Special Issue

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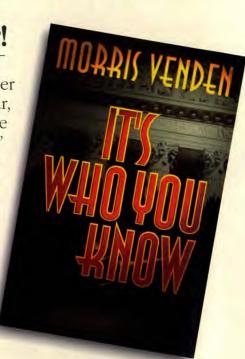
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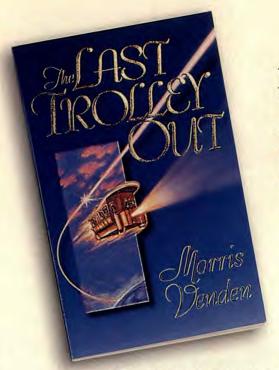
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By William G. Johnsson

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Their responses came back and are wonderful. Some made me cry; some brought laughter; all did me good. Jeannette Johnson shared her "most sacred experience." Dick Duerksen told how God changed the words of his prayer; Hyveth Williams related how a crowded jumbo jet ready for takeoff turned back to the gate–because of her. Randy Maxwell and Manuel Vasquez shared accounts of battles with cancer. Roger Morneau told of the copier that kept on copying long after the toner ran out.

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From the Editors: Meet Him—Again

We all have them—lapses in our devotional life. It isn't that we *intend* to lose touch with our Creator; we just do. In a cruel bit of irony, the One who gave us life often gets pushed *out* of our lives. The guilt piles up, and we shoulder it submissively. But we don't have to.

God is love, and love is a lot of things: patient, kind, gentle. And so—patiently, kindly, gently—He waits for the reunion: the crisp morning walk, the midafternoon prayer, the evening psalm. Just you and He. One on one.

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BY DIANE FORSYTH

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Prayer

BY REBECCA BRILLHART

ot long ago my prayers and devotions had become flat. The words that formed on my lips and in my thoughts barely

scratched the surface of what I wanted to express to God—and I didn't know how to release them.

After attending a prayer conference, I reluctantly decided to keep a journal, a "chore" I had been avoiding for 20 years. The first few weeks were rough. I wrote pages and pages without sensing that I had revealed even a small part of myself.

And then I opened my
Bible to the Psalms—something the
main speaker had encouraged during
the conference. I began with the first
and decided I would rewrite each one
in my own words so that I might
experience the height and depth of
each emotion found there—from joy to
despair. It worked!

Instead of the dry desert it had been, my devotional life became "like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (Ps. 1:3). I stopped the obligatory form of prayer I had been practicing—"touching all the bases"—and wrapped a part of myself

around every word.

By becoming more willing to express any thought or emotion boldly to God, I entered a dynamic relationship with Him. Being authentic with myself and God has become an integral part of my being able to be generous with others. Perhaps that is the other lesson I found in the Psalms—that the songs expressed in solitude are as relevant to the community of

believers as they are to each individual. Staying connected is the key.



Rebecca Brillhart owns and operates her own business in Columbia, Maryland.

Bible Study

BY LEE GUGLIOTTO

hen I study the Bible, I'm reminded of the youngster who heard the sermon begin while

she played in the church's mother's room. Fascinated, she stared at the corner speaker, then turned to her mother and announced, "It's the voice of God."

In a way, she was right. The Bible is God's Word. Though written in human language, it is a supernatural book. As Solomon says, God speaks to us through the sacred page: "For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his

mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6, NIV). By listening for His voice, we can hear—and learn—the truth of every text.

So every time I study God's Word, I try to let Him speak for Himself. I do not come to the Bible to prove something I believe or to disprove what I do not. I come to learn.

That's why I set aside my Presbyterian

beliefs and put on spiritual ears when evangelist Jac Colon challenged me to show him from the Scriptures that the Sabbath had changed from the seventh to

the first day of the week.
Three days later I
admitted that I could
not—and eventually asked
for baptism into the
Seventh-day Adventist
Church.

Bible study continues to change my life. Each time I plunge into the ancient Book with its obsolete customs and oldfashioned personalities, the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever makes every word fresh and relevant. He

comes alive with every transforming truth. I really do hear His voice.



Lee Gugliotto is senior pastor of the College Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church at Canadian Union College in Alberta with his wife, Jolynn. His Handbook for Bible Study (Review and Herald) won the 1996 Gold Medallion from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association in the category of Bible study.

Small Sroups

BY SHERLYN PANG

n my formative years I was entirely comfortable keeping God at pew's length. But as a young adult desperate to identify and meet my spiritual

needs, I've found that God will go to great lengths to seek me out. Specifically, He's assembled several of my peers who meet regularly to search spiritually.

This small group has made other believers real for me. No longer are they the one-dimensional smiles and handshakes that greet me from week to week—or the grungy rebel with the disinterested look. Each participant brings a

unique perspective to our discussions. As I hear their questions, their struggles, I often find that I share them.

I come to the group to get real answers for my life. It's where I seek God in an intimate way, where others will see my face and hear me stutter when I don't have the right words, where my silence will be noticed.

I've learned that God likes us to ask

questions and that He can give me answers through the people there. But I'm shocked to realize that God is also using me to help others. I'm no public

> speaker or Bible scholar, but I do have my own story. Just as I've gained direction from someone else's story, I know that I must let down my guard and trust God when He moves me to tell mine.

I'm not alone in my quest to get closer to God; our small group has shown me that. By exposing our thoughts and hopes, our anger and fears, we can be supported in our weaknesses and challenged in our moments of strength.

And amid this raw exchange, God continues to pull me away from my frenzy and into His care.



Sherlyn Pang works as a recruiter at the Museum of Science in Boston, Massachusetts. Recently she helped organize Face It! (a lay young adult working conference held in Laurel, Maryland, focused on empowering young adults to take responsibility for the spiritual state of their generation). The next Face It! conference is scheduled for the fall in South Bend, Indiana. For more information, contact Sherlyn at pang@al.mos.org.

Music

BY CHARLES D. HAUGABROOKS

can't really say that I ever got into music. I do know that in some miraculous way, music got into me. Singing has always been

spontaneous and enjoyable—especially when I found the right songs to sing.

For years I thought I was singing the right songs. My mom died when I was 3, and at this age I began to sing. My nephew, first cousin, and I would listen to and mimic various voices on our radio or record player, and our relatives got excited to hear the blending voices of their newly formed "trio." Before long

we were invited to sing in area churches and talent shows. Sometimes the audience would even throw money onto the stage. Throughout high school and college I sang regularly in nightclubs: rock 'n' roll, top 40, rhythm and blues, you name it.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ taught me a new song.

Listening to His voice and mimicking His tones have taught me the true meaning of song. I no longer have a need to sing for show or the applause of humanity. Instead of wanting money to be thrown at my feet, I now want to cast all of my praise and joy

at the feet of Jesus Christ.

I am close to God when my spirit sings the words of John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease." And I pray that my audience will look not upon the frail human instrument that I am, but instead, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."



Charles D. Haugabrooks lives in Mount Dora, Florida, with his wife, Minerva, and their children, Esther, Ezra, and Sherrard. He works as a human resource specialist for a government

defense contractor and, on the side, has recorded four albums: Songs Reflecting Him, Pleading Heart, One Step Closer, and God's Touch Through You.

ature

BY JUDY LARSON

s I was growing up in the country near Paradise, California, my family instilled in me a love and

respect for

nature. My father, noted artist Clyde Provonsha, often incorporated animals and nature in his religious works. One of my favorite paintings is his Our Rejoicing Shepherd, which portrays Jesus rejoicing upon finding the lost lamb. This picture has been a blessing to people around the world.

I consider my move

eight years ago from commercial art to painting wildlife to be providential. Doors opened that I never knew existed. As a result, I deal almost exclusively with people outside my denomination. Although I try never to be "preachy," moments arise when I am asked why I portray animals so "up close and

I respond that in the Bible we are continually asked to look at nature as a pattern for conducting our own lives. That's why I choose to portray the admirable qualities of animals that I believe God instilled in them—working

> faithfully, relying on one another, protecting their young, and having offspring only when they can be cared for properly.

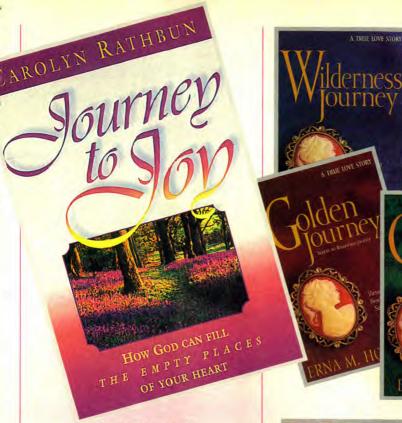
The hidden images in my pictures are designed to provoke an awareness in the observer that many of God's creatures live in danger and in need of our protection. As a Christian who believes that what God created He deemed "good," my goal is for people to gain a greater appreciation

and respect for His handiwork.



Judy Larson is an internationally known wildlife artist specializing in concealed imagery. She was named among the top 15 print artists of 1996 by U.S. Art magazine. She lives in Elsinore, California, with her children, Rakel, Erik, and Krister, as well as two horses, three dogs, one cat, six fish, and two hermit crabs. She is published by Applejack Limited Editions of Vermont.

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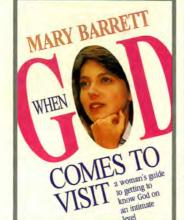
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Walk in Wonder

Open your eyes, open your ears—God is all around.

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSSON

shiny morning I walked to Hawk's Nest beach on the Australian coast north of Sydney. The huge sweeping arc of sand and surf split my gaze as I came through the dunes. Far to the south a headland terminated the curve; to



the north the beach stretched

on and out into infinity. Not

another soul on the beach.

Stripping to swim shorts, I began to run barefoot, splashing through the waves, headed north. The booming of the surf filled my ears, broken only by intermittent cries of wheeling sea birds and the steady splash-splash of churning feet. A rain squall came down; sea and sky, surf and sand, merged into an incandescent whole. I was one with the elements, one with God's good world.

Buoyed by the experience, feeling very close to God, I ran on and on—one hour, two hours, who knows for how long? At times I sang and shouted out above the waves, praising God, talking one-on-one with Him.

The sound of the surf sinks deep into your soul and wells up years later. You hear again the shrieking of the gulls and the splash-splash-splash of dancing feet, and you know that God is infinitely good and that you don't treasure His earth half as much as you should.

Open your eyes—God is all around. Open your ears—the air vibrates with His voice. Open your heart—walk in wonder. Tread softly on this earth, for it is holy ground.

I believe regular times for prayer and Bible study sustain the Christian life, that without them we will gradually dry up spiritually or wander off into false religion. For me, morning is key: start the day with God, give Him my first thoughts and my deepest desires. My mind works best early in the day, and I try to give Him the best portion.

But these programmed periods of personal devotion are only the appetizer of the feast God plans for us throughout the day—and night. I believe these regular times of prayer and Bible study can open our eyes and ears to God so that we may walk in wonder with Him every waking moment.

We needn't think that God is near only when we feel a spiritual "high." If we get online with God first thing—turn on the spiritual computer when we awaken—we can be sending and receiving messages constantly. Surely this is what the apostle meant by his admonition "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, KJV).

God is real; God is personal. He created the universe and sustains every whirling galaxy and every wriggling amoeba, but more—He walks and talks with humanity. He wants to be with us, to be our best friend. "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them," He instructed the ancient Israelites (Ex. 25:8), and He promised: "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jer. 31:33).

To know God—intimately, personally—is the essence of Christianity. To live as Paul described—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I

now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20, KJV)—this is the highest experience open to the human heart.

People who don't believe find this concept incomprehensible, foolish. But we who have taken the Lord at His word, who have tasted and found that He is good, have discovered that His word is true, that Christianity works, that in Christ Jesus every divine promise is Yes! and Amen! (see 2 Cor. 1:20).

In theological terms, the personal experience of God, being constantly online with Him, reflects the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Although the doctrine is mysterious, the one God is also the three—the Father, from whom all things come to be and to whom all return; the Son, eternal and self-existent, who came to this earth to walk in our shoes and to die in our place; and the Holy Spirit, who is God with us, God in us, working out His will and lovingly guiding us.

