

A Gem from the Mountain

By Lois E Callaway



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

A Pilgrim Ponders Prayer

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

Book # 7

A Gem 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 composition by Joyce Callaway Nicholson.

All Poems not attributed to others
were written by Lois Callaway

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A Gem from the Mountain

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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This book reveals prayer as the gem of great worth, the prerequisites of answered prayer being set forth as the setting and facets of the gem in seven chapters.

1 The Gem - its Setting -- is where the gem of prayer is pictured as the special privilege of prayer given the one who is "in Christ" -- a child of God speaking to his own Father

Chapters 2 to 7 examine these facets of the gem of prayer:

2 The Facet of His Name -- the efficacy of praying in Jesus' name and thoughts as to what that oft used phrase really means.

3 The Facet of His Grace -- Christian graces that tune God's ear to our prayer.

4 The Facet of Faith -- the promise of answered prayer for the prayer of faith.

5 The Facet of Humble Boldness -- God's delight in both our boldness and our humility

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7 The Facet of the Yielded heart -- the willingness of God to answer any prayer that is asked in accordance with His will.

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Then mount four rows of precious stones on it.

The first row shall be carnelian, chrysolite and beryl; ;

The second row shall be turquoise, lapis lazuli and emerald;

In the third row a jacinth, agate and amethyst;

In the fourth row a topaz, an onyx and jasper.

Mount them in gold filigree settings. There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes. For the breastpiece, make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the LORD." Exodus 28:17-22, 29 NIV

These (Gentile nations) I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. Isaiah 56:7 NIV

God scooped up the rainbow
To put it in a gem;
In the prism of the diamond,
The promises of God.

God picked up the diamond
To give to me -- His child!
It's mine -- this priceless treasure
-- The matchless gem of prayer

Bear with me, please, for a few more chapters in which we will examine and enjoy the beauty of the gem of prayer we have discovered on the mountain of Prayer. But first a final look at the mountain on which we mined this treasure.

I lift up my eyes to the hills -- where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalms 121:1-2 NIV)

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The Mien tribal people, with whom we have shared God's good news for forty years, have a spirit ceremony referred to as "calling heaven and earth". It is a last resort, all-out effort to get help from somewhere. Many of them as Christians are now finding that help truly comes from Someone -- not somewhere! Help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth -- not from heaven or earth.

God is often pictured as being a God of the mountain tops. He spoke to Moses on Horeb (Sinai), the Mountain of God. (Exodus 3:1;4:17) Many years later He met Elijah there in an exciting encounter. (I Kings 19:8-15) Horeb (Sinai) was not intended to be the mountain of God for all time however. Psalms 68:17 tells us "...The Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary." The Psalmist tells us that "The Lord is enthroned on Mount Zion (Psalms 9:11) and again that God has a tent in Salem (Jerusalem) and a dwelling place in Zion (Isaiah 8:18) More than that, "the Lord Almighty will reign gloriously on Mount Zion in Jerusalem." (Isaiah 24:23 NIV)

In the days of Moses, God thundered on Sinai, but Joel tells us:

"The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her. In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias."
(Joel 3:16-18 NIV)

Jesus sat upon a mountain to preach His most famous sermon. When He left our planet earth to ascend beyond the mountains once again, He called His disciples to come to Him on the mountain (Matthew. 23:16) and from that mountain He went on ahead to prepare the Holy City, the New Jerusalem for us.

Mountains are important in the Christian life because so often the mountain top was where God chose to live and to speak with His people. It was on Mount Horeb that God first spoke to Moses and there, God later hid him in the cleft of the rock that Moses might see the glory of the Lord as He passed by. (Exodus. 33:18-23; 34:4-8)

On Horeb the Lord said to Elijah: "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." (I Kings.19: 8-13) Elijah saw the wind, the earthquake and the fire, but hid his face when he heard the Gentle whisper of God.

On the Mount of Olives Jesus was accustomed to pray to His Father. One day the disciples "saw Jesus praying in a certain place." (Luke.11:1) Was it perhaps on a mountain? They said, "Teach us to pray."

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Our two most precious possessions come from the mountain: salvation from Mount Calvary, and the teaching and experience of prayer from the mountains of God's presence. A precious treasure is ours, the pearl of great price, salvation, and this gem of prayer, right from the mountain quarry of God. Let us look at it, cherish it, use it to enrich our lives. It was in fact on a mountain in Colorado where I, at the age of thirteen, discovered God as Lord of my life as He gave me the gem of prayer for my own.¹

Does our Father not want us to have pleasures? Of course He does! He longs to give us the most precious treasures and pleasures of His Kingdom. He only wants us be so in tune with Him that we will be capable of enjoying each pleasure -- each treasure.

Shall we climb together to the Secret Place of Thunder where the pure light of His presence can illumine our Gem of Prayer that we may appreciate it more fully both for its beauty and its worth?

1 The Gem -- Its Setting

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you..
John 15:7 NIV

Let us ask whether our prayer be indeed the expression of a life wholly given over to the will of God and the love of men. Andrew Murray²

I have become
As it were
wind chimes
waiting His breath
to sing
to passersby
whatsoever melody
He chooses.

Rachel Rice³

¹ To this day the sound of water rushing over rocks in a mountain stream shadowed over by tall pines, takes me instantly back to that moment of discovery and my commitment to Him and to a daily time of communicating with Him.

² (Murray, The Prayer Life 1899)

³ (R. Rice, Decision Magazine 1970)

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People assigned to Southeast Asia often find themselves developing into rock hounds -- collectors of not just any old rock, but of the exquisite gems found in the soils of Burma and Thailand. They learn to turn the star sapphire or ruby in the light to find the most radiantly perfect stars. They compare jade with jade, ruby with ruby, emerald with emerald.

Having selected the stone or stones, the next concern is the perfect setting. What kind of setting will best set off the gem best? The gem, itself valuable, is enhanced by the perfect setting.

