



Teaching an Engineer How to Pray

Written by Samy George
St John Khame Church, Birmingham Alabama

The Lord Jesus Christ showed us the importance of prayer by His own example: He prayed early in the morning, before His baptism, before choosing the Apostles, before His transfiguration, before His passion, and specifically taught us the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord Christ also admonished us to persevere in prayer by asking, seeking, and knocking (Matthew 7: 7-11), and Saint Paul asked us to pray without ceasing, which is the law of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5: 17). God told the prophet Jeremiah, "Call on Me and I will answer you and tell you great and un-searchable things you do not know." (Jeremiah 33: 3)

The Church Fathers wrote much about the definition of prayer. Origen the Scholar wrote that prayer is to be with God. Pope Cyril VI, a noted man of prayer, said that prayer is moving the hand that manages the universe. Prayer is unity with God: every contact with God is prayer but not every prayer is contact with God. Reciting the Agpeya, or the Coptic Book of Hours, is cherished and practiced by the faithful of our Orthodox Church.

But all the beautiful examples and definitions of prayer did not exactly teach me the practical details of



how to pray! Saint Paul in the Holy Book of Romans 8: 26 stated that we do not know how to pray! Having an engineering analytical mind, I was frustrated by having a one-way conversation and feeling that God is silent and is ignoring me, and I often lost my peace. Maybe I was expecting a voice in reply, a sign, or some miracle. After all, in the Old Testament Holy Book of Exodus 33:11 teach us that "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend!"

Next, I studied what our Coptic Church teaches regarding how to pray. I learned that we have to prepare ourselves for prayer by shutting out the physical feelings and thoughts. Further one must never cease to continually pray to keep from falling into temptation. These two steps will assist us to succeed in our prayers. The fruit of prayer is the Holy Spirit and all the gifts that come with it.

I met Fr. Anthony Coniaris and read his simple explanation of prayer in his book "From God and You: Person-to-Person." Fr. Coniaris said, "We address God in the language of prayer, and He addresses us in the language of Holy Scripture." Thus I realized that when I talk to God while slowly reciting the Psalms of the Agpeya, praising Him while driving to and from work, meditating and expressing my feelings and thoughts while walking, and invoking the saints' intercession, I eagerly expect God to personally respond to my prayers



and inquisitions through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when I read my Holy Bible in the evening. For then I am listening to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Word of God, or Logos, which is also the Holy Bible.

I become all the personalities in the Holy Scriptures, and all God's promises, proposals, admonitions, and chastisements therein are personally addressed to me. And in response to the response of God, I claim the promises and take steps to align my life according to the Word of God, for prayer ought to change me and not change God, and then I wait on the Lord's grace and pray that the Eleventh Hour comes sooner.

Praying this way was only a small step in the right direction. For then I have a chance to be positive and a reason to hope when faced with life-altering trials that bring doubts and break my confidence in God. For the Lord Jesus Christ said to me, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," (John 16: 33b) which when taken personally translates that I have a confident potential in the providence of God; joy is attainable despite my circumstances. Even though Heaven seems silent, for in reality God is near me and I am the one far away from God, I draw hope from God's word and desire to prove His faithfulness in my life. I trust that God may use my weakness to demonstrate His perfect strength. (II Corinthians 12: 9)

Praying this way is not just positive thinking, dreaming, and longing; it demands concentration of my whole person, will, and movement of my heart. I find expression in every word, delight, and develop a friendly and less confrontational relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. When I come home broken by the pressures of life to my evening reading, He welcomes me home: home to knowledge, wisdom, joy, and peace, home to friendship and fellowship and openness, home

to intimacy, acceptance, and affirmation. Instead of complaining that God has hidden Himself, I give thanks for having revealed so much of Himself. And when I accept God's love, I begin to be shaped as the person He created me to be, He transforms my heart and rebuilds my character, live to my full potential, and see people and circumstances as God sees them.

Praying this way I learn God's way in answering prayers mostly in the Eleventh Hour. God's solutions and timeliness are often different from ours; for He is not bound by time or space as we are which seems unfair at times when compared with our limitations. As an example from the Holy Scriptures, King David prayed that he might build the House of the Lord, but God told him that he should not build the House, but that his son Solomon would. (II Chronicle 6: 1-10) I learned that God will meet every possible need I have if I allow Him to do it His way and at His time. I do many times confuse my desires with my actual needs, but God knows the difference. Sometimes He will fulfill them both, but He always meets my need.

Finally, the Lord Jesus Christ instructs us to make our request in His Name, "Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14: 13) This is why the Coptic Church uses these words to close the Lord's Prayer and other prayers. But when we carefully examine this verse we find a qualifying situation in the request: it must glorify God! Thus I realize that when a request is not met, God's answer might be that it does not glorify His name and it is not based on His principles, or that my request is not good for me. And what is not good for me will surely not glorify God, for the Lord Jesus Christ also said, "Your Father who is in Heaven will give what is good to those who ask Him." (Matthew 7: 11) ✚