Just before Jesus, the Son incarnate, left this earth, He promised: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17).

Then Jesus said: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me" (verses 18, 19). So although the Holy Spirit is not Christ, He is the presence of Jesus, just as real and just as wonderful as if Jesus were in the room with us.

Godly men and women have known this reality throughout the ages. They have found in God their deepest longings, their highest aspirations. They have sung with the psalmist: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:1). They have cried out with Paul: "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. . . . I

want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" (Phil. 3:7-10).

Ellen White, pioneer and shaper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, knew God personally. She kept online with the Lord; she walked in wonder. Over and over she called, and calls, the Adventist people to "heart religion." Listen to the breathtaking ideal she holds out before us: "If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses" (The Desire of Ages, p. 668). "Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached" (Education, p. 18).

How do you walk in wonder? Begin the day with God—that's the first and most important point. But after that, and throughout the day:

1. Look for God in the ordinary.

When you stand back and consider the life of Jesus, what strikes you is how ordinary it was. Oh ves, it had extraordinary moments, beginning with the miracle of birth

> and ending with the miracle of resurrection. But think: the great majority of our

Lord's life was occupied in the humdrum, nonspectacular tasks and duties of life. He spent a full 30 of His 33 years in Nazareth—going about His job as a carpenter, eating, sleeping, bathing, talking. Even after He left His hometown for three-plus years of itinerant ministry, most of His time was taken up walking from place to place, simply being with people, living as a human.

Yet Jesus' ordinariness glowed with the divine. Constantly He communed with the Father—sometimes all night

God comes to us at the most unexpected times.

in prayer, but always online. His face was open to the sparrows and the ravens, to the anemones that grew wild on the Galilean hillsides, to the smell of the rain and the whip of the breeze. He walked in wonder.

God walked this earth. People saw Him but didn't see; they heard but didn't hear. Their hearts weren't open to God. So don't be surprised if today the crowds don't see and hear Him. But you may, and I may, if we walk in wonder.

Toward the close of the Old Testament you come upon two amazing verses. In a description of what

> Israel might have become if she had opened herself to God's will for her, you read: "On that day HOLY TO THE LORD

will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in lerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord Almighty" (Zech. 14:20, 21).

Your work may be menial, or it may be professional. But if you walk in wonder, even the dishes in the sink or the video teleconference may glow with the presence of the living Christ.

2. Look for divine serendipities.

God has a delightful way of surprising us. He comes to us in the most unexpected ways, at the most unexpected times, in the most unexpected places.

Remember Jacob, that smoothie, too clever by half? His schemes went awry, his world fell apart, and he had to flee for his life. Alone in the bush, feeling a fugitive from the family of God, he lay down to sleep with his head against a stone. But in the night he dreamed of a stairway reaching from earth to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending on it and the Lord above it all. When Jacob woke up, he said to himself, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it" (Gen. 28:10-19). Setting up a pillar, Jacob called it Bethel-house of God.

I remember how moved I was at the first symphonic concert I attended. I had no inkling that the great music would unleash creative energies within me, galvanize me to attack tasks that I had felt too burdened to contemplate, send me out into the world with a heightened awareness of God. Since that experience I have turned again and again to music for refreshment, comfort, and inspiration.

I vividly recall also the sense of wonder when I saw my firstborn, a son, emerge from the womb, and two years later, a daughter. The world held its breath; time stood still. In the presence of new life I felt the mystery of our coming and our going, of time and eternity. We are bound up with the life of God, in whom we have been, are, and will be.

I live in Maryland, and as I write, the deer population is multiplying along the eastern seaboard of the United States. There are deer in woods behind the street next to ours; I ran into a deer on crowded Interstate 95.

Deer are everywhere, but you have to know how to look for them. You have to look for horizontal lines among the vertical, and expect to find deer. They are there—if you can see them.

3. Look for God in the darkness.

This may be the best news of all: God comes to us in the night as well as at noonday. Even when, crushed and broken, we don't want to live another day. Even when, bowed down by worry and care, we don't want to trudge another mile.

Jesus—God of ordinary grace. But think of the last moments of Jesus, of that lacerated body crying out for water from the cross, then that moan of dereliction, of God-forsakenness—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46, KJV). Here is the Saviour of the world drinking the cup of our woe, our pain, our guilt, to the last dregs. At that moment He could not see beyond the portals of the tomb.

But God was there, even at the soul's darkest midnight. God was there, although bleeding body and fevered mind sought to deny it. God was there, suffering with the Son.

It's hard to believe from the belly of the whale. It's easy to doubt when our house comes tumbling and our bodies are so broken we don't know who we are or what we are saying. But God is there.

Friday afternoon Jesus died in agony. But Sunday morning Jesus rose in glory.

Faith is the finger reaching out through the darkness, stretching to touch God. Faith is the confidence that the God who has walked with us in wonder all our days has not forsaken us now.

* All Scripture references come from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

William G. Johnsson is editor of the Adventist Review.



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ABreath of Fresh Prayer

Seven ways to invigorate your communication with God

BY RANDY MAXWELL

hen it comes to our relationship with Jesus, *choosing* to pray—to be with Him—is often the greatest battle. I may have the best of intentions, the warmest feelings, but I must choose to talk to God every day. There are no shortcuts.

Once we've made the choice, however, what can we do to shake ourselves out of the doldrums and experience some fresh, new approaches to God in prayer?

Pray whenever you think about it. Jesus, in answer to a theological question put to Him by the woman at the well, replied, "A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23).

The Samaritans (and the Jews, for that matter) were hung up on the right *place* to worship. They were sure that the true God could be approached only at the "right" spot. Hence the Samaritan woman's statement: "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem" (verse 20).

Jesus adjusted her attitude by revealing the truth about God-that He is spirit and not confined by human-made temples or times. God is an everpresent reality. And true worshipers of the true God can make contact with Him anytime. anywhere.

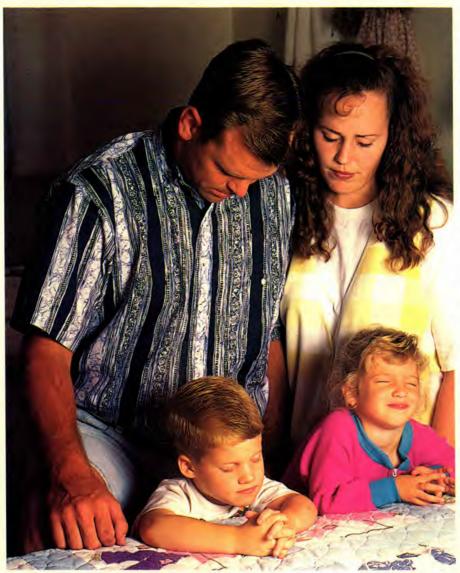
Don't make the mistake of thinking you can pray only at certain times and in certain places. Pray when you think about it. In your car, in a meeting, in bed when you can't sleep, as you mow the lawn or wash dishes, while brushing your teeth.

The natural man or woman doesn't desire prayer. "You, however, are

controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you" (Rom. 8:9). If it's on our minds to pray, it's the Holy Spirit calling. Don't put the King on hold!

I used to fall into the trap of telling myself, "I'll pray about that later." I'll be mowing the lawn, thinking of someone I need to pray for. I'll mentally review the details of that person's need and even rehearse what I plan to say later during my "prayer time." It's then that I catch myself and smile at how foolish it is for me to pray later about something I'm thinking about now!

If you kick yourself for forgetting to pray for people whom you've promised to pray for, learn to pray when God puts it on your mind—



when you think about it.

Pray about a variety of things. My wife and I used to talk and pray about the new minivan our family of five so desperately needed. Today we're praising the Lord for the Grand Caravan we cart our "tribe" in. Before the answer to our prayers was realized, however, Suzette and I talked about it a lot—but it wasn't all we talked about.

We talked (and still do) about the kids, schooling, the church, vacation plans, family members, music, bills, romance, TV programs, work, etc. And guess what? We don't try to talk about everything all in one sitting. We pace ourselves. Talking about this now, that later; this thing today, the other thing tomorrow.

Do the same with prayer. Don't pray about the same things all the time, and don't try to cover everything in one prayer. Vary your conversation. Pray about the supervisor who gives you grief today, and save time for the missionaries tomorrow.

Pray different types of prayers. Try praying a prayer of praise without any petitions. Put away your shopping list and just spend time praising God for who He is in your life.

Or sing your prayer to God. Paul admonishes us to "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). There are times when we pray by singing

favorite praise hymns, such as "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" or "I Love You, Lord."

During sung prayers I sometimes experience the presence of God more profoundly than when I'm at my "regular" prayers.

Pray without words. You don't always have to have something to say in order to be with God. I know this may seem odd to some, but sometimes it's perfectly all right to "be still, and know that [He is] God" (Ps. 46:10).

One morning not long ago I had a deeply moving encounter with God without saying a word. It was one of those extremely rare times when both the house and my spirit were quiet. I sat in the stillness and just allowed my heart to be an open book to God. As I

sat there with the first rays of dawn spilling onto my office carpet through the tiny slits in the miniblinds, I knew I was in the presence of God.

Don't be afraid of silence. In our culture we drown out silence every chance we get. We feel compelled to quench quiet with sound. TV, radios, CD players, Walkman stereos, Game Boy video games, our own chatter. On airplanes, while exercising, at the dinner table, in the restroom, and on elevators, we have to have some kind of music, noise, or other auditory distraction grinding away in the background.

Learn to "be still, and know."

Quiet can be profound. Don't feel like you "fail" if words escape you occasionally when you pray.

Remember, there are times when "we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Rom. 8:26, 27).

Keep your prayer time and Bible study time separate. This suggestion may get me in trouble, but it's worth trying.

It's been my experience that when I bring quarterlies, commentaries, and multiple translations of the Bible into my devotional time, I spend little time in prayer and much more time in study.

Prayer is primarily meeting with God. Reading and studying during this time may not always be required. Whether you're just being quiet with Him or focusing on your own needs, you're still meeting with Him. This is not wasted time.

Pray for your spouse. Not in a general, vague way, but in specific terms, claiming certain Bible promises for him or her that are tailored to individual needs.

I like to do this for Suzette and sometimes will leave her a note with the verse that I'm claiming for her on it. She saved one of these notes and kept it on the bathroom mirror, where she could see it, for several days. It

read: For you today: That your delight will be in the law of the Lord, that you will meditate on it day and night. That you will be like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season without withering. And that whatever you do will prosper (Ps. 1:2, 3). Love ya.

You love your spouse. He or she has struggles, frustrations, goals,

Don't be afraid of silence.

hopes, and needs that you probably don't know about. Take those things to God in prayer. Lift your husband or wife before the Father, and ask Him to meet his or her needs according to His unfailing love.

Search the Word for specific verses that fit his or her situation, and pray those verses back to God, inserting your spouse's name in the appropriate place. I did this recently for my wife while I was out of town and she was nervously awaiting the results of some medical tests back home. We were both on edge, and I went to the Bible for a word of encouragement from the Lord. I found it in Psalm 33:18-22. I claimed the promise for Suzette and then prayed it back to God something like this: Suzette waits in hope for You, Lord; be her help and her shield today. Let her heart rejoice in You, and help her to trust in Your holy name. May Your unfailing love rest upon us both, O Lord, even as we put our hope in You (verses 20-22).

Later I called home and told her I was praying this promise for her. I could tell she was pleased. Nothing brings you closer together as a couple than praying earnestly and specifically for the man or woman who shares your life. (You can pray for your children the same way.)

And singles, the absence of a spouse doesn't indicate the absence of

other individuals who love you and need your prayers. Claim promises on behalf of your best friend, coworker, family member, nieces and nephews, or pastor, and let them know that you are praying for them. Any relationship will be strengthened by this prayerful act of love.

Pray (or speak) a blessing on your family members. In the sixth chapter of Numbers we come across the priestly blessing that Aaron and his sons were instructed to bless the Israelites with: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.'" So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them'" (Num. 6:22-27).

Did you see that last part? God said that the priests—Aaron and his sons, in this case—were to put the Lord's name (the promises that are inherent in His attributes, His nature, and His character) on the children of Israel by speaking these words of blessing.

