

GROWING  
SPIRITUALLY

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# GROWING SPIRITUALLY

Transcripts of Spiritual Renaissance Broadcasts

by

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20:27: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts."

God's spirit—a fragment of infinity—indwells your mind. But you don't see it; you can't touch it or taste it or smell it. And a surgeon could operate on your brain but never find it. You might as well tear apart your radio during one of our broadcasts and try to find my voice inside. You'll find wires, condensers, resistors, tubes, transistors, potentiometers, and dozens of other electronic gadgets—but not my voice. Yet my voice is real. God's spirit within you is likewise real.

God at this very moment stands watch both at the outpost of eternity and at the threshold of our thoughts. He loves each one of us as sons of His and brothers to each other in the Family of God, if we would only dare to believe it. The spirit of God in you is constantly coaxing you to become a better person, to follow divine guidance for your life by courageous, spirit-inspired, life-changing decisions. But only *you* can *make* those decisions!

Consider: If you noticed a brown-shelled acorn lying on the ground, you might at first mistake it for a stone; yet an acorn, unlike a stone, has the living power of growth inside it. It is crucial to recognize that you too have such a power of living, spiritual growth within yourself. For there resides in you, throbbing and vigorously vibrant with life, the very spirit of the living God. In seeking God, fail not to seek within.

God is where you are. His child you are, if you will but have the faith to believe it! And since every child is entitled to know his Father, and since God is the Father of all mankind, we can literally *know* God in personal prayer and worship.

Nearly everyone has seen the advice columns in daily newspapers where perplexed people write in for answers to their pressing problems and questions. Troubled souls send thousands of letters weekly to such journalistic oracles. Others seek out counselors, psychologists, ministers and bartenders, searching for advice, wisdom and insight into their difficulties. The more renowned the authority, the more people seek his advice.

But think for a moment. Who would be the greatest authority in the world, even in the universe? God. But He doesn't write a newspaper column. Much better than that: His very spirit is within. You can receive insight and live a

God-guided life by sincere prayer and communion. It is a totally transforming experience!

For God the Father loves and is with *every* person *every* moment, right *now*. If you will muster the faith to believe that simple truth, you have *found* God.

Amid the crumbling ruins of ancient temples archeologists sometimes find forgotten fragments of art, scattered gems and broken statuary beneath the stones and fallen pillars. Among the rubble of fallen human lives there likewise lie fragments of forgotten beauty, remnants of toppled values, hopes and buried meanings. Eternal yearnings live within the heart of man; and while they live, the soul of man shall never die. For finding God means having the faith to know that you *have* found God.

There waits and watches within you something eternal and divine: the spirit of the living Father. We are children of the Everlasting One: sons and daughters of the living God! Believe that . . . and really begin to live!

## II. GETTING TO KNOW GOD

Inscribed upon the temple of Appollo in ancient Greece were these words: "Know Thyself." But far more important than "knowing yourself" is knowing your *God*—and knowing God *within* yourself.

*You can know God!*—not merely the way a scholar knows his ancient history or a scientist knows his nuclear physics, but the way a child knows his loving Father—*personally*. For God is a person, and so are you; and personalities are capable of *knowing* each other. "And every one that loves is born of God and knows God." (1 John 4:7)

Consider: human beings possess personality. Therefore, God must *also* have personality; for if He did not, we mortals would embody something which God lacked. But God is our Creator. Could He who formed our eyes Himself be blind? Could He who designed our ears himself be deaf? Could he who conceived our minds and personalities *Himself* be mindless and without personality? No! Of course, God is much *more* than this; but He *must* be at *least* this!

Since God, the source of personality, is a person and is



therefore capable of being known, you can know Him in at least three ways: by FAITH, EXPERIENCE, and ENCOUNTER.

1. By FAITH, acknowledge that God already knows *you*, loves you and is your spiritual Father—that He is near to you, interested in your doings and welfare, and cares for you. Believe that implicitly! Then, by faith, begin *living* as though you knew God. Converse and commune; discuss things with God. Don't be misled into thinking, "What I'm doing is all foolishness; nothing is really happening," for something *is* happening. You're learning *faith*.

You are not blindly deceiving yourself. Faith often begins with the illusion that faith is an illusion; but if you will put the weight of your whole life upon your faith, it will bear you up and will soon become experience.

2. EXPERIENCE. Who can tell the exact moment when a planted seed becomes no longer a seed, but a plant? No one could say with certainty; neither is it possible precisely to define when living faith will become living experience for you—but that moment will surely come, and then without the slightest questioning or hesitation you will know God and will *know* that you know God. Skeptics may have been able to shake your intellectual belief, but nobody can rob you of your inner experience.

