

Draw Near to Him in Prayer

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Thank you, girls, for that beautiful song. The words you have just sung remind me of a prayer—and singing hymns is one way for us to pray, one way for us to draw near to our Heavenly Father.

Prayer is what I want to talk to you about tonight. Our Heavenly Father has said, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you.” (D&C 88:63.) The way to draw near to our Father in Heaven is to speak with him, and this is what we call prayer. We speak with our Father in Heaven in much the way we would speak with our earthly parent, whom we love and honor.

Does it frighten you to speak with your Heavenly Father? It shouldn't. It's true that he is powerful, more than any of us can even understand. But he also loves us—much more than we can ever know. He knows all about you, knows all of your secrets, all the things you are afraid of, and even more—he knows what you are capable of doing. He knows you even better than you know yourself. He wants what is best for you, and he wants you to be successful and happy in your life. In order for him to help you, he wants you to talk with him often in reverent, humble prayer.

Some people say they don't know how to pray, but there are just four steps to take when you want to talk with your Father in Heaven:

The first one is to *prepare*. Remember who it is with whom you are speaking. We are to come to our Father with humility and meekness, ready to listen as well as to talk. We should always remember that this is our Eternal Father we are speaking with, and so, whenever possible, we kneel. We fold our arms and bow our heads to show him that we have reverence for him. Sometimes it isn't possible to do these things—not even possible to close our eyes for a moment while we pray. But even in these unusual situations, we can still begin with reverence.

I'll give you some examples. I have prayed silently for help while driving my car—when it would be dangerous to fold my arms, and certainly to close my eyes even for a moment. I sometimes bow my head briefly while I'm at a stop sign. Some people pray while they are walking in the woods or in some other peaceful place. Others pray while they ride in elevators, or on buses, or in school just before a test. The need for prayer can come at any time; when it does, just remember to be reverent—kneel, bow your head, close your eyes whenever you can. Then begin by calling on your Father in Heaven.

The second step is to *be grateful*. Remember to thank your Heavenly Father for his blessings. This is a very important step, not just because Heavenly father wants us to be grateful, but because it does so much for us. Most of the time we think of prayer only when we want something; but when we start by expressing gratitude for the things we already have, we begin to see our lives in a new way.

I experience this as the Primary general president. My calling is to care not only for the children in our church, but for the children in all of the world. This is a tremendous responsibility, and at first I could feel only the burden of it. But I seek for the Lord's help constantly. I pray for enough strength and insight to do the work I have been called to do, and for the leaders around the world, that they might have the Spirit of the Lord to help

them love and understand the children for whom they are responsible. I plead with Heavenly Father to give each teacher a sense of deep responsibility, so that they might help the children to know the gospel of love. I pray for parents to love and teach their children.

Then, just the other morning, I thought, “I have been asking for so much. This morning I am not going to ask for one thing. I’m just going to be grateful.” I knelt and thanked the Lord for my good health, for my understanding husband, for our children, for our missionary son, for the privilege of serving, for the board members and staff who assist me, for stake and ward members throughout the world who are serving, and especially for the teachers who give and care so much. I thanked him for the children everywhere. I thanked him for the prophet. And the list went on. My spirit soared. What an astounding experience to know that I have so much! It takes a grateful heart to experience that soaring, that realization of how much Heavenly Father loves you, how much he does for you.

Sometimes being grateful doesn’t come easily. Sometimes when we come to our Heavenly Father we are in such despair that it is hard to think of anything to be grateful for. These are times when prayer is especially important, times when drawing near unto him is essential because we so desperately need him to draw near unto us.

My young friends, I want you to know that there is nothing so terrible in your life that you cannot take it to the Lord. Maybe you feel lonely. Perhaps you think there is not one person in the whole world who cares about you, but I promise, Someone does. No matter what, you have a Father who cares, who knows your heart, who is ready to listen anytime. Draw near unto him in prayer; allow him to draw near unto you. Go to him, acknowledge him as your Eternal Father, and be grateful—for life, and for the opportunity to grow, if for nothing else. And then you will be ready for the third step in prayer.

The third step is to *seek*. Ask for his help, but ask with an open, searching spirit. Plead for guidance to meet the challenges you have been given. Ask, knowing as Nephi did, that “the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” (1 Ne. 3:7.)

Part of seeking is to give space for an answer. After you have asked for help, pause and listen. Many times the Lord answers our prayers in a still, small voice. It may be an answer you don’t want to hear. Or you may not recognize what happens to you as an answer to your prayers.

I’ll give you an example. Three little boys were flying a kite in a field away from their homes. It began to rain, and they wanted to save their kite. As they hastily pulled it from the sky, it caught on a tree limb high over their heads.

They found a long stick and tried to pull it down, but they couldn’t reach it. They tried everything they could think of to get it down, but the kite just turned and twisted in the storm. One of the boys finally said to the others, “I think we should pray.” The other two looked at him, then followed his lead, bowing their heads while he said the words. As they opened their eyes, they saw a car coming toward them down the road that led to the field. As it neared, the boys stood motionless and almost breathless, staring at the lady driving the car.

Their stares fascinated the lady, so she stopped and called to them, “Are you having trouble?”

“Yes,” they said. “Our kite is caught on the tree. Will you help us get it down?”

“I’ll try,” she said. “Stand away while I back up.”

She backed her car to position it under the kite, then she got out, climbed on top of the car, and, with the long stick retrieved the kite.

When the boy who had offered the prayer carried his kite into the kitchen, he told his mother about the kite’s getting caught in the tree. She asked, “Who helped you get your kite down?”

“Heavenly Father,” he replied. The boy, who had prayed with perfect trust, knew the answer to a prayer when he saw it.

The fourth and last step to prayer is to close. Remember to offer your prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. He is our emissary, our representative, to the Father. That is why we offer our prayers in his name. It is our acknowledgement of him as our Savior.

So these are the four steps of prayer: First, *prepare*; second, *be grateful*; third, *seek*; and fourth, *close* in the name of Jesus Christ.

Your prayer can take many forms. It can be sung in a hymn, or whispered, or even thought. It can be as short as one word—“help!”—or it could be as long as Enos’s prayer that lasted all night and all day.

The important thing to remember is to pray often, talk to Heavenly Father, seek his counsel so that he can guide you. When you draw near to Heavenly Father in prayer, he will draw near to you. You need never feel alone again. I testify to this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.