

Ask of God: Our Solace, Guide, and Stay

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It is a thrill for me to be here with you today. It brings back a flood of memories. When I was a newly returned missionary from Portugal, my very first date was to a BYU devotional! I have a long-lasting love for these wonderful gatherings. The Spirit has a great capacity to teach us the things that we are willing to receive in these sacred settings. I pray that we will pause for just a minute and be in tune to what the Spirit would have us learn today.

From the moment I received the invitation to speak with you, I began to pray for you—the student body and the faculty. As I prayed, the Spirit touched my heart, giving me a sense of God’s tremendous love for you and making me aware of some of your concerns. I was given just a small glimpse of the deep loneliness some of you are dealing with. I felt great anticipation for those of you beginning a new adventure. And I became mindful of the anxiety of those carrying burdens or in transitions—preoccupied about the past,

the present, and the future. These reoccurring insights witnessed to me more fully that the Lord knows you intimately: both collectively and—more important—individually. Oh, how He loves you! He cares about you in a way that human language cannot adequately express.

As part of this mortal experience, we each long to feel loved. We yearn for connection—both to Heavenly Father and to each other. We have gone to great lengths over centuries and decades to connect. Countless tools have been invented—all with the hope of easing our loneliness and feeling support and love for one another. [A video was shown of many modern tools, concluding with a view of the scriptures.]

Two hundred years ago, a young man read a promise in the scriptures:

*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*¹

Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women general president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, delivered this devotional on February 4, 2020.

Where do we turn for answers? What is our source of comfort and solace? Who is our steadfast guide and stay as we face the challenges of life?

As it was for the Prophet Joseph Smith, our answer is to “ask of God.” God lives. He is our Father. He is accessible to us. He will be our guide, our solace, and our stay if we go to Him in prayer—one of the greatest of all the privileges given to the sons and daughters of God.²

Ask of God: Our Guide

As we consistently go to Heavenly Father in prayer, we develop a relationship with Him that helps us see ourselves and Him in a clearer light. He will guide us! He *wants* to help us achieve the divine and eternal potential He knows is ours.

Our Savior Jesus Christ taught us the pattern for prayer—a pattern with tremendous power: we call upon Heavenly Father, offer thanks to Him, ask for blessings, and then close in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. When we approach this communication with real intent, I believe we will see how prayer can bring “the will of the Father and the will of the child . . . into correspondence with each other.”³

Recently, as I uttered the familiar words to address Heavenly Father in prayer, I was overcome with a sense of awe. I paused, and I thought, “Who am I to address God?”

But almost instantly an innate knowledge was rekindled: He is my Father and I am His daughter. I know He longs to hear from me as much as I yearn to commune with Him. This experience was overwhelming and revitalizing all at once.

Once we humbly call upon God, we get to thank Him for our blessings. There is a power that comes as we are generous with our gratitude. Let me explain by sharing a childhood memory. As a little four-year-old, I was asked to pray over the Sunday meal. I began, and I kept one eye open so I would not forget to pray for all the food by name and for each family member. I prayed for the mashed potatoes, the meat, and the corn; then I prayed for Mom, Dad, Linda, and Glenn. I was just about to end the prayer when my mother whispered in my ear, “And bless Rodney.” With the full wrath of a four-year-old, I said, “No, and you know why!”

Well, I do not remember what my older brother Rodney had done to be excluded from my prayer that day. You can imagine. But I know I was in a dither over something. Maybe some of you can relate to having a hard time expressing gratitude when you are hurt or upset. If we hope to gain the full power of this portion of prayer, we may need to open our hearts more fully. What could have happened if I had thanked God for Rodney that day? What if we offered thanks for those situations that bring us frustration, sorrow, or even anguish? Could we open our heart and offer thanks for a trial while still experiencing it?

