

Devotional Reading from the Pages  
of

## *Praying Like Jesus*

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Several years ago I read an interview of a Hollywood star whose acting work I respect. The interviewer, trying to get past the usual barrage of questions, asked her what she does when she is in an overwhelmingly frustrating situation. Her answer rings all too true: "I try to pray," she said. Not, "I pray"; just "I try to." Leaving open the question of whether or not she gets through to Heaven.

I don't know whether this actress has a personal relationship with God. But I can't help but wonder how many of us know we ought to communicate with God, we may even try to do it, yet we haven't made the proper preparations for the journey—we haven't established a relationship with Him.

It is, after all, rather audacious for one who doesn't know God personally to reach a crisis and suddenly try to storm the doors of heaven with requests or demands.

As strangers to Him, what right have we to make requests of Him? How can we even expect admittance into His throne room? We can try to pray, but like this actress we will continue to be left wondering whether our prayers *might* get through.

The code to unlock the access portal of Heaven is the address Jesus uses when beginning His prayer. *Father*. For, not only does He claim God as His Father, but He invites us to do the same. "When you pray," He tells His followers, "go into your room, close the door and pray to *your* Father, who is unseen" (Matthew 6:6). Even I—a flawed, puny human from the heavenly



perspective—can call God *Father*, if He has adopted me into His family.

This adoption is free on our side, but it came at great cost to God the Father and His Son Jesus. In his letter to the believers in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul explained that "Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. ... He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven" (Eph. 1:4-7, NLT).

Why did the purchase of our freedom—yours and mine—require the shedding of Jesus' blood? No matter how good we may think we have been, the Bible tells us every one of us has sinned—has fallen short of God's holy standard of perfection (Romans 3:23). It matters not whether our sin is small or great in our own eyes, even one little transgression of His law is enough to disqualify us from access into God's presence and from our adoption into His family.

Yet, there was something God could do. He initiated a way—the only possible way—for us to be made spotless in His sight, but this required that someone without blemish or sin give up His

life in our place. That someone was His only Son, Jesus, who laid down His own human life two thousand years ago, letting His lifeblood splatter down from a cross and puddle in the dust of a hill outside Jerusalem, taking the penalty for my sins and yours upon His perfectly sinless shoulders.

Jesus agonized over the burden of our sin, over all our pain, and especially over our distance from the God who loves us. He did this so we could be established with all the rights and privileges as sons and daughters of God. He bore our guilt, and now we can be free of it. And the amazing part is that all the pain was on His side; He made it so easy for us to be clean that it sometimes seems to our constricted minds that we must do something more to become worthy.

Yet all we need do is follow Jesus' prescription: "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24). Or in the words the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved" (Romans 10:9-10, NLT).

So, I invite you right now to pray the following prayer along with me, a prayer that will help you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, as a confirmation of what you have come to believe in your heart. Perhaps you've prayed a prayer like this before; perhaps this will be your first time. Even if it is your first time, I assure you that God will hear and answer, and from the moment you speak it, He will call you His own child. Just like a prince or princess in a king's court, you will now be welcome to have an audience before the King of the Universe at any

time, for any reason, without appointment and without uncertainty.

The thirteenth-century Italian author, Dante Alighieri, wrote his first masterpiece of poetry when he was a young person, as a tribute to the woman he loved. He called it, *La Vita Nuova*. Its opening, loosely translated, offers this statement about the first day he met the love of his life: "In that book which is my memory ... I find one chapter that says, "Here begins a new life." So, if you are praying this prayer for the first time, or if you are praying it again as a recommitment to building a vibrant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, then we can say along with Dante, "Here begins *la vita nuova*."

*Almighty God,*

*I come before You in Jesus' name--not because of any merit of my own, but only because Jesus, Your Son, makes it possible. Never before have I felt more aware of my sinfulness. I confess to you that I have sinned. Although I could never earn my way into Your good stead, even so, You sacrificed Your Son to give me the opportunity to become Your child. I reach out to accept the free gift of forgiveness You offer me. Please apply Christ's blood to my account, forgive my sin and make me clean before You. Thank you Lord for saving me! Amen.*



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