

Incense from the Mountain

By Lois E Callaway



**A Pilgrim Ponders Prayer
Book #3 (of 7)**

A Pilgrim Ponders Prayer

A Missionary's Reflections - in a 7-book series

Book # 3

Incense from the Mountain

By

Lois E. Callaway

Dedicated to

My Mother:

Lura Groves Elkerton

who first taught me to pray the prayer of faith.

And to

My Grandparents:

Elmer and Netta Groves.

who taught her.

Cover artistry by Jon Mark Callaway

All Poems not attributed to others
were written by Lois Callaway

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Acknowledgement

It has now been well over 20 years since my wife, Lois, wrote these seven studies on the subject of PRAYER. I want to express my appreciation to our children and their spouses for all they have done in the editing, checking of quotations, etc. Four who have done most are: Joyce Callaway Nicholson (covers, pictures, formatting), David Callaway (researching book and Bible references), Mark Callaway (art work on book 3 cover), and Cinda Lott Callaway (proofreading).

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C W Callaway, March 20, 2017

About the Author

Lois Nadine Elkerton Callaway served with her husband, C W Callaway, in Thailand among the Mien mountain tribespeople from 1949 to 1985. From then on they served Mien refugees from Laos in U.S.A. In 1996 at age of 75 she died in an automobile accident near Napa, California. She had a deep reverent love for God and for His Word. And she loved those whom she served so faithfully. She was an avid reader, a gifted poet, and a skilled writer in Mien as well as English. She was a woman of prayer as revealed in this series.

For more information about her see:
<http://www.mothersite.org/>



Lois E. Callaway
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For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord, there in the land all the people of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There will I require your offerings and your choice gifts along with your holy sacrifices. I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations ... and I will be proved holy through you in the sight of the nations. Ezekiel 20:40-41 NIV

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put incense in it, along with burning coals from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the Lord; the plague has started." So Aaron did as Moses said... Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped. Numbers 16:46-48 NIV

Part your heavens, Lord, and come down; touch the mountains so that they smoke. Send forth lightning and scatter the enemy; shoot your arrows and rout them. Psalms 144: 5-6 NIV

Altar Fire

The thin sweet wisp of fragrant smoke
Wafts, twists, and twirls an upward course.
The golden censer of the heart
Is lifted up and seeks its Source.

Kneel then – before the altar bow.
O Longing Heart, lift high your bowl
Of gold, (though cold may be your fire)
To wait fresh incense for your soul

And now your censer fragrant, full,
Though still no flame is kindled there.
Lift once again, O Longing Heart,
"Tis altar fire can kindle prayer.

Then as the angel cast it down
Full filled with incense prayer
And fire upon the earth,
So cast your prayers of care

Across a sin-sick earth.
And know, as then, will follow on
Ignited prayer, the voices, thunders,
Lightning, quakes – phenomena

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Of power unleashed in hearts awaked,
Ignited by the bowl of prayer,
In which has fallen altar fire,
Wafts to heaven an incense rare!

When I was a very little girl, my grandmother had a pretty miniature china house in which she burned tiny cones of incense.

“Please, Grandmother, may I light a cone of incense?”

Grandmother was always willing and together we enjoyed the sweet scent as it filled the house. Pine was my favorite, speaking to me of the clean freshness of the mountains I loved.

Today I keep in my home a small can that says, “Air Freshener – Pine Scent”. When the air seems stale a few squirts freshens the house – but oh so temporarily. The scent is the same, but there is not the lingering softness of the scent of incense.

The Bible likens prayer to incense. “ He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.” (Revelation 8:3-5 NKJV)

Even in the Old Testament the typology was there in the incense burned in the temple morning and evening. “Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the Lord for the Generations to come.” (Exodus 30:7-8 NIV)

“Receive my prayer as incense, my uplifted hands as an evening sacrifice.” (Psalms 141:2 GNT)

Aaron was commanded, “Offer no unauthorized incense, burnt offerings, meal offerings, or wine offerings..” (Exodus 30:9 TLB)

Does this not illustrate well the importance of prayer? Nothing can substitute for the incense that was commanded. Neither is there a substitute for prayer. Sacrifice neither burnt offering or a drink offering upon the altar of incense. Work for the Lord, service, offerings of money, sacrifice of self, none can take the place of the sweet incense of prayer. Each has its own place, but none can replace the other.

In this modern day have we exchanged the lingering fragrance of incense for the quick squirt kind? Rather than the quiet, enduring fellowship with God, so well typified by the lingering scent of the burning incense, have we rather taken prayer by squirts that provide momentary exhilaration, but which cheat us out of the real fragrance?

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Were we to burn the real incense of prayer often in His Presence would there not be more of that fragrance about our lives which God uses "to make the knowledge about Christ spread everywhere like a sweet fragrance."? (2 Corinthians. 2:14 GNT)

It is easy to remember that the twenty-four elders had each a harp -- but who remembers that each also had a "gold bowl filled with incense which are the prayers of God's people"? (Revelations. 5:8 GNT)

It is a golden bowl that holds our prayers. The altar of incense was overlaid with pure gold. That altar where we present our services and sacrifices to God is as brass to the pure gold of the altar where we offer the incense of our prayers -- the evidence of our delight just to be in His presence.

We have been given the golden bowl as a gift from our Father. It is ours to fill it with prayer and seek fire from the altar to ignite it. If we leave it unfilled, there is nothing to be ignited by the heavenly fire to fill their bowls with the incense of prayer, we can find answers. Stories of men who asked for and received the "impossible" will challenge us. At the feet of the Master, Himself, we can find true incense for our golden bowls.