3. ENCOUNTER. Finally, you will sometime know God by encounter. Ages of thrilling spiritual preparation beyond your life on this earth will be first required in order to attain that moment, but attain it you shall if your heart is set on eternal things and on knowing God, who dwells at the center of all things.

It is remarkable that people who lament most about not knowing how to get acquainted with God are often ones who have no trouble whatever getting acquainted with their next door neighbors! And the difference is not really so great. Suppose a housewife wants to introduce herself to some new people in the neighborhood: she "runs out of sugar," goes to borrow a cupful, knocks at the door, and has soon found a new friend.

Yet it is much simpler even than that to get to know God. You needn't even leave the house. For it is written: "I stand at the door and knock." God comes to *you*; God seeks *you* out. When God stands at the door, he *knocks*—but he

doesn't knock it *down*. God won't force friendship: you too must show yourself friendly.

But once the first acquaintance is made, how do you then get to *know* God? Again, think in comparisons. How do you get to know anybody else? By spending time with that person! There are probably people in your home town with whom you've been politely acquainted all your life—you've nodded to them on the street time and again—and yet you could not truthfully say you *know* them. Similarly, too few have gone beyond a mere nodding acquaintance with God. Humanity needs to spend time in prayer, worship, meditation, and communion with the Father, that we may live not as strangers but as sons and daughters.

Still, people who come to *know* each other do more than just spend time together: they *do* things together. What can you and God do together? His will. Your Father has things in mind for your life—projects to be done, plans to be executed—and if you will decide to seek and carry out His purposes for you, you will get to know God better through the process of undertaking to do His work. And He will strengthen you to do it.

Think of God as your Father and as your Friend. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, said that a friend is "a single soul dwelling in two bodies." Certainly, then, God *is* your friend, for His spirit dwells not in Himself alone but also in you. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God 'dwells within you?'" (1 Corinthians, 3:16)

Also, if you truly know a person, you'll recognize him anywhere. Thus, if you know God, you will similarly learn to recognize Him wherever you may see Him in the lives of other men and women. For God has set the smoldering ember of His spirit burning in your mind to illumine you, and it glows in other men and women as well. Therefore, getting to know God as your Father involves getting to know man as your brother. Remember—you are a child of God!

A young man born in Europe during the Second World War had never seen his father. While he was yet a baby, both of his parents were killed in a bombing raid, and the only family memento he possessed was his father's pocket watch, which he carried with him everywhere. Years later, he took it to a jeweler for cleaning, and in the back of it was found a



small picture of his parents. All this time he had been carrying it and hadn't known it! Similarly, all the years of your life, the very God you seek has dwelt within you!

You *inherit* your relatives, but you *choose* your friends. In exactly the same way, God is your Father and man is your brother by the very fact of your being born into the world, but being *friends* with God and man is a *choice* you must make. Be assured, however, that if you learn to know man, you will come to love him; and if you will learn to love God, *you will come to know Him!*

Have you beheld a mother fondly bending over her sleeping child's crib at night? God so loves *you!* Have you seen a father taking his youngsters to the park? God so loves *you.* Have you seen parents labor all their lives with meager incomes to send their boy or girl to college? God so loves *you!* You've seen a mother sitting up and waiting to know how her daughter's first date went? So God loves *you.*

Have you seen a father patiently working far into the night to show his grade-school son how to do long division? God so loves *you!* Have you seen parents beaming to watch a son or daughter graduate from high school? So God cares for *you!* Have you heard a mother reminding her young son to wear his goglasses and earmuffs when he goes out into the snow? So God loves *you!* God is your divine *parent*, your loving *Father.*

Relax; be wholly at ease with God. Live as a son or daughter of God, not like a mere stranger in an unfriendly household. You're not God's house guest—you're one of the household, one of the worldwide *Family*—the Family of God!

God knows and loves you; and in love you can come to know God as well. Such is life's supreme satisfaction; may it be yours!

### III. FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Fear can literally kill!

Several years ago, a New York City newspaper carried this headline: "Window Washer's Death Due to Fear." The

story followed:

(AP) Window washer John Hirowski, 63, apparently was frightened to death Tuesday when his safety belt broke, leaving him dangling by one strap and screaming for *help* below a sixth-floor window in Manhattan.

He hung suspended at least 10 minutes outside the West 54th Street apartment building before a tenant heard his screams and called police.

When officers got to the window 10 minutes later, Hirowski appeared to have stopped breathing. He was pronounced dead of heart failure.

It is a proven medical fact that fear can kill. But, conversely, faith can lengthen human life by freeing a person from worry and anxiety. Human beings were created to live in *faith*, just as surely as *fish* were created to live in *water* and *earthworms* to live in the *soil*. Wrote Napoleon: "He who *fears* being conquered is *certain* of defeat." Fear *itself* is a form of captivity.