If you talk to someone who has come through the fiery furnace or the lion’s den, they will tell you of the blessings they have received, of the increased strength they have received, and even of the miracles that have been discovered amidst their trials. As we sincerely thank God in and through our trials, we invite Him to help us see our trials and ourselves in a different way. Thanking Him rather than asking for something to be taken away helps us accept His unceasing effort to mold us into who we are meant to become. It allows us to see a flow of blessings deeper and broader than we could ever comprehend.⁴

Having expressed our gratitude, we have the privilege to ask for blessings; perhaps a very different list of requests will come from our re-focused position of gratitude. “The object of our prayers should [be] . . . to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is eager to bestow, according to His will and timing.”⁵ God knows us, and He knows our potential and our limitations. He wants to bless us in all things temporal and spiritual.

Recently I ran into a BYU student and asked her how her classes were going. She admitted that her statistics class was giving her some trouble. We talked for a minute, and as I hugged her in farewell, I whispered, “You know, God is really good at stats.”

And then she responded, “I hadn’t even thought to ask.”

The word *google* is now used as a noun, as a verb, and even as an adjective. But I invite you

to take your questions to the divine Source that starts with a capital G. Prayer may not offer you more than 34 million results on a single topic, but through prayer you may be blessed with a clearer mind and quickened understanding. God wants to bless “us according to his plan for us, consistent with our need to grow”⁶—no matter the topic.

There may be some of you who are thinking, “I have prayed and I continue to pray, but the Lord doesn’t answer.” I, too, have questions and concerns that I repeatedly bring to God. There is a reason prayer is referred to as “a form of work.”⁷ At some point we all have to “wait upon the Lord.”⁸ The answer may be there but not as we expected. It may be a matter of timing, and we just need to continue to ponder and wrestle. We need to trust that the Lord will “guide the future as he has the past.”⁹

We close our prayer in the name of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—He who is “the author and the finisher of [our] faith”!¹⁰ I love that we begin by acknowledging our relationship to our Heavenly Father and we close by recognizing Jesus Christ and His role in our lives. This puts our gratitude and our asking in the context of the divine plan of happiness and our commitment to live by that plan. The Savior declared, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”¹¹ When we sincerely offer our will and our willingness to follow Him in prayer, the power of the Savior’s Atonement and our covenants will help us act on the inspiration we receive.

Ask of God: Our Solace

We know that prayer is evidence that the Lord understands the storms of life and the need for His children to have a safe place to retreat. While prayer is spiritual work, it is also an opportunity to find solace as we turn to God. *Solace* is defined as comfort in times of sadness or distress. “The Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name.”¹²

Our Father in Heaven wants us, as His children, to counsel with Him about what is important to us. If it matters to us, it matters to Him, because

we matter to Him. Let me illustrate this with a story from my daughter-in-law Hana. She said:

While I was serving as a missionary in the United States, I was transferred to a new area in which wonderful members would feed us four to five times a week. For the first dinner I went to, the sweet sister surprised us with pizza! Excited for such a treat, I eagerly ate my dinner and thanked the sister. The next night you can imagine my surprise when a completely new family treated us, again, to pizza! I ate the pizza and thanked the family for their thoughtfulness. However, after this pattern had been repeated every night for two weeks, I was sick of pizza and started dreading dinner with members.

Finally, when it started to weigh me down, I dropped to my knees and told Heavenly Father that I was so grateful for the members’ service, but I could not eat any more pizza. I needed a break, and a meal of fresh vegetables would be wonderful.

That evening, after a long day of work, we arrived at a member’s home for dinner. The mother was visibly nervous as we sat down to eat. She explained that she was trying to cook healthier for her family, but if we did not like her dinner, she could order us a pizza. She then served us a scrumptious dinner of fresh vegetables!

In prayer I thanked Heavenly Father for the break from pizza and courageously asked if it was possible to have curry with rice for dinner. My heart started to giggle when we showed up for our next dinner appointment and we were served curry with rice!

