

Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith

By President Thomas S. Monson

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Photograph by David Newman

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."¹ So spoke the wise Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel.

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, declared, "Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith."²

In this dispensation, in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."³

This divinely inspired counsel comes to us today as crystal clear water to a parched earth.

We live in troubled times. Doctors' offices are filled with individuals who are beset with emotional problems as well as physical distress. Divorce courts are overflowing because people have unsolved problems. Human resource administrators in government and industry work long hours in an effort to assist people with their problems.

One human resource officer assigned to handle petty grievances concluded an unusually hectic day by placing facetiously a little sign on his desk for those with unsolved problems. It read, "Have you tried prayer?" What he may not have realized was that this simple counsel would solve more problems, alleviate more suffering, prevent more transgression, and bring about greater peace and contentment in the human soul than could be obtained in any other way.

A prominent American judge was asked what we as citizens of the countries of the world could do to reduce crime and disobedience to law and to bring peace and contentment into our lives and into our nations. He carefully replied, "I would suggest a return to the old-fashioned practice of family prayer."

Strength in Prayer

As a people, aren't we grateful that family prayer is not an out-of-date practice with us? There is no more beautiful sight in all this world than to see a family praying together. There is real meaning behind the oft-quoted "The family that prays together stays together."

The Lord directed that we have family prayer when He said, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed."⁴

Will you join me as we look in on a typical Latter-day Saint family offering prayers unto the Lord? Father, mother,

and each of the children kneel, bow their heads, and close their eyes. A sweet spirit of love, unity, and peace fills the home. As father hears his tiny son pray unto God that his dad will do the right things and be obedient to the Lord's bidding, do you think that such a father would find it difficult to honor the prayer of his precious son? As a teenage daughter hears her sweet mother plead unto the Lord that her daughter will be inspired in the selection of her companions, that she will prepare herself for a temple marriage, don't you believe that such a daughter will seek to honor this humble, pleading petition of her mother, whom she so dearly loves? When father, mother, and each of the children earnestly pray that the fine sons in the family will live worthily that they may, in due time, receive a call to serve as ambassadors of the Lord in the mission fields of the Church, don't we begin to see how such sons grow to young manhood with an overwhelming desire to serve as missionaries?

I am sure that family prayer motivated a letter written some years ago by a young Latter-day Saint girl attending a Colorado high school. The students had been asked to prepare a letter to be written to a great man of their choice. Many addressed their letters to well-known athletes, to a noted astronaut, to the president of the United States, and to other celebrities. This young lady, however, addressed her letter to her father, and in the letter she stated: "I have decided to write this letter to you, Dad, because you are the greatest man that I have ever known. The overwhelming desire of my heart is that I might so live that I might have the privilege of being beside you and Mother and other members of the family in the celestial kingdom." That father never received a more cherished letter.

As we offer unto the Lord our family prayers and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Let us remember the injunction of Paul to the Hebrews: "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."⁵ If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. William Cowper declared, "Satan trembles, when he sees the weakest Saint upon his knees."⁶ Those who feel that prayer might denote a physical or intellectual weakness should remember that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.

We cannot know what faith is if we have never had it, and we cannot obtain it as long as we deny it. Faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other.

Accepting His Invitation

If our desire is to discard all doubt and to substitute therefor an abiding faith, we have but to accept the invitation extended to you and to me in the Epistle of James:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."⁷

This promise motivated the young man Joseph Smith to seek God in prayer. He declared to us in his own words:

"At length I came to the conclusion that I ... must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to 'ask of God,' concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

"So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. ... It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally."⁸

Now, if we have hesitated in supplicating God our Eternal Father simply because we have not as yet made the attempt to pray, we certainly can take courage from the example of the Prophet Joseph. But let us remember, as did the Prophet, our prayer must be offered in faith, nothing wavering.

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that the brother of Jared saw the finger of God touch the stones in response to his plea.⁹

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Noah erected an ark in obedience to the command from God.¹⁰

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Abraham was willing to offer up his beloved Isaac as a sacrifice.¹¹

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea.¹²

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Joshua and his followers brought the walls of Jericho tumbling down.¹³

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Joseph saw God our Eternal Father and Jesus Christ, His Son.¹⁴

Now, the skeptic may say that these mighty accounts of faith occurred long ago, that times have changed.

Have times really changed? Don't we today, as always, love our children and want them to live righteously? Don't we today, as always, need God's divine, protecting care? Don't we today, as always, continue to be at His mercy and in His debt for the very life He has given us?