So it is with the gem of prayer. We hold in our hand a priceless treasure -- the gem of permission to go to our Heavenly Father with our requests and our thanks. There is, however, the perfect setting for this gem which we too often neglect. The perfect setting for the prayer of the Christian is the life in Christ.

Our Heavenly Father loves us so much that He readily forgives our sins and cleanses our lives again and again, answering prayers of hearts that have wandered and come back in time of emergency, but He can best answer prayer and bless the child who lives daily, moment by moment, in Him.

What is it to be in Christ? John answers: "Whoever says that he lives in God must live as Jesus lived." (1 John 2:6 NCV) What a requirement! But God never asks of us anything He is not prepared to enable us to do. "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.. (2 Peter 1:3-4 NIV)

How do we claim such extraordinary promises? By prayer! Simply by coming to Him constantly saying, "Lord, I have a little faith and believe that You can make me into this kind of remarkable person who shares Your divine nature. I claim my portion of Your nature for this day -- for this trying situation."

Pushed into a hopeless situation where you know your own personality is apt to add tinder to an already ignited situation, it is a tremendous experience to fully commit the situation, the personalities involved, and your own personality (and tongue!) to Him, and then, being vividly aware of His hand on your shoulder, to see beauty come out of a sordid situation. You back off and say in awe, "Lord, how did You do it?"

This exciting, full-of-surprises life in Christ is the perfect setting for the life of prayer! It is gold, precious, enduring, worthy of polish and care.

"From now on then, you must live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God's will and not by human desires." (1 Peter 4:2 GNT) Ephesians 4:23 as it is

translated in the Mien language says, "Let God train your heart and change your desires." Praise God! "He gave himself for us. . . to make us a pure people who belong to Him alone ..." (Titus 2:14 GNT)

The Facets

What are the characteristics of the facets of this gem of prayer? Just as one turns a diamond in the light, so one may gently turn the gem of prayer to see its various facets scintillate in the Light of the World, Jesus, revealing all its depth of color and worth.

A perfectly cut diamond must have fifty-eight facets, properly placed so that each one catches and reflects the light and color prisms of another. In much the same way, the facets of prayer illuminate and enhance one another. Any facet left out reduces the beauty and worth of the stone. Any facet of prayer neglected means we cheat ourselves out of the full value.

"In His name" might be called the table facet, and our own yieldedness to His will the cutlet facet. Around these two basic facets we find other facets such as the graciousness of the child of God, which reflects all the tints of love, cleanness, separateness from the world and obedience to His every wish.

Another facet we might call faith.

Still another humble boldness -- the flashing fire of boldness softened by the Gentle tints of humility.

Forgiveness, Jesus reminds us, is another important facet if we ourselves would pray for forgiveness.

It has been said that there is nothing so heart searching as believing prayer, or even the honest effort to pray in faith. Let us not turn the edge of that self examination by the thought that God does not hear our prayer for reasons known to Himself alone. By no means! "When you ask you do not receive it, because your motives are bad; you ask for things to use for your own pleasures." (James 4:3 GNT)

Let that word of God search us. "Let us ask whether our prayer be indeed the expression of a life wholly given over to the will of God and the love of men."⁴

⁴ (Murray, With Christ in the School of Prayer 1978)

2 The Gem -- The Facet of His Name

"Whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you." John 15:16 NIV

" You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." John 14:14 NIV

"...for it is he who is the "Yes" to all of God's promises. This is why through Jesus Christ our "Amen" is said to the glory of God.." 2 Corinthians 1:20 GNT

The promises of God
Are vast!
Beyond that we can think
Or ask!
Yet Jesus Christ, Himself,
God's Son,
'Tis He who is the "Yes"
To them!

Living in Him, we can then pray in His name. "In Jesus' name", a phrase so easily and glibly tacked on to an English prayer presents problems in translation into other languages. What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name?

Jesus Himself told us to ask in His name. "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)

As His disciples, we "belong to him alone". (Titus 2:14 GNT) We have taken His name upon ourselves, not just while we pray but for life. Day in and day out we are His. We bear His name and because in Him we live and move and have our being, we ask from within this security of His name, wherein we live continually. His will covers our whole lives. His power, His authority makes His will possible because our life is in Him.⁵

A young college graduate with no finances of his own, no reputation of his own (i.e. he has not yet "made a name for himself") joins a reputable business firm. The firm has solid assets, a worldwide reputation. The young man, joining the firm, has business cards printed -- his name -- an unknown factor. But as a Representative of THE COMPANY, suddenly he is known. He can sign contracts involving millions of dollars and they are valid because he can do it officially in the name of THE COMPANY. Should the young man prove himself unworthy and be dismissed, or should he decide

⁵ See Philippians 2:13 "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (NIV)

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to strike out on his own, he could no longer sign such contracts, or even carry the business card.

The first time we returned to the mission field, leaving all our five children in the United States, we strongly felt the need of someone who could act in our name on behalf of our minor children. For many years our forwarding agent had power of attorney to act on our behalf in legal and business matters but even she felt the need of someone to share the responsibility where legal action might involve our children. So it was that we invested in our oldest son the power of attorney so that he could act quickly and legally should any such need arise.

How could he have this power? Because his father had given him the authority, legally, to act in his father's name. Any action he would take would be as legally binding as an action by his father himself.

Why were we willing to give such a young man this power? First, because he was our son. He had grown up in our family. He knew how his parents reacted to various situations and had proved himself trustworthy. We could trust Lelan to act in a way he was sure his own father would act in any given situation. Should a situation arise where he could not be sure of his father's reaction, we could still trust him to act in the interest of the family. We had no qualm about authorizing him to act in his father's name.

So it is with the Christian. Only as he is "in Christ" -- in God's family -- can he deal with God "in Jesus' name". "In Christ" he asks in the authority of Christ -- and receives.

Why is God so willing to give that which we ask in Christ's name? "I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son." (John 14:13 GNT) and "your joy will be complete." (John 16:24 NIV)

We should never forget that Christ Himself is the "yes" to all God's promises. "for it is he who is the "Yes" to all of God's promises. This is why through Jesus Christ our "Amen" is said to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 1:20 GNT)

In His name that "Yes" can be stamped on every prayer we pray.

