

**Part I. Love, Prayer and  
Communication**



*Prayer—what does it  
communicate?*

Prayer, communication and love are so closely linked together in everyday life that to omit any one of them is to become a spiritual cripple.

"Communicating love? What's that about?" a lady asked when she saw the title of this book.

"It's about God," I answered, "and how much He loves us. It's about us . . . and how we can love one another."

Do you believe God loves you?

If you do, you won't have any trouble at all answering this lady's question. If you don't really believe God loves you, you'll hesitate and hedge a bit, or you'll come right out and say, "Me? how could He love me?" In either case, your answer will show that you do not accept yourself, nor do you know how great is the heart of God.

Being who He is, God's love is unconditional. Therefore He can accept us, forgive us, and love us as we are.

Love's nature is to communicate. There are countless ways to communicate, and however unsatisfactory it may be, speech is one of them. To speak with God is called *prayer*, a religious practice from which many, although deeply religious in spirit, shy away. We need a simpler approach to prayer which will attract and not repel.

### To learn to pray

To learn to pray is to learn to love. Prayer is a dialogue between two people who love each other, because prayer is the language of the heart.

Have you ever listened to yourself pray, like a third party listening in? Did you ever try to "edit" your prayers, to find out exactly what you are saying?

When you pray, do you say what your heart wants to say? Or, ignoring your heart, do you pray for the ears of people? When did you last listen to what your heart was saying?

It is a wonderfully freeing experience to get your mouth and your heart together, to say what you mean and mean what you say, and come to the point. Well, why not? It makes good sense, doesn't it?

Listen next time you or another is asked to pray—whether for giving thanks at a meal, or whatever. Why pray just to get it over with? Why pray with "clichés" which have outworn their meaning? Who listens to this kind of praying? Why be so general and so inclusive that there is no interest at all in what is being said?

Prayer should be an outbreathing of love which God himself has put into you. Prayer should be speaking with God, for He is present and loves not only you but also your brother. Essentially, prayer should be simple, expressing straightforward grati-

tude or asking for what we need at that particular time. The past may need confession, while the future calls for trust.

In group prayer, the prayer which truly communicates is the prayer expressing love. When someone so prays, I am loved. So are you. So is everyone present.

Prayer that contains the power of reaching from one to another, the power to heal and to make whole through the giving and receiving of love, is real prayer. This means more than speech. It means giving one's self to others all day long in love, because Jesus Christ, the author of love, is already there in your inner being. Every act and thought can be prayer, projected by the choice to love.

### **To love**

The greatest need of any human being is love. God made us like this. Our trouble is that we confuse different kinds of love until we may think God rejects us because some person has rejected us. The quality of God's love is of a different essence from human love, even though all human love must of necessity spring from Him who is the source.

To most people love means sex and possession. No wonder we are so soon disillusioned. Love is openly sought by youth. Older people settle for security and companionship, but nevertheless long for love.

To love is imperative. We must love or perish. But we must love with an unselfish love, a giving love, the kind of love God gives to us, the kind of love that involves us with each other—in time, in words, in caring. Yet because we are human and cannot read one another's minds, loving us makes us vulnerable. We can be hurt, misunderstood and rejected. And we in

turn will hurt others with or without "malice aforethought."

The big problem, as I see it, is that we cannot love each other for the simple reason we don't love ourselves! And how can we love ourselves, until we are certain that God loves us? But when we know that He does indeed love us, then everything changes! Then we can tell it, and others listening will believe us, because they know we are speaking from the heart and from personal experience.

In a recent meeting a lady asked me, "Have you ever been married?" The group of 60 waited for my answer. I stood speechless for a moment, never having been put on the spot like this in a public gathering. Then the answer came to me, as it always does when I wait for it.

"No, I haven't, but it isn't my fault!" The laughter which followed drew us together dispelling the loneliness which up to that moment all had felt.

"How is it," asked another, "that never having been married you nevertheless understand all of our problems?"

Well, I haven't exactly been a hermit all my life. I've lived in China and among students, and travelled widely. I have eyes and ears, and a heart with which to give and receive love. And single or married, everyone has problems, everyone has a sense of aloneness which must be recognized, accepted and utilized. In a sense, everyone lives alone. This is why we all need to learn to communicate and to love.

Communicating love can be done by prayer. And we can all learn to pray. When love is poured right into the words being said, God becomes more real and is more often felt to be present. This is because love is His gift to our hearts. God is love, He gives us Himself, and we are loved.

What then do we do with love? We misuse it right and left. We hoard it selfishly. We bottle it up in business, houses, lands, cars, possession, and seldom share it with anyone. But if it is to grow, love must be given away. Love given away increases in depth and in quality. When we give love to one another in any manner acceptable to each other, we are communicating. We are not communicating when our own ideas of giving love take precedence. We *are* communicating when we serve one another in love.

We are communicating the most important message in all the world when we say (having first believed it ourselves) *God is love. God loves you; yes, you.* Do you believe it? Can you say it? Say it now and believe it.

This is the message the world is waiting to hear—that God loves sinners, and *this sinner* in particular. God is love and God offers forgiveness—for you and for me and for all who, hearing His invitation, will come.

### To communicate

Later (in Chapter 11) I will discuss communication and will link it with God, love and prayer. I want to put it into a personal setting where there are words which the heart longs to hear, words of love and invitation, words of acceptance and response that break down walls of fear and open doors of shared joy. When doors are open, then the breakdown in communication—between husband and wife, between parents and children, between friends, between all peoples—will be and can be healed and restored. The hard heart will be softened, the rebellious won, the hungry fed, the searching will find, the doubting will believe. The heart will be at peace in shared love.

Such love and understanding can be found when we are together in the Presence of God—in God who has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, the Lord of love, the Lord of all creation.

God is speaking all the time. Who is ready to respond to the Voice of Love—the love of God speaking to us . . . through us? But not until we have first learned to listen are we ready to respond.

Communication is an essential word in today's world. We hear it everywhere. But how and to what degree are we personally involved with it? A lack of communication of love has been established, there is greater potential for peace, progress, integration, and meaning to life, for individuals, for families, for cities, and for nations.

Communicating love is always possible when God is present.

And God *is* always present!



God is speaking all the time, all the time, all the time.

—*Frank Laubach.*



### *Suggestions for study*

1. As you go through the chapter again, write down short sentences which express the nature of God's love
2. Think about these words in relation to why prayer may be dull. Supply a creative word as the opposite for the following:

repetitious  
impersonal  
habitual  
too conclusive

general  
traditional  
clichés  
non-communicative

3. List a few reasons why you believe communication has broken down between you and another.
4. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). Memorize this verse.

