

Principles of Meaningful Prayer
Joint RS-PH May 22, 2005
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Introduction

- Not going to discuss
 - Receiving & recognizing answers to prayer
- Focus on some principles of prayer that lead to personal growth
- We can pray... and not really pray

Prayers can be routinized and made very superficial

- **Prayers like these leads to very little growth**
- Most would say that prayers are answered
 - Yet still we sometimes wonder if they are heard
 - We wonder – "Have my prayers done any good?"
- We yearn for deeper more meaningful prayers yet we:
 - End up in a cycle of what we feel are meaningless, superficial prayers
 - Perhaps we are not sure what to do to change
 - We feel maybe we should spend more time in our prayers but don't
 - We perhaps know what we should do but are not willing to do it

General Principles

Prayer is a commandment

- We are commanded to pray
 - Moses 5:8
- Clear that there are different types of prayers
 - Adoration
 - Appreciations
 - Confession
 - Petition

We must pray properly

- D&C 62:41
"If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal."
 - Neal Maxwell
"Marvelous promises are given about what can be received if we pray properly " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- Neal Maxwell
"Clearly, however, since praying is a part of living, if we are not living righteously the quality of our prayers will be affected " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- Routine prayers are not enough
 - Life is uneven
- Neal Maxwell
"Nor is merely placing the petition before God enough, as Oliver Cowdery was told, for he had not fully understood the process, supposing that God would give him answers "when you took no thought save it was to ask me." (D&C 9:7.)" ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)

Prayers will reflect circumstances

- No single prayer will suffice for all circumstances
- Neal Maxwell
"Nor is merely placing the petition before God enough, as Oliver Cowdery was told, for he had not fully understood the process, supposing that God would give him answers "when you took no thought save it was to ask me." (D&C 9:7.)" ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- Christ gave us the Lord's prayer as a model
- In Gethsemane the model did not suffice

Key Principles for Meaningful Prayer

Expressing gratitude is essential to Christ-like prayers

- D&C 46:32
" And ye must give thanks unto God in the Spirit for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with"
 - Neal Maxwell
" There are no Christlike prayers, however, that do not include, as did the Lord's Prayer, deep expressions of gratitude and appreciation to our Father in heaven along with a submittal to Him " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- Mom about lady who spent time in temple complaining about her lot in life – things changed when she changed to prayers of gratitude

Discovering the will of the Father and aligning ourselves

- Neal Maxwell
"So very much of pure prayer seems to be the process of first discovering, rather than requesting, the will of our Father in heaven and then aligning ourselves therewith " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- Christ's example
 - Luke 22:41-42
" And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,
Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me:
nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done "
- Helaman 10:5
" And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word

and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee *according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.*"

- When we do conform to His will, God will pour forth special blessings from heaven upon us

The help of the Spirit is needed to know what to pray for

- Romans 8:26
"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: *for we know not what we should pray for as we ought*: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."
- 3 Nephi 18:20
"And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is right*, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you."
 - Neal Maxwell
"When we ask amiss, God, being perfect, must reject our petitions " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- 1 John 5:14
"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us "
 - The task is to draw close enough to the Lord that we progress to the point where we petition Him according to His will, not ours
- D&C 88:64-65
"Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, *that is expedient for you*;
And *if ye ask anything that is not expedient for you*, it shall turn unto your condemnation "
 - Neal Maxwell
"Lord grants us the requests contained in our petitions if what we ask for is expedient for us" ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- D&C 50:29
"And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done "
- D&C 46:30
" *He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God*; wherefore it is done even as he asketh "

- We clearly need to have the Spirit with us as we petition, because "in the Spirit" we will ask "according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh."
- Neal Maxwell
 "To grow to that point when we can utter inspired prayers (which we can do only insofar as we can align ourselves with the will of God and petition Him in faith and righteousness and appropriateness) is part of being proven" ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)

Powers of only drawn upon the principles of righteousness

- Whether it is the powers of the priesthood or the powers relating to prayer also
- We clearly cannot have the Spirit in our prayers if our lives do not reflect reasonable righteousness
- D&C 121:36-41
 - Neal Maxwell
 "When we are developing and living in these ways, we can access the powers of heaven and petition with especial effectiveness, having done much to align ourselves with the will of our Father in heaven " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- D&C 46:33
 " And ye must practise virtue and holiness before me continually "