1. The Prayer God Can't Answer

I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name ... And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear.

Isaiah 65:1, 24 KJV

Then when you call, the Lord will answer "Yes, I am here." He will quickly reply."

Isaiah 58:9 NLT

"And whatsoever ye shall ask me in my name that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

John 14:13 KJV

"There is only one prayer God cannot answer. He cannot answer the prayer that is not prayed."

---Anonymous

With God, all things are possible. What prayer, then, can God not answer? While it is true that God can and often does give a blessing for which we have not asked, such a blessing is not an answer to prayer. A friend tells of the day his friend dashed into the house very elated to tell of an exciting way the Lord had provided for him and his wife, before they even knew of the need. He prefaced his story with: "Mike, you'll never believe it! The most wonderful answer to prayer, and we never even prayed!"

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It happens to all of us. God gives an unexpected blessing, straightens out a complicated situation and leaves us thinking, "I wish I had thought to pray about that." A blessing received without a prayer preceding it can all too easily be accepted as a coincidence rather than a providence. Not only that, it lacks some of the praise-producing wonder of a blessing that we can pinpoint as a definite answer to prayer. It is great to say, "God heard and answered me." That makes it special.

My oldest daughter has always loved music. Even when she was very small we gave her musical toys, but we did not buy her a real instrument until she had told us how much she would love to have a certain instrument. We shopped for a guitar, having decided beforehand that we would buy an inexpensive one. While I priced cheaper ones, Joyce, a lover of Christian folk music, reached over, picked up one of the most expensive guitars in the Hong Kong shop, and strummed once across a chord. Her whole face registered ecstasy. My own heart responded -- for here was an instrument worthy of the praises of God. Joyce must have this instrument. It was an answer to her heart's longing -- an answer to a prayer.

God is like that. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Rom 8:32 NIV

True, sometimes He gives the things for which we have not asked, but sometimes He withholds things we need to teach us to pray. One time we came back from furlough on borrowed funds. Very busy, we had thought, "God has provided before. We won't worry about it", but we didn't really pray about it. The time came to pay for our tickets and we had to borrow money to pay for them. Never has this happened when we have prayed specifically about it. When we have said, "Lord, we're turning that over to You, believing You will not fail us", the fund has been supplied. It is often at a faith-testing eleventh hour --- but never has He failed to answer the prayer that has been prayed. Be specific. God said to Joshua "I will give you every place where you set your foot." (Josh 1:3 NIV) Sometimes he asks us to believe with our feet, our hands, and our mouths. "Go set your feet on this place and I will give it to you."

"... before they call I will answer. And while they are yet speaking I will hear"
(Isaiah. 65:24 NIV)

"Then you will call, and the Lord will answer."
(Isaiah. 58:9 NIV)

He will answer before we call—but not if we never call-- for He continues, "while they are yet speaking I will hear." Prayer has to be prayed in order to be answered. How gracious He will be when you cry for help!

"As soon as he hears, he will answer you."
(Isaiah. 30:19b NIV)

God doesn't want us to take Him for granted. Once the disciples did that, they tried to cast out an evil spirit and they failed miserably. "Why could we not cast it out?" (Mark 9:17-29 RSV) they asked the Master.

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It seems that the disciples fully expected to be able to cast out the demon. It was not faith they lacked. But their faith was more in their own ability and less in their dependence upon God's power. Jesus told them that what they really lacked was prayer, which is an expression of faith in God. Had their faith been toward God, they would have turned to prayer and through that faith in God's power they would have succeeded.

Is failure to pray not usually an indication of our feeling of self-sufficiency? If we felt insufficient, we would be driven to prayer. If we are forced to this kind of prayer, results are bound to come. Sometimes successes can swell our ego to the point where we think we have laid hold on God's power to a sufficient extent that we can pray a little and see great results.

God wants us always to realize that our sufficiency is only in Him, and He may send heart-breaking failure where we had thought to have brilliant success. This is to remind us that, "This is accomplished only by prayer," --i.e. Through the power that He graciously gives in answer to prayer.

The seventy gloated, "Even the demons obeyed us when we gave them a command in your name." Jesus answered them: 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Listen! I have given you authority, so that you can walk on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the Enemy, and nothing will hurt you. But don't be glad because the evil spirits obey you; rather be glad because your names are written in heaven.'" (Luke 10:17-20 GNT)

2. Pray for the Impossible

Jesus looked straight at them and answered, "This is impossible for human beings, but for God everything is possible."
Matthew 19:26 GNT

"I assure you that if you have faith as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this hill, 'Go from here to there!' and it will go. You could do anything!"
Matthew 17:20b GNT

What no one ever saw or heard, what no man ever thought could happen, is the very thing God prepared for those who love him.
1 Corinthians 2:9 GNT

"God specializes in things thought impossible. He does the things others cannot do."
-- Oscar Eliason¹

"The Christian life is impossible." Ian Thomas²

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees
And looks to God alone;

¹ Eliason 1929

² Thomas 1961

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Laughs at impossibilities
And cries, 'It shall be done!'
-- Unknown

A child between the ages of one and two years old usually wants to feed himself. What a mess! Mother often gives in and resigns herself to cleaning up vegetables and cereal spattered with a vengeance. Then when the wee offspring has gotten to the place where he can feed himself he goes through another stage: He pouts in his high chair and says, "Mommy feed me." With visions of an emaciated child, or just to get the meal over, Mommy may reluctantly go back to spooning it in.