This pattern continued for an entire week. Each morning I would pray specifically for what I wanted to eat, and that night the members would unknowingly serve us the exact meal I had asked for! Finally, after a week, I told Heavenly Father that He had won—I could not think of any dinner that He couldn’t deliver, and I was ready to return to pizza or to whatever the members served. After that prayer my heart felt light and unburdened, and I was grateful for such a mindful and loving Father in Heaven.

Just as Hana discovered, every joy seems doubled and every sorrow supported when we bring it to God in prayer. Every prayer is a brick in the foundation of our relationship with Heavenly Father. The true gift of prayer is knowing we are

not alone when the world literally brings us to our knees. Many of us have already experienced firsthand what the prophet Helaman warned his sons about when he said:

*And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds . . . , yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down . . . , because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation . . . whereon if men build they cannot fall.*¹³

Life sent me a hurricane of sorrow in December 2016. We took our family on a trip of a lifetime—a week at Disney. Our oldest grandchild, Derek, was two and a half and so excited to discover the magic. From the very first day, everything amazed him. He held my hand, and together we rode as many rides as we could, falling into bed each night exhausted and happy.

In the middle of the fourth night, little Derek stopped breathing, and his parents rushed him to the hospital. I stayed with the family at the hotel and immediately went to my knees in prayer. With a measure of confidence, I asked Heavenly Father to bless little Derek that he would feel good enough to join us that day for our planned activities.

As I was praying, the Spirit gently but unmistakably impressed on my mind: “Little Derek has returned home to heaven.”

Wait, what?! The answer was so far from my thoughts, and yet I knew it was true. Despite my reeling shock, there was an instant “peace of God, which passeth all understanding”¹⁴ in my heart and in my mind. I knew then that little Derek had passed away.

Derek was in a children’s hospital for three days on life support. I longed for my little Derek, but as I prayed, I continued to feel comfort and consolation from a loving Heavenly Father.

The week after Derek’s passing, I was scheduled to do some ministering visits at Primary Children’s Hospital in Salt Lake City. I felt overwhelmed and didn’t think I could walk back into

those medical sights, sounds, and smells again. I pleaded to the Lord for guidance. My heart was tender, and I did not know if I would be of any help to others in their suffering. Could I just stay home? Tears flowed in abundance—which is unusual for me—and the feeling in my heart and mind was “Go. Just go!” So, with makeup streaming down my face, I went.

As I checked in, a sweet peace came over me. The Lord knew my willingness, even though I was hurting, and He had orchestrated an extra dose of love for me. I was guided to visit Oliver, a young Primary child fighting cancer. He was filled with love and courage. He had written on his big whiteboard: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”¹⁵

To this day that scripture is a reminder that my Heavenly Father knows me and loves me. I still have a hole in my heart for little Derek—and I will until I am able to see him again—but, until then, I gain solace in the Lord and keep moving forward, building on a sure foundation of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Whatever your mighty “shafts in the whirlwind”¹⁶ may be, come to Him. He knows the end from the beginning, and He knows you. He delights to bless you, and He will carry you. You can trust Him. You will find rest in Him.

Ask of God: Our Stay

With promised guidance and proven solace, you would think we would ask of God continually. He will be our stay, our steadfast and constant source of strength and revelation if we will choose to walk with Him, yet we sometimes cease to pray. We allow what was once a close relationship and consistent communication to become distant and less connected.

The Book of Mormon teaches us about the need for continual prayer through the example of Jared and his brother. At the Tower of Babel, the brother of Jared cried unto the Lord to save the language of their people, and the Lord responded. Then the brother of Jared cried unto the Lord again, asking that the Lord would not confound the language of his friends. In both instances “the Lord had compassion . . . , that they were not confounded.”¹⁷

With these prayers answered, the brother of Jared returned again to the Lord, praying concerning the land in which they were living and asking where the Lord would have them go.¹⁸ The Lord promised to bless them and meet them in the valley of Nimrod, “because this long time ye have cried unto me.”¹⁹ Jared and his brother went into the valley of Nimrod, and, as promised, the Lord came to them and talked to the brother of Jared.²⁰

Line upon line, step by step, Jared and his brother were “directed continually by the hand of the Lord.”²¹ They made it through the wilderness to the seashore, where they pitched their tents and stayed for four years. Certainly the power of prayer had been understood and practiced throughout their journey, but the brother of Jared did not continue praying to the Lord. As a result, the account says, “For the space of three hours did the Lord talk with the brother of Jared, and chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord.”²²

Wow! After a season of being guided through prayer, did the brother of Jared simply forget to pray? Did he feel like he had things under control and did not need God? Did he slowly fall out of the habit of praying?