As recipients of the new covenant, we who have received Christ as our Saviour are part of a new breed of humans on earth. Regardless of race or gender, we have been made into "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Peter 2:9). Additionally, we are the spiritual children of Abraham, inheritors of the promises to Israel. These two facts provide us with the commission, qualification, and authority to bless, as priests under the old covenant did.

My wife and I have done this together. With our hands placed gently on the heads of our girls, I've prayed this blessing on them: "Candice, Crystal, Danielle: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen."

You can't imagine the intensity of hugs and beaming faces that come

after a prayer like this. Your children won't forget, and neither will you. It's not something to be done casually. But this is what a life of prayer is all about. It's not just words and requests and routine. It's love and power and relationships and heart and soul.

One word of caution: be sure your life supports whatever your lips speak. Words spoken in blessing are invalidated when a child (or spouse) hasn't sensed the daily touch, concern, interest, availability, and care of the blesser. We must build a platform of relationship from which to bless. Remember, the life we lead backs up the words we speak.²

Pray through the newspaper. For those who have trouble coming up with enough things to pray about and for those who, like many people, are addicted to the morning newspaper, this can revolutionize your prayer life. The paper is full of needs, crises, hurts, and troubles that should cause the heart of the Christian to break. What fertile ground for prayer!

As Adventists with an end-time

mind-set, we often look at the news with a prophetic sense of inevitability. "More signs of the times," we say. "Jesus must be coming soon." Sometimes our "sign watching" instills a subtle indifference in our attitudes toward suffering humanity—or at the very least, a sense of helplessness. But there is something we can do. We can pray.

Each news story represents lives, real people who are hurting and desperate, and in need of Jesus. Read the paper with the eyes and heart of Christ, and ask God to intervene mercifully.

sestions for putting new passion into your personal prayer journey with God. Not an exhaustive list by any stretch. You may already be experimenting with several creative forms of prayer that aren't even mentioned here. Great. Go for it. Whatever you do, though, pray. Don't just read about it or mentally assent to it. Pray. Be real. Be consistent. Be creative. But above all, pray. There's so much in store for you if you do.

And as you do, receive this blessing from God:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
The Lord turn his face toward you
And give you peace.

Amen.

All Scripture references come from the New International Version.

² The thoughts expressed in this action point are credited to Pastor Jack Hayford from a taped sermon entitled "The Importance of Blessing Our Children: Passing Our Spiritual Inheritance On to the Next Generation" (Ventura, Calif.: Gospel Light, 1991).

Randy Maxwell, formerly coeditor of ParentTalk magazine, is currently director of publicity and public relations for Pacific Press Publishing



Association. He is a frequent prayer conference speaker and seminar presenter.

This article was adapted from his book If My People Pray.

What? Pray for Larry Flynt?

BY RENÉ ALEXENKO EVANS

For whom do you pray?

Your sister and her husband and their struggle with infertility? Your best friend's father and his unhopeful diagnosis? The publishers of pornographic magazines?

Say what?

I work with a freelance graphic designer who's obviously a Christian. It says so right on his business cards. Proverbs 3:6. He works out of his home, and when I stop in, his open Bible is usually sitting on the table or kitchen counter. His framed baptismal certificate hangs over his desk.

Last week I dropped off a direct-mail piece for owners of high-performance boats, and as we talked about the job, I mentioned a magazine for "hot boat" owners published by Larry Flynt.

"Something's about to happen with Larry Flynt," he said.

"Oh, really?" I asked, with no clue as to what he meant.

"God's gonna reach out and grab him."

"Oh?" I said again, a teeny bit incredulously.

"Yes," he said firmly. "Larry Flynt is going to give his life to the Lord. My wife and I prayed for him and Hugh Hefner by name this morning."

Now, to be perfectly honest, it had never even occurred to me to pray for either Larry or Hugh. Occasionally the name of an almost-forgotten acquaintance pops into my head, along with a strong conviction to pray for that person. But in general I have a hard enough time remembering to pray for people I know and like.

But what would happen if I—if you—were to break out of our comfort zone and take intercessory prayer to a new level? What if we were to decide that no one is off-limits? Even people we don't like. Even people who have wronged, mistreated, or assaulted us or someone we love. Even people who do such vile, disgusting things as publish pornographic magazines. Especially people like that.

What would happen if just one Larry Flynt gave his life to the Lord? Imagine the potential in such a high-profile person. Sound far-fetched? I'm sure the disciples thought the same thing about Saul.

At the very least we would become more like Jesus, who with His dying words added to His prayer list the very men who were nailing Him to the cross.

René Alexenko Evans is a part-time public relations consultant and a full-time wife and mom near Nashville, Tennessee.



A Talk With Roger Morneau

ELLA M. RYDZEWSKI

oger Morneau, a Seventh-day Adventist, has written three top-selling books on prayer as well as his biography.* In preparing our special edition on prayer and spirituality, we felt it appropriate to include him. As the staff discussed how best to conduct the interview, I remembered that my upcoming vacation in California included going through San Francisco, not far from Morneau's home. I called him and made an appointment. I also mentioned to him my discomfort with (and usual avoidance of) flying. He prayed for me, just as some of my friends were doing.

My husband and I arrived in San Francisco after a bumpy but pleasant trip and not even a twinge of my lifelong phobia. We found Roger and Hilda Morneau living in a small apartment in Modesto. It was in one of those two-story complexes, so familiar to California, built close together with sidewalks lined with rich, green foliage. The Morneaus greeted us like old friends. After visiting awhile, we began the interview.

This article focuses on intercessory prayer. Is there one incident that started you on this ministry?

In 1984 I was admitted to the hospital in Niagara Falls. I went in on a Saturday night with congestive heart failure. They worked to keep me alive. I was next to the nurse's station and could hear what was going on in the unit. About 8:00 p.m. on Sunday I said to myself, A lot of people here won't make it overnight.

I began to pray for these people. I said, "Lord, these poor mortals are going to their graves early." I talked to the Lord for them, asking for their forgiveness and His blood over them. From then on they began to improve.

You asked God to forgive their sins?

Yes, I always do this. I was in the Woolworth parking lot one day doing a work report. A Mercury parked in front of me, and the husband and wife were fighting. The man velled profanities at his wife. Without speaking a word, I said in my mind, Lord, please have mercy on this man, because I think he hasn't had his sins forgiven and doesn't know the merits of Your blood over him. May the evil spirits stop harassing him. In 20 seconds the man apologized to his wife and said he would never talk like that again. She seemed surprised and apologized for her digging words, and they went off smiling and hugging each other.

Sounds as though you were doing intercessory prayer before 1984.

I prayed for people on my job. When I did that, the Holy Spirit would have the people open up to me. But this Woolworth incident was the beginning of a new experience in my prayer life. I told the Lord, "What a glorious experience You allowed me to have. I want to pray in a way that will honor You. You taught me today the most beautiful understanding that I could have on the power of intercessory prayer." I thanked the Lord and cried, I was so moved over this experience.

I wanted to see the Holy Spirit work on the lives of wicked and degraded people who have no use for God. I had seen good results before for some people. But after that I saw more. I learned by



experience how God honors certain prayers and not others—I guess this sounds weird.

Tell us what you mean.

I found that I do not pray for anyone unless I have prayed for myself. I need to pray that my own sins be forgiven and acknowledge His claim on me through His death.

Then I pray for the people. I pray that their sins be forgiven, and ask Jesus to appropriate His divine blood shed at Calvary for their salvation. Then I ask to see the Holy Spirit move in and do something special for these people. See *The Desire of Ages*, page 671.

What is a typical prayer session for you?

Every day I receive a stack of mail through our post office box. I don't have time to read them all, but Hilda reads them to me while I eat. Hilda is my right-hand person. We take these letters and open the Bible to Matthew 27—the power chapter of the Bible. Years back I read it—now I know it by heart.

We put these letters on the open Bible. We commune all morning about the names. This has been done with all 17,000 on the list. I usually do the praying, saying something like "Dear Jesus, we are so happy here today. We are privileged to be intercessors in this land of the enemy." We ask, "How have we offended You in words or deeds?" And we say, "Thank You for Your death on Calvary for our salvation." Sometimes I say, "We are by nature very sinful, and our righteousness is like filthy rags. Lord, please clothe me with the robe

of Your righteousness as I come to the Holy Father." I know I'm being listened to by the precious Redeemer, Father, and Holy Spirit. A lot of us don't understand the value of the Trinity.

We say, "Dear Jesus, we have read these letters, and some have made us cry." We refer to specific problems. "They need *Your* help, not mine—grace, divine strength, and Your sacrifice on Calvary. A lot of them don't understand that their spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical faculties need re-creating. So many kids have been destroyed by drugs and other things. They have the capacity

for destruction, as we all do. They need to be re-created." Christ didn't give up on people, even though many brought disease on themselves. He cared for their spiritual disease as well.

So you see people as whole beings who need re-creating mentally and emotionally as well?

Yes, in the field of human behavior we find that extremism and fanaticism cripple the intelligence. People's minds need to be re-created according to God's standards. They need to appreciate what God is doing for them. When the fallen heart becomes attuned with God's heart of love, things happen. They are ministered to according to their faith.

Today people are fascinated with the supernatural. Demon spirits are conditioning people. Through hypnotism they can take control of the mental capacities. And demons have the capacity to flash false thoughts into minds and create strong feelings. They can make people miserable, and they love to play with Christians. But people still have choices.

What about inherited weaknesses?

These also need to be re-created. The Lord says He has given all a measure of faith. Many have thrown it to the winds. They don't love God and couldn't care less. We get so many letters from parents.

I noticed it's difficult to get you by phone.

Until 1996 people got our number when they asked. But I can't do it anymore because of my heart. I got calls from Australia and Europe in the middle

of the night and sometimes slept only two hours. I didn't have as much pressure then—now I am writing books.

How do you handle all the mail?

I asked the Lord how to keep the mail from getting out of control. I was blessed with a computer three years ago. But I needed help.

I am on Social Security; my wife is also and gets a small pension. When I became disabled at 59, I had no company pension because of the way they had formulated the contract. We could meet our obligations, but had no way to pay for help with the computer. I talked to the Lord about getting a computer analyst to help me. That was 10:00 a.m. Monday. By 11:00 a.m. a letter had come from Angwin from a man who had read one of my books. He told me that if I owned a computer and needed help, he'd fit his schedule to spend some time at my home. I called the man and said, "You are a direct answer to prayer. I don't have any money, but could pay your gas. You can stay with us." This man blessed my life, and I now have 37 buttons that do beautiful things.

I have stored 100 letters for certain needs, so I don't have to start from scratch with my answers. Then I have a special two-page letter that gives encouragement. I let people know I am praying with and not just for them. I have 500 paragraphs that I can add or replace in the letter. I also use a one-page letter when the pressures are great.

What about postage?

I spend \$60 to \$75 a month. I use writing royalties to pay phone bills and postage. When I run out of money, someone will send me just enough in the mail.

You don't ask for funds?

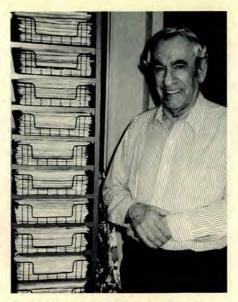
Nope. I say, "Lord, You know my needs."

Do you keep a list of these 17,000 names?

At first we had a beautiful red book. Then we started putting the letters in boxes, then in stacked trays that I call my "prayer tower."

How can you pray for 17,000 people?

It started with one person. After about 50 I knew I couldn't do all of them. I think of my intercession like the



Roger Morneau and the "Prayer Tower"

feeding of the 5,000. When I pray, I believe God is attentive to all these people. Jesus said bless the food and pass it on—He didn't ask them to re-create it. I pray for the Lord to focus my attention on persons who need special grace at times. People I haven't heard from in five years will pop into my mind. I understand this as an SOS for a soul in distress.

How do you tell people to start to pray regularly in our fast-paced world?

I often send a one-page article entitled "A Four-Minute Audience With Christ." A teacher wrote me and said to have it put in the Adventist Review. I said, "If the Lord wants articles run in the Adventist Review, He will have them contact me. I have already talked to Him about it." But she said she would send it in anyway.