The same thing may be repeated with tying shoe laces and dressing himself. A weary mother reflects that there are plenty of things Junior can't do for himself that she still must do. A wise mother guides her child into accepting responsibility as he is able. She happily does for him those things baby can't do. That's why God gave baby a Mother.

There are some things God expects us to do for ourselves. There are other things He in His wisdom knows we should turn over to Him. Sometimes He must wish we had dared to ask for far more than we did, for surely it is He "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.." (Ephesians 3:20 NIV)

Joash, one of the few Godly kings of Israel, came to weep at the bedside of dying Elisha. Elisha had one last message for him from the Lord. "Take your bow and arrows," said Elisha. When Joash had taken them, Elisha laid his hand in blessing over the royal hands that held the bow and arrows. "Now open the window and shoot," he commanded. King Joash shot, and Elisha spoke to him of this "arrow of the Lord's deliverance from his enemies.

"Take the arrows. And he took them." said Elisha "Smite upon the ground. "

Joash obeyed, striking the ground three times.

Elisha was disappointed and angry with the king. , "You should have struck five or six times, and then you would have won complete victory over the Syrians; but now you will defeat them only three times." (2 Kings 13:14 -19 GNT)

As Elisha had said, Joash did defeat Benhadad three times -- and only three times. How often God would give us greater victories if we would only have faith to claim them -- or lacking faith, would ask Him first for faith to pray for the impossible. "What no one ever saw or heard, what no man ever thought could happen, is the very thing God prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9 GNT)

There are so many accomplished impossibilities recorded in God's word for our encouragement. Abraham longed for a son. God could have given him that son while he and Sarah were young and the whole thing could have been written off as "one of those lucky

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things that happen to people". But no! God chose to test Abraham and Sarah's faith. When the son was given, the whole world could only say, God has done the impossible!

Hezekiah was ill -- so ill he turned his face to the wall --and prayed, breaking into great sobs. Isaiah had already told him he was to die, but God heard Hezekiah's prayer and sent Isaiah with an answer. "You will live another fifteen years. In fact, in three days you will go to the temple."

Hezekiah, like some of us was impatient. Three days was too long to wait for the answer. "How will I know, Isaiah that God is really going to heal me? What sign will He give me to let me know that you aren't just speaking idle words of comfort to an old dying king?"

Isaiah replied, "Yes, the Lord is willing to give you a sign. You know the sundial Ahaz made? Would you rather the shadow moved forward ten degrees or backward ten degrees?"

Hezekiah wanted a real sign of power so he said, "The shadow moves forward easily. If it were to move forward might we not say, 'Time goes quickly today!?' No! Let it move backward. That is a real impossibility."

The shadow moved back ten degrees and dying Hezekiah was given fifteen more years of life. Two impossibilities in one day! (2 Kings 20:1-11, Isaiah. 38)

Truly, impossibilities vanish in the face of earnest, believing prayer. Everyone knows how "Joshua fit the battle of Jericho and the walls came a tumbling down." (Josh 6) Not so much talked of is the miracle of the crossing of the Jordan just before Jericho.

Joshua appeared before the people of Israel one day and said, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you." (Joshua 3:5 NIV) This was to be the miracle that would prepare the heart of Israel to participate in other miracles to follow. Without the crossing of the Jordan, the Jericho miracle could not have happened.

I can imagine some of the Israelites saying, "Joshua is foolish. It's not that we're afraid to go in and take this land God has promised us. We've spent forty years preparing for this day. But why not wait until the Jordan is lower? This is harvest time and anyone knows the river overflows her banks at harvest." (Joshua 3:15)

The priests had faith to obey, though, and once their feet were wet in the waters of Jordan, God did the rest -- the impossible! The flood waters were held back while the priests, with great faith, stood in the river and people -- tens of thousands of them -- passed over safely.

God could just as well have timed the crossing of the Jordan for the dry season when crossing the river would have been relatively simple. God so often chooses to simplify the impossible if we are only willing to "wet our feet in the Jordan". (Joshua 3)

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When Jesus and His disciples were faced with a hungry throng of 5000 men plus women and children, they began to wonder how they could feed them. (Mark 6: 30-45) Philip reckoned on the moneybags, and Andrew on a small boy with five loaves and two fish. Both knew that their resources were inadequate.

"Christ reckoned on the Father. He gave thanks and exposed the situation to His Father. His resource was ample, for the God of the impossible fed thousands of people from Andrew's meager find of five loaves and two fish."³

One time the disciples were gathered together behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jews. Closed, locked doors were no hindrance to the risen Christ. Suddenly, in spite of locked doors He was in the room with them saying, "Peace be with you". (John 20:19 RSV)

Not many days later, after Christ had ascended into heaven, the disciples were once again behind closed doors for prayer and power. (Acts 1:13-14)

"Today we are not only behind closed doors -- we are before closed doors."⁴ One is appalled at the doors slamming shut in the face of missionaries. Heart doors are closing just as certainly to the program of the church as it now functions. We need to remember that Jesus has passed through closed doors -- and He still can.

When we stop closing doors for fear and begin closing doors for prayer then we are ready to stand before those closed doors expecting them to be opened before us. They may not always open the way we expect – but they will open!

