

**The Use of Praying: J Neville Ward.**  
**Epworth Press 1967**

Private Prayer is second to community prayer (as in Eucharist and *Our Father*)  
But individual needs to be alone with God.

Thanksgiving Prayer should not be duty dominated but thanksgiving and joy.  
“Thankfulness is happiness spontaneously reaching out beyond itself, wanting to make contact with its cause” p.18  
It is this that makes meaning and holiness of an ordinary life.  
Thanking God for who people are rather than our fears and illusions about them.

Adoration

When we thank without self, we are adoring.  
We eucharist, the angles then take up that thanks in Sanctus adoration. So we must cut the cackle and look in wonder - this is contemplation - the straight forward attentiveness of holding self in the Presence. The ‘moment’.

Confession does not put an adversary in the wrong. It is the abandonment of the desire always to be in the right. rather than from guilt and fear, confession should come from adoration of the Holy. Confess in order to accept that we are known by God already. If we went alone on this journey into self we would despair at what we find, so we go with God, who will encourage in the truth about ourselves, in his loving presence. Not for observable self-improvement but education in humility (the same old boring sins over and over!)

Asking

The suppliant is asking God to do what God continually does - fulfilling God’s purpose in love. This allows the suppliant to participate more fully in what God is doing - not magic nor manipulation. “Actually there is not much one can say”! - just the Lord’s Prayer, really  
Praying in the mind of Christ changes our wants and what we ask for

Resentment can be traced to three sources: undissolved anger, pride, disappointment of extravagant expectations. .Often this is rage against God. But the cross is to take on the disappointments and seek God’s will in them. Genuine revolt against genuine evil is invigorating rather than sapping of energy, vs. the inertia that is modern sloth.

Fear As we learn to live by faith we are less fearful of life. Fear of disapproval, of disaster, fear of ceasing to exist, fear of holiness (of what it entails).

Suffering When pain exceeds its protective function. Discernment to know whether this pain is natural way to learn or goes beyond that - so not to endure the suffering, but find ways to serve God within it. Suffering is a waste of time but service to God cannot be. “All experience refused is a true waste of time:” In suffering only prayer worth praying is Gethsemane prayer.

Intercession:

Underhill says: “real intercession is not merely a petition but a piece of work, involving perfect, costly self-surrender to God for the work he wants done on other souls.” (Life as Prayer) and prayer that is mere request without self-offering is not prayer in his name.

Vigils are only half to God and the other half is trying to make an impression on the world for the cause prayed for. - this is not sincere prayer. Intercession may begin with "this is what I hope for and trust God not to let me down", but should end with "this is how this situation looks right now in the light of God's purpose, this is what I must now do to serve God in it, and this is what I really want."

"If we say that we want more from religion than this, more guarantees that it 'works', the fact is that we are in some odd, primitive world and a very long way from home. Home for the Christian is at the foot of the cross." p93. St John of the Cross point out that we are on surer ground when we simply lift up to God our needy condition than when we ask in detail for the things we think we need. Basil the Great's liturgy speaks of Divine care..

Answers. Praying in Christ's name we will know that the past cannot be cancelled it can only be forgiven. Reject experience and you reject God and will not be in the best place to engage with what is truly happening. De Caussade :renewing ones confidence in God and one's endeavour to see in each experience some manifestation of God's will. So in the "Journals of Kierkegaard (1834-54)": "the true relation in prayer is achieved not when God hears what is prayed for, but when the person praying continues to pray until he is the one who hears... the true man of prayer only attends."

Helps: What helps one person revolts the next. "The forsaking of the Church for the realm of the Arts is one of the characteristic works of the Holy Spirit in our generation." P111. "The Holy Spirit articulates far more successfully through Bach and Beethoven than through the boredom of the books of Chronicles."

Memorising, Rosaries, Jesus Prayer, great moments of the Liturgy,  
Silence, retreats, directors,

Rule of Life should include: prayer time, Bible or other reading, worship, self-examination, income, non-churchy social action involvement.

When it is impossible to pray: "It may be that certain temperaments will never be interested in private prayer." (p12) Pascal said, "Console thyself, thou wouldst not seek Me if thou hadst not found Me." If you cannot pray, then prepare the way by being reconciled with a colleague. Enjoy the world of art, live intensely in the world of thanking, for this is half of what Christian prayer is about. One does not lose ones' faith, faith is like that, we simply forget to live it and it wanes a little. Do not misinterpret mental turmoil as loss of faith. It may simply be a preoccupation with guilt for example. Remember there is a long tradition of prayer as argument with God. Jacob wrestles. We are near to him when we are fighting him. If it is impossible to pray, then just be silent before God. Hold fast to those times when we pray with the worshipping Church.

The Night of faith St John of the Cross tells of the joy of first believing which is not meant to last. Life of faith must normally feel like going on a journey through a dark night. St. Teresa: "I hear servants of God worrying so much because he is not giving them devotion, it makes me sick to listen to them. if God grants it to them, they should value it...They should realise that since the Lord does not give it to them, they do not need it. They should exercise control over themselves and go right ahead." Complete confidence, trust and abandon is what is needed.

But there are graces and one is to be able to look back over experience and then to see God at work in it, which gives assurance, even joy. Also, daily life becomes less agitated, more contented and joyful. Also times of an immediate awareness of God's presence, but these may be exceptional. Many however find an overall increase in happiness..

So start ignoring your feelings and start living by faith.. even the most blissful sense of grace can be a deception. Rewards can also come much later in the journey after much tribulation.