

Chapter 11 Prayer: Let's Talk

1. Does Prayer Really Work?

Yes, prayer works - but not always in the manner we intend. We may not receive a particular benefit that we seek, but prayer still draws us closer to God. It establishes in line of communication with the Lord and builds his presence in our minds. And yes, many times our specific prayers are granted – although not always as we expect.

Prayer is a key which opens many doors. Whether we are giving thanks or seeking help for ourselves or others, we are working to understand our relationship with the Lord. Some prayers are praises to God, some are affirmations of his glory, some are petitions for help, and some are prayers of thanksgiving, but in all prayers we seek to draw closer to God. Prayer is one of the most basic and most ancient elements of every religion – a model of positive thinking.

Prayer is the very breath of religion, for it brings man and God together and with every sigh, nearer and nearer.

Sathya Sai Speaks 7, p.291

2. How Do We Start ?

When we begin our new spiritual life, our desires are like a runaway train. It is impossible to stop them immediately. We can only redirect them along channels which reduce the risk to ourselves and others. If we switch the train to an uphill track, it will gradually lose its momentum and we can regain control. Prayer is the uphill track for our runaway desires. Until we direct our aspirations along proper lines, it is best to steer them to God. The Lord knows what is best for us; he will help us to direct our efforts along the right lines.

From the very outset it is necessary for us to practice the habit of regular prayer. A regular time and place for prayer help us to quickly concentrate and reach a state of calm. Regular prayer makes us aware of God's omnipresence and attracts his grace, for God is as close to us as we are to him.

第十一章 祈祷：让我们谈谈

1. 祈祷真的有效吗？

是的，祈祷是有效的 -- 但常常是不如我们所期盼的那样。我们或许接收不到我们所要求的特别的利益，但祈祷还是引领我们更亲近神。它建立起与神沟通的一条管道并让祂显现于我们心中。是的，我们特别的祈祷多次的应验 - 即便不常如我们所期盼的那样。

祈祷是开启诸多门户的一把钥匙。不论我们是感恩或为自己或他人求助，我们都在为了解我们与主的关系而工作。一些祈祷是赞美神，一些是肯定祂的荣耀，一些是祈求帮助，而一些是感恩，但在所有祈祷中，我们无不寻求亲近神。祈祷是每一个宗教最基本与最古老的要素 -- 一种正面思想的模式。

祈祷确实是宗教气息，因为它把人与神拉在一起并随着每一个感叹而更加亲近神。

《沙迪亚赛说》第7章291面

2. 如何开始？

当我们开始我们新的灵性生活时，我们的渴望就像是一列奔驰的火车。你是不可能立即制止它们的。我们只可以沿着轨道路线来转变其方向以减少我们自己和他人的危险。如果我们把火车转向上山的路线，它就会渐渐失去动力而我们就可以重新控制它了。祈祷是我们奔驰欲望的上山路线。除非我们把我们的欲望导向正确的路线，否则我们最好还是把它们驶向神。主知道什么是对我们最好的；祂会帮助我们朝向正确方向努力去做。

打从步上灵道的第一个出口，我们就有必要养成经常祈祷的习惯。在一个固定的时间与地点祈祷，帮助我们很快地就集中精神和平静下来。常常祈祷使我们觉知神的全在和吸引祂的恩典，因为神之亲近我们就如我们之亲近祂一般。

At the beginning, one might need some special set of circumstances for clearing the mind for concentration on God. But after a while, if one finds that God is omnipresent and becomes aware of him and one's thoughts are centered on God, then no matter where one is, it is the same. Prayers may be addressed to God and the prayers will reach him.

Conversations, p.43

God knows what we seek, but it is up to us to ask. In asking we make a conscious choice of what path we wish to follow. We ask for specific results and thereby accept the consequences of those results.

It is your duty to ask God. Words must be said, and the words must correspond to the thought. The thought must be put into a true word. It is true enough that the divinity knows all, but he requires that the true word be said. The mother may know that to maintain life the child requires food, but milk is given when the child asks for it.

Conversations, p.42

We must ask for what we want, but our actions should not contradict our words, if we pray for greater love, we cannot continue to harbor hate. If we long for humility, we cannot continue to strut about in pride. When we pray, we must also do our part to fulfill the request. We cannot receive grace before we have made our own best effort to secure our objective. Our thoughts, words, and deeds must all support our prayer.

Prayer must be united with practice. You should not pray for one thing and practice another. Such prayer is only a means of deception. The words you utter, the deeds you do, the prayers you make must all be directed along the same path.