3 The Gem -- The Facet of His Grace

We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will. John 9:31 NIV

. . . and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.. I John 3:22 NIV

Then they will cry out to the Lord, but He will not answer them. At that time, He will hide His face from them because of the evil they have done. Micah 3:4 NIV

My desire, to be like Jesus
My desire, to be like Him.
His Spirit fill me,
His love o'erwhelm me,
In deed and word
To be like Him.

Lillian Plankenhorn⁶

As we continue to turn the gem of prayer to the light of God's Word, we see flashing highlights in this gem of prayer. So many things make up the productive prayer life.

Our identification with Christ has exciting possibilities of producing within us characteristics that could perhaps be grouped under one cover term -- graciousness. Yes, the Lord's people are gracious.

My dictionary⁷ defines gracious as "obsolete: godly. . . 2a. Marked by kindness and courtesy." Yes, God's people should be "marked by kindness and courtesy." From what other source do kindness and courtesy arise if not from God? Graciousness is, in its finest form, derived from the grace of God.

Further my dictionary says, "grace. . . *b*: a virtue coming from God
c: a state of sanctification enjoyed through divine grace"

But what has this to do with our gem of prayer? Much! Let us linger a bit over this facet to catch the prisms of purity, righteousness (lit. being right with God), love, and obedience.

⁶ Plankenhorn 1946

⁷ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

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One element of Christian graciousness -- that of purity -- has been symbolized in both Old and New Testaments by the putting on of robes. In Leviticus we read that when Aaron would come to the holy place (that is into the Presence of God) with an offering, he was to "put on the holy linen coat. . . ." (Leviticus 16:3, 4 KJV)

In Revelation one of the elders asks, "Who are these people dressed in white robes. . . ?" (Revelation 7:13-15 GNT)

The answer is, "These are the people who have come safely through the terrible persecution. They have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb.." The white robe of the righteousness of Christ is given freely to all those who are "right with God."

Ephesians gives depth of meaning to these metaphors. "Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy." (Ephesians 4:23, 24 GNT)

God has promised to hear the prayers of the one who is characterized by this newness. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.. (Psalms. 34:15, 16 NIV) David, a man after God's own heart, knew that. "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." (Psalms. 66:18 NIV)

Jeremiah speaks of a people who were not holy -- a people who were not willing to be set apart and separated from the world for God's use. The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Do not pray for the well-being of this people." (Jeremiah 14:10, 11 NIV)

Speaking for God, Isaiah explains the reason for the rather shocking command God gave Jeremiah. "Don't think that the Lord is too weak to save you or too deaf to hear your call for help! It is because of your sins that he doesn't hear you. It is your sins that separate you from God, when you try to worship him." (Isaiah 59:1, 2 GNT)

God requires holiness, separateness from the world, as a prerequisite for the prayer that He will hear. Just as the king asked, "How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?" (Matthew. 22:12 NIV) so the Lord will rebuke us if we approach His throne without the garment of righteousness.

Too expensive a garment? Yes and no. It costs nothing -- yet it costs all that we have and are. He gives it to use -- the righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ -- but we can only put it on by first taking off our old selves and all that they represent, and putting on the new man, Jesus Christ. Then we may kneel at His feet with our prayers.

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Jiem Vang Meng an elder/evangelist among the Mien people in France uses this pungent illustration in his preaching. "When we lived in our primitive villages in Laos where we had no modern facilities, and our days were filled with work and very few special occasions we quite often went too long without bathing or changing clothes. Then we would look down the trail and see an entourage of guest officials coming. No time to prepare, we would pull on our best jacket, reserved for special occasions, from the wicker hamper in the bedroom, put it on and smilingly greet our guests -- looking good but smelling terrible!"

We are like that with God. Emergency!! Need to pray quick. Put on your best, most pure front. Fold your hands. Close your eyes, not realizing that in God's sight we stink!

If we approach the throne in our own sinful condition, then Satan, the "accuser of the brethren" stands beside us to accuse and thwart our purposes before God. Listen!

". . . He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?' Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.' Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.' " (Zechariah 3:1-4 NIV)

Our Lord longs to take from us the filthiness of our own natures and all that Satan could point a finger to, declaring us unworthy before the Lord. God longs to clothe us in His own righteousness leaving Satan no word of accusation to utter.

Not only does God want us clothed in His garments of purity, He wants us to be willingly clothed -- willingly obedient to Him, not dragging our heels.

God, through Jeremiah said, "Yet they did not obey, or incline their ear, but every one walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart... Therefore. . . I will not listen to them." (Jeremiah 11:8, 11 RSV) It is our own evil heart that devises ways to keep us from His Presence. "They have loved to wander thus, they have not restrained their feet, therefore the Lord does not accept them." (Jeremiah 14:10 RSV)

We need to pray not only for the cleanness of a holy heart, but that the Lord will keep us from temptation -- the temptation of our own imaginative hearts. Someone has said that if we insist on eating salt herrings, even the Lord Himself cannot keep us from being thirsty. How often our own evil imaginations take us to places, to books, to movies, to television shows, to paths of reverie where we can scarcely help but sin -- and in the next breath we plead, "Deliver us from temptation."

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"We receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him." (1 John 3:22 GNT) His commands are so simple, and make such good sense. "This is His command, to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us." (1 John 3:23 NIV)

Jesus knew, and we must learn, that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love men, and that all the laws of God were summed up in these two.

Loving God may be easier than loving our neighbor. Linus in a Peanuts comic strip once said, "Oh, I love mankind. It's people I can't stand."⁸

God gets pretty specific about love in regard to prayer. He commands us to love our enemies. ". . . love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. . ." (Matthew. 5:44 NIV) It is only as we learn to pray for our enemies that we can see them through God's eyes and learn to truly love them as God does.

