

On Prayer

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Greetings.

Prayer seems to be a fraught subject for Christians.

'I don't know how to pray'.

'I'm not very good at prayer'.

'I don't know what to say'.

I hear this kind of thing a lot – and I say this kind of thing myself.

Because I don't know how to pray either; I'm not very good at prayer; often I don't know what to say...

I am a beginner. I'm learning. I'm practising and trying to get better...

If I know anything about prayer it is that it is mystery; it is about a relationship – with God - and that for it to be true prayer – which suggests there maybe something that is 'false' prayer - it must be honest. You cannot lie in prayer – perhaps that's why it is so hard?.

Friends with intellectual disabilities have taught me – prayer doesn't have to be right – but it does have to be warm...from the heart...to do with our deepest truest selves – which can be confronting, because there is nowhere to hide in prayer.

For some people that is thrilling and liberating; for others truly terrifying.

Which would you say is true of yourself?

The disciples saw something in the way that Jesus prayed that they wanted for their own lives. What did they see? Possibly not what he actually *did* in prayer – though they saw he went off by himself and prayed - but they saw what the *result* of his prayer was, in how he lived his life and faced his death; how he was with those he encountered – the powerful and the poor; how he challenged the status quo and celebrated with ordinary people. And they wanted to be like that, be like him too. Today we are his disciples...

Below is a poem by George Herbert an English Anglican priest from the early 1600s. There are no sentences; just phrases as he tries to put into words what he thinks about, his experience of, prayer. Choose one or two and sit and wonder about them. Which phrase or phrases might you choose to describe prayer in your life?

Prayer (I) by George Herbert

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,

Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood.

Lord teach us how to pray... Luke 11:1

This article originally appeared in issue 30 of The Mustard Seed, August 2019