Doctors say that most headaches and nervousness result from emotional upset. But inability to cope with strain is a primary symptom of *spiritual* need. And a man or woman who practices prayer, meditation, and worship discovers in close relationship with God a deep sense of personal peace, permitting greater efficiency in meeting problems. As Dr. William S. Sadler wrote: "The only known cure for fear is faith." Have faith as a grain of mustard seed, said Jesus, and it will root and grow.

Whoever you may be, you have an elementary choice in how to live your life. You can either drift with the tide, or put in your paddle and row. The choice is yours. If you choose God's will and way for you, life will take direction never found before, and with this newfound purpose will come renewed courage.

Jesus said to have childlike faith, to become as "little children."

One key to the mastery of fear is to become vividly aware that you are loved by God. Freely accept the Father's forgiveness; consciously acknowledge the intense and immediate reality of God's goodness, care, and concern for you. Then, having accepted God's divine forgiveness, simply *refuse* to feel guilty. As Jesus put it: "Be not anxious," for fear is



often a symptom of guilt, just as a fever is a symptom of flu.

An old sea captain said that the best philosophy of life was to "expect the *unexpected*. It always comes." You do not *know* who will be at the door the next time you hear a knock, what letters will be in the mail, what tomorrow's newspaper will say, or who will be on the telephone whenever it next rings. But does that mean you should live in fear of the future? Not at all!

What is it that makes an adventure book or a mystery story exciting and fun to read? The fact that you *don't* know what is going to happen next. Take the same attitude toward life itself! Rather than dreading the unknown, learn to enjoy and savor the suspenseful uncertainties of living. Come to love the adventure of meeting new situations. Begin to think of life as a valiant challenge, and life will become more *fun*.

The same energy you so lavishly expend in nervousness and worry you could instead utilize to *solve* your problems and *improve* your situation! The time you waste *running* from life you could spend *living* it.

God gives us a choice of how to use our abilities. But God will not change *you* the way Cinderella's fairy godmother transformed her pumpkin into a livery coach with the touch of a wand. You *yourself* must decide to change: by seeking to find and do the will of God and by cooperating with the divine spirit which indwells your mind.

But once you yield your future to God, the future will hold no terror for you. Jesus wholly relinquished his personal plans, purposes, and energies to the Universal Father and lived fearlessly in faith. He was certainly not the melancholy martyr many people picture in their minds, nor a mild mystic whose face bore the perpetually pained expression of a man whose sandals were too tight, whose robe was scratchy and whose beard itched! No, Jesus taught and lived a *joyous* and *robust* religion. It can be yours as well!

Rather than dreading difficulty, *learn* from it. Have you ever pondered the fact that you can see farther at night than you can in broad daylight? That may sound odd at first, but upon closer consideration you will recognize the truth of it. For at night you are able to perceive the *stars*, which are invisible during daytime—yet those stars are millions of miles more distant than anything visible on even the sunniest afternoon. And so it is with trouble: in the dark midnight of

human suffering a person may glimpse glimmering insights and truths more lofty than ever he could see on sunny days. Hence, have no fear of affliction: difficulties are only educational episodes.

I once conversed with a university coed who told me that at final examination time she always broke out in a severe rash all over her face, neck, and arms. Her doctor told her it was caused by her tenseness and emotional anxiety, and that if she could only attain a more calm outlook, the rash would not recur. Fear, worry, and nervous unrest cause adverse bodily reactions. But to be truly at peace with yourself, you must be at peace with *God*. Bear in mind that emotional fluctuations are irrelevant to your spiritual growth; faith *alone* is important. But as your faith becomes stronger, fear will diminish proportionally.

Freedom from fear means living as a son or daughter of God and a brother or sister to man, confident of the Father's eternal love and your own eternal life, and daily seeking to live by God-guided purposes.

Offtimes you will get an inkling of what the Father desires for your life by reflecting upon your own highest desires. Frequently the loftiest ideals of man impinge upon the divine ideals of God because God is the *source* of all true ideals, and His spirit dwells within the human mind.

Dare to become enthralled by the perfect purposes of God and have unwavering faith that the Father has a good use for you.

And above all, remember: God loves and accepts you. You are a child of His. Believe that! Dare to seek and to do God's will, forsake your fearfulness, and live constantly with courage as the son or daughter of the Deity you really are!

Beginning now!

#### IV. GROWING SPIRITUALLY

When a prominent San Francisco woman committed suicide recently, her photograph and the story of her death appeared on page one of the newspapers. But had she been the wife of a manual laborer or a small shopowner, there might have been no more than a two-inch item on page 26. In *her* case, it was front-page news. Why? Because the public always



finds it incredible, unbelievable, that anyone with power, prominence and wealth would be dissatisfied with life. But one Jesus of Nazareth knew better. "What shall it profit a man," he asked, "to gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?" Without a growing spiritual life, human beings are restless and dissatisfied.