Someone has said, "Not only do we not love our enemies, we don't even really love our friends." If we cannot learn to love, we cannot learn to obey. Paul said, "The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, do not commit murder, do not steal; do not desire what belongs to someone else -- all these, and any others besides, are summed up in the one command, Love your neighbor as you love yourself." (Romans 13:9, 10 GNT) (Whoever loves his neighbor will never carelessly hurt him.) To love, then, is to obey the whole Law.

Peter touched on another crucial point. "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (1 Peter 3:7 NIV)

Do we perhaps let lack of love within the family interfere with our prayers? Love for enemy, friend, Christian brother -- and even our families -- puts us on line for communication with God.

God wants us to lift in prayer hands that are not embroiled in contentions and arguments. "I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.." (1 Timothy 2:8 NIV)

God also wants us to be gracious enough to say thank you. ". . . In all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart." (Philippians 4:6 GNT)

⁸ (Charles Schulz, creator of the popular comic strip "Peanuts.")

How gracious the life of the Christian who wants only to be like Jesus -- whose graces come from the very grace of God! How precious the fellowship of such Christians with their Heavenly Father who delights to hear and answer their prayers!

4 The Gem -- The Facet of Faith

Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24 NIV

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. Matthew 21:22 NIV

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. James 1:6-8 NIV

I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief! Mark 9:24 NIV

Nothing before, nothing behind,
The steps of faith
Fall on the seeming void and find
The rock underneath.

John Greenleaf Whittier⁹

Faith is perhaps the most universally accepted prerequisite for answered prayer. Often we hear unanswered prayer explained by: "My faith wasn't great enough."

Really? What about the man who cried, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24 NIV) It takes such a little faith, and even that is free for the asking.

When asked by the disciples why they couldn't cast out the demons, Jesus said, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew. 17:20 NIV)

Another time the disciples came to Jesus with a request: "Make our faith greater."

⁹ (Whittier 2012, Locations 2664-2665)

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"The Lord answered, "If you had faith as big as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Pull yourself up by the roots and plant yourself in the sea!' and it would obey you."
(Luke 17:6 GNT)

Christ commands our faith. Yet He requires so little -- a mustard seed worth -- and He is willing to give so much if we but ask, for as we are told, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- (Ephesians 2:8 NIV)

Our faith, a prerequisite for answered prayer, grows out of our life in Christ. It is not something we muster for a moment while we approach the Throne with a request, but a way of life. We learn daily to trust Him. He answers such little prayers -- and such big ones -- with such ease as to leave us breathless with wonder. This is how He increases our faith. Someone has said that each answered prayer received with thanksgiving is like a bollard to which a sailor ties the rope which moors the boat to the dock. Each time our prayers are answered we have one more bollard on which to secure the rope of faith.

As life goes on in Him, we find that faith is less of faith and more of knowledge for "...faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see."
(Hebrews 11:1 GNT)

We cannot expect to come to God with an open hand and demand, "Drop the mustard seed of faith here, please. I have a prayer to pray." Rather it is a daily gathering of the mustard seeds from the plants of answered prayer He makes to flourish in our lives.

Abraham believed and hoped, when there was no hope, and so became 'the father of many nations' . . . He was almost one hundred years old; but his faith did not weaken when he thought of his body, which was practically dead, or the fact that Sarah could not have children. His faith did not leave him, and he did not doubt God's promise; his faith filled him with power, and he gave praise to God, for he was absolutely sure that God would be able to do what he had promised." Hebrews. 11:11)

Abraham's faith was not something that happened in a moment of insight. It was rather a growing thing which began when God told him to leave his country and people and his father and go to a land which God would show him and He would bless him and make him a great nation. (Hebrews. 11, Gen 12:2) Abraham got up and went! That was when his faith began to grow.

It grew again when he saw how God blessed him when he unselfishly let Lot take the better land and found that God could bless his worthless-looking portion.

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(Genesis 13:5-18) It was refined as he realized that lack of faith had brought upon him the problems of two wives in one tent. (Genesis. 16:1-10; 21:8-14) His faith must have increased when he saw Lot delivered from Sodom. (Genesis. 19:29) Faith was fully rewarded when Sarah did indeed bear him a son. (Genesis. 21:1-7)

Yet even that was not the end of the development of Abraham's faith -- for he had yet to learn the extremity of faith which raised a knife over the heart of his son just because God had commanded it. (Genesis. 22:1-18) By this time Abraham was able in faith to "reckon that God was able to raise Isaac back from death. . . ." (Hebrews. 11:17-19) Yes, Abraham's faith grew with each obedience.

"A cloud the size of a man's hand" isn't very big, as far as rain clouds are concerned, but it represented a faith big enough to break a three-year drought.
(I Kings. 18:40-46 NIV)

It had taken faith -- and courage -- when Elijah bravely appeared before idolatrous Ahab to announce that as punishment upon the king, no rain should fall on the earth for three and a half years.
(I Kings. 17:1)

His faith was nourished and increased when he was obediently dependent on God for the bread and meat sent by raven express. (I Kings. 17:1-6) Surely his faith grew dramatically when he saw the widow continue to draw meal and oil from seemingly bottomless containers.
(I Kings. 17:7-16)

Elijah's faith was great enough, then, to raise the widow's son from death.
(I Kings. 17:17-24)

Then came his most public test of faith. (I Kings. 18) Once again he was to stand before Ahab, well-knowing that Ahab considered him to be the fly in the ointment, the troubler of Israel, the cause of the great famine that had settled like a vulture on the land.

Before the rain came -- or even the cloud -- Elijah was to give a public demonstration of his faith. There on Mt. Carmel after the prophets of Baal had failed to bring down fire from their god, Elijah staked his very life on the faith that his God was a God who could and would produce fire.

To be sure that no one could accuse him of sleight of hand, Elijah thoroughly soaked the altar, the offering, and the ground around. That was faith! And God honored that faith with a stunning victory as fire fell on Elijah's offering.

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As is so often true, Elijah's faith had perhaps its most subtle tempting in the wake of that great victory. God had promised rain -- Elijah had passed that promise on to Ahab -- but where was the rain? Where indeed was a cloud that would produce rain?

