

10 WHEN YOU PRAY

Luke 11:1-2 ...Lord, teach us to pray...When you pray...

John 15:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

We grow in our understanding of prayer through praying. Here are three practical points on praying gleaned from experience:

- **Praying means putting all into God's hands**

When we do not get what we have prayed for, we begin to lose confidence in prayer. That is when our wrong notions of prayer get corrected. We learn more about proper praying if we do not give it up when disillusioned. The type of prayer which simply asks for what we want is very self-suggestive. It can be no more than a psychological process of repeated self-affirmation on our knees, or a sort of mental priming of confidence and motivation to push ourselves to get the thing done. The test is in the spirit with which we go about doing things once we get up from our knees. Have we been humbled to a real reliance on God, or simply stirred to action in the flesh?

- **Praying is child-like asking**

What is the mark of a trusting child and a loving father? The child can freely ask what he desires, and the father is most happy to hear. Our heavenly Father loves to hear His children asking Him this way because it is an expression of their implicit trust in Him. We ask with a confidence arising from a right relationship with Him, not from a pumped-up faith. Childlike asking is never clouded by anxiety over the outcome. There is a winsome simplicity in childlike faith which asks no questions and takes you at your word. When we ask, we should be taken up not so much with the thing asked for, as with the One who hears us. We ask, respecting what He gives as good. We ask as children, always trusting though not always knowing. And we receive as children, always thanking though not always understanding. For God's children, praying is a privilege, not a duty. It is not a means of getting but an outcome of relating.

- **Petty praying**

There is a futility in scrupulously detailed praying that is not asking at all but an announcing of information. We are prone to pray pious platitudes, which are a repetition of the obvious. As we mature, we outgrow petty prayers about a multitude of minute and inconsequential matters, which speak not of faith but rather a lack of it. Prayer is not to be misused as a shelter for timidity or a shield from reality. If a child keeps on asking for every little thing, something is not right. Either the child is too demanding, or the parent is not meeting the need. Praying is asking God, not nagging. It takes some denial of our requests to realise that we may be asking for the wrong thing or in the wrong way. At such times, having our desire denied is a better gift as the dross is removed and our praying perfected.