- Does all this mean the heavens are cut off from sinners? We can only have our prayers answered, receive help when we are perfect?
 - NO! This is one of Satan's big lies
 - "Your not worthy to pray"
 - "You don't deserve to be forgiven"
 - 2 Nephi 32:8
 - " For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; *for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray*, but teacheth him that he must not pray "
 - Can we receive guidance?
 - Yes
 - A difficult part is not asking amiss
 - A difficult part is recognizing answers
 - Can we receive strength, help?
 - Yes
 - D&C 10:5
 - " Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work "
 - What then is needed?
 - Mormon 2:10-14
 - " And it came to pass that the Nephites began to repent of their iniquity, and began to cry even as had been prophesied by Samuel the prophet...
 - And it came to pass that when I, Mormon, saw their lamentation and their mourning and their sorrow before the Lord, my heart did begin to rejoice within me, *knowing the mercies and the long-suffering of the Lord, therefore supposing that he would be merciful unto them* that they would again become a righteous people.
 - But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but *it was rather the sorrowing of the damned*, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin.
 - And *they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits*, but they did curse God, and wish to die.

Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives.
"

- 2 Nephi 2:6-7

"Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have *a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else* can the ends of the law be answered "

We should remember to whom we pray and his omniscience

- "If what is going to happen is 'all set,' why pray?"
 - Neal Maxwell
"God foresees, but He does not compromise our agency. All the outcomes are not, for our purposes, "all set." True, God's foreseeing includes our prayers, our fasting, our faith, and the results that will thereby be achieved. But until our mortal actions occur and our decisions are made, things are not "all set." The Father foresaw the Atonement, but the Atonement was not wrought until the very moment of Christ's death when He gave up His spirit, which He had the power to retain. " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
 - We should not counsel with the Lord
 - C.S. Lewis
"I've heard a man offer a prayer for a sick person which really amounted to a diagnosis followed by advice as to how God should treat the patient."
(Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer, p. 20.)

- God's understanding is greater than ours
 - Isaiah 55:8-9

" For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts "
 - Neal Maxwell

" The time will come when we will thank Him for saying no to us with regard to some of our petitions. Happily, God in His omniscience can distinguish between our surface needs (over which we often pray most fervently) and our deep and eternal needs. He can distinguish what we ask for today and place it in relationship to what we need for all eternity. " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- God can see eternity and so His perspective is different than ours
 - Neal Maxwell

" Let us never forget, however, that our needs will take us to our knees in agony at times. We too will say, "Father, if it be possible." In those moments we will not be worrying about whether or not God knew beforehand what we then petition for. Indeed, we will actually be glad that He knew before that moment—for we will come to Him in desperation, not to bring Him new information!
In those moments our desires of the day may have to be sacrificed to our needs in our endless tomorrows. " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)

Other Principles

Pray with intent to obey

- Henry B Eyring
" He (Joseph Smith) prayed with the intent not only to listen but to obey. He did not ask only to know the truth. He was committed to act upon whatever God would communicate to him. His written account makes clear that he prayed with real intent, determined to comply with whatever answer he received. " ("Prayer," Ensign, Nov. 2001, 15)

Sometimes we feel we are too good for petitionary prayers

- Neal Maxwell
" We are also sometimes too proud to pray over small things, and thus we get out of practice. Then the moment of agony comes " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)
- Neal Maxwell
" Just as we must learn to "follow the Brethren" in small things so that we can follow them in large things, so it is with prayer " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)

To be in tune with God we must follow his prophets

- Neal Maxwell
" Meanwhile, we can scarcely be in tune with God if we are not in harmony with His prophets. We are not likely to hear God's instructions to us as we pray if we neglect the counsel of His leaders. " ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91)

References

- Neal Maxwell, "Prayer and Growth" from the book "All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 91
- Henry B. Eyring, "Prayer," Ensign, Nov. 2001, 15