

**SMALL TALK WITH GOD**  
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*“I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer”* (Psalm. 66:17-19).

We read from the work *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, “that which a person loves above all things is continually in his or her thought, and also in their will” (55). If we consider this for a moment, we might begin to see that every thought we have or emotion we feel is a manifestation, to at least some extent, of the core love or motivation of our life. This is not to say that those impure thoughts or feelings that might sometimes pop into our heads are necessarily signs that we are inwardly harboring some set of horrendous spiritual motivations. Instead, our spontaneous responses to those inappropriate thoughts and feelings are more a manifestation of the person we truly are.

We hold this thought in mind as we consider the opening statement of the Lord’s Ten Commandments. “And God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before My face’” (Exodus 20:1-3). The Gospel of Matthew states something very similar with the words, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38).

Love of the Lord is meant to be at the center of our lives. It is meant to be the core influence that shapes our thoughts and our affections. Love to the Lord is supposed to be the governing motivation that drives the charitable external actions that we

engage in. For most of us, sadly, that day when love to the Lord finally takes complete control can seem far away. Right now, other influences can appear to hold sway. Some of these influences are noble. They are influences that have been inspired by the Lord. They lead us to live out important aspects of our lives in a spirit of caring. They guide us with a degree of wisdom that only the Lord is capable of giving us. Other influences, though, are not so positive. They are the product of the types of hereditary challenges that have hampered the goodness and usefulness of our lives from the time we were very small. Therefore, it is in order to promote the positive influences while combating the more negative and destructive ones, that we are taught to pray.

The simplest definition of prayer, is “talking to God” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2535, 3285). In addition, when it comes to prayer, the one that most readily comes to people’s minds is the Lord’s Prayer. Many people in the throes of some life challenge have turned to the Lord’s Prayer in the hope that the Lord might be reached through it. Moreover, in a great many cases the Lord is reached. Calling to the Lord through the Prayer that He taught provides an avenue by which He can touch a person, giving a renewed sense of comfort and hope.

Still, we might well ask, why is it that people tend to turn to prayer when life is at its most challenging, when for the most part, their life is empty of prayer? This is a subject that is addressed in *Arcana Coelestia* 8179, “...when people are in the throes of temptation they usually stay their hands and resort solely to prayers, which they then pour forth feverishly, unaware that such prayers achieve nothing, but that they should battle against the falsities and evils which the hells introduce.”

It is interesting from this passage to think how easy it is for a person who is struggling to stop trying and to turn to the relative security of prayer. For the most part though, although praying

when in crisis can never be a bad thing and indeed should be encouraged, the fact remains that a person's first real attempt at communication with the Lord should not be when things have gone bad.

We go back the basic point, which is that prayer is talking to God. This is something that comes quite naturally to some people. For a great many others it is more difficult. This is because the Lord is rarely if ever manifestly present with a person. Something deep inside instinctively knows that there must be a Divine Creator (See *Divine Love and Wisdom* 282). Indeed, the opening sentence of *True Christian Religion* 8 says that, "There is a universal influx from God into the souls of men of the truth that there is a God, and that He is one."

If we have been raised with a religious background, the things we have been taught over the years have probably reinforced this inner sense of the existence of God. Still, because the Lord is not readily present to our external senses and as a result is generally not tangibly present to the outer aspects of our minds, it can appear difficult to connect with Him. Connection with Him, however, is something that for us is a 'must.' A connection, as far as our talking to God is concerned, should ideally begin long before we reach a time of crisis.

Consider our daily relationships with the people we love. When couples in crisis first start to receive counseling, one of the things they are often encouraged to do is to engage in small talk. Regularly what is found is that couples in crisis have not communicated very well in the daily exercise of their lives. Small talk has not become a habit for them. In many cases, it is something that the couple needs professional help to start to practice. Challenges may still come up in their relationship. These challenges, however, will be far easier to work through if the couple has been practicing regular, non-confrontational communication when things are going relatively more smoothly.