Prasanthi Vahini, p. 34

No one can instruct another when or how that person should pray. All of us have different needs and attitudes. What is appropriate at one time may not be at another time. The values and languages of different cultures also vary. It is not possible for us to evaluate the worth of another person's prayer, for

开始时你或许需要某个特别环境作为你清涤心念之用以便专注于神。但过后，如果你发现，神是全在的而变得对祂有所觉知，并且你的思想则专注于神，那时，不论你在哪儿都没有分别了。祈祷可以跟神说话而祈祷会抵达神那儿。

《交谈》第43面

神知道我们所求之物，但我们必须开口。在祈求时，我们得做一个明智的抉择，哪一条路是我们希望走的。我们要求特别的结果并因此而必须接受那些结果的报应。

祈求神是你的义务。话必须说出，且必须与思想一致。思想必须以真话表达。真的，神无所不知，但祂要我们说真话。母亲知道孩子需要食物维持生命，但只有当孩子要求食物时，母亲便给他牛奶。

《交谈》第42面

我们必须祈求我们所要的，但我们的言行应该一致，不相冲突。如果我们祈求更大的爱，我们就不能继续怀抱着恨。如果我们渴望谦虚，我们就不能继续自我膨胀，趾高气扬。祈祷时，我们也必须尽自己的本分去完成我们的请求。在竭尽所能去达到目标之前，我们是接收不到圣恩的。我们的身口意必须支持我们的祈祷。

祈祷必须与实行一致。你不能祈祷一样东西而实行另一样东西。这样的祈祷仅是一种欺骗行为。你所说的话，所行的事，所做的祈祷都必须沿循同一的途径进行。

〈平和之川〉第34面

无人能教另一人，该何时祈祷，该怎么祈祷。我们所有人都有不同的需要和心态。适合于此时者未必适合于另一时。不同文化的价值和说法也有所不同。我们不可能估计另一人祈祷的价值，因为大家都以自

all speak to God in their own ways. It is not the words we use or the form of God we address that gives prayer its power: it is the devotion in our hearts.

The stamp of bhakti (devotion) is what makes the prayer reach the destination, God; not the festoons, the fanfare, the heap of flowers, or the festive nature of the feast-offerings. The simple, sincere heart is the stamp that makes the prayer travel fast.

Sathya Sai Speaks 7, p.259

Prayers are not always answered immediately. Many of us wish for one thing today and for another thing tomorrow. We must show that our prayer is a heartfelt need. It must be sincere and pure to reach the Lord.

Prayers for worldly ends do not reach God. They will reach only those deities who deal with such restricted spheres. But all prayers arising from pure love, unselfish eagerness to render service, and from hearts that are all-inclusive will reach God.

Sathya Sai Speaks 11, p.68

3. What Should We Pray for?

In prayer we need not request anything at all. Prayer may be best used simply to draw us closer to God – to bring God into our lives and attract his grace. Prayer can then enable us to experience the joy and bliss which God confers.

Our devotion and prayer to God should not be for the sole purpose of obtaining something or fulfilling some desire of ours. This should be for the sake of atma (the inner divinity) and for the sake of becoming one with the Lord and for the sake of getting the bliss that one can get by being close to the Lord.

Summer Showers 1974, p.176

It is best to pray for results which reduce desires and promote peace, love, and understanding. These are the proper objects of prayer; they are the special gifts of God which are not available in any shop. Perhaps the wisest object of

己的方式跟神说话。给予祈祷威力的不是我们所用的语言也不是我们所祈祷的神相，而是我们内心的虔诚。

虔诚 (*bhakti*) 的特征使祈祷达到目的地，神；而不是花綵，不是炫耀，不是堆积如山的花卉，也不是喜庆的宴席。纯真而诚挚的心才是使祈祷迅速迈进的特征。

《沙迪亚赛说》第7章259面

祈祷不常立即应验。我们很多人都是今天希求这个，明天希求那个。我们必须把由衷的需要展示于我们的祈祷。它必须真诚和纯净以便趋向主。

为世俗目的而作的祈祷不会到达神那儿。它们只会到达那些统领这种受限制领域的神祇。然而，所有产生自纯爱，无私的热切服务及发自涵盖一切之内心的祈祷，就会抵达神那儿。

《沙迪亚赛说》第11章68面

3. 我们应该祈祷什么？

在祈祷时，我们大可不必祈求任何事物。利用祈祷使我们更亲近神是为上上之策 --- 把神带到我们生命上来并赢取祂的恩典。祈祷能使我们体验神赐予的喜悦与福乐。

我们对神的虔诚和祈祷不应该只为了获得某样东西或满足我们某种欲望作为唯一目的。这应该是为了自性 (*atma*) 的缘故，和为了与神融为一体的缘故以及为了获得必须与神亲近才能得到的至福。