San Francisco, California, is one of the most wealthy cities in the U.S.A. But according to police statistics, it also possesses the *highest suicide rate of any city in the U.S.A.!* Many of mankind who live in material wealth live in spiritual poverty. Jesus taught that no man can serve two masters; we must choose between God and mammon. ("Mammon" was the Aramaic word for "money.") "Lay up your treasure in heaven," he said, "where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal."

Affluence alone cannot create joy. "Man shall not live by bread alone," quoted Jesus. A banquet may swell your stomach, but it can never satisfy your soul! The most urgent human yearning is for God! "You shall worship the Lord, and him only shall you serve," declared Christ.

Some people are uninterested in religion because their adequacy has never been tested. They have contented themselves with paltry aspirations and meagre goals. Never have they known the thrill of great endeavor, the stirring straining with all their strength to achieve some noble aim, the vital adventure of living by supreme ideals, and the search for perfection, even as God is perfect.

Only he who hungers knows the true delight of food, and no one savors water like the man whose tongue smoulders with thirst. The lumberjack who swings the ax and drives a saw all day knows more about the joy of falling asleep at night than the shiftless lad who lies around his room in indolence. It is a physiological fact: he who does little work needs little food. And likewise, he who dreams no dreams, has no hopes, loves, aspirations, mighty tasks and projects in his life may feel but little need of further spiritual growth and the power of God. A baby's bathtub boat has no need of mighty canvas sails stretched into the winds—it isn't going anywhere. So it is with the person who toys with the trivialities of life, but never dares give himself wholeheartedly to the best he knows: never having spent his own strength, he feels, perhaps, no need of God's.



But the man or woman who seeks to live as the Master taught, as a son or daughter of the living God and a brother to every other man; the person who really tries to love his enemies, bless those who curse him, pray for those who despise him, return good for evil, and live by the noblest truth he knows—that person soon discovers his own inward inadequacy, his spiritual shortcomings. He finds he can't live this higher life by his own power alone, but needs the inner energies of God. And turning to God with all of his heart, he discovers God as a person and a power in his life! He begins the adventure of spiritual growth!

The late historian Arnold Toynbee wrote: "People are now afraid of being alone with themselves. They turn on the radio or the T.V. at once. They can't dare to be alone with their own thoughts and feelings. This is cowardice, really." Jesus knew the sustaining strength of solitude. Often he went apart to pray, worship, and seek spiritual energy for daily living. He further taught that each one of us was created for the same kind of close companionship with God. You were born to live in joy as a son or daughter of the Universal Father and a brother or sister to all mankind in the worldwide family of God. This vital fellowship with the Father is yours by faith alone.

*Persist* in your faith, prayer, and the seeking of God's will! Develop unwavering spiritual perseverance. A weary business executive had just signed his name to an expensive life insurance policy. Turning to the beaming salesman, he remarked, "Young fellow, you should feel proud of yourself. I have *refused* to see three other insurance agents today." "I know," he replied. "I'm them!"

If persistence can be that important in business, think how vital it is in the realm of religion! Jesus spent *hours* in prayer and worship. In the garden of Gethsemane the night before his arrest, he prayed for the will of God not once, but three times in a row. He prayed with perseverance!

Once your life is given to God, a new spurt of spiritual growth will take place in your soul. But even at that, you may feel you are progressing too slowly. Be patient. When you plant a flower in a pot, will tugging and pulling at it make it grow any more readily? Of course not. Neither will worry and fretting accelerate spiritual progress. The flower grows no faster because the gardener worries; it only needs

the proper conditions of growth: sunlight, soil, and water. Neither can anxiety create spiritual progress in your life. You need only persevere in prayer, worship, faith, and the love of God and man. Maximum spiritual growth will be the inevitable result. And your life will begin to change!

In 1912, when the *Titanic* sank, among the 1,513 who drowned at sea was a prominent Philadelphia millionaire. He and his valet came strolling onto the deck amid the panicked passengers, both impeccably attired in their tuxedos. "We have dressed in our best, and are prepared to go down like gentlemen," he declared.

Yet, noble as it may be to die at one's best, far more important is living at one's best! Truly great men and women are those who live by truly great ideals. They are never contented with petty purposes. Jesus challenged you to be true to the *best* you know. He didn't say, "Be you therefore genteel, as the pharisees in the temple are genteel." He called people to the ultimate ideal: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." What a difference! *Real* spiritual growth is becoming Godlike!

