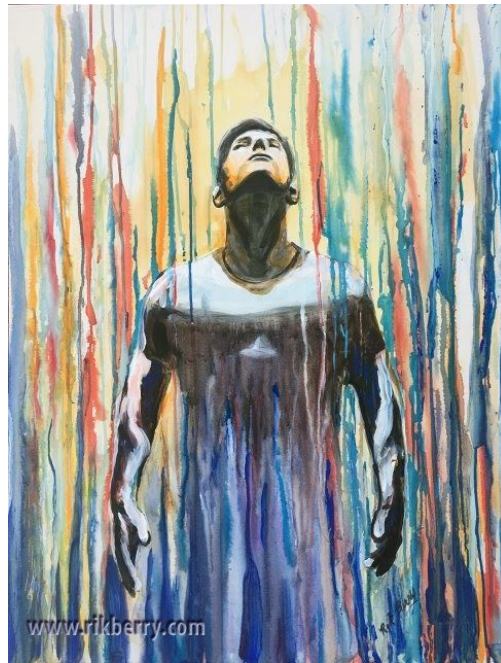


GETTING CONNECTED



Presence *courtesy of Rik Berry*

Let's face it. You can get along perfectly well in this world without prayer.

Most people do. Oh, maybe they say a little prayer before they go to bed at night. Maybe they ask God to bless their loved ones. But prayer,

connecting with God in a living way,

getting in touch with heaven,

breaking through to the unseen world, the unseen God,

... this is not happening in their lives. And they're getting along.

You can get along without prayer. Most people do. But once you begin walking the walk of faith — once Jesus, crucified and risen, starts making himself known to you; and you have to answer his call, you have to do something with this fire within you---that's when you feel compelled to find out how to pray. How to really pray.

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

Luke 11:1

These disciples had been with Jesus for some time. He had sent them out to proclaim the kingdom and heal the sick. And they had come back with glowing reports. "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" But the more they ministered, the more they became aware that something essential was missing.

When Jesus sent them out to touch people with power in his name, they could do it.

They could touch people. But somehow they *could not touch God*.

Jesus was touching God for them. Jesus was doing the praying.

They watched Jesus pray, and they knew he was getting through to the Father in a way they could not. "Lord, teach us to pray like John the Baptist taught his disciples. Show us how to connect with God the way you do."

This was music to Jesus' ears. Who knows how long he had been waiting to hear that. "Lord, teach us to pray!" It was the turning point. It was the beginning of something in their lives which never left them — the day the Master began to show them how to *connect with God*.

How to really connect...so you're not just putting on a pious show for your own benefit, like the Pharisee. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men..." So you're not just heaping up empty phrases like the Gentiles, "for they think that they will be heard for their many words." So you're not just sitting alone in a room trying to pray, while your mind wanders the universe with daydreams. "Lord, teach us to pray!"

So he did. Jesus taught them three things:

1. Who you're praying to.
2. How to pray to him.
3. What to pray for.

Jesus teaches us who we're praying to

Do I know who I'm talking to when I'm praying? Or am I sending up a request, hoping it will somehow find its way to the "Man Upstairs"? i.e. "Dial 1-800-TALKTOGOD" If you have a question, press #1; if you have a problem, press #2. Please hold, we are really interested in your call."

And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.

Luke 11:3-4

"Father.....Father." Jesus always addressed his prayer to the Father. "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will."

And now he's teaching us to do the same. "When you pray, do like I do. Pray to the Father." "When you pray, say, 'Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.'" You're talking to your real Father. You're *honoring* him, *hallowing* his name, *revering* him.

The Holy One who rules the universe is our Father. So we take the words of the Lord's Prayer, which we have known since childhood, and use them as our starting point, to bring us into the presence of the Father.

Just as the First Commandment is the most important of the Ten---keep Number One, and you'll keep them all---so this First Petition of the Lord's Prayer is the most important:

"Father, hallowed be thy name."

Get that right, and everything else will follow.

You are not praying to a machine.

You are not praying to a Cosmic Tyrant.

You are not praying to an Aloof Mystery.

You are praying to your Father. Our Father.....



Awesome God courtesy of Deborah Nell

Who knows you better than you know yourself.

Who loves you more than any earthly Father ever could.

Who cares about every detail in your life, as if you were his only child.

Who longs to give you more than you could ask or think.

He's your Father!

Jesus teaches us how to pray.

Imagine that one of your friends comes over at midnight. He bangs on the door and shouts, "Friend, will you lend me three loaves of bread? A friend of mine just showed up unexpectedly from a journey, and I don't have anything to feed him." Would you shout out from your bed, "I'm already in bed, and so are the kids. I already locked the door. I can't be bothered"? You know this as well as I do: even if you didn't care that this fellow was your friend, if he keeps knocking long enough, you'll get up and give him whatever he needs simply because of his brash persistence!

So listen: Keep on asking, and you will receive. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened for you. All who keep asking will receive, all who keep seeking will find, and doors will open to those who keep knocking.

Luke 11:5-10

Though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, because he keeps at it, makes a pest of himself, he will get up and give him whatever he needs. In other words, Put something into it!