《夏季浸濡1974》第176面

最好是为了减少欲望和促进平和，爱，及了解而祈祷。这些都是正确的祈祷目标；它们都是市场上买不到的，神的特别的礼物。或许最明智的祈祷目标是除去灵性进展的障碍。坚持还是达到目标不可或缺的

prayer is for the removal of the obstacles which block our spiritual progress. Persistence may be required for us to obtain our goal, but tenacious effort builds spiritual strength. The difficulty of our journey sometimes grants us added fortitude, as the strongest steel is forged in fire. If we listen to our loving hearts, not to the rationalizations of our minds, we will concentrate on proper goals. The heart is a wiser guide and is the source of true prayer and communion with God.

Prayers must emanate from the heart, where God resides, and not from the head, where doctrines and doubts clash.

Sathya Sai Speaks 7, p.83

It is important to pray for benefits which further spiritual progress. When we experience difficulty in fulfilling our wishes, it may be that we need to examine and possibly change our attitude rather than present circumstances. Many times the things for which we pray are obstacles to our spiritual progress. In fact, it may be best for us that most of our prayers are not granted. It is not always possible for us to determine the consequences of our desires. The following story illustrates this point.

A young man once had a simple wish: he prayed for a job so that he could leave his parents' home. Next, he prayed for a wife to cook for him and provide a home for him. With the wife came children, so he prayed for a big house to put them in and a car to carry his family around town. Then he needed a better job to support all of his obligations. Finally the poor fellow was so burdened by his many responsibilities that he only wished to retire into the forest alone to meditate. Unfortunately his spiritual prayer could not be granted, because all of his previous prayers for material benefits had been granted.

God gives you whatever you pray for, so take care. Ask for the right things.

Sathya Sai Speaks 3, p.230

条件，然而，不屈不挠的努力则培育起灵性力量。困难有时反而给予我们附加的刚毅，如钢之千锤百炼。如果我们聆听我们亲切的心声而不是合理化的心念，我们会专注于正确的目标了。心灵是一个贤明的指南并且是真正祈祷及与神交融的泉源。

祈祷必须根之于神寓居的心，而不是根之于教义与怀疑起冲突的头脑。

《沙迪亚赛说》第7章83面

为更进一步的灵性进展而祈祷是重要的。当我们发现难以实现我们的愿望时，我们得深加检讨乃至可能改变我们的心态而不是改变目前的情境。很多时候，我们所祈祷之物是我们灵性进展的障碍。其实，我们大多数的祈祷不能如愿反而是件好事。我们常常不可能决定我们欲望的后果。以下的故事可说明这一点。

一个年轻人有一个希望：他祈祷获得一份工作，使他能够离开父母的家。接下来，他祈祷有一个妻子为他煮饭烧菜，提供他一个家。有了妻子就有孩子，所以他祈祷有一间大的房子，让全家居住，及一辆汽车，可以运载全家去兜风。然后他需要一份更好的工作来维持养家的义务。最后，那可怜的家伙得肩负沉重的责任，致使他萌生远遁山林之念。遗憾的是，他的祈祷得不到回应，因为他以前所有的为了物质利益的祈祷都已如愿。

神恩赐你所祈求的，所以要谨慎。要祈求正确的事物。

《沙迪亚赛说》第3章230面

It is best to let the Lord decide what we should receive. He sees the past, the present, and the future of us all. The material objects that we pray for often increase our desires and make our lives more difficult. However, some material wishes may be granted so that we will appreciate God's benevolence. Swami says: "I give you what you want, so that you will learn to want what I have to give." Still, the wise course is to trust in the Lord to provide what is necessary for us.

Not knowing what we should ask, we are asking him for something when really we want something else. In this process, we are getting ourselves into difficulties. God is always ready to give you all that you want, but you do not seem to know what is good for you and what you really want. Since you do not know what you should want and under what circumstances, it is better and easier to surrender yourself completely to God and simply ask for his grace.

Summer Showers 1973, p.134

4. The Answer Will Come When the Time is Right

It is beyond us to know how or why prayers are granted. So many factors are involved that we cannot hope to understand the process. Timing, karma, grace, the degree of personal effort – all have a bearing on the situation.