But spiritual growth is not instantaneous. Jesus compared it to the planting of a mustard seed, the leavening of yeast in a pan of bread dough, and the ripening of crops in the field. Luke writes that Jesus himself "increased [grew] in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." His own spiritual growth took time; so will yours. The best way for a colt to become a horse is to enjoy being a colt: by prancing and frisking in the pasture, he naturally increases in strength, stamina, and stature. So it is with you: refuse to worry and despair over your spiritual growth—worry and despair are in fact enemies of spiritual growth. Resolve joyfully to delight in the progress you have made instead of mourning over the progress you have not made. Maintain a childlike, trusting faith in God.

"Seek," Jesus exclaimed, "and you will find; ask and you shall receive; knock, and the door will be opened to you." Growth comes in the questing. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The Master emphasized that people must positively and aggressively search for truth. He did *not* say to wish and you will find, whine and you shall receive, or daydream and the doors will be opened. You must turn to God with *all* your heart,



and dedicate your life to the Father in utter faith. You will never find *wholehearted spiritual joy in halfhearted spiritual commitment.*

Have faith! As a son or daughter of the living God, you possess unsuspected spiritual possibilities. Astronomers have found that with our naked eyes, you and I can see only about nine thousand stars in the sky at most. But by means of cameras and telescopes, scientists count hundreds of thousands beyond. So it is with life itself. There is far more to existence than meets the eye at first glance: there is a spiritual dimension as well! Far from being a coldly mechanical, merely material universe, this cosmos is the starry household of the Family of God, and *you* are a valuable member in it. The Father personally cares about *you*; and by seeking God's will and wisdom for your life, you can discover the enthralling adventure of spiritual growth—day by day, and for all eternity beyond!

## V. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

One morning a little boy came running into the house and asked, "Mother, where did I come from?" Just as she drew a deep breath to begin her first sex-and-biology lecture, he continued in earnestness, "The new boy who just moved on the block said *he* came from Baltimore; where did *I* come from?"

"Where did I come from?" is more than a question of biology and geography—it is essentially a philosophic/religious question. And it has a religious answer: *God*. In the final sense, all people are children of one heavenly Father, members in the universal Family of God. This is true regardless of social, cultural or economic status.

God is not a merciless mathematical Mind, an uncaring computerized Creator ruling the universe by the wave of a celestial slide-rule; He is a *Father*, and He rules by *love*. God knows each person personally. Isaiah 45:3, "I am the Lord, who calls you by your *name*."

Once you believe by faith that God is your Father and you are His child, this love of God will begin to change your entire life. And *why* does God love you so? Simply because you are His son or daughter. And it is the way of a father to love his child.

Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man; that word "*brother*" is used eighty-two times in the New Testament. And in the gospel of John alone, which is only twenty-six pages long in my Bible, I counted through and discovered that Jesus calls God by the name "*Father*" sixty-three times. That's over twice a page. These twin concepts are vital to a new philosophy and way of life.

All human beings need love. Not long ago the United Press International wire service reported that a scantily-clad exotic dancer was found in her New York apartment, lying unconscious from an overdose of barbiturates. The young woman had attempted to take her own life. Courted by a Hollywood actor and engaged to a wealthy Texas oilman, she still was not happy. When she broke her last engagement, she said, "Love, not money, is the only thing I want."

Human beings deeply crave to be loved. God created that need in people, and God alone can fully fill it. For we mortals, who long for love, are *infinitely* loved—by God . . . if only we would believe it! God forms no emptiness He cannot fill, no thirsting of spirit He cannot quench, no hungering of soul He cannot nourish. The incessant inner wanting of the human heart is spiritual. You long for God. Your Father He is; God loves you.

Once at the University of California I read the transcript of a psychiatric session in which the doctor was counselling an emotionally troubled teen-aged girl. Her grades were poor, her disposition sour and surly, and she had a stomach ulcer at age seventeen. At one point in the transcript she broke down crying and blurted out to the psychiatrist, "So you really want to know what's wrong with me? I'll tell you. Just nobody loves me."

Countless lives are tortured by painful despair precisely for the same reason: they feel unloved. And a person who feels unloved is certain to feel unhappy. It should therefore be evident why the religion of Jesus is so inherently important. It declares that whoever else may or may not love you, *God loves you!* And that makes a difference!

You are a child of *God!*

People are almost obsessively concerned to know where things came from. We have a penchant for discovering roots and backgrounds. An antique collector wants to know if a certain cut-glass bowl came from Italy. Or a woman pro-



claims with pride that her set of china was passed down from her great-great grandmother. We are curious to know histories – the artist who did a painting, the year a wine was pressed, the pedigree of a dog. But the bizarre thing about it is that hardly *any* people know their *own* backgrounds. Very few men and women are dynamically aware that they are children of the infinite *God!* They feel fearfully alone, as if they had no place in the larger picture of things. But the truth is that human life stands not in stark and solitary isolation: it stands in personal relation to *God*. All are God's children and brothers to one another. That is the transforming truth!