Can't you just see Elijah there on the mountain, his face between his knees, fighting mounting doubt? (I Kings. 18:42)

"Go, servant. Go up now, look toward the sea."

The servant looked and came back. "There is nothing."

"Go again, servant. Go seven times."

"Nothing. . . nothing. . . nothing. . . nothing. . . nothing . . . nothing. . ."

Then the seventh time: "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand!" (1 Kings 18:44 NIV)

A little cloud like a man's hand! But Elijah saw in it a far greater Hand. He saw the Hand of God fulfilling a promise.

Again he gave orders to his servant. "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'" (1 Kings 18:44 NIV)

It wasn't long before even Ahab could see that he had better move fast. The little cloud spread until it produced a heavy rain. The hand of the Lord, which Elijah had seen with the eye of faith, was upon Elijah, and he outran Ahab's chariot to Jezreel.

James tells us, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit." (Jas. 5:17, 18 NASB)

The Bible frankly portrays Elijah. He was the same kind of person we are. We can see this when he "bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees." (1 Kings 18:42 NIV) We see it again when he ran for his life and sitting under a juniper tree, asks to die. He was tired and slept finally under the juniper tree just as we would have done. He was strengthened physically -- and spiritually - by a cake baked for him by an angel. (I Kings. 19:1-5)

He was like us also in that he was lonely -- and perhaps just a little self-righteous, feeling that only he had remained really true to the Lord. (I Kings. 19:9-18)

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The difference between Elijah and us perhaps was that he let his faith carry him to the heights of victory. Who remembers that Elijah sat with his face between his knees, or that he asked to die because he was the only faithful one left? Rather we remember Elijah for the victory over Baal on Mt. Carmel -- for the faith in a cloud the size of a man's hand.

The experiences of faith the disciples, Abraham, and Elijah lived, might be summed up in a saying my son passed on to me: "Believe and receive. Doubt and do without."¹⁰

Which of us has not experienced what Edith Schaeffer refers to as "the icy chill of discouragement designed to make one disappear down the hole of doubt."¹¹

This is not the measure of the man nor his faith. What counts is what we do with the icy chill and the hole of doubt.

"This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith!" (I John. 5:4 NIV)

5 The Gem -- The Facet of Humble Boldness

We have, then, my friends, complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by means of the death of Jesus. He opened for us a new way . . . So let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith . . . Hebrews 10:19, 21, 22 GNT

Don't be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated.
You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps.
David Lloyd George¹²

Prayer ascends highest that comes from the lowest depths of a humble heart.
Archbishop of Glasgow¹³

Humility is a bag. . . Into which Christ puts the riches of His grace.
Andrew Murray

Turn the gem of prayer just a wee mite and the facet of faith is colored a bit more brightly with boldness -- a holy boldness - almost a presumptuous boldness at

¹⁰ anonymous

¹¹ (Schaeffer 1969)

¹² (Schuman 1941)

¹³ (Leighton 1853)

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times. It would be presumptuous boldness indeed if it were not for the righteousness of Christ that the sons of God can claim for cover and cleansing at the Throne.

Truly the answered prayers that I remember most are those prayed when a crisis came in a time of leanness of soul. There had been in each instance a busy-ness that had crowded out time for prayer and Bible study. Life had become dull and temper sharp. Cast before the Lord in an hour of desperation, there was only shame and remorse.

"Lord, I am not worthy. I have no right whatever to ask this thing of You, but if in Your mercy, through the cleansing blood of Christ, You can allow me to whisper this request, please, Lord. . . in spite of me. . ."

Then came the miracle -- answered prayer -- but more! Cleanness and joy before the Lord.

"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?" declares the Lord. So you will be my people, and I will be your God." (Jeremiah 30:21-22 NIV)

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities. . . I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you . . ."

(Ezekiel 36:25-27 NIV)

"I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 11:19 NIV)

"Ask, and I will give you all the nations; the whole earth will be yours." (Psalms 2:8 GNT) "Ask for nations." That takes boldness! Command this mountain. . . (Matthew 17:20) "Say to this mulberry bush . . ." (Luke 17:6 NIV) These take boldness!

God is pleased with our boldness. He says, "do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded . . . But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back. " (Hebrews 10: 35,38 NIV)

How can we achieve, such boldness? ". . . we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him." (Ephesians 3:12 RSV) . . . if our heart does not condemn us, we have courage in God' s presence." (1 John 3:21 GNT)

When He has forgiven and cleansed, our heart no longer has a right to condemn us. "But if we confess our sins to God... he will forgive us. . . and purify us from all our wrongdoing." (1 John 1:9 GNT) Then, and only then, do we "through our faith in Him

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have boldness to go into God's presence with all confidence." Amazing! . . . "For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father." (Ephesians 3:12, 14 GNT)

"If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV)

"Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up." (James 4:10 NIV)

If we, like Daniel, could humble ourselves and say, " We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy." (Daniel 9:18-19 NIV) If we could with Isaiah, see "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6 NIV) then our Father would lift us up from our prostrate position as He did Daniel, and command us to stand upright before Him. There, in His presence, we will experience the most glorious promise of His word. I, a polluted sinner, will be brought "holy, pure and faultless into his presence." (Colossians 1:22 GNT)

There, in boldness, I may speak to God -- the King of Heaven and Earth—and My Father!

Jesus told a story that we think of as teaching persistence in prayer. It also teaches boldness. (Luke 11:5-8) How bold of a man to go to his friend at midnight to borrow bread. Bolder yet to keep asking after having been refused. The reason he could do this is that he went to a friend.

Do we know God well enough to "go to Him at midnight"? Do we know Him well enough to approach Him boldly with our requests at any hour? If not, it's time we got acquainted!¹⁴

The gift of bold tongues is a great gift! It may not be so important that the place be shaken wherein we wait before Him, but it is important that our hearts be shaken from their complacency and that we be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4)

Thus filled, we will be humble -- very humble -- before our Father. But we will also be bold, asking humbly without shame for our heart's desires.