If this is an important tool for couples, surely it is an important tool when it comes to our communication with the Lord. There is a lot to be said for simply talking to Him regularly. This is because something intrinsic within the basic willingness to pray regularly shows an inner spirit of love and charity. The selection we read from the Gospel of Luke says, “Pray always” (Luke 21:36). We are to “pray always.” There are two important reasons for this. One is that we know that our fallen and troubled heredity will condemn us without the Lord’s help. Perhaps more importantly, we want to be useful people, and we know that “as of ourselves, we can do nothing” (*Brief Exposition 5*).

We read in *Arcana Coelestia* 1618 that for angels the Sabbath and its worship never end. This, of course, does not mean that angels spend all of their time in churches or similar venues. It does mean, though, that the spirit of worship and the attitude of worship are things that are constantly present in angels’ lives. Their lives are thoroughly devoted to the Lord’s work. They look to Him, and He continually guides them. We could say that the angels regularly and consistently are talking to Him.

Clearly, prayer should be an active and ongoing part of our lives. It should factor into everything we do, whether the issue at hand is seen as substantial or trivial. The Lord in the Sermon on the Mount says, “When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place” (Matthew 6:6). This can seem like a natural directive. However, we discover the symbolic language used here. A person’s room or bedchamber is not a physical place, per se. We learn in *Arcana Coelestia* 5694 that this is instead a reference to an inner place within all of us. We do not need to go anywhere in order to shut the door and pray in our room.

Sometimes the challenges that we face in our lives can seem like mountains. It is at times such as these that we need to heed the Lord’s words in Matthew 17. There He said, “Assuredly, I

say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and the mountain will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:20-21; see also Mark 11:23).

Prayer to the Lord is such a critical element when it comes to overcoming those incredibly stressful periods in our life. With the Lord’s help, mountains can be moved. With Him, as we have heard many times, “all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27). How can we turn to the Lord when things have gone bad, when we have not spoken to Him when times were good? It is like spouses trying to talk their way through a crisis in their relationship when they have not developed a habit of talking when times have been better. It is not that the couple in crisis should not try to talk things through. It is just that the challenge of trying to talk now is far greater than it would be if their communication had been better beforehand.

Consider how this principle applies to the way we talk to the Lord. It is just as important that we try to develop healthy habits of communicating with Him when things are going relatively well for us. Such habits may actually minimize the chances for later crises. And, even if those trying times still come our way, consider how much better prepared we are to talk to the Lord about solutions to life’s problems if we have already been engaged in regular conversation with Him.

Of course, there are reasons to talk to the Lord beyond the seeking of solutions to life’s problems. A major reason we should talk to the Lord is simply to have Him help us live a life of charity. We go back to the quote from the work *Brief Exposition* and see that “as of ourselves, we can do nothing.” We can do nothing charitable and useful of ourselves. It is *in order* to be truly useful that we need assistance from the Lord. It is with this in mind that we hear again the Lord’s message in Luke,

“Pray always.”

This prayer does not need to be about grand theological matters. It doesn't need to be in response to some great crisis. All it needs to be is small talk. Tell the Lord about yourself. Describe to Him what is happening in your life. Share with Him the things that you desire and the things you wish to achieve. Speak to the Lord about your hopes and aspirations for the people in this world that you care about. Nothing is too trivial. Develop a new relationship with Him. He is there to listen. Indeed, there is no doubt that He wants to listen.

The Lord's message to us is always this, “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and He with Me” (Revelation 3:20). Our prayer to the Lord opens the door to Him. This does not need to take place in the quiet recesses of our private room. It does not need to touch on topics of profound importance. It just needs to be conversation. It just needs to be sincere, and hopefully, somewhat consistent. Isn't simple communication the key to all our relationships? There is no doubt that it should be key to our relationship with the Lord as well. Let us end with the thought from the Lord's Word that we began with: “I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer” (Psalm 66:17-19). *Amen.*

Lessons: Psalm 66:16-20; Luke 21:29-36; *Arcana Coelestia*  
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