Times have not really changed. Prayer continues to provide power—spiritual power. Prayer continues to provide peace—spiritual peace.

Faith in Action

Wherever we may be, our Heavenly Father can hear and answer the prayer offered in faith. This is especially true in the mission fields throughout the world. While presiding over the Canadian Mission, under the direction of President David O. McKay (1873–1970), Sister Monson and I had the opportunity of serving with some of the finest young men and women in all this world. The very lives of these young missionaries exemplified faith and prayer.

There sat in my office one day a newly arrived missionary. He was bright, strong, happy, and grateful to be a missionary. He was filled with enthusiasm and a desire to serve. As I spoke with him, I said, "Elder, I imagine that your father and mother wholeheartedly support you in your mission call." He lowered his head and replied, "Well, not quite. You see, President, my father is not a member of the Church. He doesn't believe as we believe, so he cannot fully appreciate the importance of my assignment."

Without hesitating and prompted by a Source not my own, I said to him, "Elder, if you will honestly and diligently serve God in proclaiming His message, your father will join the Church before your mission is concluded." He clasped my hand in a vise-like grip, the tears welled up in his eyes and began to roll forth down his cheeks, and he declared, "To see my father accept the truth would be the greatest blessing that could come into my life."

This young man did not sit idly by hoping and wishing that the promise would be fulfilled, but rather he followed the sage advice that has been given of old: "Pray as though everything depended upon God. Work as though everything depended upon you." Such was the missionary service of this young man.

At every missionary conference I would seek him out before the meetings and ask, "Elder, how's Dad progressing?"

His reply would invariably be, "No progress, President, but I know the Lord will fulfill the promise given to me through you as my mission president." The days turned to weeks and the weeks to months, and finally, just two weeks before we ourselves left the mission field to return home, I received a letter from the father of this missionary. That father wrote:

"Dear Brother Monson:

"I wish to thank you so much for taking such good care of my son who recently completed a mission in Canada. He has been an inspiration to us.

"My son was promised when he left on his mission that I would become a member of the Church before his return. This promise was, I believe, made to him by you, unknown to me.

"I am happy to report that I was baptized into the Church one week before he completed his mission and am at present time athletic director of the MIA and have a teaching assignment.

"My son is now attending BYU, and his younger brother was also recently baptized and confirmed a member of the Church.

"May I again thank you for all the kindness and love bestowed upon my son by his brothers in the mission field during the past two years.

"Yours very truly, a grateful father."

The humble prayer of faith had once again been answered.

There is a golden thread that runs through every account of faith from the beginning of the world to the present time. Abraham, Noah, the brother of Jared, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and countless others wanted to be obedient to the will of God. They had ears that could hear, eyes that could see, and hearts that could know and feel.

They never doubted. They trusted.

Through personal prayer, through family prayer, by trusting in God with faith, nothing wavering, we can call down to our rescue His mighty power. His call to us is as it has ever been: "Come unto me."¹⁵

Ideas for Home Teachers

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Read the account of the missionary from the section "Faith in Action." Discuss how faith, prayer, and hard work helped fulfill the promise made to the missionary. Ask the family to think of things they are seeking the Lord's help in. Invite them to list what they can do to gain the answer or help they need. Also invite them to exercise faith in the Lord as they pray for help and seek to do their part to find a solution.
2. Read excerpts from the section "Accepting His Invitation." Take turns having family members finish the following sentence using their own experiences: "It was by faith, nothing wavering, that ..." Discuss what it means to pray with greater faith. Leave a card with the family that reads, "Have you tried prayer?"

Left: photo illustration by Craig Dimond

Photo illustration by Matthew Reier; *Brother of Jared Seeing the Finger of the Lord*, by Arnold Friberg, © IRI
Jesus Christ, by Harry Anderson, © IRI

Notes

1. [Proverbs 3:5–6](#).
2. [Jacob 3:1](#).
3. [D&C 6:36](#).
4. [3 Nephi 18:21](#).
5. [Hebrews 11:6](#).
6. William Cowper, *Olney Hymns*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 2nd ed. rev. (1966), 161.
7. [James 1:5–6](#).
8. [Joseph Smith—History 1:13–14](#).
9. See [Ether 3:1–16](#).
10. See [Genesis 6:13–22](#).
11. See [Genesis 22:1–14](#).
12. See [Exodus 14:15–22](#).
13. See [Joshua 6:2–20](#).
14. See [Joseph Smith—History 1:14–19](#).
15. [Matthew 11:28](#).

[E-mail to a Friend](#)