

# AN ATTITUDE OF PRAYER



**W**hat do you expect from prayer? Your attitude can make a great difference in the degree of success you encounter.

As people who know best will tell you, the benefits of prayer rarely come in terms of what you expect when you begin to pray. In that way, prayer is like marriage. Its greatest fruits are unimaginable at the stage where one stands before the altar; they come slowly, sometimes imperceptibly, through the years. Even then they are seen most clearly in retrospect, from the point of view of one who savors the memories of them.

This is to say that prayer, like marriage, is an act of faith. You know that it is good, that it is natural, and that it holds promise for you.

In the beginning, that is all you need to know. Specific expectations can lead to disappointment.

You might expect to become a stronger, more disciplined person, able to resist temptation and live a life of asceticism and purity. But if that is your intention in praying, you will probably find yourself becoming frustrated.

You might expect to gain more power with God, so that you can effectively heal the sick or work other miracles. Again, if that is your intention, you will be unhappy.

Prayer is not something we engage in because we wish to achieve anything. Prayer is communion with God. It is a matter of making connections with the One who stands at the center of all life and joy, and of learning to live with those connections all the time. That's all it is. Nothing more, nothing less.

Now, a great many things come of this, especially later on, when you have been at it for a while. But in the beginning that is all prayer is—simply being with God.

A great many people are frustrated with prayer because they don't understand this. They see it as some great romantic venture of the soul from which they return as conquering heroes, or as some equally marvelous merit badge contest in which they are given points for every moment they manage to spend in a posture of devotion.

But prayer is so much more simple than that and much more substantive.

Prayer is coming into the presence of the One who loves us all the time—more than our parents ever loved us even in the best of times—and waiting in that presence, merely *being there* in that presence.

That's all. Coming and waiting and being there.

Prayer, you see, is a fellowship, a meeting, a merging.

You don't even have to talk when you don't want to or don't know what to say. All you have to do is to become aware of the fellowship, to pay attention to it the way you would if you were with an ordinary friend.

Some people never learn to pray because they say they don't know what to say to God. Words are not easy for them. But you don't *have* to talk to God. God accepts you in silence as well as in words. All you have to do is feel God's love for you, and, when

you feel it, respond in any way your heart wants.

It's really that simple.

Maybe you can see, then, why attitude is important.

You do not pray in order to get something from God that God was going to give you anyway. You pray in order to feel God's love and to give God your love.

What happens when you do this, of course, is that you begin to see how rich your life already is—how God has surrounded you with more gifts and joys than you were aware of.

But you don't pray in order to achieve something.

You pray in order to be with God.