"You can do the impossible for God if you will let God do the impossible for you."⁵

This will begin to happen when we begin to believe and claim the miracle of 2 Corinthians 3:18: "All of us, then reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord who is the Spirit, transforms us into his very likeness, in an ever greater degree of glory." (2 Corinthians 3:18 GNT)

Impossible that we should be like Him! Yet man's extremity is God's opportunity. When we are ready to believe Him for this marvelous impossibility in our own lives, we shall see heart doors opening and we shall learn the truth of His words when He said, "whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:12-13 NIV)

³ Thomas 1961 (not completely sure of resource)

⁴ (Havner 1964)

⁵ Anonymous

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Got any rivers you think are un-crossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible
He does the things others cannot do!⁶

"A mighty man of God demands things from God because God demands the impossible from him."⁷

3 Pray When It's Impossible

I am always thinking of the Lord; and because He is so near I never need to stumble or fall.
Psalms 16:8 TLB

My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me, O my people." And my heart responds,
"Lord, I am coming."
Psalms 27:8 TLB

But as for me, I get as close to Him as I can! I have chosen Him and I will tell everyone about
the wonderful ways He rescues me.
Psalms 73:28 TLB

God's telephone number: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable
things you do not know."
Jeremiah 33:3 NIVUK

In the same way the Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we
ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express.
Romans 8:26 GNT

"The telephone dial is a reminder that when everything else comes to naught,
we can dial that and ask for help from the Operator."
Hugh Redwood⁸

It is important not only to pray for the impossible, but also to pray when it is impossible
– impossible even to know for whom to pray or for what we should pray.

God is ready to teach us in this, too, and to teach us for what and for whom we should
pray. If only we could know the good our prayers do when we have prayed. Even though we
did not know for what we prayed, we would feel, I think, the urgency to let God lead us to
prayer – even occasionally giving us an SOS call to prayer.

⁶ (Eliason 1929)

⁷ Anonymous

⁸ Hugh Redwood

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My husband and I and sons, Lelan, then 15, and David, then 5, were on an eleven-day evangelistic trek on foot and horseback. We had asked our supporting churches at home to specially pray for us those two weeks, for we were venturing into new territory. The prayers we asked for especially were for evangelistic victories. Had we known what lay ahead, we might have asked for prayers of a somewhat different nature, too.

We had stayed two nights in a large Mien village, but the teaching had been hampered by a demon worship that had run concurrently with our teaching.

A tribesman, who spoke Chinese, mentioned that he was off to Pepper Water Village the next day. Pepper Water! How many years we had wanted to go there, but had often been warned by Chinese friends as well as Thai police that just over the border from Pepper Water there was an encampment of Chinese communists. On occasion the Police had flatly refused permission to travel there.

On this particular trip we had been having trouble getting carriers for our loads, so when the tribesman offered to let us put our loads on his pack animals and guide us to Pepper Water, we decided to go.

The night before we were to have reached Pepper Water, we slept in the sleepy-hollow Thai village of Two Forks. Here there was a bamboo village guest house where we bedded down – ourselves with our two sons, the tribesman and his Chinese horseman and our tribal horseman, who also spoke Chinese.

In the night I was awakened by Chinese voices. At first I supposed them to be our guide and his horseman. Then I heard one voice say in Chinese, "Are they friends of yours?"

"No, " came the reply, "they are only missionaries I met down the way."
"Where do they go?"

"To Pepper Water."

"Do they know the trail?"

"No, I am their guide."

"Are they friends of yours?"

Now my ears tingled. A Chinese will not harm his friend or the friend of a friend --- why did the other voice have to know if we were friends of our guide?

Other questions followed, and the third time I heard him ask, "Are they friends ...?" I felt I must somehow quietly awaken my husband. If only he would waken quietly!

I could now see one form silhouetted against the night sky framed by the window. The other voice was that of a stranger on the ground below the house.

"They'll be terrified when they meet us on the trail tomorrow!"

I touched my husband's arm -- then my fingers to his lips to signal silence, but the tiny sounds we made alerted our guide to the fact that their conversation must end quietly. Abruptly he

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swung around, flashing his flashlight to the other side of the house and began calling to our horseman "Lao Lee, Lao Lee! Your horses are gone."

The only reply was a sleepy grunt from our horseman Lao Lee. "Wandered down to the river where the grass is greener," he mumbled and Lao Lee resumed his snoring. The confusion gave time for the other voice to disappear into the dark jungle.

Praying quietly till nearly dawn, my husband and I reached a decision and by paying several prices for carriers, we were able to transfer our loads from our guide's horses to our own carriers and leave the next morning by an entirely different trail, one my husband had traveled before and knew well.

Late that afternoon we arrived safely – though scratched and torn by thorny wicker palms -- in a small Luh tribal village. We found a couple of bonuses there besides safety. As we broke through the pass and slipped into the basin, our eyes met one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever seen anywhere. The mountains completely encircled a tiny basin. The hills were rich in shades of deep green -- the basin itself was a golden bowl of rice ready for harvest. A river ran tranquilly along the edge of the basin watering stately old trees.

In the village the people were thrilled with the story of salvation. Nowhere had we met such open hearts and eager minds. The terrors of the past night were quickly forgotten as our souls feasted on the beauty and tranquility of the basin and we turned to answer the multitude of questions about the Savior. Full measure, pressed down and running over! We had asked only for safe deliverance from our dilemma

We spent two nights in that village and after two more nights in other villages where interest was also keen, we arrived home. There was a letter waiting for us from the church in Lewistown, Montana: "We just want you to know that we have organized special prayer for you throughout the two weeks of your evangelistic trip. We are eager to hear what the Lord has done."

