

## PRAYER-TALKS WITH GOD

photo

by *Jim Gordon,*  
*President of ILM*

When I was born, my parents decided to let me choose for myself what religion and practice of faith I wanted to follow. So I was not baptized into any particular religious faith, and during my childhood I enjoyed visiting many different churches and synagogues. One thing I became aware of during this time was that prayer was a very important part of all religious practice. In visiting the different places of worship, I began to ask in the Sunday School classes what was the right way to pray. And I found that very few people were able to truly talk to me about prayer. This started me on a quest to understand what prayer is and how I might find a practice of prayer that works for me.

Prayer has always been a very important action in my life. As a child I would talk with God and share with Him what had been happening in my life that day. I would also share with God about people or situations that I wanted Him to be aware of and give help to. I would also thank God for all that was in my life. I was very grateful for my parents, my brother, my dog, and my friends and I wanted God to know how grateful I was.

I still wondered, though, if the way I was praying was the right way to pray. It seemed that the prayers I heard at religious services were more about asking God for forgiveness and asking God for things rather than thanking God for all that we have. I found that very few people would talk to me, a child, about prayer except to tell me to say my prayers every night before I went to sleep. When I asked how to pray those prayers, I was taught the little prayer that I am sure we all have heard: "Now I lay me down to sleep ..." And that was all I was told about prayer.

So, I began to look in the Bible for direction on how to pray. I figured that the Bible would certainly have a lot of things to say about prayer. And sure enough it did - here are some of the passages that had the most meaning for me. Matthew 6:9 states, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye, 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name'." Mat-

thew 21:22 states, "And all things, whatever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, shall ye receive." Luke 11:9 states, "And I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." I began to have certain understandings about these passages that worked well for me. I did not know if anyone else would agree with my understandings and I did not feel that I needed or wanted to ask for others' opinions. I just began to practice what worked for me - which is something I recommend to everyone. Find what works for you and work it. Don't first look for someone else's opinion or approval because no matter what you do, not everyone is going to approve.

Let me share a few insights and practices that I have found work for me regarding prayer. When I pray I say to God, "My loving Father-Mother God, I, your living-loving child, come before You." I have always prayed in this way, seeing myself as a child of God. And when I looked at the Lord's Prayer, I realized something that made this practice more real to me. The prayer begins, "Our Father." In this prayer, Jesus is praying to demonstrate to us how to pray. And here he says, Our Father. Not just your father or my father, but Our Father. For me, I hear the voice of an elder brother saying to us to pray to Our Father in this way. In fact, I have always felt that Jesus was my brother, my elder brother - and I have often talked to him, too, in this way. So I have always made my prayers a kind of family gathering.

**When I pray I say to God,  
"My loving Father-Mother  
God, I, your living-loving  
child, come before You."**

I also pray as though it has already been done or given. So I do not ask God for something, I thank God for giving me, His child, these things. I pray with the attitude of gratitude. I give thanks. Matthew 21:22 says, "And all things, whatever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, shall ye receive." For me, believing is knowing you already have what you ask for. So, I pray as though it has already been given and received and I give thanks. Philippians

*(Prayer continues on page 4)*

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# THE GENTLE HAND OF GRACE

by Steven McAfee,  
ILM Midwest Coordinator

Yesterday, I was running errands with our oldest son when, somewhere between the bank and the post office, I received a frantic call on the car phone from my wife. It seems that our youngest son had been out riding his bike through the little nature walkway in our neighborhood when he discovered a bunny rabbit stuck in a fence. Apparently this rabbit had been attempting to leave someone's back yard by jumping through their chain link fence. The front half of the rabbit made it through just fine, but the back half didn't. Try as she might (our son who found it said she was a mother rabbit with babies), her hips were firmly wedged in the chain link fence and wouldn't budge. If you have ever read the story of Winnie-the-Pooh getting stuck in Rabbit's front door after eating too much "hunny," you'll have a fairly good idea of the predicament. Only this one wasn't funny (of course, it wasn't funny to Pooh either, as I recall).

