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A Pathway of Prayer

by Jim Gordon
President of ILM

A very important part of my spiritual path has been prayer. Ever since I was a child, I have used prayer as a means by which to share with God. It is a way for me to focus on God and give my attention to Him for a period of time each day. And, in that time, I might talk with Him about what is going on in my life or what I might like to see come forward in my life. But beyond being a means of asking God *for* things, prayer is a process for sharing who I am with God and for making myself available to Him in whatever form He might choose.

As a child, one of the first prayers that really made an impact on me was the Lord's Prayer [Mt 6:9-13]. I was told that this was how Jesus taught us to pray. And I noticed that the first thing Jesus said was, "Our Father." That statement made a big impression on me. So I started to pray to God as my father, my creator, and in my prayers today I often pray as I did as a child, saying something like, "I, a living child of yours, come before you at this time asking these things..." or, "bringing myself forward that I may share myself more with you." And I also make myself available to God to use as an instrument, perhaps to bring blessings into my own life, to bring blessings to others, or to anchor a light into the world or into another level of consciousness.

I was also taught, as a child, to pray as if it were already given, and so a lot of my prayer process was not so much asking for things to happen but rather an offering of thanksgiving – praying as though that which I would like to see manifested was already here. As an example, when I was about seven years old, I wanted to go on a trip with my older brother and his daughter and wife to her parents' ranch in Carrizo Springs,

in south Texas. Because it was during the school year, I really didn't think my parents would let me go. But, in my prayers, I just gave thanks for the opportunity to go there, and for the joy of spending time with my brother and getting to know him and his family better. Even though it was a prayer of hope that this *would* happen, I was praying as if it were already done. When I asked my mother, expecting her to say no, she just said, "Yes. That would be fine." And the next thing I said to her, almost unconsciously, was, "Amen," because in my mind I was still sharing my prayer of thankfulness to God!

As a child, I learned to end my prayers with, "I ask this in the name of Jesus," because it says in the Bible that if you ask "in my name" it shall be given [Jn 14:14]. Later on, though, I became aware that in the Lord's Prayer Jesus also said, "Hallowed be thy name." I began to see that maybe there was a connection between *thy* name and asking "in my name." All of a sudden, I realized that there was a name here that wasn't Jesus' name. Finding this connection was very illuminating for me, but the word *hallowed* didn't mean very much to me. I looked it up in the dictionary and found that it meant "holy or sacred," and so I began to pray, "My father, which art in heaven, as a living child of yours, I pray in your sacred name. I come before you asking..." or, "sharing my love," or, "making myself available to you." I didn't know what the sacred name of God really was, but in my own way I prayed in His name, and I began a search for the real meaning of "the sacred name of God."

In the past, and also today, when I pray, I simply share with God what comes from my heart – not my desire or my need so much as what is in my heart in the moment. After a recent seminar, several people asked for a transcription of the prayer with which I closed our meeting. In hopes that it may be of interest or helpful, it is presented later in this newsletter. ■



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Back Where We Belong

by *Steven McAfee*
ILM Midwest Coordinator

On June the 6th, our eldest daughter gave birth to her second child, a beautiful baby girl named Victoria. My wife and I, and our other two daughters (our sons were at school), arrived at the hospital shortly after the birth. It was a scene I am sure is repeated day after day, in one setting or another, all over the world: a group of kindred hearts gathering to welcome a newly arriving soul into their midst, one who will become a special part of their world. Expectancy, hopes, and emotions run strong and deep, yet so much of what is felt is never spoken aloud. It is silently displayed on the faces of those present, astonished anew at the miracle of life.

The hospital's policy was to routinely place every newborn into a "warmer," a mechanical device used to stabilize the baby's body temperature. The baby remains in the warmer for four hours. After this, the nurses bathe the baby, and only *then* give it back to its mother. It was a long four hours.

Needless to say, Victoria wasn't happy with this arrangement. She fussed and cried and was obviously distressed. She looked afraid, even though she was quite safe and even though she was regularly attended by the nurses. She knew she was not in the presence of her parents. She was not where she knew she belonged.

When, at last, she was placed into her mother's arms, she seemed instantly transformed. She looked totally calm, peaceful, and truly radiant. A little later, she was handed to her father. Her father is a young, strong man, who works long hours at heavy labor outdoors. You can see his strength just by looking at him. But that day, in that moment, being wrapped in his presence was the softest, most tender place any

child had ever rested her head. And from that moment on, her daddy's touch, or just the sound of his voice, calmed and soothed her.

This, I thought to myself, is the story of life. Victoria's environment hadn't really changed. Her clothing, her health, her age, her surroundings: all were the same. Yet one moment she was distressed, frightened, and in tears; and the next, she was cooing, sighing, and contented beyond description. Why? Because she was at home in the loving arms of her parents where she belonged.