The following are but a few of the scriptures which clearly portray the Fatherhood of God.

Psalm 89:26: "You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation."

Matthew 23:9: "And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, who is in heaven."

Luke 6:36: "Be you therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Sixteen times in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5, 6, and 7) Jesus refers to God as "*your* Father."

Ephesians 4:6: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

I Corinthians, 8:6: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him!"

Deuteronomy 14:1: "You are the children of the Lord your God."

Psalm 68:5: "A father of the fatherless is God in his holy habitation."

Psalm 103:13: "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him."

Isaiah 63:16: "Doubtless you are our father . . . . You, O Lord, are our Father, our redeemer; your name is from everlasting."

Isaiah 64:8: "But now, O Lord, you are our father; we are

the clay, you our potter; and we all are the work of your hand."

John 16:27: "For the Father himself loves you."

In John 20:17 Jesus says, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God."

Hebrews 12:7: "God deals with you as with sons."

The Fatherhood of God is the greatest truth in the scriptures! And by living faith you can experience your personal sonship or daughterhood with God!

## VI. THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

There is a beautiful, logical, and natural corollary to the Fatherhood of God: the Brotherhood of Man. What the world needs most is *love*. It is possible to admonish people, plead with them, reason with them, threaten them, intimidate them, and even psycho analyze them—but it is wholly impossible to *force* people to *love* each other unless they *want* to. Brotherly love is inward and spiritual in origin; it is not merely a refined and civilized version of the cattle "herd instinct"—it is born of *God*.

In First John, Chapter 4, verse 11 it is written: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

You are a member in the brotherhood of man!

I remember that once when I was back in high school, I spent an evening looking at my family's old photograph album. It bulged with snapshots of multitudinous relatives, uncles, cousins, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and other assorted sorts. There were reams and reams of pictures, and photographs of people I didn't know at all grinned from its pasted pages. But I was aware everytime I looked at them that whether I knew them or not, they were still my *family*.

Consider: whenever you walk down the street, each and every person you see, whether you know him or not, is a fellow member in your family—the family of God. This is a startling and *world-changing* thought. All this earth is one family precisely because we have one Father: God. He loves us. And the religion of tomorrow will quite simply center on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

When I was a young boy, it was our custom to hold a



family reunion every few years. One time it would be in my home town in Kansas, another time we would all meet in Missouri, at my grandparents' farm. A large family reunion is a *wonderfully* peculiar event. You may never have met some of the people there. In fact, if you didn't know they were your relatives, you might never speak to them at all. If you were sitting on a bench in a train station waiting for your departure time, and those very *same people* were all milling around you, you would likely pay very little attention to them. But meet them at a family reunion, and everything is different. You talk, joke, help each other, and have a wonderful time. Why? Because you know you're all in the same family; you know you are related. And that makes all the difference in the world.

So it was meant to be in the worldwide Family of God. The same people you see every day are suddenly more interesting when you become aware that they are spiritually related to you. There are no strangers in the world—only brothers and sisters you haven't met yet. Every time you shake hands with someone, it's another family reunion. Because both of you are relatives in the Family of God.

Someone objects, "But I can't love everybody!" Maybe *you* can't, but *God* can; and the spirit of God is *in* you. The daily life of a faith-born child of God is powered by more than hamburgers and potato chips: it is strengthened by the living love of God.

God's love can *alter* your behavior toward others. Think of a young man whose girl friend tells him for the first time that she loves him—suddenly that boy becomes more friendly toward the whole *world*. You have seen that happen; it is a fact of *life* that being in love transforms human attitudes. Likewise, God's love for a person, when accepted, creates a new friendliness within that person, and friendliness is the sown seed of brotherhood. You cannot have the brotherhood of man without the Fatherhood of God any more than we can have oaks without acorns.

A new age of love will bring a new age upon the earth.

One by one, we are conquering the major diseases which cripple mankind. But what will be the result? Merely a world of healthier hatemongers? A race of sound-bodied barbarians? Or will we increasingly learn to live in love as a human brotherhood? It is a crucially urgent question for all mankind. We *must* learn how to love.



For the brotherhood of man is a fact. Our mission is not to *bring* it into being, but to accept it, to *believe* in it and live it in love as sons and daughters of God. The choice is *ours* to live as children of our Father and brothers to our brothers in the worldwide Family of God. The choice is ours *this moment*.

And the destiny of our planet hangs in the balance!

The following are a few of the scriptures which portray the brotherhood of man.

