



Lord, Teach Me to Pray

by JENNIFER KENNEDY DEAN

JESUS, WHILE ON EARTH AS A MAN, spent much time in prayer. He often prayed all night long. He rose up hours before dawn to be alone and pray. He withdrew to pray after ministering to the crowds. He prayed spontaneously as He walked along with His disciples. Prayer marked His life. As Jesus lived out His life on earth—day by day, encounter by encounter, event by event—His life exhibited a power and a joy that were so enticing that it caused His disciples to ask Him, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Until they encountered Jesus, the disciples’ models for prayer were primarily ritual, scheduled, public, memorized prayers. Not the passionate, free, honest outpourings they heard from Jesus. This was new to them. Never had they heard a person address God with such audacious intimacy and heart-felt love. Can you imagine their conversations as they waited for Jesus to finish yet another extended time of prayer? Perhaps as they waited, impatient to get on with the day’s business, they began to ask each other, “What do you suppose He does all that time? What is He doing for hours and hours alone with God? Could it be that this—all this prayer—is the secret to His power, His peace, His joy?” When finally they saw Him coming toward them, they were bursting with their newfound desire. “Lord!” they exclaimed. “Teach us to pray like You pray!” They didn’t need to know how to pray in some generic, memorized way. They already knew how to say prayers. They wanted to know how to live prayer. They wanted to know how to pray *like Jesus prayed*.

If the disciples were enthusiastic about their request, their enthusiasm was more than met by Jesus’ response. His lessons, I’m sure, were animated and punctuated with His own experiences. Notice that Jesus did not correct





their request that He would teach them to pray. He sat down and began to teach them to pray. He instructed them. Do you see? Prayer can be learned. In fact, prayer must be learned.

Learning to Pray

Prayer is an art or a skill. It has to be learned and practiced. It has to be honed and polished. Does that surprise you? Look around you. Whom do you know who seems to have power in prayer? Does your own experience in prayer seem weak and ineffectual in contrast? It is not because that person is more loved by God than you are. It is because that person has, with patience and perseverance, become skilled in the art of prayer.

When a person is born with an innate talent for music, that talent must be cultivated if it is to reach its fullness. A person may be born with a gift for music, but that doesn't give the person the ability to read notes or play an instrument. The skilled musician is one who has taken lessons, watched and imitated the masters, studied, and above all, practiced. Practiced, and practiced, and practiced. The mature musician has mastered the basics. The fundamental laws of music have been drilled into him through diligence and discipline. Finally, the basics have become part of him. As automatic as the blinking of his eye. Then he begins to find his own, unique style. The music becomes his focus rather than the fundamentals. He is able to use the fundamentals to compose his own music. He has honed his skill and has moved from diligence and discipline to delight.

You, my dear friend, when you were born into the kingdom of God, were born with the innate talent for prayer. It is encoded into your spiritual DNA structure. It is written into your spiritual genetic blueprint. No one, living or dead, has more prayer potential than you do. The fact that you have picked up this book and have read this far tells me that you are beginning to awaken to that innate talent. There is a stirring, a restlessness that pushes you to





look for answers. It is the Spirit Himself, calling you to develop the art of prayer.

When we learn how prayer operates, we discover that prayer is simply responding to God's love, saying 'yes' to what He offers, receiving from Him all that He desires to put into our lives. "Prayer... is the opening of a channel from your emptiness to Gods fullness." (E. Stanley Jones, *Abundant Living*)

Prayer is more than the words that come sandwiched between "Dear God" and "amen." Through prayer you can live in a continual intimacy with Him that satisfies all of your eternal longings.

Lord, Teach Me to Pray

More than anything, I want to be a skilled and trained intercessor. I want my life to have optimum effect for eternity. I want continually to progress in the art of prayer.

There is only one Prayer Teacher. Jesus Himself will teach you to pray as you yield yourself to Him. Look to Him. Be alert to His leading. He delights in teaching you to pray. Right now, enroll in His school of prayer.

