

Recognizing God

Scripture Reading — Psalm 40:1-8

*Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.
—Psalm 40:3 —*

Who taught you how to pray?

When I was a child, we often had dinner with my grandparents on Sunday evenings. My grandfather almost always began his prayer with these words: “Our heavenly Father, we come nigh unto thee in the evening hour of this Sabbath Day.” His prayers were eloquent, had deeply meaningful key phrases, and a predictable cadence. I wish I could hear him pray again.

Many of us develop patterns to our prayers. We bow our heads and close our eyes, use respectful terms to address God, express gratitude for his grace, ask for his intervention in our concerns, and end with the word “Amen.” Sometimes we hear prayers that cause our hearts to be awakened by God’s majesty and mercy. Upon hearing such wonderful prayers, we may desire to pray with the same eloquence.

The goal of prayer, however, is not to become better at praying. The goal of prayer is to make us more aware of God’s presence and power in our lives. Praying well is not an end, but a means to become more attuned to God’s work. If we think prayer must be confined to a pattern of bowing our heads, uttering standard phrases, and ending with “Amen,” the power of prayer will be limited in our lives. Prayer allows us to recognize God, grow in our awareness of his work, and enjoy the wonder of his love.

Prayer

Open my eyes, Lord, so that I may see you working in this world, and so that my heart may swell with gratitude. Amen.

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