Give us an example of an answered prayer by letter.

There was a woman with five children—professionals and all out of the church. I gave her encouragement and sent her the two-page letter.

I said, "You must promise me that you will not try to do the work of the Holy Spirit. In bringing your children back to the church, don't talk to them about religion. If they bring it up, that's OK, but they have had more of it than they can stand. They probably have spiritual indigestion."

Six months later she phoned and said it is working—three of her children

came back to church, two are being baptized, and the family of the other one is attending.

How do you remember all the quotes you use?

When I became an Adventist Christian, I realized I had to break from my past. I had to keep my mind on heavenly things, so I started memorizing verses. I prayed about them first. I memorized, while driving or walking the dog, more than 2,000 over the years, many in French.

Tell us about the photocopy machine. That's a story some find too incredible to be true.

The Lord produced toner for a little more than two years. We moved here in April of 1992. I was working on a book, and my copier ran out of toner. (I keep copies of all letters sent out.) We didn't have the \$70 for a new cartridge. I talked to my Problem Solver. "Please honor me by creating toner so I can use my copier till the next check." I told Hilda we were going to see a miracle. We went to the copier and put the power on, put a letter down, and made a clear, sharp copy. I said, "Glory to God." Hilda was so stunned she couldn't say anything for a moment. After the three weeks was about done, I had my check.

At that time I had a lot of letters from people stressed over the time of trouble. One woman said her minister talked a lot about the subject, and it stressed her daughter. I told the Lord, "Lord, have the Holy Spirit create toner for several months, and I will tell people that this miracle took place as an assurance that He would be with His people during the time of trouble." The machine continued for 721 days. I had a plaque made for the copier. Then one day I made the mistake of doing 130 pages without putting the lid down, and it caught fire. That was the end of the copier. Someone donated another one.

Tell us about the new book you have been working on.

It's called *Beware of Angels*. Angels come in two kinds. I had experience with evil angels in the 1940s. In the past few years people, even Adventists, have been seeking out angels, and they have appeared. Among other things the book

tells of two women in Oregon. I interviewed them in prison. They felt the time to see angels had come. Their desire was self-motivated. The angels came—beautiful creatures—and gradually deceived them into killing two people.

I know you write to inspire people to pray. Are you hopeful that this is happening?

What is happening in certain parts of the world is wonderful. In 1995 a Korean evangelist stopped by on his way to Korea and China. He wanted to translate the prayer books into Korean. Two months ago he came back. He said the Lord has blessed me. He told us people in Korea were praying and having divine interventions. He also went to China, and the same thing happened. He flew to Japan, and they had the same experience. Buddhists don't change overnight, but when people pray for their relatives, many become Christians.

A woman in Saudi Arabia writes frequently and tells me how a number



Roger and Hilda Morneau

of Muslims attend church as a result of prayer.

I don't ask for royalties in other languages. I'm not a trained writer—I'm just a person telling people what Jesus has done in my life. I'm an old guy brought up as a French Catholic in Canada. My editor understands me. Recently he had a surprise for me. By midsummer the prayer books will have

Adventist terms taken out and be printed as one book for public and Christian bookstores. The Spirit of God is doing some marvelous things.

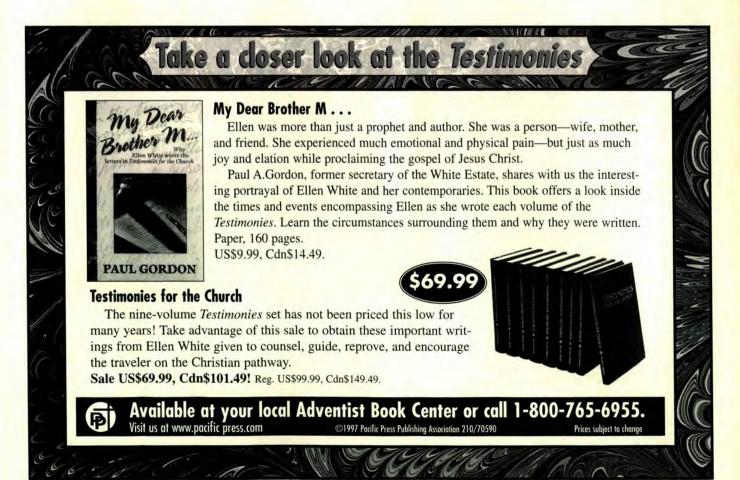
We finished our interview, then visited awhile, and Roger Morneau prayed something like this: "Now that You have forgiven our sins and iniquities and have appropriated to us the divine merits of Calvary for our salvation, may the Holy Spirit surround these people with a glorious atmosphere. Do something special for them today." And He did.

On the flight home I decided I rather liked airplanes. Was that a coincidence? I don't think so.

* Incredible Answers to Prayer, More Incredible Answers to Prayer, A Trip Into the Supernatural, and When You Need Incredible Answers to Prayer.

Ella Rydzewski is editorial assistant at the Adventist Review.





Shoot for the Moon

We both wanted the same thing, but Dad's vision was much more inspired than mine.

BY SARAH E. COLEMAN

AD," I VENTURED ONE WINTER EVENING when he came in from the shop, "can I ask you something?"

He looked up from the work boot he was untying. His curly red beard held tiny frozen water crystals that sparkled in the lamplight. "Sure."

I took a deep breath and looked away, hoping he couldn't read the hope in my face. Trying desperately to sound casual, I posed my case. "Well, you know how sometimes the weather gets nasty?"

He nodded, his blue eyes brimming with laughter.

"I mean, even in the summer. It just rains and rains and, well, I was wondering if you could give me a few old boards to make a roof with."

To my surprise, Dad began to chuckle. I turned to face him, afraid he'd already rejected my request. "Just a roof?" he asked. "What about walls?" Dad, a general contractor by trade, couldn't resist asking the obvious question.

"Well, uh, I didn't think you'd have time to help me out," I stammered. "Besides, I just want something to keep me dry when I'm writing outside." At 12 I already knew that writing had become my passion, and I longed for somewhere private to conduct my experimental scribblings.

"I could put it way off in the 'boonies' and it wouldn't bother anyone . . ." My voice trailed off as Dad bent over his boots again. Was this the rejection I expected?

I stared at the top of his head, noticing the ridges and valleys his curly hair formed against it. What was he thinking? Shifting my weight to the other foot, I waited dejectedly for my verdict.

Finally, oh, finally, Dad removed both boots and set them against the wall. Carefully he adjusted their stray laces and after an eternity of silence stood up and looked me full in the face.

"Why do you want old boards?" he asked softly. I caught my breath, prepared to suggest even the rotten boards he'd already thrown away. Before I could answer, however, he continued, "Why do you want old boards when you know I can get you new ones? You want somewhere to write, don't you? Why not make it special? Shoot for the moon." He flashed me a fatherly I'm-olderand-wiser-but-I-love-you-anyway smile and started down the hall toward his bedroom.

"Wait!" I grabbed his flannel sleeve just in time. "What do you mean, shoot for the moon?"

ur conversation that chilly January evening sparked a creative streak in both of us that continued into the summer. For a week of evenings we pored over various designs for a small, weather-tight structure. Dad's optimism left me awestruck. "Why not have a porch?" he asked one day. Later he announced that if I would dig the trench, he'd install electricity and a phone. And when I mentioned cutting a few holes in the walls to let in the light, he simply scoffed. "You're going to have *real* windows, Sarah. With glass panes."

The next months are marked in my memory by milestones such as: deciding on a color to paint the exterior of my little cottage, choosing the perfect material for my curtains, and carpet-sale hunting for the ideal color





and size of remnant.

But nothing in my craziest dreams prepared me for the miracle that met my eyes late that summer. After weeks of oil-based paint, rough-wood slivers, and carpet-fitting dilemmas, I opened the front door into perfect bliss. Situated near a stream and surrounded by cottonwoods, the house even smelled of nature. One window faced the trees; the other greeted the sunset. Through my curtains sunlight laced its way across a broad, smooth desk, a sturdy bed, and freshly painted walls. Beneath the window an electrical socket waited expectantly to power anything I plugged in. More than I'd ever dared to hope, this little writer's cottage left me breathless and smiling.

"Thanks, Dad," I said, turning toward where he stood on my spacious porch.

He smiled. "All you need now is a lawn chair." I laughed and followed him toward our family house. "No, I'm serious!" he continued. "A lawn chair and a little stone walkway would be nice. We could put a birdhouse just outside your window . . ."

Shoot for the moon. So often I

approach God with requests that insult His abilities. I feel as though I shouldn't bother Him with my concerns. I'll take whatever You have left over, I promise, but don't let me interrupt Your work.

But I am
His work!
More than
anything else,
my Father
wants to make
me happy.
What could
thrill Him
more than the
opportunity to

become deeply involved in my life? If I restrict Him to the role of a used-goods supplier, He won't overstep those boundaries. But if I take His advice and "shoot for the moon," I turn Him loose on the project of His dreams.

God has limitless capabilities. John reminded me of this when I read his words: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14, 15, NIV). Why should we limit our requests to our perception of His will, as I did when I asked only for used boards from Dad? Why not make His will our prime desire and, at the same time, ask for what we really want?

Why not try this approach with God? The Bible encourages it. What can you lose? Either you'll receive the thing you asked Him for, or He'll give you something that in the end will make you happier than what you originally wanted.

Either way, it's simple, open communication with God. Why not shoot for the moon? After all, you're talking to its Creator.

Sarah E. Coleman is an English student at Walla Walla College in College Place, Washington.





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How Prayer Works

From tough, personal struggles, here's what I've found.

BY BEATRICE S. NEALL

ow does prayer work? Do things really happen when we pray that would not happen otherwise? Is prayer a way to apply pressure on God? If we knock long and loudly enough at God's door, will He hear? Do fasting and afflicting ourselves excite His pity? If we can round up enough people to join us, do our combined prayers carry more clout than our individual prayers? Or, conversely, do we even need to tell God of our needs? Doesn't He know before we even ask Him (Matt. 6:8)? Is it heathenish to think we shall be heard for our "much speaking" (verse 7), or by afflicting ourselves (1 Kings 18:28; Isa. 58:3)? Can God hear the simple, trusting prayer of one person (1 Kings 18:36, 37)? What goes on behind the scenes when we pray?

I wish I knew all the answers. But as one who has studied the Bible, prayed, and

I wish I knew all the answers. But as one who has studied the Bible, prayed, and struggled with God for many years, I have come to the following conclusions that I believe are true.

Prayer does make a difference. We must accept by faith the promise "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16, NKJV). Or, as Tennyson said: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

For example, why was Peter saved from the executioner's sword, while James was not? Perhaps the church neglected to pray for James, assuming

that God would continue to deliver His apostles as He had done in the past (Acts 4:21; 5:18-25). Then the loss of lames alerted them to pray earnestly when Peter's life was threatened. Their united prayersthough perhaps made with only partial faith (see Acts 12:12-15)resulted in Peter's dramatic deliverance (verses 5-11).

When Daniel

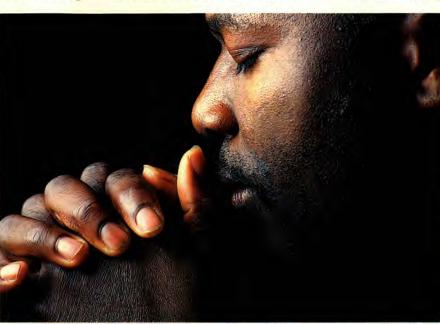
prayed against the forces of evil that were troubling his people, heaven went into action. Gabriel wrestled with the kings of Persia for three weeks, and then Michael himself entered the fray (Dan. 10). Daniel was assured, "Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them" (verse 12, NIV).

The one who comes to God must believe that He really is there and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

There is one prayer God answers instantly—the prayer for forgiveness. When you bow in humiliation and cry out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," God hears and answers right away. You go home justified (Luke 18:13, 14). All that is required is a contrite heart, confession, and a

turning away from sin (Ps. 51:17; 1 John 1:9; Acts 2:38).

