

Teach Me to Pray

#0163

Study by W. D. Frazee—February 4, 1977

“And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” Luke 11:1.

There are several things here to notice. One is that the disciples could tell when Jesus stopped praying. Why? They could hear Him. Was it public or private prayer? Private prayer. They came to Him as He was praying, and they were impressed by His prayer. It was evident that He was in the presence of His Father. In a sense, everything else was shut out. He was shut in with God.

The response of the disciples was, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Do you suppose that they had ever prayed before? Oh, yes. These men were ordained ministers. But in the presence of Jesus on this particular occasion, they felt such a nearness of Christ to His Father and such a power in prayer that they longed to know the secret.

Jesus did not give them some elaborate ritual, or some long-drawn-out ceremony. He repeated the Lord's Prayer and then told them the story about the man that came at midnight, begging for the three loaves of bread to feed his traveler friend, and he stayed there until he got it. So He says:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” Luke 11:9–10.

Do you believe that everyone who asks receives? Yes. The promise is sure, but we must meet the conditions.

“And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me” Psalm 50:15.

That is a good “traveler's check” to carry with you. You will never run out of help if you carry that check and use it. One great advantage that the promises of God have over the banker's traveler's checks is that we can use it again and again. But we always have to *endorse* them and present them to God as His own promise made out to us, and we accept it.

I want our minds to be refreshed with that expression:

“And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me” Psalm 50:15.

We find an echo of this in Psalm 46:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” Psalm 46:1.

We find these statements:

“In every difficulty we are to see a call to prayer” *The Desire of Ages*, page 667.

“As soon as difficulties arise, we are to offer to Him our sincere, earnest petitions” *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 172.

If you were living in downtown Chattanooga and became aware that the building was on fire, how long would you wait to get the telephone and call the fire department? Just as soon as you knew there was a problem, you would immediately call for help. That's the way we are to be with God in prayer. Prayer is not to be the last resort. As soon as difficulties arise, we are to offer to Him our sincere, earnest petitions. Just as soon. And while we are to at once enter into prayer, we are to keep on until we receive the blessing that we seek. Here is another statement on this:

“When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper” *The Desire of Ages*, page 493.

This is to be our settled habit. We are to turn to Jesus as naturally as a child turns to his mother. When I was a little fellow, I would stub my toe. We went barefoot much of the time. The skin would be off, and the blood would be running. I would come running. Mamma, mamma! Do you suppose I got any help? Sure.

We sing the battle hymn of the reformation—A Mighty Fortress Is Our God. Luther got the inspiration for this from Psalm 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Have you proved it to be so? Thank God.

This doesn't mean that our prayer experience is to be confined to crying when trouble comes. But the apostle says we are to pray without ceasing. You have heard of a “hotline.” It means that all a party has to do to make connection is to lift the receiver, and he is on. Jesus wants you and me to have a hotline with Heaven. We can call anytime, day or night, and there is help for us. We have this wonderful statement:

“When it becomes the habit of the soul to converse with God, the power of the evil one is broken. Satan cannot abide near the soul that draws nigh to God” *Review and Herald*, December 3, 1889.

How do you get a habit? Can you buy it in town? No. Every habit we have ever formed, good or bad, has been formed by doing the same thing again and again, over and over. That's the way habits are formed.

We see this principle applied to the matter of learning to pray:

“We should accustom ourselves to often lift the thoughts to God in prayer. If the mind wanders, we must bring it back; by persevering effort, habit will finally make it easy”
Messages to Young People, page 115.

Can it happen? Does it happen? Sure.

Someone says, “Brother Frazee, it's so hard.”

Well, isn't it nice that we never have to do anything in life except the easy things? People who adopt that program never climb. It is easier to slide down than to climb up. Here is something that will finally be easy, yet it takes a persevering effort to establish the habit.

When Nehemiah was the king's cup-bearer in the palace of Persia, he was going through his duties, bringing the king's cup. The king looked at him and said, You don't look very good. What's the matter with you? Nehemiah had been weeping and praying about Jerusalem. His heart was burdened. Before he got through with that interview, he had the opportunity to make an ingathering solicitation. He got what he requested. He got permission to go back to Jerusalem with the backing of the king to build the wall and put things in order. But in the midst of that important experience, Nehemiah said, I prayed to the God of Heaven.