There may be other reasons why our prayers are not answered. We may have karma to work out or lessons to learn. When we pray for a miraculous cure, we may not see the factors which caused the illness. Some people receive cures, while others do not. If the lessons of that illness have not been learned, it would be cruel to relieve the illness, for it would only have to be repeated. But if the lessons have been learned and the debt paid, then a cure could endow the aspirant with new faith and determination.

It is always wisest for us to put our trust in the Lord. He takes care of our needs without being asked when we try to live a good life and dedicate our actions to him. God is our eternal parent; he cares for his children and tries to direct them in beneficial directions.

最好让神去决定我们应该接受的是什么。祂看到我们大家的过去，现在和未来。我们所祈求的物质常常增进我们的欲望而使我们的生命更陷于困难。无论如何，有一些物质希望或可如愿以偿，以便我们会感激神恩。斯瓦米说：“我给你，你所要的，就是希望有朝一日你会接受我必须给你的。”然而，最明智的做法就是信靠主提供我们所需的一切。

不知道我们该祈求什么，我们正祈求某样东西，而其实，我们需要的是另一样东西。在这过程中，我们正陷自己于苦难之中。神总是随时提供你所需但你似乎不知道什么是对你好的及什么是你真正需要的。由于你不知道你该要的是什么，及在什么情况下你需要，你最好还是完全降服于神并且只要求祂的恩典。

《夏季浸濡1973》134面

4. 时间一到，答案自然出现

我们不可能知道祈祷如何或因何应验。涉及的因素是这么多，致使我们不能了解其过程。时机，业障，圣恩，个人努力的程度---都与这情况息息相关。

我们的祈祷为何没有回应，可能还有其他原因。我们也许还有业报得承受或教训得学习。当我们祈求一个神奇的疗效时，我们或看不到致病的原因。有些人获得疗效，有些人则得不到。如果那疾病的教训未获认知，解除病痛反而是件残酷的事，因为它只会一再地重复。但如果这教训已被学会而债务已被清还，那么，疗效即能给予求道者以崭新的信念与决心。

信靠主总是最明智之举。当我们过一个正直的生活并奉献我们的行动给主，祂会照顾我们所需，即便我们从未祈求。神是我们永恒的父母；祂关心祂的子女并引导他们朝向对他们有利的方向前进。

If a bhakta (devotee) has dedicated his all – body, mind, and existence – to the Lord, the Lord will himself look after everything, for he will always be with the bhakta. Under such conditions, there is no need for prayer. But have you so dedicated yourself and surrendered everything to the Lord?

Prasanthi Vahini, p.14

It is easier for us to learn how to live in the world than to change it to meet our expectations. We cannot expect immediate fulfillment of our many desires. Through prayer we learn to accept that which we cannot change and to change what we can. However, some prayers do not even require an answer, while others may take a lifetime to realize.

Questions for Study Circle:

1. What is the function of prayer?
2. How many kinds of prayer are there?
3. Why are some prayers answered and others are not?
4. Should we pray for results or leave events up to God?
5. What makes prayer effective?
6. Is a regular time and place for prayer necessary?
7. What obstacles may keep prayers from being answered?
8. Does God hear all prayers?
9. What are worthy objects of prayers?
10. How long should we wait for an answer?
11. Are traditional prayers more effective than spontaneous prayers?

References for Further Study

1. Sanathana Sarathi, Sept. 1979, pp.193-194 (All prayers do not go directly to God).
2. Conversations, p.42.
3. Eastern View of Jesus, p.26-27.
4. Summer Showers 1979, p.8 (Some prayers are handled by God's "ministers").
5. We Devotees, p.162.

如果一个虔诚者以奉献一切 --- 身体，心念，和存在 --- 给神，神会照顾他的一切，因为祂一直与虔诚者在一起。再这情况下，祈祷就不需要了。但你是否如此献身并降服一切给神？

《平和之川》第14面

学习如何生活于世间远比要改变它以配合我们的期待，容易得多。我们不能期盼欲望立即兑现。通过祈祷，我们学会接受我们不能改变的，并且学会改变我们所能改变的。然而，一些祈祷甚至不必应验，而一些祈祷可能要费一生的时间才实现。

学习圈的问题：

1. 祈祷的作用是什么？
2. 祈祷有几种？
3. 为什么有些祈祷应验而有些则不能？
4. 我们应该祈求结果抑或让神来决定？
5. 致使祈祷有效果的是什么？
6. 一定的时间和地点对祈祷来说是必要的吗？
7. 是什么阻碍祈祷的应验？
8. 神聆听所有的祈祷吗？
9. 什么是祈祷的有价值目标？
10. 等待一个答案要多久？
11. 传统的祈祷比自然而发的祈祷更为有效吗？