But what if you don't feel repentant? This inability must not become a barrier between your soul and God. God will even give the gift of repentance—He'll help you feel sorry for your sins—if you ask Him (Acts 5:31). The prayer for deliverance from sin takes persistence. When evil habits control our lives, God occasionally



delivers instantly, but more often we must persist. A few of my friends testify of instant victory over alcohol or tobacco as soon as they made the decision to quit. But most had to endure a stiff struggle.

Why is it so hard for the many? Perhaps God wants us to realize the danger of flirting with evil, the deadly nature of sin, and our vulnerability to it. For the sake of our future character development He allows us to struggle to overcome evil habits so that we will be doubly wary of temptation in the future.

We need to recognize the power of the will. Apart from God we can do nothing. Apart from us, God's hands are often tied. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4). In this struggle God has assured us that He is faithful not to let us be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will always make a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

I once became addicted to unholy thoughts. But even as I savored the delights of sin, I saw an abyss open beneath my feet—the ruin that would result if I lived out my fantasies. This realization threw me into an agonizing conflict. Worse yet, I was dismayed to find that my fantasies even intruded into my prayers for deliverance. (I had not yet learned when I prayed to focus on Jesus and the promises rather than

on the temptation.)

For months the struggle continued. Then God sent our family far from the source of my temptation to the other side of the earth. I didn't realize until years later that our missionary call was to save my own soul as much as "the heathen." God heard those prayers!

Dramatic answers to prayer

often occur most frequently to strengthen the faith of new believers. I believe the various ages of miracles (the times of the Exodus, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the apostles) occurred to validate God's presence for new believers. Certainly there is no experience as thrilling as seeing God act directly in response to our entreaties.

We pride ourselves on having a direct line to the Throne. But as we grow in grace, God wants us to grow in maturity. He invites us to the "fellowship of His sufferings." The greatest suffering God endures is the rejection of His love by His creatures. Often we must endure as our dear ones turn away from the God we love.

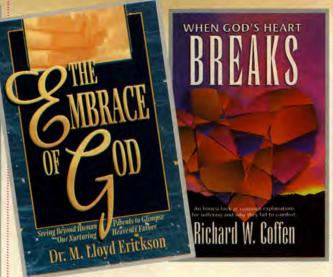
Prayers about material things are simple for God to answer. Prayers for people are different, and often take years to be answered. That's because God does not zap people into a change



our

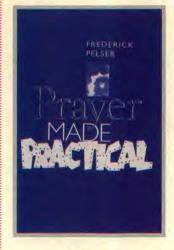
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of behavior. We have to give Him time to work.

If I were God, I would have put a 100-foot-high, 2,000-volt barbed-wire fence around the tree of knowledge to protect our race from the ruination of sin. I'd wall off every temptation today. But I am confronted with the appalling fact that God gives freedom to human beings—even as I also demand it for myself. He has to give us the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them.

God has powerful weapons on His side. Sometimes it appears that the devil has everything going for him—the whole secular culture with its bewitching pleasures, heady powers, titillating entertainment, and sensual delights. We despair when our children get hooked by it. We see the abyss below their feet and agonize over their souls.

Our agony is compounded when our children's children grow up outside the worshiping family, the church, and without a Christian education. Our influence as grandparents is small. We weep as they marry outside the church and perpetuate the choice of their parents. When one generation fails to pick up the torch, darkness can persist for generations to come.

So what advantage does God have on His side? The pleasures of sin last only for a season! Then come failure, disillusionment, and bitter remorse. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12, NKJV). God's way of life is the only one that works! He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). His way alone brings ultimate joy and satisfaction. God has a lot going for Him!

We have to be patient as our loved ones experiment with evil. Since at this phase they are not open to our counsel, all we can do is pray. Recognizing that Satan loves to allure souls into sin and then snuff out their lives, we need to pray that God will preserve their lives while they are on enemy territory. We will often have to comfort them as they get battered by sin.

Finally, all on their own they make the profound discovery that God's way is best. Satan drives them into the arms of God! God has the last word! That's His weapon!

Prayer is a discipline. God does require earnestness, perseverance, and persistence. Why? Because we often do not recognize God's answers unless our prayers take effort. We ask for healing, then when it comes ascribe it to natural causes. We ask for relief from financial pressure and think it a lucky coincidence if "things worked out

God wants us to cling to the promises.

OK." We don't acknowledge or remember an answer when it comes. The countless benefits we receive from God are taken for granted. We appreciate only what we struggle to obtain. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12).

Maybe our prayers need to be violent! Jacob struggled all night with the heavenly Messenger. The prayer of his heart was, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me!" (Gen. 32:26). We need Jacob's desperate earnestness.

Years ago Ellen White penned this poignant challenge: "Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God."

Jesus asked His weary disciples to

watch and pray with Him in Gethsemane. Do we love Him enough to keep Him company as He struggles for the salvation of our world?

When God seems indifferent or distant or absent, He is inviting us to persevere. The Phoenician woman could have been crushed by Jesus' rudeness. First He ignored her, then implied she was a heathen and a dog. But her feminine intuition sensed the love in His voice. She persisted until He granted her request (Matt. 15:21-28).

Sometimes God may appear to us to be a reluctant neighbor—or worse, an unjust judge (Luke 11:5-9; 18:1-8). But Jesus insists that we should "always pray and not give up" (verse 1, NIV). When God seems hostile, we need to sense His love and keep on asking. "Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God (Isa. 50:10, NIV).

During tranquil times C. S. Lewis wrote a reasoned book on the problem of pain. But when his wife of four years died of cancer, reason forsook him, and he panicked. He felt he had lost her—he couldn't even remember her face. When he pounded on God's door for help, the bolt latched and the lights went out. He was devastated, not because there was no God, but because God was that kind of Person.²

Since the greatest triumph of divine love is to love us at our unloveliest, might not the greatest triumph of human love be to love God when He appears unloveliest—when we can neither see Him nor hear Him, when we fear that He has forsaken us, if indeed He exists at all?

When God seems absent, we are not to despair. "Oh, for a living, active faith! We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial," wrote Ellen White. "The darkness that will then rest upon our path must not discourage us or drive us to despair. It is the veil with which God covers His glory when He comes to impart rich blessings. We should know this by our past experience."

Jesus felt the horror of God's absence when He cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). As the sins of the world blotted His Father's face from view, He faced eternal separation from God—extinction. How did He conquer? By clinging to the naked promises of God. When He proclaimed in triumph "It is finished!" (John 19:30), He conquered by faith alone.

We want evidence from our senses that God is there—we want to see Him, touch Him, hear Him, feel Him. But God wants us to cling to the promises. He gives us instead the promises of His Word. These will touch us and move us and warm us if we have stored them in our memory

and know where to find them.

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. 49:15).

There are no emergencies with God. At times our lives spin out of control. We lose all our property. We discover we are full of cancer. We are paralyzed from the neck down. We are lost at sea. We are pinned down by gunfire. A loved one is murdered or killed in an accident. Shocking events like these happen every day. We scream, "Why me?" (Some brave souls have said, "Why not me?") Our agony is increased by the realization that God had power to intervene and did not.

I have lived in horror of such

experiences all my life, and can testify that "fear hath torment." At such times can we believe that "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18)? Can we believe that, as Ellen White wrote, "In every difficulty [God] has His way prepared to bring relief"?

We have to believe that God is good. In the darkest times we must cling to the assurance that God is in control and that He has our best interests at heart. Though we cannot understand the reasons for the tragedies that enter our lives, we need to remember this encouraging statement from Ellen White's pen: "All that has perplexed us in the providences of God will in the world to come be made plain. The things hard to be understood will then find explanation. . . . Where our finite

Giants of Christianity: How They Prayed

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), Germany, theologian and martyr "Through the half-open door . . . I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer, before taking off his prison garb, kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed to the gallows, brave and composed" (the camp doctor at Flossenbürg, in Dallas M. Roark's, Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

John Bunyan (1628-1688), England, imprisoned for preaching, authored Pilgrim's Progress

"In all my preaching my heart has earnestly cried out to God to make the Word effectual to the salvation of souls" (*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*).

John Calvin (1509-1564), Switzerland and France, theologian and Reformer

"Prayer is similar to a communication between God and us whereby we expound to Him our desires, our joys, our sighs, in a word, all the thoughts of our hearts" (Instructor in Faith).

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), Italy, itinerant preacher

"the Holy Spirit had made him remarkably deserving of divine communications, and he had conversed with God many times" (*The Little Flowers of St. Francis*).

Billy Graham (1918-), United States, evangelist

"Your petitions should always be conditioned by 'Thy will be done.' 'Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart' (Ps. 37:4). But the delighting of oneself in Him precedes the fulfillment of our desires. God will always do what is best for His children" (Peace With God).

Sören Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Denmark, theologian

"The true relation in prayer is not when God hears what is prayed for, but when the person continues to pray until he is the one who hears, who hears what God wills" (Journals).

Brother Lawrence (1611-1691), France, lay brother

"I keep myself by a simple attention and a general fond regard to God, which I refer to as an *actual presence* of God. Or, to put it another way, an habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God. This often causes me to have feelings of inward rapture—and sometimes outward ones! They are so great that I am forced to moderate them and conceal them from others" (The Practice of the Presence of God).

David Livingstone (1813-1873), Scotland, missionary to Africa
"It was his habit every birthday to write a prayer, and on the
next to the last birthday of all, this was his prayer: 'O Divine One, I
have not loved Thee earnestly, deeply, sincerely enough. Grant, I
pray Thee, that before this year is ended I may have finished my
task'" (E. M. Bounds, Purpose in Prayer).

Martin Luther (1483-1546), Germany, father of the Reformation "Prayer is a special exercise of faith. Faith makes the prayer acceptable because it believes that either the prayer will be answered, or that something better will be given instead" (Table Talk).

Julian of Norwich (1343-1413), England, spiritual director and first well-known female writer in the English language

"For the highest form of prayer is to the goodness of God. It comes down to us to meet our humblest needs. It gives life to our souls and makes them live and grow in grace and virtue...."

Saint Patrick (393?-461?), England, missionary to the Irish
"After I arrived in Ireland every day I fed cattle, and frequently
during the day I prayed; more and more the love and fear of God
burned, and my faith and my spirit were strengthened, so that in
one day I said as many as a hundred prayers, and nearly as many

in the night" (History of the Christian Church, vol. 4).

minds discovered only confusion and broken promises, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony. We shall know that infinite love ordered the experiences that seemed most trying. As we realize the tender care of Him who makes all things work together for our good, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 5

John Greenleaf Whittier expressed his confidence in God's goodness in these beautiful words:

"Yet, in the maddening maze of things,

And tossed by storm and flood, To one fixed trust my spirit clings; I know that God is good! . . .

And if my heart and flesh are weak To bear an untried pain,

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), England, pastor

"God does not judge as you do. A groan is heard in heaven; a deep-fetched sigh and a falling tear are prevalent weapons at the throne of God. Yes, your soul cries to God, and you cannot help it" (Advice for Seekers).

Tertullian (160?-230?), North Africa, presbyter, theologian

"Tertullian calls it [the Lord's Prayer] the 'regular and usual prayer, a brief summary of the whole gospel, and foundation of all the other prayers of the Christians' " (History of the Christian Church, vol. 2).

John Wesley (1703-1791), England, evangelist

"Let the language of your heart sing out with regard to pleasure or pain, riches or poverty, honor or dishonor, 'All's alike to me, so I in my Lord may live and die!'" (Christian Perfection).

Ellen G. White (1827-1915), United States, church leader

"Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend" (Steps to Christ).

"Daily prayer is as essential to growth in grace, and even to spiritual life itself, as is temporal food to physical well-being. We should accustom ourselves to lift the thoughts often to God in prayer. . . . We cannot for one moment separate ourselves from Christ with safety" (The Sanctified Life).

The bruised reed He will not break, But strengthen and sustain. . . .

I know not where His islands lift Their fronded palms in air; I only know I cannot drift Beyond His love and care." ■

¹ The Great Controversy, p. 621. ² C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), pp. 4, 5.

¹ Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 215.

