

ASIA AREA LOCAL PAGES

ASIA AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Prayer Draws Us Closer to God

By Elder Siu Hong Pon, Area Seventy

“Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name” (3 Nephi 18:19). This is the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer is one of the greatest blessings we have while we are here on earth. Through prayer we can communicate with Heavenly Father and seek His guidance every day. Prayer is a sincere, heartfelt talk with our Heavenly Father.

I would like to share with you two experiences with prayer that have strengthened my faith and testimony in my life.

In 1976 when I was about 19, two sister missionaries shared the gospel with me. After teaching me all the missionary discussions in more than three months, they committed me to search for my own testimony of the gospel. They helped me set a date for my baptism and invited me to prepare spiritually for that day.

The week before the baptism, although I felt good about joining the Church, I needed to seek my parents’ approval for receiving baptism and joining the Church. Unfortunately, as my parents and grandparents practiced traditional rituals to pay respect to our ancestors by burning incense as offerings daily, they were afraid that I would not follow the family traditions after I joined the Church. My grandmother raised her strongest objection and even scolded my mother for not teaching me properly. She thought that I would not burn incense to pay respect to her after her death if I were to join the Church. My grandma also felt that I was cheated by the missionaries as she remembered that many Chinese people had been cheated by foreigners to travel to America to work in gold mines. Although I tried very hard

to explain my feelings about the Church, my parents, being scolded by my grandmother, felt that I was not obedient and they did not approve of me joining the Church. Feeling hopeless to convince my parents and to avoid severe argument, I was desperate and returned to my room.

The following evening after returning home from school, the lack of parental approval for my baptism kept bothering me. I went into my room again and tried to ponder for a solution. While pondering, I remembered the teaching on prayer—with faith, Heavenly Father would listen to my prayer! I knelt down and offered my prayer, humbly and earnestly asking Heavenly Father to send the Holy Spirit to help me convince my parents. I kept kneeling after the prayer until I felt a peaceful and warm feeling in my heart. Then I went to my mother and told her my feelings about the Church in a gentle and respectful manner. I told her that I would become a much better son because of the gospel. This time, my mother did not scold me but told me to seek approval from my father. I told my mother that I assumed she had permitted me to join the Church. She did not deny it.

I ran to my father immediately. I could hardly believe that my father also had a different attitude this time when I talked with him about how I felt about the Church and my desire to join. He responded by asking me to seek approval from



*Elder Siu
Hong Pon*

my mother. I told him that I had already gotten it from my mother and was waiting for his approval. He paused for a while and then said to me that I had grown up and if I felt that this Church would help me in my life and chose to join, he would not stop me. What a big change from the previous evening! When I pondered what I had done differently, I could only resolve to and confirm that Heavenly Father had answered my prayer. The Holy Spirit had helped to soften the hearts of my parents. This experience has built my testimony that Heavenly Father really listens to our prayers, especially when we pray with a righteous desire and ask for righteous things.

The second experience came at the time when I served as a bishop many years ago. One Saturday morning, I received a phone call from a single sister requesting immediate counsel for an important decision in her life. As she lived near me, she came to our home shortly. She told me that through her friend's introduction, she had dated a brother just visiting from the United States. After dating for two days, this brother approached her and proposed marriage. He wanted to receive confirmation from her before returning to the States so that he could work out the details afterwards. This brother had planned to return home the next day. The sister was confused about whether she should marry him and wanted to seek advice from me. I was surprised and wondered how I could give advice that might affect the future of this sister.

To help this sister better understand her situation, we talked about all the possible impacts and concerns that might befall her and her family. After that, I told her that I needed to ponder for a while. I hesitated to get her the answer, but knowing that she was anxious to know what she should do, I

invited her to join me in prayer to seek guidance from Heavenly Father. We knelt down and prayed humbly for guidance. I did not stand up after the prayer but listened carefully to what would come to my mind. I got the answer. However, as this answer was so important to the sister, I prayed once again by myself in my heart asking for a reconfirmation of the answer. I also asked Heavenly Father to provide the same answer to her in her prayer. I got the same answer the second time. After a while, we both got up. The sister was looking at me for the answer. Instead of telling her, I asked what she had felt from her prayer. She told me that she had a feeling that she could marry this brother but she was not sure whether the answer was right. I got the same answer as she did.

Instead of telling her that I had gotten the same answer, I encouraged her to trust the answer that she had gotten through her prayer. I provided further advice that she might need to exercise faith for such an important decision for her life. A year later, this sister did marry the brother in the temple and they have a happy family together. This experience helped me understand that we not only could pray for ourselves, we could also pray for others and we could both receive answers from our beloved Heavenly Father.

In Moses 5:8, we learn that an angel of the Lord commanded Adam and Eve to repent and call upon God in the name of the Son. This shows that prayer has been an important part of the gospel from the beginning of the world. The commandment of prayer has never been taken away. As we live the gospel of Jesus Christ and pray always, we will have joy and happiness. Let us draw closer to God and allow all our thoughts, words, and actions to be influenced by our prayers. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ELDER MATTHEW MASSEY

Our Faithful Prayers Are Always Answered

By Elder Matthew Massey

I would like to share a wonderful experience I had while on my mission.

