

Optional Study and Practice for The 1962 Manchester Closed Class Session 6: Recording 493B “Living by Prayer”

Previous Sessions in The 1962 Manchester Closed Class

Joel said that the theme of the 1962 work was “raising up the Christ in you,” and we have certainly seen that theme throughout the 1962 Manchester Closed Class.

In the first session of the class, “The World Is New,” Joel taught that to bring the Christ into our experience, we must *consciously* open our consciousness, seeking only to have the Christ “enter in,” or seeking to *consciously* realize the Christ that already indwells us and is our true identity.

In the second session, “The New Man,” Joel taught that there is only one true God, and its name is “I Am.” That “I Am” dwells in every individual as the Christ. But to come into the full consciousness of God as “I Am” and be reborn as the “new man,” the Christ, we must die to our human, mortal sense of self.

In the third session, “Infinite Way Healing Work,” Joel carried forward the theme of realizing the “I Am” through the lens of healing work. He taught that we develop a healing Christ consciousness through the constant practice of two principles: first, there is only one power, and second, all evil is impersonal.

In the fourth session, titled “Attuning Ourselves to Our Christhood,” Joel built on the heightened awareness of the Christ within, developed in the previous sessions. He taught spiritual practices that enable us to be in conscious attunement with our Christhood, so that it shows forth in our daily lives.

Having drawn us deeply into the awareness of our own Christhood and shown us how to attune to it, in the fifth session, Joel lifted the veil on Christ Consciousness, or the fourth-dimensional consciousness. He explained how the fourth-dimensional consciousness manifests in our lives once we attain it, and he taught us how to develop that consciousness.

Joel was inspired to focus this sixth session on the subject of prayer. He covers the purpose of prayer, the many forms of prayer, answered prayer, and prayer as a way of life. He describes one form of prayer as a communion with the Christ of our being—the Christ that we have come to know so well in the previous sessions of this class.

In the sections below, we have summarized some of the key points in this class.

The Purpose of Prayer

Joel teaches that prayer has many forms, but only one purpose. The purpose of prayer is to enable us to live without effort, without taking thought, without struggle or striving. Prayer is a way of life, the highest way of life. What does it mean to live by prayer? It means to live in the

conviction of an inner Source and in the continuous recognition of the spiritual nature of God, the child of God, the kingdom of God, and the universe of God.

As human beings, we live as if our good were “out there,” and that either we must get it ourselves or get God to deliver it to us. Humans pray as though supply of anything—health, wealth, happiness, etc.—were in heaven, and God can send it to us on earth. Of course, that is not living by prayer, for no fruitage comes from such prayer.

If you are living in the third-dimensional consciousness, you will either have to pray to God for your supply, work for it, cheat for it, or steal it. But when you begin to understand life by prayer, your supply starts to unfold “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit.” Life by prayer is a recognition that our supply— whether of ideas, food, clothing, or housing—is not external to us. Supply is within us. Prayer is the recognition of this.

The Many Forms of Prayer

Throughout the class, Joel speaks about the many ways in which we can pray.

- Prayer can be a hymn of gratitude that the kingdom of God is within me, that all that the Father hath has been established within me from the beginning.
- Prayer can be a recognition of our relationship with God: We are heirs of God, joint heirs to all the heavenly riches.
- Prayer can be the recognition of the *spiritual* nature of the child of God and the *spiritual* nature of creation.
- Prayer can be a recognition of the spiritual nature of all law, because this breaks any bondage to material, mental, medical, or legal laws. All law is of God and therefore, spiritual, good, and just.
- Prayer can be a continuous recognition of Spirit and an abiding in Spirit. “If ye *abide* in me, and my words *abide* in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”
- Prayer can be a recognition that we live by the still, small voice.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Prayer can be this recognition that we do not live by bread alone—by anything in the material realm, or by might or power—but by hearing that still, small voice. So prayer can be an attitude of *listening* for that voice.

- Prayer can be a recognition that God is not in the “whirlwind.”

God is not in sin, disease, accident, or any physical manifestation of error or discord. God is in the still, small voice. So if we want the power and presence of God, we must hear the still small voice, and when we hear it, “the earth melts.” We may not hear an audible voice, but every time we receive some inner awareness or inner feeling of a spiritual Presence, the voice has been uttered, and some phase of earthly discord must melt. So prayer can be just that recognition that every discord can be met by hearing the still, small voice.

- Prayer can be the recognition of God as the solution to every problem.

The still, small voice is the solution to any problem—physical, mental, moral, financial, or relationship. The still, small voice is the solution to any problem, because God is in the still, small voice, and God is the solution to every problem.

Whenever we become aware of a problem of any nature—even on a national or international scale—we can solve it by prayer. The prayer is the recognition that God is the only permanent solution. God is the only solution that will bring forth justice, equity, equality, and abundance. God is not in the problem; God is in the still, small voice. So we turn from the problem and go within, and by having a listening attitude, we receive the solution.

