

A NEW WAY TO PRAY

By CLIFFORD HOMER RICHMOND.

"Lord, teach us to pray."—St. Luke, 11:1.

One day the disciples came to Jesus and said: "Lord, teach us to pray." This must have been a bit embarrassing for them for they were good men. They were men of prayer. Still they realised that there was something about Jesus' prayer life which was different from their own. There was power in His prayers. His prayers seemed to be ALWAYS answered. They were eager to know the secret of their effectiveness. In answer to their request, Jesus said: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in Heaven" By studying this prayer we could discover the secret of Jesus' power in prayer; but I want to take you to another scene in the Life of Jesus which more graphically portrays the secret of His effectiveness in prayer; namely, the tomb of Lazarus.

Believing is Receiving

As Jesus stood before the tomb of Lazarus He looked up to Heaven and said: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me . I thank Thee that Thou dost always hear me. Lazarus, come forth!" And Lazarus came forth from the grave! Jesus did not ASK God to hear Him. He KNEW that He heard Him. His confidence was based upon the character of God. Since God is love, a Heavenly Father, He hears and answers the prayers of His children, so Jesus just RECEIVED the "good things" which God had prepared for them that love Him. In this case it was the resurrection of His dear friend.

Jesus seldom, if ever, prayed the prayer of petition. He knew God's will for His children is good, so He simply received this good by faith. Sometimes it was forgiveness of sin; sometimes the healing of the body; sometimes it was peace of mind; sometimes it was stilling the tempest; and sometimes it was feeding the multitudes. This was the secret of Jesus' success in prayer.

Why Our Ineffectiveness?

If we were perfectly honest, we, too, should come to Jesus with the request of the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray;" for our prayers have also been very ineffective.

This is due, for the most part, to the fact that our prayers are prayers of petition. We are always asking God for something. Now, there is nothing really wrong with the prayer of petition. Jesus taught us to pray such a prayer at times. "Ask," He said, "and ye shall receive." Even in the perfect prayer we are taught to say: "Give us this day our daily bread." There are times when with Peter we need to cry out: "Lord, save or I perish." At such times God moves in His great love and compassion to answer these prayers; but such praying is on the lower level of prayer. We are apt in this kind of praying to make God a sort of celestial Santa Claus. We pray to Him for what we get out of Him. Such praying is never very effective.

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The reason is evident. When we petition God we are concentrating on the thing we are asking for. Our problem has our attention. Now, it is a psychological principle that **WHAT GETS YOUR ATTENTION GETS YOU**. When our problem, no matter what it is: sickness, poverty, discord, etc., gets your attention, even in prayer, it gets you. It is magnified. Its power over you is increased. Of course, it is better to pray about your problem than it is to worry about it. But that is not the answer.

Here is another example of what I mean. Two little girls had been put to bed by their mother. The younger was frightened, so the older sister, thinking to comfort her got out of bed and kneeling, began to pray, "Please dear God don't let any goblins get little sister. Don't let any wolves come out of the closet and hurt her. Don't let any black bear come through the door and eat her." By the time older sister had finished this type of praying the younger sister was "really" frightened. How much better it would have been if the little girl, instead of concentrating on what she didn't want, had concentrated on God, the love of God, the care of God, the presence and the protection of God!

Mind Stayed on God

This is what Jesus did. This is the way He prayed. This is the new way of praying. The heart of it all is: When you pray — **TURN YOUR THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PROBLEMS TO GOD!** Thus, God will get your attention. Then God's Good will begin to manifest in your life. When Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water, everything was all right as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. As long as Jesus got his attention, all that belonged to Jesus became available for him; but, when he took his eyes off Jesus and concentrated on the wind and the waves, he began to sink. The wind and the waves got him.

"But," you ask, "how can I turn my thoughts to God so that I shall be able to receive all the good which belongs to God and which He desires to give me?" There is no better way that I know than to become acquainted with God's truth in His Holy Word. **ACCEPT BY FAITH!** Affirm it again and again during your prayer periods. Then begin **ACTING** on it and **IT WILL BE YOURS**. It will take on flesh and manifest itself in your daily life. In this way we receive what God has already made possible and wants to give us.

A young lady came to me once and said, "Dr. Richmond, of late I find myself stumbling and falling. It is becoming very embarrassing to me. My friends are still teasing me about it. I've prayed about it, but it doesn't seem to help." I asked her if there was anything physically wrong with her and she informed me that there was not. Then I proceeded to acquaint her with this new way of praying. I showed her how she had been fastening this undesirable experience upon herself by concentrating upon it in prayer. I said: "Let us turn to God's Word and find some truth which will meet your need and turn your thoughts to God." I gave her those words in the 91st Psalm: "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." I said, "Stop thinking about your problem. Memorise these words. Accept them as true, for **THEY REALLY ARE**. Thank God that they are true, that **HE IS**

LITERALLY GIVING 'HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER THEE.' Live with thus truth and forget your problem." Some months went by. Then one day she came to me smiling and said: "Dr. Richmond, **IT WORKS!** I'm not stumbling and falling any more."