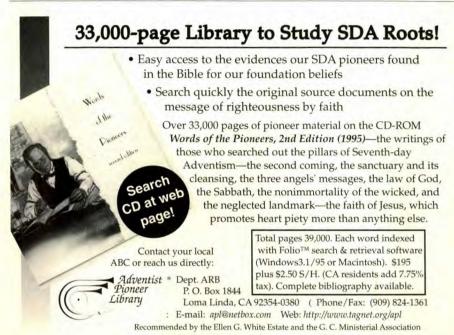
4 The Desire of Ages, p. 330.

Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 286.

6 "The Eternal Goodness," in American Poetry and Prose, ed. Norman Foerster (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1947), pp. 721, 722.

Beatrice Neall is a retired professor of religion from Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska. She served for many years in Asia as a missionary.





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Bouder and Clearer

Using study and meditation to help recognize God's voice

BY JON DYBDAHL

ometimes, just for fun, I attempt to disguise my voice when we phone our children. The temptation is particularly strong when we call our pastor son at his church. In the myriads of calls coming to his office, can he discern his father's voice even when it doesn't sound normal?

Invariably he responds, "Hi, Dad." He has, after all, heard that voice since before he was born and recognizes it even when camouflaged. That's what a lot of listening can do.

We make no merit before God by regular times of Bible study or meditation; rather, study and meditation simply help us know God's voice. They are the telephone—the means to convey God's message to us. Regular listening makes His voice recognizable and clear. The good news is that God is *always* on the line—and desires that we join Him.

Here are some ways to hear His voice more clearly:



I. Study

Study is using the mind—then the heart—to pay careful attention to reality. This careful attention should lead us to think and act in a certain direction—always in the context of God's presence.

Much study is superficial because it is hasty. Just as hurried listening often leads to misunderstanding, studying without care is unsatisfactory. Study involves four steps:¹

- 1. Repetition—constantly rehearsing the deeds of God and going over and over key subjects. Repetition implants crucial ideas deep in our inner being.
- 2. Concentration—focusing and centering our minds on the object of study. It is impossible to hear God clearly while listening to our favorite song at the same time.
 - 3. Comprehension—truly discerning

the meaning and impact of what we are studying. How many of us have "known" certain things for years, yet only later discerned their true meaning?

4. Reflection—going over and over the object of study until its significance becomes real. Pondering brings new insight.

God Speaks to Us Through . . .

Six areas of study deserve attention—the first three verbal, the last three primarily nonverbal. God uses all six, often in combination, to speak to us.

1. The Bible. Strange as it may seem, many Christians read the Bible but never reach the type of study we are talking about. You can learn history, languages, geography, even theology, and not listen to God's voice. In fact, some Bible professors in secular universities are

atheists or agnostics—and can actually explain parts of the Bible quite well. Bible study should begin with factual questions about background and content, but must progress to implications for Christian faith and actions: How does God want *me* to respond to what I have discovered? We must never mistake the accumulation of facts and information *about* the Bible for the knowledge of the Bible.

2. The writings of Ellen White.
Adventists have a treasure in these books—a treasure of knowledge about God from a woman who intimately knew His voice. I am distressed at how often her writings are used as ammunition in theological battles rather than food for the soul. I feel bad for those who see her work only as instruction on how to behave rather than a good news call from God.

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Remember: These writings are to lead us back to the Word of God, not replace it.

3. Great devotional classics. If we neglect the great number of Christian devotional classics, we're poorer because of it. My list of 11 favorite books—six old, five new—is included here. Others undoubtedly have different favorites. Ask your pastor or friends what books have blessed their lives. The mature Christian will not let theological disagreements with some of these works detract from their spiritual value.

4. Nature. The study of God's second book can be verbal (from books or talks), but often nature's deepest lesson can come only through nonverbal contemplation. Here study and meditation overlap. Even now, as I look out my window at the shimmering spring sun reflected on Lake Chapin, I hear God speak His love and peace to me. If we are too busy to watch sunsets and comets and mountain vistas, then we need to slow down.

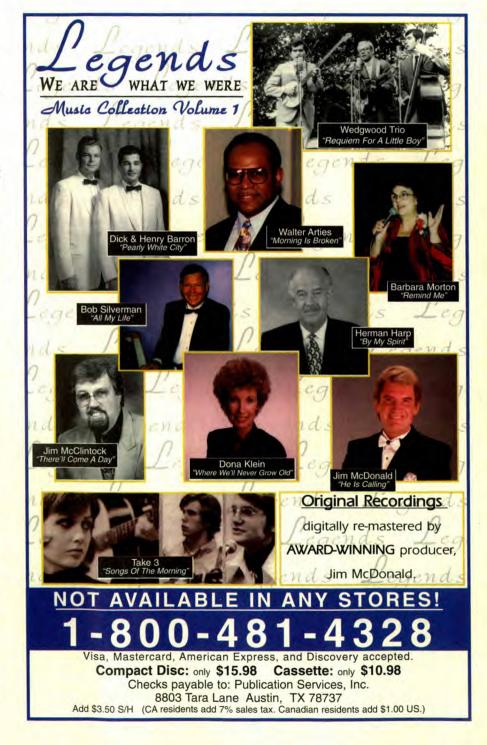
5. Human hearts and needs. Jesus was an astute observer of human need; He studied it firsthand. We must do the same. Only when we see Jesus in the face of the hungry, the hurt, the AIDS victim, and the prisoner have we really understood our world and the heart of God.

6. Ourselves. Self-knowledge and God-knowledge are clearly related. Listening to ourselves and listening to God can't be separated. It is very hard to hear what God has to say unless we know who we are. Can I hear and experience His words of peace unless I recognize the tension in my neck and shoulders or the knot in my stomach? Can I truly hear His call to depend on Him unless I know how my independence from Him has backfired? Taking time to listen to our own heart, spirit, and body prepares us to discern the voice of God as it relates to our need.

II. Meditation

In a world in which most link meditation with Eastern religions, it is easy to forget that meditation is firmly rooted in the Bible and Christian history. Two Hebrew verbs that specifically mean meditate are found more than 50 times in the Old Testament.² Other words also seem to connotate "meditation" in some instances. One especially interesting for Adventists is "remember." In certain contexts the word seems to refer to a contemplation activity in God's presence in which one recalls

what God has done and will do for His people. An example is found in Deuteronomy 5:15: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there.... Therefore the Lord your God has commended you to observe the Sabbath day" (NIV). This text implies that one of the reasons for the Sabbath was so the Israelites could meditatively



Eleven Gems for Spiritual Growth

BY JON DYBDAHL

I. Classic

Book of Common Prayer George Fox, The Journal of George

Ignatius Loyola, The Spiritual Exercises

Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ.

Ellen White, Steps to Christ.

II. Contemporary

Richard J. Foster. Celebration of Discipline. Harper and Row, 1988. Thomas R. Kelly, A Testament of Devotion. Harper and Row, 1941. Henri J. M. Nouwen, Making All Things New. Harper and Row, 1981. Don Postema, Space for God. Bible Way, 1983.

A. W. Tozer, The Best of A. W. Tozer. Baker, 1978.

recall their salvation by God in the Exodus.3

Iesus certainly meditated. Jewish historians claim there is ample evidence that meditation was widespread among Jews throughout their history, including the time of Jesus.4 Ellen White, in a chapter describing Jesus' devotional life, twice uses the word "meditate" or "meditating" and five times the word "communion," which undoubtedly included meditation.5

Church history testifies that God's people have always practiced meditation. While Catholics have been well known for meditation, Protestants have been involved also. Those giving specific practical help with meditation include Martin Luther, George Mueller, and early Methodists.6 While in many places this heritage has been neglected over the past 200 years, it deserves a

revival—especially among those looking for the soon return of Jesus.

What, Exactly, Is It?

One classic definition of meditation is to descend with the mind into the heart to dwell in the presence of God. Meditation simply creates a space in our heart so God's Word can be heard in our inner being and obeyed in our outer life. While in most cases Eastern meditation tries to empty the mind, Christian meditation endeavors to fill the mind with God.

Meditation is a logical and powerful follow-up to study. The sources or subjects of meditation are exactly the same as those for study—the Bible, devotional writings, nature, and human beings. Study analyzes them, and meditation drives them home to the heart. In fact, the fourth step in study-reflection-easily spills over into real meditation on the object of that study. Study defines a word, while meditation tastes and relishes it. Study gives a thought framework, while meditation sings a song about the framework created.

How to Meditate

The methods used in Christian meditation are many and varied. Communication with God is enhanced as we find new ways to hear His voice.7 I suggest here the method Martin Luther described in a 1535 pamphlet.8 Simple and Bible-based, it combines study, meditation, and prayer. I have adapted it slightly.

- 1. Set apart 15 minutes (minimum) in a quiet place.
- 2. Offer a short prayer asking God to illuminate the mind and bend the
- 3. Read a large portion of Scripture. For Luther it was the daily appointed lesson. For us it could be a Sabbath school lesson scripture or a chosen chapter of the Bible. Suppose John 3 is chosen.
- 4. Choose a short portion—usually a verse, but no more than a paragraph. Read that short portion three or four times slowly, deliberately, and reverently, believing that through it

Jesus will by His Spirit actually speak to us. Suppose John 3:16 is chosen.

- 5. Ask questions of that text—who, what, where, and especially why. On John 3:16, we could ask: Who loved the world? What is it like to give an only son? Do I want or need eternal life? Why do I need to believe in Jesus? What would believing mean for me today?
- 6. Recollection. As I answer these questions, I recall everything I know about the subject from all sources.
- 7. Consideration. I carefully consider what teaching I am receiving from God as I take the meaning of this verse to heart. Is God speaking encouragement, counsel, or command?
- 8. Self-examination. Do I really appreciate how much God loves the world? Do I have any idea how much it cost God to send His Son? Do I really believe the good news? Am I sure about receiving the gift of eternal life?
- 9. Prayer. Having thus meditated on God's Word for me, I am now ready to pray with a warm and full heart.

he phone is ringing. God is on the line desiring to speak to you. Will you answer? Will you recognize His voice? The more often you pick up the phone and listen, the more easily His voice will be recognized among the many calling in our hectic world.

Ibid., p. 15. See Peter Toon, From Mind to Heart (Baker, 1987), p. 24.

Aryeh Kaplan, Jewish Meditation (Shocken, 1989), p. 40. See also Toon, pp. 72-78.

"With Nature and With God," The Ministry of Healing, chap. 3.

6 Toon, pp. 69-78.

⁷ For those wanting to know more, start with Foster, pp. 29-33, and Toon, pp. 69-123.

8 Toon, p. 73.

Jon Dybdahl is director of the Department of World Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.



Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline (Harper, 1988), pp. 64-66.

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A Word in Season

Many individuals find a direct link between a period of profound growth in their Christian experience and the pages of an influential book.

The Greatest Thing in the World By Henry Drummond

(Barbour, 1994)

I don't remember if it was my interest in love that brought me to this book, or maybe it was the book that broadened my interest in love. But this small book, which is really a sermon by this pastor/author, captured my heart the way few books have.

Paul's words on love from 1 Corinthians 13 are masterfully unfolded in ways that open his paean to love like a flower. The world's intoxication with "selfish love" cannot compare with Paul's principle of agape love, which is an expression of God's character. And Drummond makes clear the depth of the disparity that exists between agape love and any other kind.

By Gordon Bietz, president of Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

The Spirit of the Disciplines By Dallas Willard

(HarperCollins, 1991)

Dallas Willard captures the essence of Jesus' message, which is radical repentance and change of lifestyle. "We can become like Christ by . . . following Him in the overall style of life He chose for Himself. . . . We must believe that He knew how to live."

Willard recommends such things as "solitude, silence, prayer, simple and sacrificial living, intense study, meditation upon God's word and God's ways, and service to others." A powerful antidote for a church that misunderstands grace.

Willard's challenge to the church is to be a transforming community, turning its "local assemblies into academies of life as it was meant to be." And when he raises obedience to the level of grace and love, I can hear Willard's brethren accuse him of legalism. His counter would be: "The greatest danger to the Christian church today is that of pitching the message too low."

This clear call to discipleship is seldom heard among today's evangelical Protestants.