Does that mean Nehemiah excused himself from the king and went to some private room? No. Right there with the king on the throne and the cupbearer with the cup in his hand, he entered into the audience chamber of the Most High. The closet of communion may be found wherever we are. We are to keep the door of the heart open continually to the Lord. Because we know that He is with us, we can whisper to Him in the inner silence of the heart.

There is a viewless, cloistered room
As wide as heaven, as bright as day;
Where though my feet may join the throng,
My heart may enter in and pray.

One harkening even cannot tell
When I have crossed the threshold o'er;
For He alone who hears my prayer,
Has heard the shutting of the door.

Let's cultivate this habit. True, we need to kneel down and pray public prayer and private prayer. But as the outgrowth of all this, we are to have a communion with God.

“Cultivate the habit of talking with the Savior when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor” *Ministry of Healing*, page 511.

Think how much time that involves. It involves most of the waking hours. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Savior when you are alone. You may be driving to work; you may be walking; you may be lying down to sleep. Cultivate the habit of talking with Jesus when you are walking. I hope that means some time for each of you every day. Walking is one of the most beautiful opportunities to talk with the Lord. Cultivate the habit of talking with Jesus when you are busy with your daily labor—washing the dishes, sweeping the floor, punching the typewriter, keeping the books, giving a treatment—whatever you are doing. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Savior when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor.

If you are all alone, you may be able to open your lips and speak a word. I don't think Nehemiah did. But he darted a prayer right there in the presence of the earthly king to the Heavenly King. Did God hear him? Oh, yes. And all he longed for was fulfilled.

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” Jeremiah 33:3.

Let's look at that expression “cultivating the habit” of talking with the Savior. How do you cultivate the habit? The way you develop a habit is to do the same thing over and over again.

Someone says, “Brother Frazee, I would like to, but I don't *think* about it.”

Well, just do it when you *do* think about it. You can't do it any *other* time. When it comes to your mind, do it. And if you will respond every time the Holy Spirit impresses you, you will soon be thinking of it oftener than you did before. Do you hear the voice of the Spirit? Do you respond? He doesn't usually shout. Elijah heard the still, small voice. And however faint that whisper may be, let your will respond; let your choice be decided. Tell the Lord, “I thank Thee for reminding me of Your love. Lord, I thank Thee that the door is open.” There are a thousand ways to respond. Let Jesus know that we love Him and that we are thankful for His Spirit impressing us to draw near to Him.

I bring one of the most wonderful promises in all the Bible. It is not public prayer. It is not family prayer at the family altar. It is certainly not secret prayer alone. It is a fourth dimension in prayer.

“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” Matthew 18:19.

Here we see something from mathematics—"two." How many are two? One and one.

We hear this text quoted sometimes and applied by saying, There are only two or three of us here, but that's enough; we can claim the promise.

I won't argue with that, but I don't think that is what Jesus is trying to say. The more the better, but if there are only two or three, at least you can do *something*. Jesus is giving a special promise to two who agree, and He broadens it to include in some cases three.

If you have never entered into this experience and proved this promise again and again, you may wonder that I emphasize mathematics. But if you have experienced it, you know what I'm talking about. We hear an echo of it when the prophet asked this question:

"Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another?" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 7*, page 21.

The instruction is given that if there is a large number in the church, they are to meet in little groups to claim this promise. But if in some place, there are *only* two or three, *they're* to meet together and claim this promise.

While Sister White was over in Europe, she was talking about some of these things to the workers and believers over there. I read:

"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.' Precious promise. Do we believe it? What marvelous results would appear if the united prayers of this company were to ascend to God in living faith! Jesus stands ready to take these petitions and present them to His Father saying, 'I know these persons by name. Send answers to their prayers; for I have graven their names on the palms of My hands'" *Historical Sketches*, page 152.

Suppose we were to get a letter from the president of one of the banks in Chattanooga, and he should say, "We have heard of the good work you are doing. If two of you will come down to my office, we have a check of \$1,000 to present to you." Do you think any of us would manage to find the time to get down there? Do you suppose two people could get together? We might argue with ourselves and him and say, "What on earth do you need two for? Why can't one do the job?" But the man who has the check is the one who makes the conditions.