How it Works

IT DOES WORK. Not simply because it gets your mind off the negative, but because it sets up the attitude of faith which is absolutely necessary if we are to receive any of the wonderful things which God has prepared for us. As Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you."

In this connection, let me say that it is necessary for us to repeat the particular truth, which is the answer to our need over and over again until it becomes part of us. It is not enough that we know it "intellectually" and "consciously". We must know it "subconsciously". It is not what we know consciously which affects us so much as what we know subconsciously.

I recall once I was to speak at a rather large gathering of people and about an hour before the meeting I began to get "butterflies" in my stomach. I tried to reason with myself about it; but it did no good. In my reasoning I was concentrating on my problem and it was getting worse. At this time I was just beginning to understand this new way of praying, so I went to my room and opened a little devotional book. At the top of the page I read these words from Isaiah, 41:13: "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, 'Fear not, I will help thee'." This was just what I needed. I believed that consciously but I was disturbed. It was not down in the subconscious. So I began this new way of praying. I took this truth and repeated it again and again. I thanked God that He **DID** have a hold of my right hand; that He **WAS** saying, "Don't be afraid," and that He **WAS HELPING ME**. I kept this up for some time and when I stood up to speak, all fear was gone. I was perfectly composed. **GOD HAD COME THROUGH.**

"That is autosuggestion, isn't it?" you ask. If by autosuggestion you mean telling yourself something that is not true to try to make yourself believe, that it is true — **NO! IT IS suggestion;** but suggestion of **TRUTH** to enable you to believe subconsciously what **IS** true and what you **KNOW** to be true consciously . . .

The thing to remember in this kind of Prayer is that **GOD** does the work. It is not by your own effort, thinking or praying that the thing happens. You turn your thoughts to God, through His Word, accept and affirm the truth, thank Him that it is so, and that He is working it out in your life. As you thus "close the circuit", the current, the supernatural power, love and wisdom of God begin to flow.

All that the wood in the petrified Forest had to do was simply to lie there in the water for centuries and bit by bit, cell by cell, it changed into the beautifully coloured stone you see today. So all we have to do is likewise, to put ourselves "in soak to God" through acquaintance with and affirmation of spiritual truth as we find it in the Bible, and we are changed and environment is changed. It does not always happen all at once; but, bit by bit, attitude by attitude, we are **TRANSFORMED**; our health is improved; conditions are made more harmonious; we have greater joy and deeper peace within.

I think of a woman who suffered with insomnia for thirty years. She has prayed about that insomnia many times and tried everything, but to no avail; then she learned this new way to pray and began to turn her thoughts away from the insomnia to God. She began to meditate upon truths such as these: "He giveth his beloved sleep." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." God began to work. God got her attention. God got her and she began to sleep soundly for the first time in thirty years.

There is nothing mysterious about this. It works according to the well-defined laws I have outlined. You turn your thoughts away from your problem to God. You concentrate upon HIS truth. Through faith you accept that truth and GOD begins to bring it to pass in your practical everyday life!

How to Begin

As a practical help to this end, I would suggest that you begin a Book of Scriptural Truths. Collect all the poems, prayers, verses of Scripture, lovely sayings, etc., you can. Put them in a loose-leaf book, so that in a moment you can turn to them and be IN GOD'S PRESENCE, with your thoughts away from your problems and on HIM! You will want to live a lot with this book. You will want to take it with you wherever you go. You will want to memorise some of the beautiful things it contains. As you travel this road you will walk in the presence of the Eternal.

Now the position of this type of prayer should be different from the position for other types of prayer. I can pray best this way by sitting in a comfortable chair, quiet and relaxed in body. I get on my knees to pray, also, but there are times when we need to sit quietly, take a spiritual truth, repeat it over and over, meditate upon it and thank God that He is working it out in our lives.

If you want the benefit of the sunshine you do not indulge in a great struggle and effort. You simply go out into the sunshine and sit or lie down comfortably and RECEIVE all that it has for you. So, if you want the blessings of Almighty God, you do not try to "take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence," you simply REST in Him and in his truth, and all THAT BELONGS TO HIM AND HIS KINGDOM WILL AUTOMATICALLY BECOME YOURS!

Copies of this leaflet are available from "Wholeness", Box 197, Stratford, New Zealand, at 1/- for 8, 10/- for 100. Please pass this leaflet on to someone who would like to learn more about prayer.