Matthew 5:22-24: "But I say to you, that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment . . . therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

I Thessalonians 4:9: "But concerning brotherly love you need not that I write to you; for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

Hebrews 13:1: "Let brotherly love continue."

Romans 12:10: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you *love* one another."

## VII. SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

1. PRAY SIMPLY. The year was 1904. In London, England an odd contest was being held and a handsome prize offered for the longest twelve-word telegram any entrant could write. Of the many compositions submitted, the winner was a message over 190 letters in length, and yet not exceeding the twelve-word limit. It read: "Administrator-General's counter-revolutionary intercommunications uncircumstantiated Stop Quartermaster-General's disproportionableness characteristically contradistinguished unconstitutionalist's incomprehensibilities Stop."

Most people pray like that! They use a vocabulary *they* cannot understand, but somehow expect *God* will. They seem to assume that if French is the language of France, and German the language of Germany, "theology must be the

native tongue of God;"accordingly, most prayers abound in dutiful verbiage. But rather than addressing God from one's lexicon of pious phrases, one ought to use the unstrained speech of common words, or even of no words at all, and simply share the soul with God. That's what prayer is: simply sharing the soul with God. Language and vocabulary are unimportant. Martin Luther wrote, "The fewer words the better prayer." And Jesus said, "*But when you pray, use not vain repetitions . . .*" (Matthew 6:7)

**2. PRAY IN THE CONSCIOUS PRESENCE OF GOD.** Come before God in prayer realizing that it is actually *impossible* to "come before God"—because you are *already* before Him! You are always in the living presence of God; His spirit is within. God is continually conscious of you, your life, your problems and your potentialities. Keep that in mind.

Pray honestly. Repudiate poses, postures and pretenses. You can't deceive God, so give up every thought of ever trying to. God knows each good and bad thing which you have ever done and—more importantly—each good and bad thing which at the moment you desire to do. So don't try to hide a thing. Lay open the book-keeping of your soul for God to audit.

Be honest in your *attitudes*, too. Don't pray like a haloed saint when you don't feel like one, nor try to shed bitter tears of penitence if you don't have any. Just be totally frank with God. Prayer is a "come as you are" affair; you don't have to put on your Sunday morning sanctity to talk with your heavenly Father any more than you need to put on a black tie and carnation or a sequined evening gown to have a chat with your next-door neighbor over the backyard fence. God is even nearer than your next-door neighbor! Yet most people are much more natural, honest, and at ease chatting with their neighbors than they are praying to God. They forget that God actually knows them far better than their neighbors do. So when you come to prayer; come as you *are*. Assume no hypocritical holiness: just be yourself. You couldn't be anybody else anyway. Jesus said, "*Be not as the hypocrites . . .*" (Matthew 6:16)

**3. AVOID PESSIMISTIC PRAYER.** To give God graphic and gloomy descriptions of how catastrophically you are convinced everything is going to turn out is not prayer at all; it is merely worrying on your knees. The only way you stand a



chance of improving things and preventing an unhappy outcome to your difficulties is to seek after *solutions* instead of lamenting over your problems. If you pray pessimistically you may maintain such a deep discouragement that you won't have the insight necessary to recognize your answer when it comes. "*Whatever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them . . .*" (Mark 11:24)

4. PRAY FOR GROWTH AND VALUES NOT MAGIC TRICKS. Many an adult ceases regular praying after childhood as the result of a series of early disappointments in prayer. Inevitably, these consisted of starry-eyed requests that God do such miracles as putting a pony under the bed next morning or "Please make green spinach taste like chocolate cake." Next day, the chagrined discovery of nothing more thrilling than dust under the bed and a subsequent confirmation that green spinach still tastes the same as ever, may be sufficient to topple the delicate balance of a child's belief.

But as pruning the tree increases the fruit, so should such spiritual disappointments result in even more prolific faith. For prayer is not a material magic trick; it is not a way of getting what *you* want from God—but of getting what *God* wants from you!

Prayer works . . . if you do. But to pray that your dishes will be done or your garden will be mysteriously weeded is both unrealistic and unlikely. God not only gives us great blessings; He gives us great *tasks*—and some of our greatest *blessings are tasks*.

Which is the greater satisfaction: buying a hand-carved, inlaid table at a furniture store or making one yourself at your basement carpentry bench? Which would make you happier: buying a frozen gooseberry pie at the supermarket, or spending a sunny weekend morning with a basket picking the berries and baking that pie yourself?

Some people wish that prayer were material magic. Suppose it were. Imagine that anytime you wanted an inlaid table or a gooseberry pie, it would immediately appear before you out of nowhere. Think what that would be like: your living room might be full . . . but not your *life*. Your life could become empty, because genuine satisfaction lies in *working* for what you want—and even more truly, for what *God* wants.