What had He done? We were overwhelmed! Without the prayers of these loving friends, what would have been our lot? Would I have awakened to the sound of whispers in Chinese? Surely the Lord had impressed an SOS upon these loved ones in Christ. And though at that time we saw no fruit for the Kingdom from that trip, fourteen years later we began to reap the harvest of seed sown on that trip.

I often think back with awe to some of the SOS experiences the Lord has given me. Mwang Meng a Mien Christian woman became my "older sister" when she and her husband, Brother Six, adopted me into the Mien tribe. I hadn't seen Muang for some months when she had talked to me about how she understood what it must have meant to my mother to let me come so far from home to teach her people, the Mien, about Christ. Now she said, "Big Sister Two, what happened to your mother on January 19th? I felt such a compulsion to pray for her that day."

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I thought only a moment and replied, "That was the day my father died." Young though Mwang Meng was in her faith, her walk with the Lord was so close He could whisper an SOS to her. What fun she and Mother must be having getting acquainted in Heaven!

Several years ago I had left our young children in our home in the mountain tribal village with their daddy while I went to the plains to help a couple of weeks in a Bible and literacy school for leprosy patients. About half way through the course I was teaching, I was awakened one night by a dream in which I saw just the grinning face of my ten-year-old son Lelan. I knew that grin well! It meant, "I'm headed for mischief." Being reminded of him, I offered a fleeting prayer for him and the rest of the family and soon fell asleep again.

Awakened a second time by the same grinning face, I was a bit alarmed and lay praying for some time before sleep would come.

When the same grinning face appeared the third time in my dream, I was really alarmed and called to Imogene Williams in whose home I was staying. She got up and we both prayed for some time. Throughout the day, as we went about our teaching tasks, we both felt an urgency to pray for Lelan. Then about mid.-afternoon we both found the burden lifted -- the urge to pray satisfied.

When I arrived home I asked, "What happened to Lelan on that day?"

My husband replied, "Oh that was the day he was walking on the trapeze bar (about six feet above the ground) and fell off on his head. He was unconscious for a time and dazed until mid-afternoon. He has seemed all right ever since. Why do you ask?"

Not long after I began sending my children away to boarding school, as far away as India. An emergency cable might take days. The memory of that trapeze bar experience was a constant comfort and blessing to me. Through it the Lord had said to me: "You see I love your little ones. Commit them to Me. I can even call you to pray for them before any person could know to send you a cable."

Never have I been called to prayer so dramatically again. Perhaps I have been more sensitive to the Lord's SOS and He had a purpose in that one time.

One day our family was vacationing at a beach in south Thailand. For no reason I could put my finger on that day, I felt I must pray for Isobel Kuhn. Though Mrs. Kuhn had been in China while we were there, and in Thailand for several years, I had never met her. I had been richly blest by her books and by friendship with her daughter, Kathy. Now Mrs. Kuhn had returned to America for treatment for the malignancy that was to be her ticket for passage Home.

That day I felt I must pray at intervals throughout the day that her life would be spared. I thought of the blessing of her writing ministry and asked the Lord to heal.

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Later I wrote to Mrs. Kuhn to tell her of that day's prayers. She replied, "Do not feel badly that soon the Lord will take me home. He has given me Jeremiah 29:11 and 'I know His thoughts to me are good and not evil.' He has made it clear to me that I am not to be healed, but to go home. On the day that you prayed, though, the doctors did not think I could possibly live through the day. But I made a surprising recovery and am at my writing again."

She lived to complete three more books which have been a double blessing to me. Besides my own enjoyment of the books, I like to think that I had some small part in making the writing of them possible.

Missionaries are very human and have problems. One time a difference of opinion over certain missionary methods were being greatly accentuated by personality problems. The situation had reached an acute stage where it seemed some solution had to be found. In the midst of this tense time I found it was my turn on November 30th to lead the Bible study that preceded our weekly missionary prayer meeting.

Each time I sat down to pray and study for that Bible study, my mind could seemingly go no further than 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Again and again I prayed, "Oh Lord, please -- not that! Help me find some subject that will not ignite the situation." But always it was the quiet assurance "Yes, 1 Corinthians 12!"

Never have I prepared a lesson with more heart-searching prayer. As I dragged my spiritual feet to the prayer meeting, my prayer was, "Lord, guard my tongue. Don't let me say anything that would add fuel to the fire!"

The study was an explosive one --sharp things were said, but through it all there was honesty and a feeling that the Lord was in charge. When it was over, brother shook hands with brother and said, "I may not agree with you, but I still love you!"

Ten days later a letter came from a prayer partner in America, "Lois, whatever was wrong on November 30th? The Lord laid the heaviest burden on my heart for you."

The time she had been in urgent prayer was the time of the Bible study and discussion. How grateful we were that the Lord had found a soul beamed in for His SOS.

Often I have wondered who prayed. What joy in heaven to find out who it was whose prayers guided us through some rough spots. Whose prayers brought us from childish foolishness to spiritual maturity?

A quiet urge to pray is a far more common occurrence than some of the more dramatic SOS calls described here, but it takes a sensitive soul of one fully attuned to God to receive these quiet calls to prayer.

4 "Dow-gow"? -- What is That?

I will bring him near and he will come close to me, for who is he who will devote himself to be close to me?
Jeremiah 30:21 b. NIV

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.
John 16:24 NIV

What do they do
On blissful days like this
Those poor who have no God?