We met a family of three people. They are Brother Samson, Sister Reema and their seven-year-old son. They are very good people. They had a deep desire to be baptised in the true Church of Jesus Christ. But they had a problem coming to church because Brother Samson had to work on Sundays. This made them feel very unhappy.

When I prayed to God to enable them to come to church, I was inspired to teach them about keeping the Sabbath day holy. After teaching them the lesson, I told Brother and Sister Samson that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only thing that can help them solve their problem of coming to church. I asked them to read the Book of Mormon

and pray to God to help them to come to church. I assured them that if their prayer was sincere, God would help them.

I continued to pray for them by kneeling down and asking God to help them show their love and desire for Him by keeping the commitment that we set for them. They read the Book of Mormon and the Bible, prayed every day, and came to church.

When I saw them in the church, I first gave thanks to God because their prayers and my prayers were answered. They were going to be baptised the next week and they were very happy about it.

This experience helped me know that God answers our prayers if we have a very strong desire, faith, and love for our Heavenly Father. We need to know that God is our Heavenly Father and we are His children. He knows us by our name and He loves all of us. He has shown His love for us once again by giving us the restored gospel. ■

Brother Samson with his wife, Sister Reema, along with Elder Massey on the day of their baptism.

An Humble and Trusting Prayer Brings Direction and Peace

By Elder Vikram Raj Vaddi

I had spiritual experiences when I prayed to God. I would like to share two such experiences.

One of the experiences took place when we went to Brother Rahul's house to visit him. He was not there. Instead, we met his father, and so we invited him to the district conference.

He came for the district conference and continued to come to church every Sunday.

We started teaching him and he started learning all the lessons. He was following the Word of Wisdom and the law of chastity; he was reading the Book of Mormon and praying. He paid his fast offering and was coming to church regularly.

Though he did all the above mentioned things, he refused to be baptized as a member of the Church and also did not permit

his son Rahul to be baptised.

On Sunday, 10 February, he came to us and told us that he was willing to be baptized. On Saturday, 9 February, I had prayed to God for him and his baptism.

Another experience I had is when we were struggling to find new investigators; we did not find anyone throughout the week. Then, one day, we earnestly prayed to God asking His

help to find at least one person that day who would be prepared to meet us.

The same day, we met a member of the Church who referred a sister to us. We went to that sister, taught her, and

invited her to witness a baptism. She came to church and agreed to investigate the truthfulness of the restored Church.

These are the spiritual experiences that I had when I prayed to God. ■

Sabbath Delight

By Elder Augustine

I would like to share a very powerful experience of our humble prayer to God.

Sister Elizabeth and her daughter, Naveena, prayed humbly to seek God's help to decide whether to attend the district conference in Coimbatore, as that day was the polio drops Sunday when all the children below the age of five years were supposed to have those drops to be vaccinated against the disease called polio.

Sister Elizabeth had two children below the age of five years. So, they wished that the children could have polio drops because, in that particular locality where they lived, the government schools and hospitals would give polio drops only on a Sunday, and Sister Elizabeth could not go to any other place to get polio drops because she could not travel long distances.

We encouraged them to pray about it and come and

attend the district conference on Sunday to show their desire to learn from God and their love for Him and leave the situation to God to show a way to somehow get the polio drops.

They prayed to God and decided to attend the district conference to keep the Sabbath day holy. Another reason why it was important for them to come to church was to keep their baptism date. If they did not attend church that day, their baptism date would be postponed.

When we finished attending the district conference, I learned that some voluntary service group had come to the chapel to give polio drops. As soon as I knew about this, I rushed with my companion to Sister Elizabeth because I was very excited to tell this news to her. As soon as she heard from us, we could see the joy on her face. She knew that God answered her prayers in such a way that nobody expected. We thanked God for the miracle he performed for us.

This experience has taught me that if we act on our faith and then seek for God's help, He helps us at the very moment when we need it. I know that we are privileged to pray to God so that we can learn to choose the right thing to do. ■



From left to right, Elder Augustine, Sister Naveena, Sister Elizabeth and Elder Matthew Massey.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ELDER MATTHEW MASSEY

Prayers Answered Close to Home and across the World

By Elder McDonald

The times I have directly or indirectly received an answer to my prayers are too numerous to count or even remember. However, I try to remember them with the assistance of my journal. I would like to share an experience relating to my family at home.

Elder McDonald's family



Elder McDonald serves in the India Bangalore Mission



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ELDER MCDONALD

My father has done much hard labour during his life and he has the kind of work ethic that makes him work long hard days, even if the labour is back-breaking. Currently, he is building a house into which my family is going to move. He is building this house out of the materials we salvaged after the May Tornado in Joplin, Missouri, USA.

He has been working on the house full time for about the past month, but now he needs to go back to work to make money.

When my mother e-mailed and told me that my father was going back to work, I immediately began to pray that he would get a job quickly and that it might be a more supervisor-like position so that he might not have to subject himself to more back-breaking labour.

