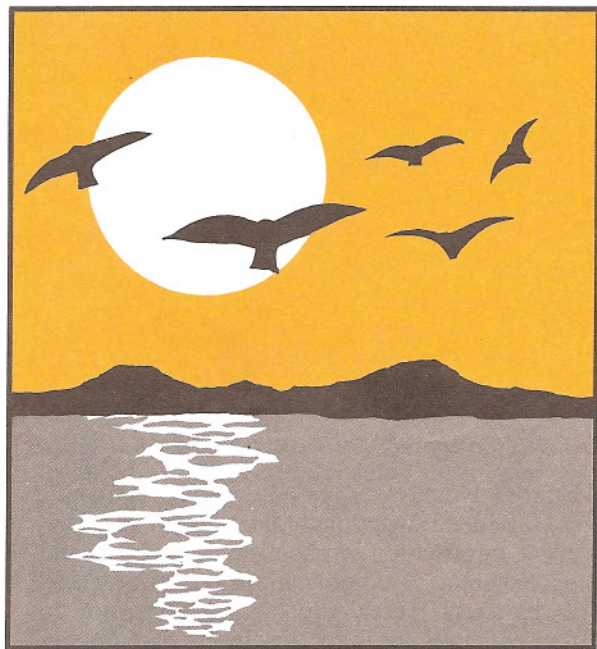


H5905 504

POCKET POWER

PRAYER AND  
**MEDITATION**



**H**azelden®

First published March, 1987.

Copyright © 1987, Hazelden Foundation.

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any manner without the written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 0-89486-442-4

Printed in the United States of America.

**H**azelden.

**Editor's Note:**

Hazelden Educational Materials offers a variety of information on chemical dependency and related areas. Our publications do not necessarily represent Hazelden or its programs, nor do they officially speak for any Twelve Step organization.

## PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Prayer and meditation are natural processes. They are responses to our relationship with our Higher Power. That relationship has deepened throughout our individual recoveries, and for many of us this means a change in our prayer — our approach — to God as we understand God.

The prayers we once thought served our needs so well may no longer be satisfactory. Perhaps we have only used prayer as a last resort when we felt desperate or alone. As we think about our prayer life, we might see we're trying to retain old, rigid patterns of prayer which no longer reflect our present relationship with our Higher Power. Each of us has a unique relationship with God, so it is only logical to approach prayer and meditation in a more personal manner.

Some aspects of prayer, however, are common to all of us. We share the same inner need to communicate with our Higher Power. We face the same obstacles to prayer, and — although our approaches may be different — the results of our prayers can be the same: a sense of closeness, a feeling of being understood, and a confidence in being heard and answered.

We may worry we are praying incorrectly, or

with the wrong motives, or with poor understanding. We want to develop our conscious contact with God as we understand God, but the way to do this seems unclear.

Consequently, we find ourselves looking for the *right* way to pray, or the right place in which to pray, or the right time. We recognize the importance of our spiritual lives and see it as so important that we might fall into one of our old traps: perfectionism. This perfectionism gradually creeps into our thinking, and we tell ourselves the spirituality we desire is ours only if we perform perfectly. This booklet is not about praying the right way or about meditating in the perfect place or at a precise time. Instead, we'll look at prayer as a natural communication with our Higher Power, as part of a growing relationship.

Throughout recovery, all of our relationships have changed. Most of these, if not all, have been changes for the better. Today, we probably feel closer to our loved ones and are better able to communicate with them. The same may be true in our dealings with co-workers, casual acquaintances, or even strangers we encounter. Because we have grown, all of our relationships have also improved. This improvement is clearly evident in our relationship with our Higher Power. And in this, like our other relationships,

we find we have a greater need to communicate, to talk, to share ourselves. With God, these needs find expression in prayer.

### **Growth in Relationships, the Program, and Spirituality**

Our increased awareness of our Higher Power in our lives goes hand in hand with our growth in a Twelve Step program. We might have to remind ourselves to see our growth as ongoing and ever-increasing. Each time we conscientiously read and work one of the Steps, we are rewarded with more acceptance, or greater humility, or more of whatever that particular Step emphasizes. We don't constantly go back to the beginning in our program. We progress, we build, and we grow from the point where we now stand.