When autumn sets a torch to every tree,
When ecstasy
Would all but burst the heart,
What do they do
With no one to say thank you to?
Myra Scovel⁹

Settling ourselves on stools a bare six inches high, our teaching eventually came to the same point in every Mien home. "When you become Christians you will burn your demon shelf. You will no longer have demon worship, but will learn to 'dow-gow' (pray) to God and He will hear and answer you."

In every home we met the same question. "What do you mean by prayer?" The word, "dow-gow" had been borrowed from the Chinese as the Mien seemingly had no equivalent word or thought in their language. The only form of "prayer" they knew was bargaining with the demons, or flattering them into helping. Prayer is neither bargaining nor flattering. It is rather submission and praise as we lay our heart's desires before the Lord.

Our attempts to explain were not usually fully understood, and almost always someone would suggest, "Why don't you pray right here and show us how to pray?" Pray as a matter of demonstration? It seemed a little inappropriate until we remembered that once twelve men said to the Master, "Lord, teach us to pray."

What would it be like to not even have a word for prayer? Much more, what would it be like to have never known the peace and comfort there is in turning to a loving Heavenly Father, to have never experienced fellowship with Him? What would it be like to have no one to say "thank you" to when the heart is full of joy?

⁹ (Scovel n.d.)

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Have we treated this precious privilege of prayer as we should such a priceless treasure, or have we squeezed it into a spare moment here and there, neglecting it entirely if the press of "the work" seems too much? Surely the answer is embarrassing before God! It seems we can hear Him say, "Thou hast not called upon me ... but thou hast been weary of me." (Isaiah. 43:22 KJV) Must we be like the third part of Israel to be brought into the fire to be refined before we call upon Him? (Zechariah 13:8, 9)

"Prayer is not a little habit pinned on us while we were tied to our mother's apron string; neither is it a little decent minute's grace said over an hour's dinner. It is the most serious work of our most serious years. It engages (or should) more of time and appetite than our longest dinings or richest feasts... (in spite of this) not infrequently the preacher's only praying is by his bedside and in his nightdress, ready for bed, and soon in it."¹⁰

Would we restore the New Testament Church? Then we must restore prayer to its rightful place in the church and in our individual lives. "We have seen in our day what has been called an attempt to go back to primitive customs in the church. We can do nothing better if only we go back far enough. I find prayer constant everywhere. The primitive church was born in a prayer meeting. The prayer meeting is the barometer of the church and points to showers of blessing or seasons of drought."¹¹

There is scarcely a book in the Bible but has an example of, or an exhortation to prayer. Think of Abraham whose faith was reckoned to him for righteousness, and his prayer for a son was granted. Think of Moses who prayed for the forgiveness of sinful Israel and saved them from the wrath of God. Think of Joshua whose prayer stayed the sun for a whole day. Gideon prayed and put out the fleece. Blind Samson prayed for strength to pull down the temple of Dagon. Hannah prayed for a son that she might give him to the Lord. Samuel prayed for guidance in the anointing of a king. David prayed for forgiveness and deliverance, and did not forget to praise God for the wonderful answers to his prayers. Neither should we forget Elijah, a man of like passions with us. He brought about a drought and a refreshing rain, and fire from heaven, as well as giving life to a dead child through his prayers.

McIntire describes the victory of their prayer life thus: "In prayer Jacob became Israel; in prayer Daniel foresaw Christ's day and was glad; in prayer Saul of Tarsus received his commission to go "far hence" among the Gentiles; in prayer the Son of Man accomplished His obedience, and embraced the cross."¹²

"Dow-gow" -- what does that mean? Prayer means simply, as the Mien now say, talking with God. It is exciting to see what God is doing in the lives of Mien Christians, young in the faith, as they learn to talk with God. It is exciting to see the mien church grow in numbers and in depth as they learn to go to God in prayer.

¹⁰ (Havner 1964)

¹¹ (Bounds 1985)

¹² (McIntyre 1978)

5 Lord, Teach Us to Pray

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of the disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..." Luke 11:1 NIV

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. Romans 8:26 NIV

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1 NIV

"Not, 'Lord, teach us how to pray' -- but 'Lord, teach us to pray.'" John R. Rice¹³

The Lord Jesus, though divine and so, one might think, not in need of the strength of prayer, gave Himself earnestly to prayer. In this, as in all else, He is our perfect example. We read that, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed." Mark 1:35 NIV

Or again at night, after a hard day of teaching and preaching, He went to the lonely Mountainside to be with His Father in prayer through the quiet night watches. The Greek verb gives the idea of repeated, habitual withdrawals for prayer on the part of our Lord. Luke says specifically, "Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives,..." Luke 21:37 NIV When Luke tells the story of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, he says, "Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives..." Luke 22:39 NIV. This was an emergency, but not one in which He had to decide where to go or to whom. Often He had met His Father on the Mount of Olives, so it was most natural for Him to go there as usual.

The accounts of Jesus' times of private prayer might be listed under five specific needs:

1. Loneliness
2. Weariness
3. Pressure of popularity
4. Responsibility
5. Temptation.

What precious fellowship He must have had with His Father in the lonely places. Lonely places are far from lonely when one is there talking with one's own Father! No loneliness is lonelier than being in the midst of the inescapable crowd when no one, not even best friends understand one's purpose.

¹³ (J. R. Rice n.d.)

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Jesus, experiencing very often this loneliness must have longed to escape from this loneliness of misunderstanding to the sweet fellowship of His Father who did understand and who had planned with Him the Love that would one day bring some of the crowd to be real companions to the Master.

