

ON PRAYER

Prayer is the life force of man. From King Edward the Confessor to King Henry VIII, all of England's noblest heroes have used prayer as a tool to a meaningful life. And yet there is conflict on what prayer is, let alone how to go about it. And how often to pray. On the one hand, a branch of Roman Catholicism insists using pre written texts for certain occasions at certain times of one's life. The Protestant tradition invites self created expression from the individual; and Muslim and Taoist expectations differ still.

Whilst this is so, prayer has the same fundamental purpose in all contexts: self disclosure. Prayer is a time to be mindful of the present, praise one's strengths and identify and overcome one's weaknesses. Whilst ignoring time for this daily ritual throws man's life off the narrow path to victory and into the gaping jaws of failure. Failure to achieve one's goals. Failure to improve at life. Failure to feel meaningful.

Let prayer be self disclosure through introspection. And so prayer is the process of identifying one's strengths and weaknesses by understanding one's thoughts and emotions. These change often, and so do life's demands. Praying twice per day, after rising from bed and before going to bed for at least five minutes, gives man the time to truly understand himself and accept the violent journey he will make to achieve happiness in life.

There are four steps to prayer: mindfulness, vision, confession and poetry. By imitating the acts of Christ and his many royal, noble and common successors, man will find happiness in his life and victory in his actions.

The first act of prayer is mindfulness. This is made up from a cycle of deep breaths; with a strong cycle made up from four slow seconds of inhaling to six slow seconds exhaling: ten time over. If this proves difficult, a man must follow his impulses. Reduce the seconds in the cycle, or the number of cycle repetitions. Controlled breathing calms a man's body and mind and prepares him for the next stages. If a man wishes to follow traditional practice, this will be done on his knees, otherwise sitting cross legged Turkish style or lying under a duvet may have greater comfort.

After reaching a state of complete bodily relaxation, a man will move onto the visionary stage. At this point, he will create a relaxing image in his mind. This may include a cave, a beach, the sea, a forest, beside a river, a lake or a place a man remembers experiencing complete comfort. This place may be fictional as well as real. The aim here is to relax the mind and keep it in a state of peace. Use of all senses, methodically going through all five of them, strengthen the impression in the mind. This prevents obeying distraction. For long term success, prayer is done in quiet place where all of a man's attention will be devoted to prayer instead of the material world.

With mindfulness and vision conjuration done, the next stage of prayer is confession. Confession is the most important stage. At this stage, man becomes mindful of his deeper thoughts and feelings. He pays particular attention to his soul and his mind. Here he asks himself to confess his fears, worries, uncertainties, anxieties, hopes, desires, wishes and what he feels impelled to praise or bring up about himself. Honesty to self is essential for confessions. Without honesty, confession fails. For it is in man accepting his weaknesses that he builds the path to victory in his goals. Man

must come from somewhere to arrive at another place. This is so in the common world as is so in the individual's world. Its importance stems from man making a contract with himself to overcome his tragic state of being and to become the man he wants to be. To himself and, should he wish, to the prime mover of matter we call God. A man will continue at this stage until he feels at peace with himself; secure in the knowledge of his mental order and his new direction of travel.

With mindfulness, vision conjuration and confession complete, the final stage of prayer is poetry. Many confuse poetry as the most important, even as the only stage of prayer to God. The poetry stage is speaking words aloud to bind the contract, as it were, of the confession stage of prayer. Usually, the poem will reflect the essence of one's confession. The Lord's Prayer is the most effective as this covers all of life. However, a prayer book from the Church of Rome, or self directed prayer encouraged by the Church of England, is as acceptable. This stage continues the sacred and ancient practice carried since at least the days of Abraham. It protects and grows a long cultural tradition in England, and so is as respectful to an Englishman's ancestors as it is useful to his health. With this done, a man may sign himself with the cross and carry on with his day.

In the modern age, prayer has been ignored by the English people; a relic of a former ideology distasteful to oligarchy. Prayer, like God, is at the heart of natural law. Like the plants on the hills and the birds in the sky, prayer is a man's ability to evaluate his strengths and overcome his weaknesses. Regardless of the religious garments it wears, prayer itself — especially confession — is the kindling to man's fire of life. A man who neglects prayer holds his life contemptuously. Prayer is the fuel to a happy life. Before you go to bed, find a quiet place. Kneel, clear your mind and create a peaceful vision. Confess your sins. Bind your promise in words.