

This chapter from William LePar's book, *Spiritual Harvest* seems especially appropriate at this time of year.

Putting Prayer to Work

*Only in eternity
will the soul find tranquility.*

We believe that prayer consists of saying to God, "Please make this happen, or please let this happen." That may be the general understanding of prayer, but that isn't what prayer is at all. When we pray for something, it is natural to ask something of God, but in praying for something we must assume a certain responsibility in working with that prayer. "Working" with a prayer means conducting ourselves in a way consistent with the goal of the prayer. Our prayer loses meaning if our actions are immoral, if our attitude does not support what our lips say. So when we see a world praying for something and the prayer does not appear to be answered, it's because the world is giving the situation lip service.

As an example let's assume there is a war and the people on both sides of that war are praying to God. Since we are a part of the Western belief system, let's also assume they are Christians. By dealing with the Christian aspects we may gain a clearer picture. Two Christian countries go to war, and in the one country, all the mothers and fathers are praying that they win the war and their sons come home alive. In the other country, all the parents, brothers, and sisters are also praying that they win the war and their loved ones come home alive. Only one country wins the war. Is it because God has favorites, and has answered the prayers of only one side? Was it God's thought, "Well, I like these people over here a little better than I like those." No. When we pray, the verbalizing of the prayer is the final step in an attitude that must be developed. If the verbalization comes before the attitude, it takes that much longer for the prayer to work, if it's going to work at all. The reason why most prayers don't seem to be answered is this: We want the answer to our prayers placed on a silver platter and served to us. This attitude smacks of wanting something for nothing or, at very best, an hour's labor for eight hours' pay. We have to assume the responsibility of working with that prayer and the situation so the prayer can manifest itself. In essence, it takes a mental attitude and the physical activities that support that mental attitude.

Many metaphysical groups consider prayer merely to be a positive force, a vibration that one sends out. It is, but it's only a positive force and a vibration that you're sending out if you are in accord with the prayer. If you're not in accord with the prayer, then you are sending out conflicting messages, conflicting signals. The words you say are one form of power or vibration. The mental activity, the visualization inherent in the prayer is another form of vibration or power that you're sending out. If the voice or the word is saying one thing and the heart or the visualization, the internal you, is saying something else, you're canceling out your prayer. Or even worse, you're sending out mixed signals that are causing confusion, distraction, dissension. When a prayer is answered, it's because all the elements were in place and all were working together.

We have to be willing to work within a situation to make the prayer come alive or to

manifest. An example: A person has family problems and prays for guidance; they pray to resolve the problem whatever it may be, but nothing happens. The situation gets worse or else it just stays stagnant. Why? Because some element isn't working with the rest. In most cases the thing that is out-of-sync is us, because we say things with our mouth that we really aren't saying with our heart. We need to ask ourselves, "What I really want in my heart, is it really right or is it self-serving?" This is where the higher self becomes involved. If we're being too self-serving, the higher self is going to block that prayer because what we're doing in essence is asking the higher power, God, to witness to a falsehood.

Those individuals who have reached that point where what they are saying with their mouth is the final declaration of what they have in their heart and in their higher self, have made a complete connection so that the power or those vibrations are flowing out and are connecting with others who are sending out that same vibration. And that combined energy then begins to work in the world. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany, the removal of the Berlin wall, are the result of prayer, the combined prayers of many. Man, if left to his own devices such as his intellect and his physical activities, will only facilitate the deterioration of the conditions of his world. With the implementation of proper prayer, the heart and the higher self are connected in a godly pursuit for a godly resolution to the problems. Now, we have a much more powerful force being applied to a situation than just man's mere intellect and physical activities. The perfect formula for a prayer situation is the alignment of the higher self, the heart, man's intelligence, and his efforts. This is the secret to powerful prayers. Prayer can only be answered when it's a just prayer and when we are willing to work with the situation. How do we work with the situation? We have to be careful not to become a "gimme" person, with our prayers always becoming some form of "God gimme this, God gimme that." God doesn't give us anything if we aren't willing to do our part. We have to accept what He has laid out before us. The question then comes to mind, "Well, does that mean pain and suffering too?" There's no pain and suffering on our table that God has prepared for us. The pain and suffering come when we don't accept what's laid before us. In essence, pain and suffering come from the rejection of the gifts that God has given to us. Accept with gratitude what God offers you in answer to your prayers.

