

Let Go, Let God in Your Life



Christopher News Notes

THERE COMES A TIME WHEN WE REALIZE we are not the sole masters of our fate. Unplanned circumstances surprise us, and we do not have all the answers. So, we stop. We ponder our place in the universe, our dependence on our Creator. It could happen when we suddenly face a particularly emotional, difficult, or even tragic event. Whatever the case, it's an opportunity to let go—and to let God into our lives.

A Christopher
Classic News Note

- When Jane Winters of Allentown, Pennsylvania, had her first child, she experienced a tremendous rush of joy. She looked at her little boy and saw hope and continuity. Until then, she had not been a particularly religious person. Now, she felt linked to the Creator through the birth of her son. She decided to let God guide her role as a mother. Letting go of ambivalence, she began a new relationship with God.
- The investors in Zacki Murphy's North Carolina barbecue restaurant told her to close because people were losing money. One night, she prayed, "Lord, You know how I've worked around the clock to keep doing what I love. But now I'm giving my dreams up to You. If You want me to keep going, fine. If not, okay, because You see far better down the road than I." Soon, the first of several glowing newspaper reviews appeared, and new customers kept Murphy's place—and dreams—alive.
- When Dr. John Haskell became seriously ill with cancer, he was angry and rebellious, refusing to acknowledge he was sick and unable to heal himself. Feeling weak and desperate, he finally realized that no medicine or treatment would bring him peace of mind. Dr. Haskell let go of his anger and denial, trusting himself to God. This choice allowed him to find peace at last—and gave him freedom from his fear of dying.

Letting God Guide the Way

In an often-tumultuous world, it's not unusual to experience stress and fear, to feel vulnerable and restless. Even with the comfort of other people, there is something in us which desires more: an affirmation of life and a sense of meaning that no one on earth can give. When we realize that we cannot depend upon our own devices, we can open ourselves to God. This does not mean passive capitulation, but loving acceptance and trust. The decision to surrender to God gives direction to a life of faith, allowing Him to help us through whatever challenges we face.

Spiritual writer Thomas Merton described his life as "a mystery which I do not understand...It's as

In Alcoholics Anonymous, people whose lives have become unmanageable due to alcohol abuse learn that they cannot rely on their willpower to stay in control. They learn to "let go and let God." In fact, that's one of their slogans. They surrender, not passively, but in active cooperation with a Higher Power.

Henry, of Ocala, Florida, was a recovering alcoholic. For years, he could not control his drinking, and he made his family's life intolerable. After being found drunk in a vacant lot by the police, he decided to go to an AA meeting. What he heard convinced him that it was possible to change his life. He learned the meaning of solidarity. Whenever he felt discouraged and tempted to drink, people were there for him. They talked to him and prayed with him, asking God's grace to overcome this destructive addiction. "I could not have done it alone," said Henry. "The care, concern, and prayers of the men and women of AA pulled me through."

though I were led by the hand in a night where I see nothing, but can fully depend upon the love and providence of Him who guides me." Such a life is strengthened by prayer. Prayer is the expression of a heart resting in God. We turn to God, not in complicated words, but with simple ones—and sometimes without any words at all. Rev. William McNamara calls this "the conscious pleasure of God's company."

Think of prayer as a necessity of life, not something left for times of distress or when we are in the mood. We need times of freedom from other occupations to meet God in a personal way. Some days, we may pray with no feeling at all, with no sense of God's presence. If we cannot find our own words, we can rely on the Lord's Prayer or other traditional prayers. Or we can read the Psalms or Gospels. Even if the heart is dry and the mind distracted, we can give ourselves to God's care—just as we are.

Author Joan bel Geddes offers this prayer: "God, teach me to let my soul rest, to still my worries and doubts, to stop my constant chatter of questions and protests...Teach me to turn toward You, the very essence of love and life, the cause of love and life, the purpose of love and life—the way leaves keep turning toward the life-giving sun."

"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard

your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

—*Philippians 4:6-7*

Pray to Praise

Rabbi Abraham Heschel, scholar and mystic, said that prayer begins with a sense of awe. When we see that God is a mystery beyond understanding, we begin to experience humble reverence and a desire to bow before Him. In worship, we open ourselves to our Creator and enter His presence to praise Him. This is the primary purpose of liturgy as a community—we unite in adoring our God. Yet, it can be a very personal expression as well.

Six-year-old Michael got a magnifying glass for his birthday. He went around the yard looking at everything—pebbles, sticks, tree bark—with a growing sense of wonder. He said to his mother, "God made all this great stuff! Wow!"

"Wow!" is a prayer of praise. It echoes the awe-filled words of St. Francis of Assisi, "Blessed be my brother the sun and my sister the moon..."

Pray to Reconcile

"God in search of us calls our souls to prayer and meditation, repentance, and renewal—and ultimately death and resurrection," said Theresa Mancuso in *Liguorian*. "Successful living requires repentance...change of heart, redemption, letting go."

Each one of us, imperfect human beings that we are, needs forgiveness, just as we need to forgive.

If reconciliation with God and with our brothers and sisters seems beyond our power, it is not beyond His. Prayer can open us to the comfort of God's transforming grace. The strong, simple words of the Jesus Prayer can be a beginning: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

—Mark 11:25

**"Father, I abandon myself
into Your hands;
do with me what You will.
Whatever You may do, I thank You;
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only Your will be done in me,
and in all Your creatures—
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into Your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to You with all the
love of my heart,
for I love You, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into Your hands,
without reserve
and with boundless confidence,
for You are my Father."**

— Charles de Foucauld



**"It's better to light one candle
than to curse the darkness."**

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Pray to Ask for Help

By asking God to help us, we lay bare our needs and the needs of others. We place our trust in His providential power. Sometimes, our prayers, said in urgency and pain, are not answered in the way we want. But God always responds when we ask to grow in faith, hope, and love, to receive the spirit of forgiveness, and to gain strength to serve others. This kind of prayer does not try to change God's will or engage Him in bargaining. It acknowledges our dependence, and asks for guidance and help.

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find."

—Matthew 7:7

Pray to Act Justly

Oscar Romero, Bishop of San Salvador, saw his people oppressed by their own government. "My position as pastor obliged me to stand with everyone who suffers and to back every effort toward the dignity of human beings," he said. Because he spoke out for justice for the poor, he was threatened, attacked, and finally, killed.

Everything we receive from God is given in a mystery of unity with the whole human family. We cannot be intimate with the Lord at the exclusion of others. When we give ourselves to God, we choose to translate prayerful concern into action.

Pray to Give Thanks

When we become aware of God's gifts to us, gratitude rises in our hearts. We thank God over and over again, not only for the food on the table and roof over our heads, but for the very gift of life. We thank God for the full reality of ourselves, for the pattern of our existence with its beauty and pleasures. "I am praying because I am happy, not because I am unhappy," wrote social justice activist Dorothy Day. "I did not turn to God in grief or despair, to get consolation, to get something out of Him. I prayed because I wanted to thank Him."

This is a reprint of the classic Christopher News Note "Let Go, Let God in Your Life."