

The elements of prayer

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Prayer is many things. Often we think of prayer as us talking to God. We tell God our problems, as if He doesn't already know. We tell God what we want, as if He isn't aware of what we need. We thank God, which is good. But sometimes praising God is done to be heard and approved by others rather than to give genuine gratitude to God for all His blessings.

Instead of thinking of prayer as a monologue, us talking to God, what if we consider prayer as a dialogue? We praise God, affirm what He is and what He does, in order to lift our thoughts Godward. Then we listen for God's thoughts to us.

God is talking to each one of us 24 hours a day. God's messages to you are unique. Just right for your individual needs. It is like a radio station broadcasting just to you and for you. How much do we tune in to God? How many of God's messages do we hear?

A frequent question is, how do I know if it is God talking or if it's just my own thinking? My answer is...I believe deep down you know. I believe every person has spiritual sense or spiritual intuition or a 6th sense, whatever you want to call it. I believe every person has heard one of God's messages. Maybe not identified it as being from God. But knew it wasn't just their own thinking. We need to start identifying those thoughts as God communicating to us directly.

One way to check: is it moral? does it bless others not just us? When we obey God's thoughts they lead us to be good and do good.

Since God is talking to us 24 hours a day, we need to start listening 24 hours a day. Listening isn't limited to church or Bible study or quiet moments. Listening is an attitude. We need to always have an ear tuned to God's station. Even in the middle of a busy day. That is praying without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

There are four elements to this prayer. Turning your thought Godward, or tuning in to God. Listening. Obeying immediately, and then expressing our gratitude to God.

Obedience is essential. When Christ Jesus called James and John to be his disciples did they say, “OK. Be there in a minute after I finish mending these nets.” They obeyed immediately. When we receive God’s messages, there’s a reason why He’s telling us right then. We need to cultivate immediate obedience, and put off worldly procrastination.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that it is God guiding and blessing us. Thanking God, praising Him, expressing gratitude for His goodness keeps us turned Godward.

With the next article, I’m going to share a series of true stories from myself, my Mother, and students in my Sunday School class. These experiences have one thread in common. Someone’s life was saved by listening to God and obeying immediately.

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