By Charles E. Bradford, former president of the North American Division prior to his retirement. He now lives in Florida.

Inside Out

By Larry Crabb (NavPress, 1988)

C. S. Lewis once observed that "we read to know we are not alone." In 1988, at the very point in my life when I felt most alone and confused, *Inside Out* was published. Written by Larry Crabb, a clinical psychologist who teaches at Grace Seminary, it mentions that Christians are often trained to deny pain, but "a core sadness that will not go away is evidence not of spiritual immaturity, but of honest living in a sad world."

Too many of us feel that we should not only be good, but feel good, or we are not true Christians. He explains that the denial of inner pain leads to compulsive sinful habits, pretense rather than integrity, performance rather than trust in God, and self-protection rather than love.

On the other hand, "people who embrace their hurt are able to pursue God more passionately" and achieve real change from the inside out.

By reading this book, I learned to stop pretending to others, and most important, to myself, that I had it all together and to let God mold me into a transparent, authentic individual who could love and trust even in the midst of pain.

By Becky Wang-Cheng, cohost of the Lifestyle Magazine television program. She lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and reads to her three sons for evening worship—and even the teenagers enjoy it.

Mighty Prevailing Prayer By Wesley Duewel

(Zondervan, 1990)

I had hardly begun reading this book when I had the profound sense that here was a powerful book through which God wanted to speak deeply to my heart. As Duewel describes prayer, he sees a God eager for us to approach Him with intense intercession and dramatic petitions. His greatest desire is to respond to our requests with regular, remarkable answers.

On a scale of 1 to 10, this book is an 11. But take your time. Don't even begin reading it if you face the pressure of other deadlines.

By Ruthie Jacobsen, coordinator of prayer ministries for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

My Utmost for His Highest

By Oswald Chambers

(Discovery House, 1994)

Next to the Bible and Ellen White's masterpiece, *The Desire of Ages*, the book that has most significantly affected my life has been a volume I've read from nearly every day since January 1, 1988. A survey of clergy in the United States indicated that next to the Bible, it is the one book found most frequently in their libraries.

Now reading it through for the ninth time, I can personally testify to

the soul-stirring spiritual impact of Oswald Chambers' classic, My Utmost for His Highest. Chambers has masterfully joined the New Testament's relational passion for Jesus Christ with the Scripture's compelling call for radical discipleship. Over and over he returns us to Calvary and a "brooding on the tragedy of God" (p. 330). The result is a life-energizing collection of daily readings (gathered posthumously by his widow) that has become for me soul food in the highest sense.

Without hesitation I recommend this volume to all who have become weary with the pablum of spiritual fare that too often bloats the devotional diet. If ever there was an hour that summoned our utmost for His highest, wouldn't it be this one?

By Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of the Pioneer Memorial church, on the campus of Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

A Field Guide for Wilderness Living By Catherine Gearing

(Southern Publishing Association, 1973)

I read this book when I was 13 years old, and I enjoyed expanding my knowledge of plants and herbs that are good for food and medicine. By 1976, when I began canvassing in the Community Crusade Against Drug Abuse program in San Francisco, I had some great recipes for preparing wild plants. I was also learning about a ministry that combines healthful living with Bible work.

One night that summer my roommate and I made an emergency visit to the Universty of California at San Francisco Medical Center. A woman was scheduled to have surgery the next day, and she wanted someone to pray with her.

After we prayed, the woman remarked that she believed we had been sent by God to comfort her and help prepare her for the next morning's surgery. As we visited, she said, "My name is Catherine Gearing. Have you ever read the book A Field Guide to Wilderness Living?"

My eyes filled with tears. In a hospital room, far from each of our

families, I ministered to a person who had ministered to me for years!

By José V. Rojas, director of youth ministries for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes By Glenn Clark

(Harper, 1937)

I first became acquainted with this book years ago. In the first chapter, "Hind's Feet That Lead to High Places," Clark tells of meeting several glowing people whose lives had been transformed by an encounter with a white-haired man who gave them a secret. Finally Clark himself encountered the man and heard the secret—"He maketh my feet like hind's feet and setteth me upon my high places."

Even more than the male deer's feet, the hind's rear feet track perfectly with the front feet and are safe on high, narrow, dangerous trails. "As the feet of the hind are to the mountains, so is the mind of man to the heights of life; and as the rear feet of the hind are to the front feet, so is the subconscious mind of man to the conscious mind."

Years later I learned how to apply the lessons of this book, became truly integrated, and my life has since been on a higher, much more satisfying level. Clark recommends the Lord's Prayer as the place to begin this journey toward the heights.

By Leona Glidden Running, professor emerita of biblical languages at the Seventhday Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Not Knowing Where

By Oswald Chambers

(Oswald Chambers Publications, 1989)

This practical exposition of Genesis is a "must read" devotional book. It's a book replete with godly wisdom that powerfully transformed my life.

In this spiritual journey through the first book of the Bible, "we see faith's reactions to God's call, to clashing circumstances, to the claims of companions and culture, to the subtle temptations of the adversary, and to the terrific cost of friendship and fellowship with God."

Read and learn, as I did, that "it is not what a man achieves, but what he believes and strives for that makes him noble and great." And grow into someone great for our God.

By Hyveth Williams, senior pastor of the Campus Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda, California.

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Finding your way in devotion

BY DIANE FORSYTH

he poet Awhadi of Kerman was sitting on his porch one night, bent over a vessel. The Sufi Shams-e-Tabrizi happened to pass by. "What are you doing?" he asked the poet.

"Contemplating the moon in a bowl of water" was the reply.

"Unless you have broken your neck, why don't you look directly at the moon in the sky?"1

It's a good question. One that deserves an answer as we consider the devotional life. The word "devotion" is often used to designate something secondhand. A "devotional" book is a secondhand look at a Bible verse through the eyes of the book's author. For some, a devotion has become three small paragraphs following a Scripture verse. They "have a devotion" each morning—like an instant spiritual breakfast, or Christian fast food.



By contrast, Frank Laubach, a twentieth-century missionary in the Philippines, practiced abiding in the presence of Christ. In the early stages of learning to do this, he wrote: "Last Thursday night I was listening to a phonograph in Lumbatan and allowing my heart to commune when something broke within me, and I longed to lift my own will up and give it completely to God. How infinitely richer this direct firsthand grasping of God Himself is, than the old method which I used and recommended for years, the reading of endless devotional books."2 Reading a devotional book just doesn't do for us what a firsthand encounter with God does.

The Pathways to an Encounter With God

There are three recognized paths to a firsthand encounter with God. They parallel what educators call the three modes of learning. We utilize all three, yet at any one time we tend to emphasize one of the three.

The modes of learning are: hand, head, and heart.³ The three spiritual paths are: the good (service); the true (knowing); and the beautiful (desiring). Or "The Path of Selfless Action," "The Path of Wisdom and Reflection," and "The Path of Complete Devotion."

For all who are willing, each path leads to a firsthand encounter with God and parallels the other two paths. We learn and express our devotion with hand, head, and heart. We need to let our understanding of devotion expand to include all three paths and all three modes of learning. As we do, devotion will be liberated from the mistaken notion that it is "a subjective experience that may be OK for the 'touchy-feely' people, but not for me, thank you."

The more fully we understand devotion, the more we will recognize it

as both the desire of our heart that draws us into an encounter with God and also what happens on the way to, and in the midst of, that encounter.

Whenever we respond to the desire for God that He planted in us, that is our devotion. It doesn't matter which spiritual path we happen to be on at the moment, or in what learning mode we are. Devotion happens in the garden, at the computer, in the library, or at the store. It happens whether we're preparing a legal document, repairing a car, or changing diapers. It happens in solitude and in service. Devotion can happen anywhere, anytime, to anyone who is willing.

Being part of a happening is something we all do; being creative about it may not be "for" all of us. So don't worry about being creative. Simply ask, "What's the best way for me to participate in this happening

Writing From Your Week: Getting Started in a Journal

Have you ever picked up one of those blank books in a bookstore display and wondered why anyone would pay good money for a book full of blank pages? If you were even slightly tempted to take it home, you might be ready to give journal writing a try.

But what will you do when you get it home? Will it just sit there blankly on your bedside table? If you're a beginner at journal writing, here are some suggestions to help you get started:

First of all, don't think that a blank book is your only option. Some people prefer to do their writing in spiral-bound notebooks or loose-leaf binders. Still others do their writing on a computer. The tools of the trade are remarkably simple—experiment a bit. Find what works for you, something comfortable, easy to handle, and appealing.

Next, just start. You don't have to be profound, just write. You don't have to worry about spelling or grammar rules, just write. Your audience is yourself and God.

So what do you write?

Start with the present moment. What is the day and time? Where are you? How has your day gone? What's going on in your life this week? As you write, you will likely see ideas to think through, questions to pursue, connections to make. Writing tends to be generative; the more you write, the more you'll have to write.

By focusing on the present moment, journaling can help

integrate all aspects of our lives. Nothing is off-limits: Home. Work. Friendships. Family. Health. Community. Our lives are not compartmentalized into sacred and secular, as if God were interested in some aspects of our lives but not others. A journal helps us bring all our concerns under the umbrella of the spiritual life.

Sometimes you might want to simply record what's happening—diary style. Or you can choose a particular event or situation and reflect on it. What effect is this having on your soul? on your relationship with others? with God? What patterns are you seeing in your life? What needs are you discovering? What do you have to be thankful for?

As you examine the people and events that fill your ordinary days, you're bringing your life before God and seeking to understand His leading. What is God asking you to do here? What would be the Christlike response there? God calls us to serve Him in concrete, practical ways. His love is not an abstraction. He presents Himself to us in the form of people to love and bids us love them.

Journaling then becomes a form of prayer that soon overflows the boundaries of the page. By habitually bringing our daily lives, and everything that fills them, before God, we learn to live, day by day, in His presence.

Beverly Beem is chair of the English Department at Walla Walla College, in College Place, Washington. She conducts workshops in journaling as a tool in spiritual renewal.



Do It for Yourself

Some of my best friends are books. I stumbled across this special "friend" in a used book store. I was made ready for it by the circumstances of my life at the time. Something was missing. I was trying to make sense of my vocation after years of being a minister.

The book, Spirituality for Ministry, by Urban T. Holmes, was written by a minister for ministers. The book jacket promised "a much-needed, wise, and practical guide to spirituality for today's pastors." I bought it and read it, and knew immediately that I had crossed over into a new and wondrous place. I realized I needed to spend more time in learning to listen to God—and this book was a beginning guide.

Following the suggestion of the author, I decided to go on a "retreat," a new concept for me then. I found a retreat center where I could receive some guidance on learning how to practice "listening prayer."

I'll never forget that first retreat. It was a miserable experience. I learned just how noisy my mind was. The isolated retreat center provided a freedom from external noises, but what could I do with the much louder *internal* noises? A major awareness was born. I'm still learning how

to "be still, and know."

If the idea of a one-day retreat appeals to you, here are some suggestions: be clear about your expectations of the day. Read books that will clarify what you can expect. Decide how long your retreat will be. Initially I would suggest that you not make it too long.

Will you enter into retreat alone? or in the company of others? Being alone alone is more difficult than being alone with others.

How much silence? How much reading? Where will you go? The beach? The mountains? A retreat house? What kind of fast will help you in your intentionality to be available to God?

Carry with you the belief that God is faithfully pursuing you, and that a one-day retreat provides a minilab for you to learn what it means to be alone with God.

Above all, don't tell anyone that you're going to do it. Or that you did it. Just do it!

Peter Luna is on the pastoral staff of the Glendale City Seventh-day Adventist Church in southern California.



called devotion?"

Keep in mind whom and what you are responding to. Devotion is a response to God and to the work of the Holy Spirit, who is already active in your heart (that is, at the center of your whole being). As you read these possible responses, ask, "How might I use or adapt this idea?" Also ask, "What other possibilities would I add to this list?"