My mother's e-mail the next week told me that my father already got a job supervising the construction of some houses being built by a man who is a friend of our family and a previous employer. My prayer seemed to be answered in the same miraculously prompt fashion as the miracles of Christ. ■

Prayers with Belief Are Answered

By Brother Charles

Ever since I joined the Church in the year 2005, I have been blessed so much in my life.

We are two members in our family, my mother and myself.

My mother has always been a good example to me in following

the gospel. She has taught me many good things in life. Prayer is one among them.

During my early teenage years, I used to see my mother wake up early in the morning, kneel down and pray to our Father in



Brother Charles Heaven. Looking at her, I always wondered why she prays to God all the time, though her problems are not solved.

One fine day I asked, “Why do you pray to God even when our problems are not solved?” Then, she answered me saying that prayer is a heartfelt communication between us and our Father who is in heaven. Just like how we talk to our earthly father, we can talk to our Father who is in heaven. In prayer, we can share all our feelings with our Father in Heaven and seek His blessings in our day-to-day life.

Then I asked her why she continues to pray to God when

He is not helping her in her problems. She said that it is because He is her Father, and talking to Him gives her the courage and strength to face all the problems and move ahead in life.

When things became even more difficult for us to live, I was very disappointed about what was happening with us, but she never stopped praying. When I saw her not giving up and being so strong in her prayers, I was moved and began to pray, but I did not believe that I would receive the things for which I prayed.

At the age of 17, I quit my job and was looking for another job. During this time, I met the missionaries. My friend who was the member of the Church had referred me to them.

I invited them home. They taught me about the restored gospel. They gave me the Book of Mormon and encouraged me to read it and pray to God and ask him if it was from him.

When I told them that I pray to God always but He never answers my prayers, the missionaries helped me to understand what prayer is, how to pray, why we pray, and to whom to pray.

After the meeting with the missionaries, I read the book

and prayed to God—this time, believing that He will answer my prayers and wanting to know the truth.

As it says in Moroni 10:3–5, “Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”

At last I really got the answer for what I prayed and I wondered why I didn’t get any answers before. Then I understood that if we believe and pray to God and are willing to find the answers after prayer we will receive it as mentioned in Moroni 10:3–5. ■

How and Why to Pray?

By Brother Michael Johnson Joseph

As the children of God, we have to communicate with Him, just like we communicate with our earthly parents, and prayer is the way we communicate with God.

We can talk to God in different places, without moving our lips. For example, we can sit in a classroom and think of a prayer, walk across the campus and talk to the Lord in our mind, pray silently while in the midst of a crowd.

However, from time to time, we need to kneel down and speak out loud to God in our quiet room, as long as we like, and tell Him all the things that we feel in the depth of our hearts; our frustrations and our desires to grow and make our dreams come true. Our Heavenly Father loves us and is always ready to hear our prayers and answer them.

Some people may think that there is no need to pray and ask God because He knows our needs. Our parents also know all our needs, but do they fulfill all our needs all the time even if we don't ask them? In the same way, our Heavenly Father wants us to ask Him and receive.

We need to have faith and patience because He will give us only those things that He feels are fit for us to receive. Sometimes I used to lose my patience in waiting for an answer to my prayers but later I came to know that we have to wait on the Lord because He will give us our answers in His time.

I have learnt from my experience that prayer is an essential part of our salvation. Our leaders have given us the following counsel regarding prayers:

- Make your prayer meaningful.
- Use language that shows love, respect, reverence, and closeness.

- Always give thanks to your Heavenly Father.
- Seek guidance and strength in all that you do.
- Remember the needs of others when you pray.
- Seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost when you pray so that you know what to include in your prayers.

These things will help us know the will of God, protect us from the fiery darts of the devil and give us a sense of peace in our hearts.

My dear brothers and sisters, I know that the things I shared above are true. James 1:5–6 says, “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.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” ■

Brother Michael Johnson Joseph



BROTHER MICHAEL JOHNSON JOSEPH

Pray Always and Be Blessed

By Brother Ravi Shekar

We communicate with God when we pray. Our Heavenly Father comforts us when we pray. He loves us and knows our needs, and He wants us to communicate with Him through prayer. We should pray to express our love to our Heavenly Father and also to feel close to Him. Through prayer we can ask forgiveness for doing something wrong in our daily life.

After we pray, we need to take time to pause and listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. At times Heavenly Father will counsel, guide or comfort us while we are on our knees. He can hear us no matter where we are or what is going on around us. He may not always answer as we expect, but He does answer in His own time and according to His own will. Because He knows what is best for us, He may sometimes answer no, even when our petitions are sincere.

We should pray every day. Satan wants to convince us that we must not pray. If you do not feel like praying, pray until you do feel like praying. I can testify to you that I know Heavenly

Father answers our prayers. I have received guidance and comfort when I prayed to God and I know, by the Spirit of God, that the guidance I

received is from God. I know that prayer is very important in our lives. Through prayer I have received so many blessings in my life and I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church on the face of earth. ■

Ravi Shekar



RAVI SHEKAR