Our prayer will be, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." But we will not hesitate to claim the promised blessings He longs to give us.

¹⁴ (Applebury 1961)

6 The Gem: -- The Facet of Forgiveness

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:25 NIV

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15 NIV

But the trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God. Because of sin He has turned His face away from you and will not listen anymore. Isaiah 59:2 TLB

"Sin not specifically confessed is sin not repented of." Unknown

"He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he, himself must pass."
Hugh Redwood¹⁵

Forgiveness is a two-way street
O'er which we all must pass.
"Forgive us, Lord, our sins," we pray,
"As we ourselves forgive,"

Thus Jesus taught His own to pray,
And, should we not forgive,
We raze the bridge which we ourselves
Must cross to enter heaven.

While it is true that our sins have put a barrier between us and our God, it is equally true that the sins of our brother have also separated us from our God because we have refused or have not honestly tried to forgive their sins against us. Forgiveness is a two-way street. We must forgive to be forgiven--and we must be forgiven to open wide the channel to our Heavenly Father.

A very dear friend once had said something about me which I considered unkind. It had hurt the more deeply because she was such a dear friend. I found as I went to my quiet time, to the Lord's Table, the Lord was whispering to my heart, "Leave your gift. . . go make it right."

Several weeks went by--weeks of stubbornness on my part. I simply was not willing to humble myself to admit that I had been hurt by so small a thing. I felt I should surely be spiritually bigger than such a small hurt. I kept telling myself, "If you

¹⁵ (Redwood, An Handful with Quietness used by permission of the publishers 1965)

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are dead to self then nothing can hurt you." I was determined that I should become spiritually big enough to shrug it off. I would solve it my own way.

But God's word kept urging. Finally, thoroughly humiliated, I sat down and not so much asked her to repent, but confessed how spiritually small I was.

Her immediate loving reply, asking also humbly for forgiveness, melted us both. We were both made more aware of our needs before the Lord and our friendship has been sweeter in Him since then.

God certainly set the precedent for us in the Garden of Eden. "God sought out Adam and Eve. It is the law of perfect love. Christ taught that one who is sinned against must seek the one who had sinned against him. It is what Christ himself did..."¹⁶

One thing that amazes me is that God had opened the two-way street so wide. He not only says, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.... (Matthew 18:15 NIV) He also says, "So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar, go at once to make peace with your brother... (Matthew 5:23-24 GNT)

That leaves not one loophole! If both parties are conscientious they should meet half way on the trail, one with his finger in the Book at Matthew 5:23-24, and the other with his finger in Matthew 18:15. How few our troubles in the church if this were true! How much happier our personal lives! How much more open we would be to ask of God in prayer!

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek of Nationalist China has written:
"Determination and will power, however are different entirely from the power that comes from faith and prayer. During the third seemingly endless year of being a human target and living half underground, I came to a new point, of desolation. I said my prayers and they meant nothing. And I realized that I was being slowly poisoned by resentment, hate, and bitterness.

"Have you ever tried to pray for an enemy? Have you ever tried to love someone who is ruining your life and the lives of those you love? I knew Christ's directive, but I could not follow it. I could not "bless the aggressors" no matter how I tried. Surely even God could not ask that of me.

"Then one morning during a period when the bombing was most intense, spiritual help came in a remembered experience. Weeks before my husband and I, on one of our trips to the front, had stopped at an orphanage for blind children. Though I

¹⁶ (Hay, Alex, 1956)

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hated the tendency in myself, I had always been repulsed by any abnormality, mental or physical, and I went to the orphanage only as a matter of duty. As I looked at those children, the expression on their faces seemed unnervingly dull and apathetic. As they gathered around me, I instinctively shrank from them. Then a thought flashed which enabled me to embrace them: If I was even temporarily so repulsed by physical blindness, how much more repulsed must God be by my spiritual blindness?

"At devotions that morning, I asked myself whether I was not being deliberately spiritually blind when I hated. Suddenly I was enabled to unload hatred at the foot of the Cross. Now when I pray I can turn the enemy over to God, His mercy and His justice.

"Never again have I been obsessed by hate. I still get angry, but that is a momentary reaction. No bitterness can go so deep within me as to possess my every thought. Now I was freed and recharged.¹⁷

In my own case, despite the lesson learned by the letter to my friend, there came another time when there had been misunderstanding between myself and another co-worker. The relationship had never been quite the same sort as that with my friend, but it had at one time been warm in Christ. Little things had crept in. I had been criticized and hurt and had in turn been critical, often silently in my own heart rather than spoken, but voiced occasionally in the presence of a close friend.

Again, at the Table and in the Closet the cloud was there. I knew what I should do--yet I couldn't quite bring myself to a personal encounter.

Finally, many miles away, on board ship with time to think, I took the easier way out: I wrote a letter which I put away for days, reading and re-reading it before the Lord.

When the ship docked I knew the letter must be sent. I was scarcely prepared for the miracle. Even without a two-way communication, the cloud was gone. My Lord's face was smiling and clear again. Obedience had brought blessing, as it always does.

The real test came many months later when I was once again thrown into close association with this same co-worker. I doubt that either of our ideas have changed much--but there was openness in Christ and we could again discuss spiritual things in a constructive way.

I fear we have underestimated the importance of Jesus' admonition to "confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other, so that you may be healed." (James 5:16 NIV) Spiritual healing comes first from this obedience. Physical healing can then follow.

¹⁷ (Kai-Shek 1955)

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One of the most precious prayer experiences I have ever had resulted from just such a time of confession. I personally felt at very low spiritual and physical ebb when our scattered mission group gathered for a few days of prayer. The four men who brought the messages had had no chance to consult together, yet there had been an amazing unity and continuity to the messages.

Mel Byers brought the concluding message on forgiveness and closed by challenging us to confess our sins to one another. Not waiting for another to begin, Mel was the first to ask forgiveness. The rest of us melted. It was a humbling experience and a time when the love of God flowed in, filled and overwhelmed us. Then we went to prayer together, with and for each other.