You cannot meet a problem spiritually on the level of the problem. If you are seeking a material answer, it will not come from within. You have to distance yourself from the problem as it appears to be. The quickest way to do this is to realize that **this is a spiritual universe**. Therefore, there must be a *spiritual* solution even to what appears as a physical, financial, or business problem. Then you open yourself for the solution to come through the still, small voice: “Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth.” This is spiritual prayer, which is very different from praying to God for a material thing.

- Prayer can be a communion with God, or the Christ within.

Communion with God can feel as though you are turning within to the presence of God and almost having a chat. “I know that this is a spiritual universe, and that the answer to this problem is in the still, small voice. When I hear Thy voice, this material sense will melt. When I feel the assurance of Thy presence, the limited sense of existence will melt, and I will have a spiritual answer and a spiritual kingdom.” The Father within you has the answer to everything concerning you. The Christ within you is your meat, wine, and water, and can provide your every need. “He knows your need before you do, and it is His good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

You can go within to ask for guidance: “Whither shall I go? Which way?” The answer is with God. While this communion may *seem* like a back-and-forth, it takes place entirely within your consciousness. You don’t reach a God *outside* of you; you reach the kingdom of God *within* you, and because it is always within you, you can pray any time—while driving your car, cooking, doing housework, or working at your job. You can always blink your eyes and look inside yourself: “Speak, Father; guide me, instruct me,” or “What is Thy will? Thy will be done, not mine. Make Thy will clear.” Talk to God the way you would talk to someone you love. You don’t have to be sanctimonious. The important thing is that you make yourself subject to God.

- Prayer can be dwelling and resting in the realization of Omnipresence.

This is acknowledging the presence of God wherever you are. “Whither can I flee from Thy Spirit? If I mount up to heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, Thou art there. If I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art there.”

In times when you wonder whether you are under the jurisdiction of God or have become separated from God, the word “omnipresence” can bring you right back to the kingdom of God.

- Prayer can be dwelling and resting in the realization of Omnipotence.

This is acknowledging that there is only one power and that any appearance, however frightening, is not a power. Since it is not a power, don't resist it, or try to get rid of it, or overcome it. Acknowledge that God is omnipotence and acknowledge that omnipotence is within you, so there is no power external to you. Then disregard the appearance: "I need not fight; I need not battle. 'Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord.'"

- Prayer can be dwelling and resting in the realization of Omniscience.

We do not know how to pray or what to pray for because we do not know what is good for us. If God is the All-knowing, you don't have to know anything. You don't have to make a decision. If you hold open this line of communion, this listening attitude, you can wait to hear God's decision, because God is omniscience and will reveal Its plan, disclose Its way, Its will, Its direction, Its guidance. Your heavenly Father knoweth what things you have need of, and it is His good pleasure to give you the kingdom. But you must pray without ceasing.

These are all different forms of prayer, and none of them are begging or pleading God for anything or telling God what you need. Prayer must **NOT** be going to a God of Spirit and asking for something material. You must be on the receiving end, the listening end, constantly tuned in to the still, small voice.

You are outside the realm of prayer if you are asking God for food, clothing, housing, companionship, supply, marriage, divorce, or anything on the human plane. You are praying amiss. If prayer is to be prayer and bear fruit, there must be a recognition of the spiritual nature of God and creation, and a recognition of the omnipresence of spiritual good without translating it into terms of a material good.

Is it possible to pray in this way while we are living our lives? Yes! It is only a matter of practice, a matter of dominion; a matter of determining that you *will* live by prayer and then knowing what true prayer is. You decide that you *will* live by the listening attitude; that you *will* live not by bread alone, and not by might or by power, but by the still, small voice.

Answered Prayer

You may not receive an answer to prayer when you are meditating or when you would like to receive the answer. Once you have prayed, tuned in, and listened, you can go about your business and be assured that the answer will come in its own time. It may be when you are not thinking at all about the problem and are engaged in something else. But be assured that God will interrupt you—even wake you up from sleep—to give you the answer.

For prayer to be answered, we must do our part. Our function is solely to pray without ceasing, listen without ceasing, always making room for the still, small voice to speak. Prayer must always be addressed within you and kept on the spiritual level. You must recognize that the solution to the problem will come through the Word, through a message or direction from God. Prayer must never have anything to do with a person, thing, or condition. The material manifestation will take care of itself.

To "pray without ceasing," upon retiring at night, consciously remember that you are not going to sleep. You are going to *rest*, and your consciousness is open to God. In this way, you are praying because you are keeping your line to God open. You are listening for the still, small

voice, assuring yourself of a divine Presence, and this is prayer. When necessary, you may be awakened in the middle of the night to receive a message.