Hemmed in by the incessant crowd, Jesus valued above sleep, time alone with His Father. Once, we are told, as He prayed His face changed its appearance and His clothes became dazzling white. Moses, on the mountain alone with God, came back to the people with a radiant face. No one can be alone with the Father without some transformation in his appearance, in his life. We need to seek Him in the lonely places so we can begin to reflect some of His radiance.

How often Jesus must have been bone-weary: walking, teaching, healing, in conflict with the religious teachers who had been misleading the people. How tiring it must have been! When the woman touched the hem of His robe and was healed, Jesus felt "that power had gone out from Him". (Mark 5:30 NIV) "After sending the people away, he went up a hill by himself to pray. When evening came, Jesus was there alone." Matthew 14:23 GNT) One can almost feel the quiet strength of the moment -- the refreshment, the power that flowed from Heaven to enable Him for the next encounter with mankind.

Jesus' problems as a human being, tempted in every way that we are, (Hebrews 4:15) went deeper than just loneliness and weariness. He was tempted by popularity. It is human to enjoy being popular. Jesus was approachable and kind. The people came for healing, and He healed, spoke kindly to them, and more came for healing and kind words. "But the news about Jesus spread all the more widely, and crowds of people came to hear him and be healed from their diseases. But he would go away to lonely places, where he prayed." (Luke 5:15-16 GNT)

It is an exhilarating feeling to be popular -- to have people come freely, speak highly, but there is also temptation in it -- the temptation to take the glory for oneself, the temptation to bask in this glory and shun the more unpleasant tasks. So He would "go away to lonely places where he prayed."

In spite of His humility, His popularity increased in volume and tempo until "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself." (John 6:15 NIV) He could have become a king without the cross and this must have been a real temptation. In His Father's presence His life once again took its proper perspective. There He knew that the way to the crown was only through the cross.

The divine Son of God, become man like His brother man, was at times burdened with the responsibilities placed on Him. When the time came begin to share responsibility with others, He felt the need of divine wisdom. "At that time Jesus went up a hill to pray, and spent the whole night there praying to God. When day came, he called his disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He named apostles:" (Luke 6:12-13 GNT)

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Had He perhaps felt the need of the quiet with His Father who has promised to give of His wisdom "generously and graciously to all?" (James 1:5 GNT) With the wisdom of His Father He chose the twelve men who were to be entrusted with the Kingdom of God.

Another time "very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of town to a lonely place where he prayed. But Simon and his companions went out searching for him, and when they found him they said, 'Everyone is looking for you.' But Jesus answered: 'We must go on to the other villages around here. I have to preach in them also, because that is why I came.' " (Mark 1:35-38 GNT) This was how Jesus prepared Himself for the responsibility of a great evangelistic crusade.

The fifth occasion of Christ's need for prayer is perhaps one that is best known by all of us. When we are hounded by temptation or plunged into sorrow, then we, too, feel the need for prayer.

We know well the story of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, but do we fully understand the implication of His forty days of fasting that accompanied that temptation time? In our day men fast more often in protest than in prayer. Jesus' fast was not a fast of protest, but of prayer. He had been praying at the time of His baptism and "while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in bodily form, like a dove." (Luke 3:21-22 GNT)

"Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the desert, where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. In all that time He ate nothing..." (Luke 4:1-2 GNT)

Jesus came from the Jordan filled with the Spirit and was led, still filled, to the desert. When we are filled with the Spirit, the Spirit will lead us to prayer -- at times to such intense prayer that we will fast, longing only to be with our Father in silence.

As our Lord's life moved swiftly toward the accomplishment of God's plan, Christ again was drawn apart. "Jesus left the city and went, as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples went with him." (Luke 22:39 GNT) He confided in His disciples, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch." (Mark 14:34 GNT)

At this point Jesus felt not only the need for the strength that His Father would give Him, but the human fellowship of these He loved so dearly. He knew, too, far better than they what lay ahead for them. "Keep watch and pray," He told them, "that you will not fall into temptation... the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:38 GNT) How well He knew as He threw Himself on His face and prayed! How the flesh longed for deliverance from the cup even while the spirit cried out, "Your will, not mine!"

Three men, chosen often to share the greatest moments of Jesus' life, slept again while He prayed. They had fallen asleep / dozed on the Mount of Transfiguration and all but missed the glory of that event. (Luke 9:28-36) They would have understood Gethsemane and Calvary

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better had they been fully awake at the transfiguration to hear Moses and Elijah discuss with Jesus the plan and purpose of His death which was shortly to shatter their world.

In Gethsemane they slept again, missing the strength that could have carried them victoriously through the next few days. While they slept, Jesus prayed the prayer of all prayers, "Father", He prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Yet not my will but yours be done."(Luke 22:42 NIV)

Here is the epitome of yieldedness -- to know that God can do all things -- even the thing for which my heart cries, and yet to be fully willing that He, for His own reasons, should withhold the answer I so long for. "Because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." (Hebrews 5:7-9 NIV)

Lord, teach us to pray!