How often do we find ourselves feeling like we're somewhere we don't belong? How often do we cry out like frightened children, feeling abandoned in a strange and foreign land? And how many times do we then convince ourselves that *if only* we were younger, or older, prettier, smarter, healthier, wealthier or *something*...If only our circumstances would change, *then* we would feel happy and safe again.

Perhaps such changes of fortune do sometimes come, and perhaps they do make our lives seem brighter. But they do not always come, nor do they always bring us comfort when they do. Maybe, just maybe, we are all, in our own individual ways, like Victoria – searching for a place where we really belong and so often feeling lost and alone when we're anywhere else. But where is that place of our true belonging, and does it even exist?

In the trials and challenges of my own life, and from all I hear from so many others, the real and lasting comfort to be found in this world is in the "arms" of our *heavenly* parent. It is in the peace of His embrace that we find out true home and begin to see our lives in their rightful perspective. It is not that we must change our world and its outer manifestations, but that we must find that inner and *spiritual* world that is there within us, only "waiting" to be found. A passage in the Jerusalem Bible says it so well: "It was neither messenger nor angel but his Presence that saved them" [Is 63:9]. ■



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Supporting One Another

Laura Kesten-Beaver
ILM Minister

Recently, I spoke with someone I've known for many years and excitedly shared with her the work I have been doing with women and young girls. I told her how important it has been to me. Then I paused and asked her what she thought. There was a silence, and she then said, "Well, I just don't know anything about it." Inside me at that moment, I connected not with her but with a feeling I've experienced all too often in the past – a feeling of separation and isolation. I felt an overwhelming sadness inside for our lack of knowing *how* to support one another.

Coincidentally, within an hour a friend of mine called. I was still feeling the aftermath of that first conversation, so I began telling my friend how I was feeling. She listened, and every once in a while she would ask me a question to help me clarify my feelings. By the end of my conversation with her, I felt comforted, relaxed and supported.

I started thinking about how different the two conversations were. I became aware that, if support could be rated from 1 to 10, these two conversations fell at the extremes. And then I thought about why this was true, and what are the essential aspects of support.

I realized that one key aspect of support is to show interest. A lack of interest, or not being able to share in someone's story, creates a lack of connectedness between people. In the first conversation, as soon as I experienced a lack of interest, our conversation came to a halt. In contrast, when my friend listened with an open heart, occasionally asking questions, it allowed me to feel safe in sharing my thoughts and feelings.

Then I began to think that there must be more to support than just listening alone. The follow-

ing story came to mind. Some years ago, a great deal of concern was being expressed about a teaching colleague of mine – about the manner in which she disciplined and managed her classroom. So a meeting was arranged in order for the teacher, the principal, and a few of the teacher's close colleagues (including me) to share with each other regarding these concerns. After much discussion, one of the colleagues said, "What we need to do here is to *support* this teacher and not be criticizing her. We should just leave her alone. In fact, we should all tell her what a great job she is doing."

Of all the things said in that two-hour meeting, that's the one comment which stuck in my mind. The implication was that support means condoning whatever a person does, whether functional or dysfunctional, through silence or compliments. In my heart, I didn't feel that this would be supporting her. And so I began thinking about feedback as a means of giving support.

To me, giving a person feedback means listening to them with your heart and then "mirroring back" the information which you have heard. So, in the case of my teaching colleague, who wanted with all her heart to be a good teacher and connect with her students, we were able to best serve her and the children by giving her feedback of how she seemed to be feeling and acting with the children. Not saying anything, or being complimentary, as was suggested by our colleague, would in fact be giving her feedback that everything was okay.

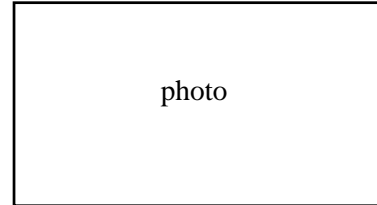
These two experiences taught me some important lessons about giving support. One thing is that it can be supportive of a person to give them sincere feedback. And, most importantly, if we want to be supportive of others, it is essential to show interest and listen openly with our hearts. ■

Laura resides with her husband, Tom, and daughter, Cally, near Austin, Texas. A licensed teacher, Laura has a deep commitment to personal growth and a special interest in women's and children's issues.

“The Human Journey: In Search of Self”

an ILM weekend retreat: September 8-10 at Camp Mack, Milford, Indiana

As children of God, each of us is on a personal and unique journey of experience, adventure, and self-discovery. When we come into an inner realization of our spiritual identity, we can more creatively, more successfully, and more joyously pursue our individual callings.



This ILM weekend retreat will be practically oriented, with an emphasis on experiential techniques for coming into a greater knowing of ourselves as spiritual beings and of our lives as rich and varied opportunities to explore and express our divine heritage.