When we ask God's assistance in answering a prayer, we have to be willing to make the changes within our sphere of existence to help that prayer come about. If we don't, it isn't going to work. As an example, a husband and wife are having marital trouble. The husband prays, "I wish this would get straightened out so I can go on with my life." The wife is saying, "I pray that this gets straightened out so I can either go on with my life or else continue on with the marriage." They are both praying, but nothing really happens. The marriage is in a stagnant state where both of them are held down or what is worse, they dissolve the marriage. Why, if both are praying, why doesn't it work? It's because they aren't taking the necessary first step. They aren't working together to come to a solution. You can ask God for all kinds of things but if you don't work with the situation, nothing will happen. Let's continue on with our example. In working with the situation, you have to set yourself aside and say: "How have I acted in this? What have been my contributions to the problem?" Don't worry about the faults of the other person. You have to ask yourself. Then if you want a resolution either to mend the marriage or to sever the relationship completely, you have to determine which is the right thing to do and then

you have to act accordingly, without vengeance, without malice, without blaming the other person. You have to assume the responsibility for your part and, to be on the safe side, accept a little bit more, just in case you're not totally honest with yourself. Then if you work within those parameters the prayer is going to be answered. It may not be answered exactly the way you want it to be but the problem will resolve itself so the situation is better than it was.

Now, does the resolution to the problem take place beyond our range of participation? Complete resolution comes to the degree that we are willing to participate in the accomplishment of the prayer. The more we bring the situation and our life into accord with the prayer the more complete the prayer will be answered.

The Council always advocates: When you pray, meditate. Prayer is asking; meditation is listening. Sometimes we can receive insight into what the real problem is or into what mode of action we should take if instead of saying: "God, give me this!"

we remain silent and listen. Most people don't want to take that time because they know that if they listen, there may be something they are going to have to do, and nine times out of ten, it's the very thing they don't want to do. Then you have to ask yourself why. Maybe, whatever it is we aren't willing to do is the source of the problem.

When we pray for things to be resolved, we have to be very careful that the resolution we're praying for isn't self-serving because when we pray for something we can't pray over the right of another individual. For example, a person is sick, and has had a long life of terrible suffering, terrible pain, and we pray, "God please alleviate this pain and suffering of this person. This is a good person." We can't over pray that person's right. By that I mean we can't force a solution that person does not accept. If that suffering is a need within that person, we can't correct it. Possibly, if we are praying for the person's health to improve, that prayer may not be answered by an improvement in health but by an improvement in the problem that has caused the bad health. The underlying problem may be an emotional inability to accept reality. The sickness the individual is undergoing might be considered in their mind a legitimate way to avoid that reality. The prayer then might not affect the illness, but may help with the underlying problem, the inability to accept reality. Although we should not attempt to override an individual's rights, we still have the obligation to pray for a condition to improve or, at least, for that individual to become more fulfilled or happy.

There are some attitudes in the metaphysical field that say we should not pray for someone who is sick because that is their karma and we may be interfering with their karmic debt. This is utter nonsense. If a person's karmic debt is the cause of an illness, praying for the illness to be corrected will not be interfering with their karmic debt. To make this clear let's examine the Divine Principle of cause and effect. The illness is the effect of the karmic debt which is the cause. By praying for the effect or the illness to improve, that energy is directed by the individual who is sick to the cause or the karmic debt. Thus, we are working at a level that we are not even aware of. Or one may say, in this particular example, we have the cart before the horse. We are dealing with the effect and the individual then can utilize that prayer vibration to deal with the cause.

Prayer is a very complicated situation and in a way it's good that we don't realize how complicated it is. If we did we would be so discouraged we wouldn't pray. But the beauty of prayer is that in our ignorance we can work greater miracles than we can with knowledge, because we work from the heart then and not the intellect.

Remember that the solution that you pray for may not be the solution you receive. Be careful that your ego doesn't demand that the problem be resolved as you think it should be. The resolution is what you want, though it may not come in the manner you want it. The Divine Influence can assist us when we ask for it in correcting situations far better than what we think. It is a benefit not only for the person we're praying for but also for ourselves. We can receive far greater benefits when the prayer is resolved in ways other than the way we thought it should be resolved. We can eliminate the role of the ego by accepting the solution provided by the Divine.

Prayer is a marvelous thing. It's your first tool for working miracles, and if you are praying for the welfare of someone else, and you are doing it from the heart and with no self-serving interest you will be surprised how powerful a prayer can be.