



Prayer Power

“Affix to the bow the sharp arrow of devotion:

Then with mind absorbed and heart melted in love,

Draw the arrow and hit the mark

- the imperishable Absolute”

- The Upanishads

Prayer is an integral part of a holistic spiritual practice. Prayer awakens your heart, engages your will and focuses intention and subtle body to live into alignment with the Source of your Being. Prayer helps you recognize and receive the love and support beyond conceptual understanding to deepen your embodiment of grace. There is no hierarchy in prayer. Any form of turning towards the living presence, has value, whether by intoning a mantra, reciting a set prayer, calling for help when you need it, writing the naked contents of your heart onto the page, or just turning into the Mystery. Prayer is intimate, and so I invite you to find *your* organic way to commune with the Source of your being. This will inevitably flush up to the surface any buried feelings about your religious conditioning, which is an important part of maturing spiritually.

Kabir said, ***“Wherever you are is the entry point”***. The point in prayer is not in the words you say, or whether you speak words at all – but that you turn the love and purity of your heart into its Source and commune, re-connect, or marinate in the living grace that comes online whenever you fold back into the Source of your being. This might vary enormously depending on where you are on the path – whether you are predominantly experiencing being on the journey TO God, on the journey WITH

God, or in a more non-dual experience where we know ourselves AS God (yet without any sense of ego inflation).

At the beginning of your path, or even perhaps after significant realization but on a very challenging day, or amidst daily challenging situations, prayer can help you come TO the source that brings forth the Divine support needed.

Praying TO God

“You ask for too little. Ask for help with everything.”

– Mother Meera

Here, prayer is a beautiful way to TURN TOWARDS the Divine Force. We can simply speak the truth of our heart, asking for help with the places inside where we might be afraid, insecure, needing support. Asking for help is humble – and humility will always bring us into the receptive state.

That which you pray to is completely devoid of judgment and thus welcomes you completely as you are. However, do not confuse prayer with giving a list to Santa Clause! Do not make demands of how you should be responded to. You will most likely find that the response to your prayers for help is the return to more peace of mind, or you somehow being moved in a different direction. This is not a little gift, but often the true response to your needs. Think of asking for help more as offering up to the inner alter the things you recognize as obstructions – limiting beliefs, reactive patterns, the ways in which you know your ego grips into some position. The things you know you need help with.

“Give up to Grace – you need a lot more help than you know. The ocean takes care of each wave until it reaches the shore”

– Rumi

You might find yourself getting caught in some cycle of seeking *for* fulfillment, perhaps through pulling to get a certain kind of attention, through some kind of reactivity or defense. Perhaps this has become more obvious to you through doing the inquiries. Seeing this activation, you could turn to a confessional type of prayer, For example:

“Beloved, I find myself caught in a sense of lack, separation from love. I see that I am identifying with thoughts of inadequacy that I cannot seem to let go of. I give to you my compulsion to try to get fulfillment by Help me stay present with my direct experience with kindness. Help me let go of following my thoughts. Help me to open to that which truly brings peace”.

I encourage you to pray whenever you could do with some help. Eventually, you start to see that it is a good idea to simply stay in prayer.

Praying WITH God

*“Why try to fly with the tiny wings of a sparrow,
when the mighty wings of an eagle have been given you?”*

– A Course in Miracles

The more we learn to befriend the fact of our need for help – that we are not supposed to be walking the path all on our own, that there is so much love and support accompanying us along the way, our relationship with prayer itself evolves.

Prayer becomes not just a calling out for help when we experience some suffering, but takes on more explicit devotion. We recognize that being intimate with the Presence makes our heart happy – it brings true fulfillment, resolving the sense of loneliness. It gives us strength, a soft pillow for our head to rest in, a way to be more graceful as we walk through life.

We experience ourselves as if partnered with Divine Presence, experiencing ourselves as an instrument whose purpose it is to express and embody Divine Will. Thus prayer at this point might include invoking Grace in our meditation practice to empty out, being brought into deeper alignment, asking for guidance and learning to listen to that guidance. Inviting Divine Presence to use us – such as *“Take me, open me, use me”*. In this stage of prayer we might start to really feel our devotion, which is incredibly joyful, expansive and beautiful. Our heart deepens and we become more generous, interested in serving others in this world. We bump into that juncture where *“Thy Will IS my Will”*.

Prayer AS God

*“The sole point of all spiritual endeavor is to dissolve
the distinction between “You” and “I”.*

– Anandamayi Ma

The deeper our practice becomes, the more the sense of the Divine as something other than your own being disappears. In authentic non-dual experience, the sense of “subject” and “object” gives way to a primordial unity, in which you experience yourself IN and PART of Grace unfolding. Yet there is no trace of arrogance or sense of achievement, because it dissolves the construct of “me”.

When you are genuinely in this experience, (rather than bypassing) the forms of prayer mentioned previously usually disappear at first. Here, prayer becomes less wordy, more silent, more of a feeling of consciously abiding in Presence. Yet still, there can be immense devotion, and a sense of praise, of receptivity and deeper immersion in the grace stream.

Prayer is not limited to a separate “Me” speaking to “God” it can be just praise, gratitude, celebration, marinating in the holy name. In this level engaging mantras can become spontaneous and natural, or a simple line of scripture as you go about your day. You are not necessarily asking for this or that to happen, but there is something natural and pleasurable about saying the holy name, feeling your unity with all of the beings that have ever intoned a particular prayer or mantra, and the joy of remembrance.

There is a Sufi saying,

“Intoning any name of God is like pouring your consciousness through a fine mesh cloth – removing the impurities.”

Whenever you turn into a prayer or mantra, it really is a devotional grace stream – and a way to feel yourself as part of all that. Any mantra or set prayer carries with it all the love, remembrance, prayer of all the beings who have ever turned into it – all of that is with you are you say a set prayer “Lords’ prayer” “Shema” “Metta” “Gayatri mantra” “Heart Sutra”, or other.

Ultimately, we discover through prayer that

“It is the Beloved’s own love that loves the Beloved in me”.