In her struggles to free herself from the metal fence, the poor bunny had rubbed off all her fur down to her hips on both sides, and her skin was raw. She was terrified and helpless. When I arrived on the scene, my wife and son had already brought a pair of gloves (sweet as they are, bunnies have big teeth and sharp claws and can kick really well), had chased off a prowling cat, and were presently speaking words of comfort to the frightened creature. The exhausted rabbit kept trying with all her might to push her way through the fence, succeeding in nothing but bruising and battering her already injured little body. We tried to pull the links of the fence further apart, so the bunny could fit through, but to no avail. The fence wouldn't budge. Then our older son said, "Well, the only way for her to get out is to go back." So, I put on the gloves, took hold of the head and front legs of the rabbit, and began gently, but firmly, pushing her backwards into the yard. Instead of fighting, biting, or resisting, she used her hind legs to help pull herself backward. All at once, she popped through the fence back into the yard and dashed off to the cover of a nearby bush.

We were all relieved and went home feeling very happy and very grateful to God. That is the end

of the Bunny-Trapped-In-A-Fence Adventure. But it was the beginning of some helpful insights for me. I kept thinking about Grace - the Grace of God. Grace is something I keep praying for, longing for, wanting to have, and yet its ways are a mystery to me. I wondered what the chances were of a boy deciding to ride his bike at *that very* moment to that somewhat secluded place, of him seeing the struggling bunny, of him caring enough to seek help, of me having taken the car with a phone in it, and of my wife reaching me *right then* in between a number of planned errands. It all seemed so unlikely, and yet, by this set of circumstances, a bunny lived. Grace? How does it work?

I also realized that the bunny was really helpless to extricate itself alone, though it tried over and over to do so with all its might. It simply was beyond its ability. I thought of those times in my life when I jump through "fences" of my own and get stuck, and when I try to save myself from that which binds me, I succeed only in bruising an already injured man. It is beyond my power. All that can save me must come from beyond. Grace.

**Then Spirit (or someone sent by Spirit) comes along and gently, but firmly, nudges me back, and shows me a better way.**

Then I thought about how simply the bunny dilemma was resolved once the proper course of action became evident. All attempts of the bunny to free herself, and our attempts to free her by trying to move a fence that wouldn't move, proved not only futile, but painful. The harder we tried, the more it hurt, and the more desperate we all became. And I realized this was also true for me when I get "stuck in the fence." When my most valiant efforts seem to be in vain, it may be because, like the poor bunny, I am going about it the wrong way. Then Spirit (or someone sent by Spirit) comes along and gently, but firmly, nudges me back, and shows me a better way. In such times, when I have the good sense of the bunny not to resist by insisting on my own way, but am able to yield to the gently leading hand of Grace, I find myself suddenly free. ■

# THE INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES

## CLASSES & PROGRAMS: SUMMER 1997

**Presented by JIM GORDON:** For additional information, call Laura Kesten-Beaver at 512-894-0992.

**Weekly Classes:** Tuesdays 7:00-9:00 PM, Franklin Sq. Bldg., Ste. #100, 3724 Jefferson, Austin, TX. Each class includes spiritual teaching, practical exercises, group discussion, and meditation. Jim helps participants to become more deeply in touch with the Spirit within.

**Presented by LAURA KESTEN-BEAVER:** For additional information, call Laura at 512-894-0992.

**The Unfolding Creative Spirit:** This is an uplifting, experiential workshop designed to embrace the inner and outer creative self, offering a variety of experiences as a means to enhance the process of unfolding the creative spirit.

Sat June 14 Urbana, OH

**PeaceMaker:** This workshop offers an opportunity to journey through the rich Iroquois story of the PeaceMaker, reliving its teachings and participating in transformational processes, thus bringing us closer to the heart of our own PeaceMaker within.

Fri-Sun June 20-22 Kalamazoo, MI

**Bosom Buddies:** Come with your bosom buddy and experience this workshop in retreat together. All processes are done with your buddy and are designed to create joy, laughter, and a delightful connection between kindred spirits.

Fri-Sat June 27-28 Camp Mack, IN

**The Writer Within:** This workshop uses specific writing processes to send us on a self-exploratory journey through the realms of our minds and hearts, thereby teaching us more of who we are and of how we think and feel about the collage of our lives - from the ants in our sugar bowl to the desire to live in the Spirit of God.

Sat July 12 Richland, MI

**A Circle of Women:** This evening is specially dedicated in the celebration of ancient woman spirit, where women join together to experience the support of an uplifting, nurturing, and self-empowering circle.

