

Prayer

One key way of getting deeper into your relationship with your Creator is to get deeper into prayer. But sometimes, we're afraid to ask questions about prayer, especially to ask ourselves about how we pray so we can at least find out where we're at right now. Thinking about prayer can carry us further into the mystery of what it's like to have an actual relationship with someone we can't contact with our senses. God wants us to know well, and places relational treasures at many spots along the way.

If you pray :

1. How do **you** pray?
2. In what settings do you pray?
3. What do you pray for? Do you receive it? Do you receive something else? What do you feel when you do not receive it?
4. When you pray, what thoughts most often break in? Do they spring from the prayer, or do they take you away from the prayer?
5. What is the one thing which most puzzles you about prayer?
6. What do you find hardest to accept about prayer?
7. Is there a catch-phrase about prayer that especially gets on your nerves? Why?
8. When have you found yourself losing the sense of God's presence in prayer? Have you found out why? What was the lesson you learned, if any?
9. When you pray for someone, do you picture them being healed, or helped in some other way? If not, is it that you don't see the healing as possible?
10. Have you ever been so concerned about someone that you felt **driven** to pray for them?

Our group :

1. How and why does your group pray? How often do you meet for it?
2. How embarrassed do you get when praying aloud in the presence of others? Do you pray for different things when praying with them than in private?
3. Some groups take on a special burden or concern in prayer, like, say, a nation, a missionary, a neighbourhood, those struck with a certain disease, etc.. What similar concern most touches the heart of you or those praying with you?
4. How can the group's prayers best support its purposes?
5. What was the most intense prayer that your group ever prayed? What do you think caused that level of intensity?

Psalms and Prayer:

Psalm 5 (the main Jewish sunrise prayer)

Psalm 8 (a praise of God as Creator)

Psalm 10 (the prosperity of the wicked)

Psalm 12 (against treachery)

- What do you notice about what they are praying about, and how they are praying about it?
- Do you find any of it disturbing? Why?
- Which of these Psalms do you connect most with? Why?

Some questions:

What do you *expect* from prayer?

Have you ever received it?

Did the Divine response surprise you?

When have you most felt that you had lost touch with God?
When have you felt most intimate with God?
How have these moments affected your prayers?

Have you ever been angry *at God*?
If so, when did you *tell* that to God?
Did there seem to be a response, then or later?

Have you ever felt afraid to pray? Why?
Does anyone else you know seem to fear something about prayer?

What do you think God *really* thinks of you?

What have you prayed for that, when you look back on it, you're glad you didn't get?
Or prayed that it would not happen, but you're glad it did?
How would your life be different if God had granted those prayers?

How do you think you'd feel if God woke you up out of a sound sleep?
If you've experienced this yourself, what did you do next?

More questions:

- When you find yourself *really* angry over something, have you ever stopped yourself, and taken at least a moment to ask the Lord, "What is happening here?"
- When you ask God to forgive you, do you *accept* that forgiveness?
- What have you been *afraid* to ask God? Why?
- When you were ill or in serious trouble, did you ever *feel* the prayers of others? What was that like? What were you getting from those prayers? What other effects did the prayers have?
- Was there ever anything that you felt was personally demeaning or insulting to put before God in prayer? Why?
- About the gifted prayer folks around you : what do you think makes their intercessions special?
- What is the strangest prayer you ever heard someone pray?
- What do you most remember from your childhood about prayer or people praying?

Some other things that you can try:

- During prayer if someone comes to mind: Take the time to pray for that person at that moment.
- Take the opportunity to pray with a group of praying with people you *don't* know.
- Maybe you're one of those who finds all this talk about prayer so boring it puts you to sleep. Hmmm..... when you're having trouble going to sleep, **pray!** (Not about going to sleep, but about other things that matter to you.) Don't worry. God doesn't get insulted if, while you're doing this, you fall asleep.
- Do your prayers and/or meditations with a notepad and pencil (or notebook computer), for writing what comes to mind.
- Set aside a place and time for **regular** solitude prayer
- Try to keep track of what you prayed for and keep alert for an answer.
- The answer may not always be what you expect (sometimes Yes and sometimes No)