Practicing the Presence of God

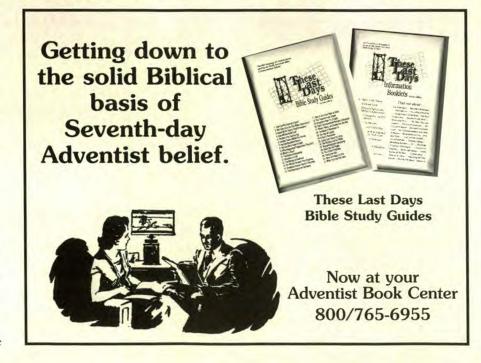
In a 1970 Review and Herald article, T. E. Unruh wrote, "To develop a consciousness of the abiding presence of God is life's greatest imperative." I read, underscored, saved, and still have that article. "Yes! That's it! Do it!" That's how the article struck me. And I've done it ever since.

I can cultivate a willingness for closeness to God, whether or not I actually sense or feel it. I can't create or give the gift of God's presence. I can only receive and respond to it. I believe Jesus, who said, "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20, NRSV) and "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come

to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23, NRSV).

Knowing, loving, living with the abiding presence of God is the foundation of devotion. It's the beginning of a lifelong adventure. Find friends who do it and learn from them. Thomas Kelly said: "There is a way of

ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship, and a gentle



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housands of believers have participated in weekend Prayer and Ministry Conferences throughout the division. In these spiritual retreats, new lives of devotion and effective witness are born, and communities of prayer and support are created. The Prayer and Ministry Conferences are ongoing ministry, and there is a Conference scheduled in your area in the near future. Call for details.

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his Prayer Conference gave me the tools to hear God's voice in a new way and to be able to act on that voice."

—New England Physician

"One of the best things I did was to bring my church members with me."

-PASTOR FROM GEORGIA

"The Holy Spirit is working as God's people come together in little circles to study the Bible and to pray. Praise the Lord!"

-LAY LEADER, LOCAL CHURCH

For more information about a Prayer and Ministry Conference near you, or for more information on North American Division Prayer Ministries, call 1-800-732-7587. Ask for "Prayer Ministries."

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NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PRAYER MINISTRIES receptiveness to divine breathings."5

Do it for a day or a week. Then, while continuing to do it, read about how others have done it. Do it another week. Then, as you do it, talk to someone who is doing it too. Do . . . do and read . . . do and compare notes. Repeat this cycle over and over. It's an unending, amazing adventure that will lead you to all kinds of ways to be with God in moments both busy and involved, quiet and renewing.

Little Homecomings

At any moment we may be "gracefully returned home to the present moment and reminded of love."6 An extremely busy church administrator decided to be reminded of God each time he walked through a doorway. An office worker, frustrated when she had to wait a minute for her computer, accepted the delays as ready-made "little homecomings." A pastor who makes a point of drinking plenty of water throughout the day connects each drink with remembering God's presence.

In addition to everyday reminders, you can plan reminders for particular days. Briefly scan the activities planned for the day and notice if there are times when you will be likely to forget God's presence. Then think of something to help you remember. In other words, plan for these "little homecomings," as well as for your appointments and projects. "Most important, you can pray for the grace of homecomings in the day ahead. Ask God to remind you of God."7

Heart Prayer

From my friend LaVonne Neff's father, Norval Pease, I learned about Harry Emerson Fosdick. He's the first one who made it really clear to me

that prayer is dominant desire. God is not misled by well-planned words that don't express my real desire. It's my "settled cravings" or "controlled passions" that matter.8

I'm not so good at praying; but my heart is. "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Rom. 8:26, 27, NIV). The Spirit of God goes straight for our heart of hearts, and the will of God finds lodging and expression. We can learn the Spirit's language if we will. We can let our heart's prayer be expressed. People of God through the centuries have done what is called "heart prayer."

During the times set aside just for prayer and meditation we can discover a

How to Take the Boredom **Out of Family Worship**

Valuegenesis research calls family worship the most important missing factor in Adventist families today. Ellen White referred to it as "the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home life" (Child Guidance, p. 521). She also said it should be "the sweetest and most helpful" time of the day (Messages to Young People, p. 341). But most parents can't think of what to do. And most kids find it boring.

Here are five simple principles to help make family worship the meaningful, happy, interesting experience it was meant to be:

- Establish a regular time. Agree on a time when you can relax together for a few moments without feeling the distraction of other pressures, including hunger and homework. First thing in the morning, right after supper, just before bedtime-whatever works best for your family.
- Keep it short. You can accomplish what you want to do (making Jesus' presence real in your home and arousing and strengthening a love for Bible study) in 15 minutes or less. "Short and spirited," and "brief and full of life," is the way Ellen White described it (Child Guidance, pp. 521, 522).
- Focus on the kids. Be sure you know what's happening in the lives of your children. Ask questions that can be easily answered from their perspective. Use illustrations that come from their world. Discuss topics that interest them.
- Involve everyone. Don't lecture. Don't read and tell everyone else to sit still. Don't even take all the responsibility for the planning. Help your children discover the delight of participation.

■ Vary the content and format. Don't do the same thing night after night. For example, discuss ways to serve others on Sundays. Read a continuing story on Mondays. Do a creative writing assignment on Tuesdays. Explore the life of a Bible character on Wednesdays. Play a Bible game on Thursdays. Sing together on Fridays. On Sabbath evening, discuss your beliefs on various topics. Your creativity will be rewarded with interest and anticipation.

To ensure variety, keep a list of activities your family enjoys doing together. Be sure to include art projects (coloring, making banners, discussing Bible scenes from great artists), mission stories, nature activities, audio and video programs, computer games, and journaling. Interview grandparents about their favorite Bible verses and about when they became Christians. Study Bible books together. Search Psalms and Proverbs for wisdom for today. Videotape a television program about a family and discuss how decisions are made on TV. what values are suggested, and how the program would be different if the family included God in their lives. Memorize, paraphrase, and personalize your favorite Bible verses. Explore chronology (Which came first: Jehoshaphat's choir or Gideon's army? Who lived first: Esther or Jochebed?).

The possibilities are endless. Enlist the help of your children. And put an end, once and for all, to family worship boredom.

Stuart Tyner is director of the Hancock Center for Youth Ministry in the School of Religion at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.



word, a phrase, or a metaphor that expresses our deepest longing. Then, during the rest of the day, in the midst of all our activities, we can return to this word, phrase, or metaphor and let it express our heart's prayer. This is something like having a phrase from a song or jingle stay with you and keep replaying itself in your mind. That's heart prayer. It's utterly simple, infinitely adaptable. "If you find yourself working hard at this kind of prayer, trying to hold on to something or flee from something, it is time to relax and turn homeward to the grace of God once more. Find your personal power and strength in desire and consecration, not in manipulation."9

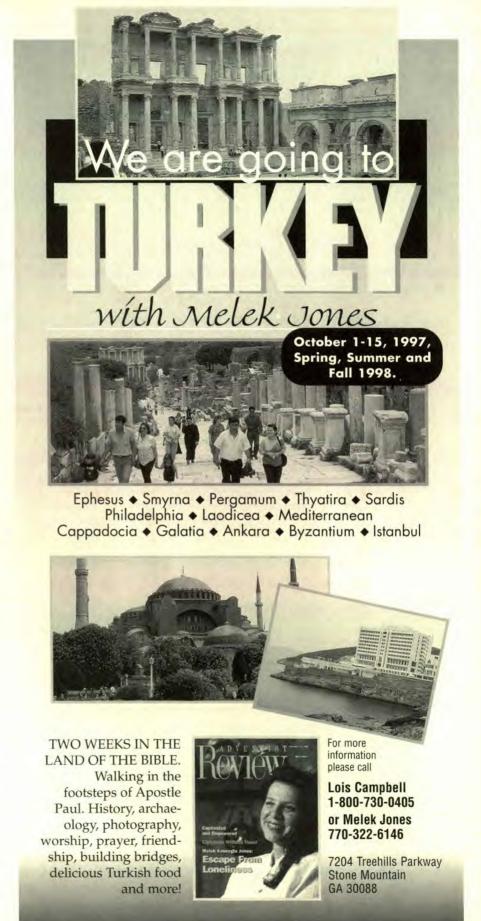
Silence and Solitude

Quality devotion will inevitably involve silence. "Right speech comes out of silence, and right silence comes out of speech." ¹⁰ Silence, like speech, is for everyone, and speech and silence can each be adapted to individual needs and interests.

Unfortunately, we have been educated and conditioned for one and rarely for the other. Few of us have received even a fraction of the same quantity or quality of education and conditioning in silence as we have in speech. This seriously compromises the quality of our devotion.

Yet we have long known better. Here is one clear call to silence: "All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. . . . They need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Psalm 46:10."

In order to experience this more fully, we can each prayerfully discover where we are in this matter of silence, and where we want to be. Gently notice the ways silence is, and isn't, a part of your life. Is there a time or place in your normal day that you can expect quiet?



What does silence mean to you? Have you noticed the difference between external and internal silence? What does internal silence mean to you? A time to think? A time to talk audibly to God? A time to be still and listen?

One of the many resources that may be helpful is Dallas Willard's book The Spirit of the Disciplines. His sections "Solitude" (pp. 160-162) and "Silence" (pp. 163-165) are insightful, encouraging, and in touch with contemporary realities.

Remember, silence is adaptable. Don't expect to be silent in the same ways, for the same lengths of time, or with the same results as others. But gently discover the appropriate place for silence in your life. Choose to respect and learn silence and solitude. They can be acts of devotion that will enrich all your other devotion.

Body Prayer

Here's a question that has great potential for expanding and enriching your devotion: In what way does my body express my devotion?

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). The idea of being God's temple has often been related to living the healthful lifestyle.

It makes sense to want the temple to be in the best possible condition—that's a given. Now let the same wonder-filled fact call you to even more than the basics of healthful living. You yourself are God's temple, and God's Spirit lives in you. How does a body respond to being God's temple?

The body is made for motion. It's a living, moving, dynamic temple that God inhabits. How can my movements be increasingly hospitable to God's indwelling presence? When I walk, when I run, when I play, work, sit, and stand—I am a dynamic temple in motion. Can I move in ways more hospitable to God? One could get guite self-conscious and awkward about this. Let's not. But let's prayerfully, gently, allow for some wonder-filled possibilities.

Notice the ways you already use your body in intentionally worshipful postures: folded hands, bowed head, closed eyes, kneeling. It can enrich you to discover ways other people of God through the centuries have expressed devotion in their bodies. The psalmists didn't just sit or kneel with bowed heads and folded hands.

And Many More

Many more suggestions are rich with

possibilities. They include: journaling, observing nature, music in conjunction with prayer and silence, day-long retreats, praying the Psalms, asceticism in routine daily life,12 seeing God in the person I am with, and paraphrasing a psalm according to today's experience.

For even more suggestions, see the Religion section of the June 29, 1993, Woman's Day magazine, pages 40-45. This article is rich with ideas and examples. It is titled "Food for the Spirit, 50 Ways to Grow in Grace All Day Long." I wouldn't have thought to look there for such an excellent list of simple, doable suggestions, but a friend gave it to me. Thank you, Helen Chin!

As you find increasingly meaningful ways to encounter God firsthand, know that all the how-to's are simply suggestions. The important thing is for you to respond with gentleness, courage, and honesty to the Spirit of God in your life. Divine love calls you to respond in love. Your life is a prayer for you to know, express, and be satisfied by more fully all the time.

Anthony de Mello, Taking Flight (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 65.

Brother Lawrence and Frank Laubach, Practicing His Presence (Auburn, Maine: Christian Books, 1973), p. 9.

In Ralph M. Coupland, "Model of Holistic and Authentic Teaching and Learning." (Italics

T. E. Unruh, "The Presence of Jesus-The Great Imperative," Review and Herald, Mar. 19,

Thomas R. Kelly, A Testament of Devotion (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), p. 35.

Gerald May, The Awakened Heart (San Francisco: Harper-San Francisco, 1991), p. 133.

7 Ibid., p. 135. 8 Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Meaning of Prayer (Chicago: Association Press, 1962), pp. 136, 141.

May, p. 166.

10 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 78.

" Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 58.

12 Elizabeth Ann Dreyer, "Asceticism Reconsidered," in Weavings 6, No. 2 (1991).

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