

Cultivating Deep Prayer

Prayer can be used to mean the conscious expression of our thoughts and feelings as an intentional communication to God. This is what we mean when we speak of “saying our prayers,” whether the “saying” is silent or vocal, in solitude or in a group. Prayer always involves personal expression with a Godward reference. It is our part of a conversation with God.

Four Ways to Enhance the Prayer Experience

Pray Receptively

We do not call God’s attention to our wants so much as call our own attention to God’s will.

Pray Honestly

Prayer is an honest communication of what we really feel.

Pray Comprehensively

A more fully developed prayer life includes at least eight forms of expression:

1. **Adoration**, articulating our awareness of God in all the vastness of God’s ultimate power, goodness, and truth;
2. **Confession**, recognizing the many specific ways in which we have fallen short of God’s expectation;
3. **Aspiration**, affirming also our untouched potentialities which, through the forgiveness and empowerment of God, can transform us into children of God;
4. **Thanksgiving**, celebrating the multiplied gifts of God, including little things which we usually take for granted and big things throughout history which we often forget;
5. **Petition**, sharing our hopes and desires in the light of the intentions of God;
6. **Intercession**, or altruism in prayer, expressing our concerns for others both near and far;
7. **Commitment**, dedicating ourselves to new life patterns beyond our previous responses;
8. **Acceptance**, or the benediction element in prayer, receiving God’s supernatural resources of poise, peace, perspective, and power with the assurance of God’s continuing presence and adequacy.

These eight elements are not rigidly to be given equal weight, nor do they necessarily enter into every prayer. But unless our prayer life as a whole includes them, we remain comparatively impoverished in both personal growth and social competence.

Pray Dangerously

Associated with mature prayer is a quality of courageous boldness, more strenuous and venturesome than the previous limits to our endurance and accomplishment. Some persons have prayed and then moved to sacrificial lives in remote mission fields. Jesus might have compromised more and lived longer had he not gone into a garden to pray.

As you think back over your typical private prayers, which of the types of prayer (adoration, confession, etc.) have you tended to omit? Write a brief prayer of that type and sincerely pray it.

What else might you do to overcome whatever imbalances there are in your prayer life?