The physical and spiritual renewal that followed that prayer meeting was to me eloquent testimony of the truth of James' instructions.

"Love covers over many sins." Peter tells us, (I Peter 4:8 GNT) but love unreleased lies dormant and can do nothing. Love must be shown before it can bring blessing to another or to our own hearts.

Paul says, "Forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you." (Colossians 3: 13 GNT)

How horrified we are at our Lord's parable of the unforgiving servant. (Matthew 18:21) How could anyone be so callous? How could he have forgotten so soon? Yet we find it hard to forgive little things even when the Lord had forgiven us so much.

As a young missionary I was very often impatient with the inefficiency of my household help. It was utterly frustrating that they seemed to care so little if I was pleased or not. Again and again as I asked "Why did you do it that way?" The answer came back, "It doesn't matter" ...which of course made it matter even more to me.

A much loved senior missionary, Mrs. Gertrude Morse, took me aside and said gently, "Lois, I know how you feel. I felt that way too. But now when I feel frustrated by my servants I say, Lord, I am your servant. How frustrating I must be to you. Make me a more faithful servant. And make me patient with these girls!"

That has been a tremendous blessing to me throughout the years. I have only to look into the face of my Master to be humbled. What once generated criticism now generates an inward look.

We are often unwilling to forgive--or even to try to think of the good qualities of the one who has hurt us.

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"Some we know appear to be so well acquainted with the faults and failings of their brethren that they have failed to discover or to recognize the nobler qualities possessed by such men as Jacob and others of his type. Nor would they trouble themselves to know anything about the spiritual struggles, or the days and nights spent by such in agonizing prayer in order to get complete victory over their faults. . . So that in vain as far as they are concerned, has a Jacob, a David, or a Peter emerged triumphant in his struggles. The worldly, the lukewarm Christian will still point to the dark shadow that has passed."¹⁸

Some of us seem to have received the gift of criticism and it is not a gift of the Holy Spirit.

How wonderful His precious promise: "But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing." (I John 1:9 GNT) We need to remember that He has forgiven our brother, and cleansed him, too! The best antidote God has ever given me for the "gift of criticism" is Roman 14:4 "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand." (NIV)

One more thing, where God had forgiven us, we must forgive ourselves. Once the sin has been dealt with and we have put it under the blood of the cross it is gone! We must learn to reckon on this as a fact. We must not try to "make merit"--to slowly work our way back into His good graces so that someday we can be worthy to ask the desire of our hearts.

Whatever the sin, none is too black for His blood to make instantly clean once it is confessed in repentance. We may have to suffer the consequences of that sin. An unkind word may bring hurt to others, remorse to ourselves for years. A murder may bring years in prison. Unfaithfulness in marriage may have disintegrated a home and may bring heartbreak for a life time--but to keep that sin as a barrier between oneself and God is to deny the power of His precious blood. He says if we confess, He will forgive and cleanse us. We must accept that as fact and from that point on pray, knowing that that sin has been removed from our record and is no longer a barrier between ourselves and God.

Oh, we may need it as a reminder--a goad--to keep us from repeating it – or even to keep us humble when others sin against us-- but to keep it as a barrier to prayer is a sin.

We must train our hearts to be so sensitive to His examining touch that we live in a constant state of momentary conviction, confession, and acceptance of His cleansing. This is possible for He has promised that He will point out to us when we are

¹⁸ (Rice 1970)

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out of tune. (Philemon 3:15) We must be alert, sensitive and ready to repent and to accept His forgiveness.

"Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting."
(Psalms 139:23-24 NIV)¹⁹

7 The Gem: -- The Facet of the Yielded Heart

We have courage in God's presence because we are sure that he hears us if we ask him for anything that is according to His will. 1 John 5:14 GNT

He went a little farther on, threw himself face downwards on the ground, and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me; Yet not what I want, but what you want." Matthew 26:39 GNT

Because he was humble and devoted, God heard him. Hebrew 5:7 GNT

Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free,
Teach me to render up my sword
And I shall conqueror be.
G. Matheson²⁰

"What we have in our Hand we will surely lose, but what we put into God's hand is still and ever will be in our possession." Unknown

"Mother to her soldier son: 'Don't give God orders, just report for duty!' " -- Unknown

"When by the obedience of our lives we say 'amen' to a promise,
then that promise is ours." Oswald Sanders²¹

In the Mien tribal village in North Thailand where we lived and worked, life was hard and there were no luxuries except of course the majestic beauty God Himself surrounded us with, often we hardly had even the necessities.

¹⁹ Read also the prayers of repentance in Isaiah 6; Ezra 9:15 ff; Nehemiah 1 ff; Daniel 9:3 ff.

²⁰ (Matheson 1890)

²¹ (Sanders n.d.)

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One thing, though, that the people had in abundance was clean pure water which flowed down to the village through pipes made of large, straight bamboo trees. The heart of the tree you cut away, forming a channel for the water. Pure water is in itself a health giving luxury.

One luxury we and the tribal people enjoyed was the beauty of the jungle round about us. Nothing is more beautiful than a grove of bamboo trees when the rains have soaked the parched ground and cool breezes cause the feathery green leaves to shimmer as the slender green stalks sway gently.

The story is told of a man who had placed his mark, cutting his name into the stem of a tall, beautiful bamboo tree.

There the tree grew, putting its roots deep, deep down until it had reached the living springs. It swayed proudly among lesser bamboo, proud that it belonged to its master.

Then one day the master walked in the bamboo grove and spoke to the tree, "I could use you if you were willing," he said.

"Oh, I am willing. Very willing! What joy it is to show forth my beauty for your viewing."

But the master replied, "That is not what I mean. I meant I could use you to carry water from the spring down to the village."

The bamboo tree was thoughtful. That was different! To become a water pipe meant being cut down. It meant being shorn of the lovely branches and leaves. It meant having the very heart cut out of one.

The master said "Are you willing? Are you willing that my axe should cut through your flesh, that my knife should cut away your branches and should scrape away your heart? As you are, you are a thing of beauty, but not very useful to me. To be of real use, you must be willing to give up your proud beauty."