This retreat will be held in the relaxing atmosphere of Camp Mack, northwest of Fort Wayne, Indiana. To maximize personal interaction and individual attention, enrollment will be limited to 50 participants. Accommodations will be provided (dormitory style), and the camp's buffet-style meals can cater to a variety of dietary preferences. The registration fee of \$125 also includes lodging and Saturday and Sunday meals.

**with ILM Ministers Jim Gordon,
Steven McAfee, Nick Martin,
and Laura Kesten-Beaver**

Space will be reserved with a *non-refundable* deposit of \$50 per person and the balance due received no later than September 1st. Refunds can not be made for cancellations received after September 4th. In the event that we receive more registrations than we can accommodate, names will be placed on a waiting list in the order received (any funds received will be refunded in full in the event that space does not permit attendance). A few partial scholarships will be available.

SEPTEMBER 8-10, 1995 ILM RETREAT REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Work Phone: (____) _____

Amount Enclosed: _____ Please make checks payable to *Inner Light Ministries*.

The retreat will begin at 7 PM Friday and close about 3 PM Sunday. Participants may check in any time after 4 PM Friday, and the option of Friday dinner (5-6 PM) will be available at \$5.50 per person. For further information or to register, please contact:

Steven McAfee (219) 485-2167
6228 Lombard Place, Fort Wayne, IN 46815

ABOUT ILM

Inner Light Ministries (ILM) is a nonprofit outreach organization founded in the fundamental principles of ancient and esoteric Christianity. It is dedicated to the development and balancing of the fourfold nature of the individual. Towards this end, it provides education and services concerned with the integration of the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of the self, and with the development of 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 – through meditation, study, and prayer on an individual and group basis.

Service to humanity and the planet is its 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.

ILM BOOKS ARE

AVAILABLE IN HONOLULU

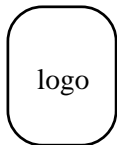
Love and Loving
The Knowing of God
The Staff of the Shepherd

The first three books in Jim Gordon’s study series are now available in Honolulu at \$6 each by calling Vicky O’Connor, 808-988-9421.

A QUOTE

Love is the only freedom in the world because it so elevates the spirit that the laws of humanity and the phenomena of nature do not alter its course.

Kahlil Gibran



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A Prayer

*from Jim Gordon's presentation in
Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 22, 1995*

Father-Mother God, at this time I call myself forward in the light of your loving and ask to be surrounded, filled, guided, and protected by your love, your light, and your sound. I call myself forward into the light of the Christ, into the light of the Holy Spirit, into the light of my own soul. I align myself to my true Self, asking the Christ within me to lift me up into my own divine presence, bringing me into that place of clarity, of loving, of understanding, of wisdom and peace. I ask at this time that your grace go before me upon this path of life, assisting me on this walk back into your loving heart. With this grace, take away any distractions and disturbances, and assist me in walking this path of neutrality and loving, and in manifesting it more each day in my life, through my actions, through my choices, through my experiences. Assist me into awakening into who I truly am in You. I ask just now that You come forward into my consciousness, through me knowing myself in the soul, that I may awaken there and know my true Self. I seek to understand more clearly who I am in You and who You are in me, and how I am to live my life more fully in that consciousness. I knock at the door of the heart of loving and ask that You open that door with me and allow me to express my loving. Greater yet, I ask that I be a chalice that is filled with loving to overflowing, and that your loving move through me into the world to touch others. I ask at this time through your grace, through your loving, through the life and soul in me, that any and all negativity, imbalance, and karma that can be lifted, just now and throughout this day, be lifted up into the highest light and there dispersed from whence it came, for the highest good of all concerned. And for all this I give thanks.

ILM Calendar of Events

GRAND RAPIDS, MI, July 28-30: "The Inner Life," a retreat with Steven McAfee, focusing on the development of a deeper relationship with God. Contact Steven (219) 485-2167.

KALAMAZOO, MI, July 29, 8:30 AM-8:30 PM: "A Circle of Women," a women's workshop with Laura Kesten-Beaver. Contact Carolyn Dailey (616) 327-6851 (home); 375-2000 (work).

FORT WAYNE, IN, August 22: "Our Inner Life and Outer Relationships," the first in a series of Tuesday evening classes with Steven McAfee. Contact Steven (219) 485-2167.

FORT WAYNE, IN, August 27th: Steven McAfee will lead a Sunday morning worship service with the Brigade of Light, 11 AM at the YMCA Villa. Contact Steven (219) 485-2167.

MILFORD, IN, Sept. 8-10: annual Midwest ILM retreat (see description on insert page).

GRAND RAPIDS, MI, Sept. 22-24: in conjunction with Faithful Heart Center, Steven McAfee will lead a family retreat for parents and children. Contact Marilyn Schuiling (616) 887-7841.

AUSTIN, TX: fall classes with Jim Gordon; details to appear in our next newsletter issue.