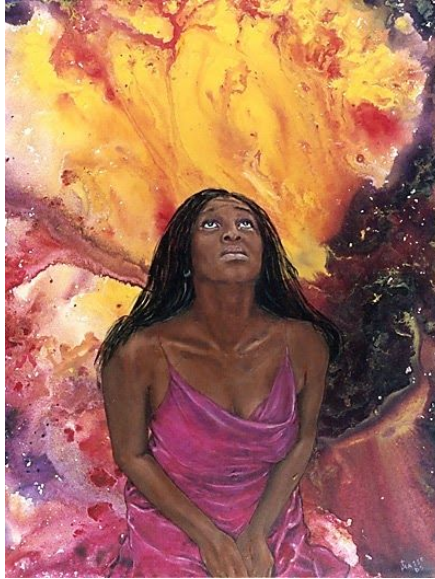
Ask, and keep asking. Seek and keep seeking. Knock and keep knocking!

Of course, there will be the rare occasion when you ask, and somehow on the "first shot" you know it's done. Answered. All you have to do is give thanks. But for every one-shot prayer there will be a hundred where you learn to pray by being persistent, proving to God and to yourself that you mean business.

After your friend said, "Don't bother me! The door is shut, my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything," what would have happened if you had turned and walked away. You would have walked away with nothing. Or if the widow pestering the Unjust Judge had given up at the third brush-off? She would have walked away with nothing.

Jesus is teaching us that there is only one way to pray:

Keep praying! Pester! Don't give up!



Lift Your Eyes by Fr. James Hase

Prove to yourself that this thing you want the Father to do for you is important! It doesn't matter what words you use, or whether you're kneeling, sitting, standing, or flat on your face as you pray.

What matters is that you keep at it! Don't be pussyfooting!

Don't be muttering and mumbling with half your brain.

Get serious! Put something into it, and stick with it!

For every one who asks receives----*if he doesn't quit.*

And she who seeks finds---*if she keeps at it.*

And to him who knocks it will be opened, *if he sticks with it.*

Start praying like that, and heaven will come down and help you.

Jesus teaches us what to pray for

What father among you, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

Luke 11:11-13

Of course, there are many things we're going to pray for.

Things we need.
People we're worried about.
Problems we face.

But if these prayers are going to connect,

if they're going to come alive, so we can enter the presence of the Father with faith,
we need to pray first for the supreme gift of God —
—the one gift Jesus sent back when he returned to the Father:

The gift of the Holy Spirit.



Come Holy Spirit by Lance Brown

... *“How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”*

So we ask, and keep asking. And as surely as we ask, we receive.

The Spirit comes to us.

And just as Jesus, during his earthly ministry, kept going back to the Father for fresh strength, so we keep going back to the Father, at Jesus' command, for fresh life from the Spirit.

Daily. Hourly. "Father, how can I live this new life, how can I bring help to the wounded souls around me, *unless you sustain me with your Spirit?*"

To make all this work in real life, most of us are going to have to do some adjusting in our thinking. We've been in the habit of thinking of prayer as a little appendage to our daily routine, a little ritual which can't hurt. Maybe it will even bring us some luck.

But now we start all over again, and do exactly what the disciples did.

We start by saying,

"Lord, teach us to pray! We don't know how to pray, Lord. Help us to move beyond these weak prayers we've been praying. Help us to rise up on wings of your Spirit into the presence of the Father. Lord, don't give us any peace until we start setting aside enough time each day so you can teach us to pray!"

Many years ago I was serving as a pastor, when it suddenly dawned on me that my prayer life was next to useless. I was trying to deliver sermons out of an empty heart. I was trying to help people find something which I hadn't found myself! So I began reading books on prayer. I must have picked the wrong books, 'cause it didn't help. I tried this, and tried that. Still no help. Then stumbled upon the idea of asking the Lord to help me. Soon after I met a strange little preacher from a strange little church and a far-away city.

This man explained to me that there was more of the Holy Spirit that God wanted me to have. Then he prayed for me. The Spirit began moving in me in a new way.

And the proof that this was happening was that *prayer came alive*. It became *real*.

That was a long time ago, and I'm still learning.

But this much I know: that what the Spirit did for me way back then, and is still doing, he'll do for anybody.

You don't earn this. It's a gift. Paid for by our Lord Jesus with his own blood.

It's free.

All you have to do is ask.

"If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

Let's make a covenant with each other — you the reader and I the writer. Let's agree to pray two prayers until the Spirit himself transforms them into something more:

1. Lord, teach us to pray. ("Us" not "Me," we're in this *together*)
2. Father, renew us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

These prayers will be answered by unsearchable Love with unspeakable Power.



Spring Rain by Rik Berry

Let's pray together:

*Our Father, Our Father...We revere you, we honor you, we love you.
We are awestruck and tremble at the thought of entering your presence.
Yet, we want to connect to you, the Living God when we pray
Give us the gift of your Spirit, so we can rise up into your presence and come alive when we pray
Keep us longing for you, for fresh life, for fire from on high... daily, hourly, moment by moment.
Sustain us with your Spirit so that we can love you with a force beyond our capability and so we can live the
life you call us to live covered by your precious love. Amen.*

Maranatha Mirror Messages

mmirror.net



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