Fri Sept. 12 Austin, TX

**Presented by STEVEN R. MCAFEE:** For additional information, call Steven at 219-485-2167.

**Tuesday Classes:** 7:30-9:00 PM, Unity Church, 3232 Crescent Ave., Ft. Wayne, IN.

Classes include spiritual teaching, group singing and sharing, and meditation. The current series will focus on mystical Bible study, exploring the mysteries and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**Friday Meditations:** 7:00-8:00 PM, Ft. Wayne, IN (except on ILM retreat weekends).

Our focus is on sharing the Love of God together in silent devotion. There is no teaching and no fellowship afterward.

**Sunday Services:** Ft. Wayne, IN. Time and location varies. Steven serves as a guest speaker for local churches and metaphysical groups. Programs include worship, singing, prayers, and lecture.

**Community Nights:** Ft. Wayne, IN. Time and location varies. Once every 4-6 weeks, the Ft. Wayne ILM community joins together for play and fellowship. Activities may include an inspirational movie and discussion; a community potluck, sharing and singing night; a family picnic in the park; or volunteering in a local service project.

(Calendar continues on next page.)

**Presented by STEVEN McAfee (continued):**

**SEMINARS:**

**Creating A Life of Love: 10:30 AM - 4:30 PM.** This seminar offers practical ideas and methods on how to experience and express love more fully in our daily lives.

Sun June 8 Ft. Wayne, IN

**ILM Family Day:** Join us for a fun-filled day in Franke Park. Activities will include a picnic lunch, free time for playing and exploring, a nature hike through the woods, and a family circle in which children and adults share their hearts together.

Sat July 26 Ft. Wayne, IN

**Families:** Laura and Steven offer a playful workshop on creating family traditions. Friday night is for parents only; Saturday is for parents and for children ages 5+.

Fri-Sat Aug 15-16 Ft. Wayne, IN

## INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES RETREAT

with Jim Gordon, Steven McAfee and Laura Kesten-Beaver

OCTOBER, 10, 11 AND 12, 1997

IN THE BLUE ROOM AT THE FORT WAYNE COLISEUM

PLAN TO ATTEND - MORE INFORMATION WILL FOLLOW  
OR YOU CAN CALL STEVEN McAfee AT 219-485-2167

### Prayer *(continued from page 1)*

4:6 states, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God." I have also learned that in asking you do receive. There is a well-known statement that says, "Be careful what you ask for because you will get it." I for one have found this to be true.

I have also learned that prayer is an ongoing action. Luke 11:9 says, "And I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." In this statement I understand it to say, keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. That is the action that I use in my prayer. There is another well-known statement that says, "He that perseveres to the end wins." Perseverance is the continuing action of prayer that I have found works for me.

I also state in my prayer, "Lord, if there is something better for me than what I am asking, something that you want to bring forward into my life, then I am open to receive it." I have also heard it said this way: "Lord bring to me that which is for my highest good." Another way of stating it is,

"Lord God, bring me whatever is for the highest good of all concerned." These are great statements. That is what I want in my life, that which is for my highest good. Only we often do not truly know what is for our highest good. What we may be wanting and asking for may not be for our highest good, and God might have something greater in mind for us than we can see. If we can open ourselves to let God's Will be done we will often find that we have in our lives just what we need and want in the moment.

Prayer is a way for me to talk with God and share with Him who I am and what I am experiencing in the moment. Talking is a great way to develop a relationship with anyone. Why not develop a great relationship with God, your true Father-Mother, by talking on a regular basis? The conversation may seem a little one-sided in that you are doing the talking and God is doing the listening. For me that is just fine. I know that in my sharing I am developing a greater relationship with God. After all, don't we wish for someone in the world who would truly listen to us and understand and accept us just as we are? That is what I find in my prayer-talks with God: a true friend and companion. ■

photo

# WHAT IS IN THE CUPBOARD?

by Laura Kesten-Beaver,  
ILM Minister

**M**y tupperware cupboard is full of plastics unpartnered with their tops. It bulges with so many containers and tops that they push against the door keeping it slightly ajar. Plastics are stacked and teeter at the top waiting to tumble with the slightest of nudges. Into this Kitchen Cupboard of Chaos I peer, tupperware container in hand, an impending sense of disaster hanging in the air around me. WHERE IS THAT TOP?! Somewhere inside me my temper stirs - and suddenly my anger grows at a rapid speed until it erupts, spilling over me - and anyone else who happens to be around. Then, just as quickly as I exploded, I get myself under control once again. It has become a family joke: "She's going to open 'that cupboard'! Head for cover!"