Who is the one who has *this* check? God. And don't worry. There are promises in the Bible for one person; there are plenty of them. But *here* is one that is *not* for one person; it is for *two*. And the only way you can get anything out of this promise is for two people to agree.

Did any of you ever get a check made out to two people, like John and Mary Brown? What do we need on the back? We need two signatures. I saw a letter once from a man who wrote to a place where they had sent him a check made out to him and his wife, and he said, "I want a check made out just to me." But the contract called for both. That's the way it had to be. In order to cash that check, he and his wife needed to agree. That check could lie around the house for a long time while they were waiting to agree.

Is there any husband and wife here tonight that needs to claim this promise? It is possible for a husband and wife to pray at family worship day after day, week in and week out, and still not be agreed. They need to get all alone, just the two of them, and pray this thing through. They need to reach the place where, in simple faith, they can say, "Lord, we are ready now to get the blessing; we're agreed."

If you can't agree to start with, you can at least agree to pray that you *will* agree, can't you? Oh, yes. Seek for it with all your heart.

But this promise isn't just for husbands and wives. I remember when I was about 14 years old. I had given my heart to God in a new way. I was going to a new school. The Lord had laid on my heart the plan based on this text. A minister that I knew, Elder Luther Warren, had introduced it to us at camp meeting. So not too long after school opened that fall, I went down the road before school to meet a boy that I had become acquainted with. I said, "Robert, God has made some special promises. How about the two of us meeting together and praying together?"

It was just that simple. Robert said he would. And he and I started praying together. It wasn't long before a chum of his joined our prayer band. And then there were three. Then another boy joined. We were ready to start over again. We kept on praying and adding others until finally over half that school were in prayer bands. Somehow the Lord moved on our hearts to do this in answer to the Savior's simple promise.

As I look back over the years since then, I don't think I would be with you here tonight if it hadn't been for that little prayer band. I think the Lord did something in my young life through it.

I recommend it to you whatever your age is. Find a prayer partner—someone who will pray with you, someone who will agree with you in prayer.

It is hard for some people to find anyone who will agree with them. That's why there are so many unhappy homes and unsuccessful marriages. This prayer experience we're looking at is dependent upon two or three people agreeing. This is one of the reasons God wants to invite us into this special experience. There are things that can happen when two people who long for a certain blessing kneel down and pray together for a special object—particularly praying for definite souls.

A few years after this experience of prayer bands, I found myself a student at Loma Linda, taking a medical missionary training. I thank the Lord He gave me some prayer partners there. There were different ones at different times. We learned more about the science of prayer. Then I was called with Elder John Tindall

to come up to San Francisco to be an apprentice in medical evangelism. But some of the most precious experiences I had there were not simply learning to give health lectures or preach sermons or give Bible studies. All of these were wonderful. But one of the most precious blessings I received was when Elder Tindall asked me if I would take charge of the young people's work in connection with his campaign.

I had learned through experience some simple lessons in united prayer in little prayer bands. So I went to a young man and talked to him about it. We started a little prayer band. Then it spread to others. I began to talk to other young people about the plan. We organized a little prayer band army. I saw those young people learn to pray together. And if you're *praying* for souls, you're going to *work* for them. I saw those young people in the heart of that great wicked city win dozens of other young people to Christ.

I know it can be done. While I am thankful for all the classes we have and all the meetings we have, I am longing to see more of these little prayer bands of two or three zeroing in on some special souls, praying for them with earnestness until Heaven answers.

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." This was one of the subjects in the schools of the prophets. This was apparently one of the things that John responded to his invitation.

Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray,
This is my heart cry day unto day;
I long to know Thy will and Thy way,
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.

Oh, that the Holy Spirit may move upon the heart of someone whom Jesus is calling to a ministry of intercession.

"Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish" *Ministry of Healing*, page 509.

Our Father, we thank Thee for the invitation of Jesus, and we are responding now. Help us to cultivate the habit of talking with Thee when we are alone, when we are walking, and when we are busy with our labor. Help us to enter into this fourth dimension in little prayer bands of two or three, claiming the promise, and pleading with God for the salvation of some special one and for still another. We thank Thee for accepting us through the merits of Jesus, in His wonderful name, who died for us, who *lives* for us. Amen.

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