Thus, God is a giver of forests and gooseberry bushes,

but tables and pies we must make for ourselves. Is this a curse? No! A blessing! Because good work is satisfying! It *is* a blessing. Prayer motivates you with the very motives of God! Prayer works—if you do. God's three answers to prayer are "yes," "no," and "later."

There is a Russian proverb: "What men usually ask for when they pray to God is that two and two may not make four." God doesn't work that way. As Jesus once pointed out, God "sends his rain on the just and on the unjust." In spite of the possibility that the unjust may have borrowed their umbrellas from the just, one has to admit that the plan is eminently fair. God doesn't play favorites with material things. They are free for *all* people.

Prayer, therefore, is not a technique of getting money. If God always rewarded spiritual greatness with correspondingly great riches, Jesus of Nazareth would have been the richest man in the ancient world! The apostles, Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and all the rest of the early disciples would have owned all of Palestine! But they didn't. Because prayer is a *spiritual* process for the acquirement of spiritual riches, and not a metaphysical method of writing cashiers checks on Fort Knox.

Pray for love, self-control, honesty, goodness, peace, good humor, patience, and kindness—said Jesus, "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:20)

5. PRAY IN TRUST. Have *faith* that God will attempt to give you what you *really* need, not merely what you *think* you need. I use that word "attempt" with good reason: you are always free to reject the answer if you choose.

I recall one time in junior high school when I passionately yearned to receive a certain short-wave radio set for my birthday. I had circled it in the electronics catalog and had set my heart on it. I made it clear—first by elaborate hints and later by outright pleas and heartfelt entreaties—that what I wanted for my birthday more than anything else was that short-wave radio. But I didn't get it. Instead, my mother gave me a short-wave *kit*, unassembled, and with complex directions on how to put it together. In the days that followed, I spent many happy hours working on that radio, wiring and assembling it, and discovering moreover the satisfactions of building something difficult. It wasn't what I had *wanted*. It was *better*!

Likewise, God usually has something better for you than



what you suppose you *want*. Pray always in that trust, that God answers your *real needs*, not just your momentary desires.

Pray not that God will *please* you, but *improve* you. Jesus said, ". . . how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." (Matthew 7:11)

6. PRAY REGULARLY. Prayer is spiritual nourishment; think of it as a banquet for the soul. Suppose you only pray once a week. Would you *eat* only once a week? Not if you intended to maintain physical health and strength. Similarly, robust spiritual vigor can come only from regular prayer.

And allow sufficient time. Bolt down a seven-course banquet in three minutes and your digestion will be less than optimum: hurried and hasty prayer can be equally disruptive to spiritual assimilation. A quick prayer—like a fast sandwich—may be excellent when "on the go," but it is not the ideal form of regular nourishment.

7. PRAY FOR OTHERS. Even if you at first doubt that it will be any good for them, you may be certain it will be good for you.

What is the effect of such praying? The first result is clearly upon the one who prays. To think thoughts of love and concern for another human being has a beneficial influence on one's general disposition, digestion, and demeanor.

But then, so does a vanilla ice cream cone. And to pray for others only in the selfish certainty that it will be good for *you* is selfishness. Only in the moment that you actually *forget yourself* in your concern for others do you discover the true *power* of praying for others. And a suggestion: *tell* people that you are praying for them.

What actually happens when one person prays for another is an utter mystery. Countless speculative possibilities flash to mind: a sort of spiritual telepathy, the unspoken communication of concern, an invisible transmission . . . but nobody knows. All we can say for certain is that Jesus taught prayer for others. For example, the familiar "Lord's Prayer," which is given in the plural form ("*Our* Father"), is obviously both a personal *and* an intercessory prayer, since it encompasses the self and simultaneously all others. Jesus taught his followers to pray with others in mind: "*And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have a grudge against anyone.*" (Mark 11:25)

Practice these seven principles of prayer daily; make them part of your life. Pray about anything at all. You cannot possibly take up too much of God's time; God is eternal, time is irrelevant to Him.

God's time is your time—literally! He created it. Don't worry about using up God's patience. God is the Heavenly Father, not a harried business executive, and you are His child, not an employee.

And above all, remember this transforming truth: God *loves* you!



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## Family of God

Only transformed individuals  
can create a transformed world  
Only better men and women  
can fashion a better society  
Only advanced citizens  
can architect an advanced civilization

All humankind are one vast family  
This world our home  
We sleep beneath one roof  
the starry sky  
We warm ourselves before one hearth  
the blazing sun  
Upon one floor of soil we stand  
And breathe one air  
And drink one water  
And walk the night beneath one luminescent moon  
The children of one God we are  
And brothers of one blood  
And members in one worldwide Family of God

Vern Bennom Grimsley