Interestingly though, when this happens it's never the tupperware cupboard that's really angering me - if that were the case, the simple solution would be to take fifteen minutes, match the covers to their containers, and that would be the end of "that cupboard." However, in a strange way, this cupboard seems to serve me - it represents something significant in my life that I have not been willing to look at, deal with, heal. It may be that the real issue at hand is so painful that instead of bringing forth the issue, embracing the pain and expressing my anger outward toward the *real* source, I have, instead, connected with this cupboard as a substitute source, temporarily releasing pent-up anger. This emotion is only releasing at the surface much like a pressure cooker whose steam escapes through the small knob at the top.

My "letting off steam" is only a temporary "fix" to the problem. I need to ask myself: what is the real issue for me which is bulging at its seams? What is the real issue which is unpartnered with my true feelings? Once I have identified the source, I will need to focus my attention on *that* issue, not my tupperware cupboard, by taking the pressure cooker's top off completely, and by working through my feelings directing my anger toward its *real* source.

All of us could probably share stories about times when we felt anger. And yet many of us believe anger is a negative emotion. We may fear that in expressing our anger we will go out of control and hurt others, or ourselves, through our

actions or words. As young children, many of us were taught that expressing anger was not okay - "Hold your temper, young man/lady!" - and now as adults, we may fear that if we express our anger that *we* will be judged "not okay" and thus, rejected. Therefore, many of us have learned to hold in our anger, or we believe that we have our anger under control, when in fact, it just cleverly manifests itself in new ways - like in the case of my tupperware cupboard, or by "letting off steam" onto a loved one for no apparent reason, or even by acquiring illnesses within the body.

**... many of us have learned to hold in our anger, or we believe that we have our anger under control, when in fact, it just cleverly manifests itself in new ways ...**

When we are feeling good inside, our emotions give us the message that everything is on track. Anger also has a purpose - it gives us information that things are *not* on track. Anger only becomes a negative or destructive emotion when we choose to hold it in and not express it appropriately. Holding onto anger directs it inwardly, blocking the healthy flow of Life's energy in us, causing dis-ease within our body, mind, and Spirit. It also blocks us from our loving, creates feelings of unworthiness to receive love, and finally erupts onto some "substitute" cause, unrelated to its source.

Anger, like any emotion, needs to be expressed - as it comes up, and in a healthy, nondestructive manner. Through means such as art, movement, writing, using voice in drama or singing, or laughter/humor, we can begin to move more creatively through our anger when it arises. Then we can look at the message our anger is giving us, seeing what in our life is off-track, and thus partnering a feeling with its true source. As we get better at using our anger as feedback, we can also start exploring those areas in our lives where we have held onto anger for a long time and which still remain unhealed. And for me, partnering my anger with its source will also finally allow me to go into my tupperware cupboard and reunite those lonely containers with their tops. ■

## ABOUT ILM

INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES (ILM) is a nonprofit outreach organization founded in the fundamental principles of ancient esoteric Christianity. It is dedicated to the development and balancing of the fourfold nature of the individual. Towards this goal, it provides education and services concerned with the integration of the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of the self, and also provides publications and materials that aid in this process.

Among its fundamental tenets is that we really are “temples of the Holy Spirit.” As we seek and express this presence within, we find the peace, love, power, and wisdom we all so earnestly desire. The many services of ILM are geared towards this path of individual unfoldment – such as meditation, study, and prayer on an individual and group basis.

Service to humanity and the planet is ILM’s second major emphasis, and ILM encourages individual service, in any of a wide variety of possible forms, as a vital aspect of our daily experience. Please write or phone for more information.

### From THE KNOWING OF GOD

*... That same love of God is in all of us. It is available to us constantly, and, as Paul says, nothing whatsoever can separate us from that love.*

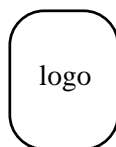
*But we have to prove this for ourselves. We have to want to find that love and experience it on a personal level. It is not difficult, and yet so many of us have not yet found it. Many of us still feel so lost, alone, and empty. How can this be when the greatest love in all-that-is is within us just waiting to be found?*

by Jim Gordon

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**Editorial and Publishing Office**

P.O. Box 164332

Austin, Texas 78716-4332

Phone: (512) 894-0992

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ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Santa Monica, CA  
Permit #457

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