6 A Golden Bowl of Incense

As he did so, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each had a harp and gold bowls, filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

Revelation 5:8 GNT

Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

Revelation 8:3-5 NIV

Lit at the lamp of God
In this still hour
Prayer
Is lighting precious candles
Everywhere.
--Myra Scovel ¹⁴

Revelation, with all its wealth of symbolism has one symbol that is especially challenging, encouraging and easy to understand. "The prayers of God's people" are likened to the sweet smelling incense in golden bowls held in the hands of an angel. This metaphor speaks of the beauty and preciousness of prayer before the Lord, and of power unleashed when the golden bowl is cast upon the earth. (Revelations 8: 3-5)

¹⁴ Scovel, Such Bounty 1958

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Truly the prayers of God's people are fragrant and precious and, cast out across the earth, the power is fantastic. God is pleased and we are enriched by the quietness symbolized by the smoke of the incense rising heavenward. Here is a tranquility we desperately need, but there is power and action there, too -- power which we need, power which far exceeds lightning, thunder and earthquake. It enables a few men to "turn the world upside down". It is indeed a golden bomb of prayer!

Men trained in Christ's school of prayer learned their lesson well. How they prayed! Yet for what did they pray! How did they pray? There has been considerable speculation as to what the prayer meeting in Acts 12:5 was all about. Many have supposed that as Peter was led off to prison the church was wringing its collective hands and crying, "Lord, don't let them lock Peter up. Deliver him." Then, the speculation goes; they were amazed when their prayer was answered.

They were amazed all right at the way in which the Lord answered their prayer. I rather suspect the reason they were so surprised was that God had more than answered their prayers. I wonder if their prayers didn't run something like this: "Lord, You know Peter! Give him the courage to stand. We remember Peter that awful night when he warmed his hands by the devil's fireside. He had been cocky that day, promising never to deny his Lord, but Peter, the rock, crumbled to sand that night. Lord, we believe this time You can keep him rock firm in his stand for You. But, Lord, it's going to be hard! So You be with him every minute. Just give him the courage he needs."

The reason I think this is how the prayer meeting went is that throughout the New Testament record of prayer this was more the heart of the prayer -- the subject for prayer requests. The church gathered for prayer another time when Peter along with John had been freed from prison. They prayed: "Lord, take notice of the threats they made and allow us, your servants, to speak your message with all boldness." (Acts 4:29 GNT)

The answer: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God's message with boldness." (Acts 4:31 GNT)

Paul in prison wrote a prayer request to the church at Ephesus: "And pray also for me, that God will give me a message when I am ready to speak, so that I may speak boldly and make known the gospel's secret. For the sake of this gospel I am an ambassador, though now I am in prison. Pray that I may be bold in speaking about the gospel as I should. (Ephesians. 6: 19-20 GNT)

Paul, praying for the Thessalonians said, "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself ... encourage you and strengthen you to always do and say what is good." (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 GNT)

All this does not mean that the early church never prayed for release from prison -- for protection from their enemies. They did, but such a prayer was coupled with, and secondary

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to, a plea that they would have the right message and the courage to proclaim it. "Finally, our friends, pray for us that the Lord's message may continue to spread rapidly and be received with honor, just as it was among you. Pray also that God will rescue us from wicked and evil people." (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 GNT) For "I know that by means of your prayers and the help which comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ I shall be set free. My deep desire and hope is that I shall never fail in my duty, but that at all times, and especially right now, I shall be full of courage, so that with my whole being I shall bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die.." (Philippians 1:19-20 GNT)

Paul's prayer for himself: first courage and then, if possible, release. His prayer for others; for courage. "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself ... encourage you and strengthen you to always do and say what is good." (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 GNT) And for peace: "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way." (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NIV) "May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being, spirit, soul, and body free from every fault, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5: 23-24 GNT)

Panic prayers are more characteristic of our own pampered Generation than they were of New Testament times. The prayers that enabled men to "turn the world upside down", were meaty prayers -- courage, a pure life, first, Lord, then -- if You please-- safety and deliverance from those who oppose Your message. They were whether -we-live-or-die sort of prayers.

What of God's people in post New Testament days? Have none of them known this kind of prayer? Men who have been greatly used of God have always been men of prayer -- this kind of prayer.

Martin Luther said that he had so much work to do for God that he could never get it done unless he prayed three hours a day! Dr. Adoniram Judson said, "Arrange thy affairs, if possible, so that thou canst leisurely devote two or three hours every day not merely to devotional exercises, but to the very act of sacred prayer and communion with God ... Consider that thy time is short and that business and company must not be allowed to rob thee of thy God." Does it seem impossible? Adoniram Judson was a busy man, and one who impressed the world in a way that men of perhaps greater capacity have failed to do.

"John Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. He once said, 'Give me one hundred praying preachers and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer.'"¹⁵

George Mueller cast himself upon God as few men have. With hundreds of orphans dependent upon him in an age when money was a very scarce item, he often found himself with nothing to feed and clothe the children, no money to buy fuel in bitterest winter. He found that through prayer there was a limitless resource and never once were his needs not met as he took them to God in prayer.

¹⁵ J. R. Rice n.d.

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E.V. Zollars of the early restoration movement founded Phillips University on his knees as it were. Many nights, say those who knew him, he arose from his bed to spend the night in prayer. Problems were solved, funds were forthcoming, and E.V. Zollars lives in the memory of many students as a man who knew how to prevail with God.

Someone has said, "Ask a busy man to do it. The other kind has no time." Prayer, real prayer, is work! It is time consuming. Often we think we are too busy to pray, but the busier we are the more we need to pray. Perhaps we would do well to adopt the motto of one busy minister, "No Bible, no breakfast!"

A quote on the wall of a busy Christian doctor reads: "For the Christian to say he has no time to pray is as for the carpenter to say he has no time to sharpen his tools.

"The prayer meeting is the barometer of the church, heralding showers of blessing or seasons of drought." ¹⁶

How reads the barometer in your life -- your church?

¹⁶ E. M. Bounds 1985

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