In our day-to-day relationships, we know that regular and open communication is important. Relationships are said to founder on lack of time and communication.

So it is the same in our relationship with God. However we approach Him in prayer, what matters is that we are taking time to be with God in prayer. It is the giving of time to prayer to our relationship with God—that is fundamental.

Indeed, there are many parallels between what matters in our earthly relationships and what is important in our relationship with God.

In any form of communication, there are two kinds of interaction necessary: the spoken word and the receptive ear—in other words, talking and listening. Much of the prayer with which we are most familiar is based on the idea of us talking to God—sharing our perspective, unloading our needs and burdens and asking for help.

This is important and must not be undervalued. We need to share our daily lives with Him on a regular basis and to create the space to make this possible.

***Come unto Me all you who are heavy laden
and I will give you rest.***
Matthew 11:28

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However, also important, though much less recognised in our prayer lives, is the need for us to be quiet and to give God space to be and to act in our lives.

Prayer is not a monologue. If we only ever talk, the relationship is one-sided and lacks balance. So we

need to learn that there are also times when God will want to "speak to us" and we must ask ourselves if we are ready to listen.

***Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet
place and get some rest.***

Mark 6:31

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Of course, God's "reply" can come in many forms and may not necessarily be in specified times of prayer. Answers to expressed needs or questions may be given in any manner of means. It may be through someone else's words or actions; through a scene in nature speaking particularly clearly to us; through the printed word, perhaps in the Bible, or maybe through another written source again manifesting clearly to our hearts.

The means may be varied. The point is that we need to be ready to respond and that readiness comes through openness in prayer and a willingness to receive.

Listen to Me and your soul shall live.
Isaiah 55:3

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Time spent quietly with God can be a precursor to this state of openness. Recognising the need to sometimes still our anxious thoughts or concerns, to lay our burdens aside and hand over as

completely as we can to God, is easier said than done! But there again, this journey of prayer takes place over a lifetime. There is no need to hurry it and there is no need to feel impatient when "results" don't seem to come.

Hurry is the enemy of prayer.
George Herbert

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We are told that "God's spirit will pray in our hearts". Thus our role may be a very simple one. We may need only to "show up" and be present for the relationship to grow and develop over time, but we are called upon to be faithful to this (discipline) as the Lord Himself is faithful always to us.

Humility also is important—being "little before God"; recognising who is Master in this relationship; learning to put oneself aside to make space for God; asking forgiveness when necessary and being ready to learn, to trust and to give ourselves to Him completely.

In prayer, there may be experiences which give deep assurance of the presence of God and of the reality of His Love. Such experiences may be short in time, but may touch one so deeply that one's life is never quite the same again. An eternal perspective has been given and that may be enough to lay the foundations on which one can build a new life.

Equally there may be times when prayer seems arid and dry and there are no experiences or times of enlightenment. Perhaps we can take comfort from the fact that even Christ Himself experienced this sense of abandonment and of being alone. His earthly life, though so rich in relationship with His Heavenly