The tree was thoughtful. This was a hard decision.

Then quietly he gave assent, and the master chopped, cut and scraped, preparing the tree for service. He carried it to the spring high above the village where one end was thrust into the cold, clear water. The master selected again and again the best trees in the grove until at last, laid end to end, they brought life giving, refreshing, cleansing water to the village.²²

²² (Newcombe n.d.),

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The Bible is replete with stories of men and women whom God had to make willing before He could use them.

From the very first book of the Bible is the story of Abraham. Abraham was at long last the father of the son God had promised, and then God said, "Abraham, are you willing to give that son back to me? Take him to Mt. Moriah, and there offer him as a sacrifice to me" (Gen 22:1-2, Hebrews 11:17-18)

He was willing –and God blessed him.

Later--in the second book of the Bible—we meet a man who took matters into his own hands. "He (Moses) saw one of them (a fellow Israelite) being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his help and took revenge on the Egyptian by killing him. (He thought that his own people would understand that God was going to use him to set them free, but they did not understand.)" (Acts 7:24-25 GNT ref Exodus 2:11-15)

Moses hid the Egyptian in the sand but he left one toe sticking out as it were, and had to flee for his life. He had acted on his own plans--his own will--not God's. "He blundered like a bull in a china shop with the best intentions in the world he became a murderer instead of a missionary"²³

Then he went off and waited forty years until he learned what God's will was--and that plan worked in spite of Moses at times.

"When Moses tried to tackle the job himself" he could not even bury one Egyptian successfully. . . When God tackled the job, He buried the whole lot of them in the Red Sea. That is how competent God is to deal with His own business." If only we'd let Him!

Later on we read that King David wanted to build a temple for the Lord. (I Chronicles 17:1-4) He spoke to Nathan the prophet about it, and God told Nathan to tell David that he was not to build a house for the Lord.

It must have been something of a disappointment to David.

Certainly he had the best intentions. He was planning it because he loved the Lord and wanted to honor Him. But it was not God's plan and David bowed quietly to the will of God.

For such a one God had wonderful promises--the full extent of which David could not possibly have understood. It was David's son, Solomon, who finally built the Temple of the Lord--one so fine it is still remembered as the epitome of all that is beautiful.

²³ (Thomas 1961)

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Perhaps one of the loveliest stories of one who was willing for God's will in her life was Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Mary was a devoted, young woman, willing that the inner beauty of her soul should be used for God's glory. But it was such a startling thing that the Lord asked of her! Surely the honor of being the mother of God's Son must have been overshadowed in her mind by the indignity of what all her friends would say and think when they found she was to be an unmarried mother. That is stigma enough in itself for a guilty one--but for one of Mary's purity and devotion to be so humiliated before her family, her friends and her betrothed was unthinkable.

The angel waited patiently, but it didn't take Mary long to yield. "I am the Lord's servant", said Mary, "may it happen to me as you have said. " (Luke 1:38 GNT)

Mary came through the experience praising God. She was, as Elizabeth said, "Blessed are you among women " (Luke 1:42 NIV) because she was willing to yield to God's will.

Our ultimate example, of course, of yieldedness is the Master Himself, as He prayed in Gethsemane, "Not my will, but Thine be done." (Luke 22:42 NIV)

A change of plans came for Mary Magdalene three days later when she came with spices to embalm the body of Jesus early on the first day of the week. (John 20: 11-18) Her plan, her intention was to show in one final way the love she felt for her Lord.

But He was not there! Where had His body been taken? She wept softly, sobs shaking her body--and then He spoke her name.

"Mary, I have other plans for you. Go tell my brothers that I am alive and I'm going back to My Father."

Her plan: to embalm the dead body.
His plan: to announce that He was alive.
His plan is always so much better!

James reminds us that we should always say, "If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this or that." (James 4:15 GNT)

Edith Schaeffer sums up so well the attitude of heart of so many of us as we go to prayer:

"There are other Christians who really almost envy the answers to prayer that they hear about, but they want specific answers to some specific requests without the

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rest of their lives being changed in anyway. They would like some prayers answered in some realms and they would like to know what it is like to be "led" by God's direction in certain aspects of their lives. They may even present two alternatives to God in their prayers, but they push the rest of the possibilities away.²⁴

We are very conscious of this, because the inward battle to be honest before God when one asks, "show me Thy will" is a very real struggle. It is so easy to clutch to oneself certain things which really erase the whole request and annul it. . . Many Christians want the excitement of a reply from God, but not the pain of the struggle.

There are two ways of submitting completely to God's will: We can say joyfully, expectantly, "Thy will be done", anticipating surprises: or we can yield with a rebellious, reluctant heart and miss the blessing, the joy, the excitement.

It is exciting to pray for those who are truly seeking the Lord's will. Anything can happen! The sky's the limit! There are no bounds to what God can do when willing heart meets willing heart before God in prayer.

Catherine Marshall tells in her book 12 about the early days of her marriage when she came down with tuberculosis. Those were the days before "wonder drugs" and she faced, it seemed, only two possibilities, a life of invalidism or early death from a then incurable disease. Prayer for healing, it seemed had failed. Then as she read the Word prayed and struggled God asked her to yield the whole thing to Him. Yield all. God's will – even if it meant death. Finally, she was able to say, "Only what You want, Lord. Life, or death, invalidism or healing – all was in His hand. After that the healing came to her spirit and to her body and she lived to bless many and gave glory to God through many books.

The facet of yieldedness is rather a subdued facet, yet one of rare beauty. We need only to be careful that this very subdued *quality* is not allowed to cloud the beauty of the whole stone by being used as a crutch for lack of faith. Sometimes we lamely tack on an "if it be Thy will"--not so much because we have yielded to His will, but because we haven't the faith to claim the good thing God wants to give us.

His will, and our willingness to yield to it, is the door that leads from the prayer closet to a glorious future.

²⁴ (Schaeffer 1969)

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