President Russell M. Nelson counseled friends in a similar state of neglect:

*Understand that in the absence of experiences with God, one can doubt the existence of God. So, put yourself in a position to begin having experiences with Him. Humble yourself. Pray to have eyes to see God’s hand in your life and in the world around you. Ask Him to tell you if He is really there—if He knows you. Ask Him how He feels about you. And then listen.*²³

The example of the brother of Jared brings us hope because he repented and was again guided by the Lord. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said:

*It is difficult to imagine what a three-hour rebuke from the Lord might be like, but the brother of Jared endured it. With immediate repentance and prayer, this prophet again sought guidance for the journey. . . . God accepted his repentance and lovingly gave further direction for their crucial mission.*²⁴

After this, the brother of Jared’s faithfulness was such that he saw God face to face.²⁵

Our Heavenly Father and our Savior Jesus Christ love us. Even if we have spent four years on the seashore and have never called home, They are there: ready and waiting to bless us. How would our relationship with our Father change if the passion and sincerity of our prayers did not wane after the crisis has passed? Can you imagine the truths we will discover and the wonders we will achieve as we choose to “pray always”²⁶ with the same fervor we plead with when we are in need?

My dear friends, the Savior has invited us to “abide in me.”²⁷ Notice the promise. It is not “with me” but “in me.” I testify that as we abide in Him, His Spirit—which is “the Spirit of truth,” the Comforter—will “abide with [us].”²⁸ There is no need to muddle through life alone; we can have heaven’s help. Through prayer we will come to understand who we are and how much we are loved. We will know what steps to take to move forward in our own life and how to bless those around us. Our trust, confidence, and humility will increase. I testify of the knowledge and miracles that come from continual communion with our Heavenly Father.

Ask of God. Continue to make prayer a constant in your life—intentional, purposeful, heartfelt prayer. Allow it to be your guide, solace, and stay. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. James 1:5.
2. See John B. Dickson, “‘Draw Near unto Me’: The Privilege and Power of Prayer,” *Ensign*, February 2001.
3. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “prayer,” 752–53.
4. See Larry Hiller, “Prayer of Thanks,” *Ensign*, February 2007.
5. David A. Bednar, “Ask in Faith,” *Ensign*, May 2008.
6. Joanne B. Doxey, quoted in “Fireside Counsel: Be Faithful, Clean, Strong in Prayer,” *Ensign*, September 1985.
7. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “prayer,” 752–53.
8. Psalm 37:9; 123:2; Isaiah 8:17; 40:31; 2 Nephi 18:17.

9. “Be Still, My Soul,” *Hymns*, 2002, no. 124.
10. See Moroni 6:4.
11. John 15:7.
12. Helaman 3:27.
13. Helaman 5:12.
14. Philippians 4:7.
15. Proverbs 3:5.
16. Helaman 5:12.
17. Ether 1:37.
18. See Ether 1:38–39.
19. Ether 1:43; see also verse 42 and Ether 2:1.
20. See Ether 2:1, 4.
21. Ether 2:6.
22. Ether 2:14.
23. Russell M. Nelson, “Come, Follow Me,” *Ensign*, May 2019.
24. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 15.
25. See Ether 3:13–14.
26. Luke 21:36; 3 Nephi 18:15, 18; D&C 31:12.
27. John 15:4; emphasis added.
28. John 14:17, 16; see also verses 13–17 and D&C 20:77, 79.