Sometimes a material problem drives us into deeper prayer, but we must still be sure that we are not seeking a material solution. We must look only for the Word of God. If the problem is physical, we remind ourselves, "I'm not looking for a physical healing; I am looking for Thy word. Let me hear Thy word. Assure me of Thy presence." We never receive a physical healing from God; we receive the word of God, and the word of God is fulfillment in my experience when I receive it. If my need is a physical healing, that's the way the word appears. The need is fulfilled at the level of the need.

Prayer is living in spiritual consciousness without trying to translate it into material terms. We miss the way if we think of God's grace fulfilling itself as matter. God's grace is *spiritual*, a spiritual gift, and it carries a spiritual blessing. If you are looking for that spiritual blessing in material form, you miss it. Reflecting on God's grace can be prayer, but you must refrain from thinking of material good and keep your mind stayed on Spirit. Eventually, you will experience God's grace. If you get a car for nothing, that is not God's grace. God's grace is that miracle that might have produced the car outside, but it had nothing to do with the car itself. You can only say, "Grace took the form of" this, that, or the other thing. Never translate grace into material terms, for grace is not material.

Prayer Is the Connecting Link Between God and Man

Prayer is the connecting link between God and man and establishes your spiritual relationship with God. Through prayer, your sonship is established. Through prayer, you are one with God; you commune with God and receive grace from God. Without prayer, you are like the branch of a tree that is cut off and withers and dies.

We read in Scripture: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind." From the human standpoint, this isn't easy, and you may have little reason to abide by it. But when you do not look to God for material things, you can learn to love God. Just as it is easy to love a friend who does not expect anything of you, so it is with God. Once you rise high enough in spiritual consciousness that you do not think of God as a way to get something and think of communing with God, living in God, as a way of life with no material considerations, then love can well up.

Prayer is the means of God's fulfillment in your life, even if what appears is not what you had in mind or what you thought you needed. While it may not be what you want, it will be what God has prepared for you from the beginning, which you did not know of, and therefore had no way of asking or praying for it or expecting it.

Prayer Is a Way of Life

Prayer is a way of life, a way of living in and through God, so that God's way may be fulfilled in you. It is a complete turning away from material problems and needs, and turning within to seek only *spiritual* grace, harmony, peace, and abundance. The more you build up a communion between yourself and your inner Self, which is God, the more you are living by prayer.

You are living by prayer when you turn your attention within so that you can hear the voice of God, or know the will of God, or that the presence of God may become tangible. When you live by prayer, you are always creating a vacuum within yourself so that you can be filled by the

Presence that is within you. This, too, is prayer, even if there are no words. By just listening, you are praying, because you have opened a way for the still, small voice to reach you. Simply closing your eyes and opening your ears is a form of prayer and communion.

As a way of life, prayer must be praying without ceasing; it must always be addressed within you; it must always concern a spiritual answer, a word of God, a message from God. Prayer must never have anything to do with a person, thing, condition, or any material manifestation. To be prayer, it must be kept on the spiritual level, in the recognition that the solution to any problem will come through the still, small voice.

Working with the Lesson

Here are a few suggestions for ways you might integrate the lessons in this class.

Your Definition of Prayer

Reflect on Joel's statement that "prayer has many forms, but it has only one purpose."

- What is your definition of prayer? Has it evolved over the time you have studied The Infinite Way? If so, how?
- Did this class inspire you to alter your practice of prayer in any way or add a new form of prayer to your practice?
- Do you agree with Joel's teaching about prayer? Is there any area of disagreement? Any questions to take into contemplation?
- Which of Joel's forms of prayer resonated most with you?

How to Pray in the Face of Human Problems

Joel states, "You are outside the realm of prayer if you are asking God for food, clothing, housing, companionship, supply, marriage, divorce, or anything that we know on the human plane." God is the solution to the problem. The still, small voice has the solution to the problem."

- Choose one personal human "problem" (health, financial, relationship, etc.). If you were to pray in this situation, how would you pray based on what you learned in the class?

OR

- If someone came to you with a personal human problem and said that they wanted to pray, but did not know how because they had learned that they are not to pray for a material solution, how would you counsel them to pray?

Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience as Prayer

Joel said that prayer can be dwelling and resting in the realization of Omnipresence, or Omnipotence, or Omniscience.

- If you have not practiced prayer in this way, choose to dwell on one of these three for a day. Begin by pondering that aspect of the nature of God and then rest in that truth. Return to it throughout the day. Notice whether and how this influences your experience.

Living by Grace

Joel discusses God's grace as a "spiritual gift" that "has no counterpart in human language." Reflect on instances in your life where you might have experienced something that felt like grace, but you interpreted it in purely material terms.

- How might you re-interpret those experiences through the lens of grace, as you understand it now?
- What does "living by grace" mean to you now?