Our spirituality is no different. Here, too, we are constantly growing. Today we don't view our Higher Power as we did when we began a Twelve Step program, because we have shared intimate moments with God by believing God is able to restore our sanity. We have trusted God with our lives, our wills, and our innermost selves. This growth will not stop today. A week, a month, or a year from now, we will have built on today's spirituality and found an even

stronger recovery and a deeper relationship with our Higher Power.

Why has this relationship with God grown so much during recovery? And why, if it has grown, do we find we desire even greater closeness? The answers to these questions for many of us exist within a Twelve Step program. The tools so essential for recovery are also the basic elements of improving our awareness of and communication with God: acceptance of powerlessness, and turning our wills and our lives over to God.

### **Acceptance of Powerlessness**

When we accepted powerlessness, we turned toward a Power greater than ourselves. Each time we take this Step, we move closer to and have a greater need to communicate with God. When we stay in touch with the reality of being powerless — over our addictions, over other people's actions, and over the thousands of other details that bombard our lives — we are more likely to seek the serenity and comfort of prayer.

### **Turning Our Wills and Lives Over**

Our decision here is practical as well as spiri-

tual. It is practical because once we admit to unmanageable lives, our only hope for recovery is to turn everything over to our Higher Power. This is spiritual because we allow ourselves to accept something which is already there — the love and care of our Higher Power.

Like all relationships, no amount of love on the part of others can save us. Today, we understand what it means to love with detachment when we face addiction. Most of us have either practiced it ourselves when we realized we had no control over a loved one's use of alcohol or other drugs, or when we saw how our own family and friends finally detached themselves from our chemical use. In both of these instances, the act of detachment is a statement of love and of personal worth. It says, "I love you and will help you when you see you are out of control and want to help yourself." Our Higher Power has always loved and cared for us, but we finally experience this love and care when we surrender.

Almost every way we practice our program helps open us to an acknowledgment of others and a sense of our spiritual existence. We discover that we are not only mind and body, although these were probably the only two aspects of our being we focused on during our using days. Despite the joys of recovery, we may at times feel somewhat unsure of how to deal with

this newly discovered or rediscovered spiritual self. We know how to stretch and develop our bodies and minds; we might not know how to exercise our spirits or even how to express them. At first, we may fall back into our old comfortable traps and try to find the “right” ways. But gradually we discover an exciting idea: how we approach our Higher Power is personal and unique, as is the way we choose to pray.

### Foundations of Prayer

Our relationship with God — like our friendships — is constantly changing. Some of the principles that go into forming a friendship hold true in the development of an ongoing dialogue with God: *trust* that the friendship has potential; *pursue* the relationship; *expect* yourself to grow; *expect* something of God.

In developing all friendships and relationships, there comes that moment when we suddenly feel excited about the other person. There’s a connection between us, and we sense a potential for closeness. It may not happen on the first meeting; we may even have some friends we didn’t think we’d like at first. But closeness gradually develops, and we come to *trust* that the friendship has potential. This trust can be present in our prayers. It says, “I

sense a closeness, and I expect this feeling to grow.”

We might have already experienced some of these feelings when we felt the potential of our spirituality. We may want to remind ourselves of the nature of spirituality: it isn’t an all-or-nothing commodity; it can grow into a deeper and more beautiful partnership, especially if we believe and trust in its potential.

We’ve all had friendships suddenly grow stale, or we’ve become out of touch with a friend and the relationship withers. Our relationship with our Higher Power is no different. Contact with a friend can’t be sustained in the deepest sense with a once-a-year exchange of greeting cards. Conscious contact with the God of our understanding must be *pursued* — eagerly, openly, and regularly. This doesn’t mean we have to set our alarm clocks to maintain precision prayers; it only affirms the need for us to keep in touch with God if the relationship is to grow. As the theologian Helmut Thieliche said: “God is always there first, and therefore our praying is always only an answer to this simple fact.”

We enter into friendships with the idea of growing. Most likely, we do *challenge* ourselves in healthy friendships. We expect ourselves to become better people — more intelligent, more

caring, and more lovable. This, too, can be a part of our prayer or meditative experience.

Finally, we can *expect* something of our Higher Power. We can expect to become more fully aware of God's presence, love, and counsel. Even those of us who understand a Higher Power as being a group or as nature can expect to become aware of a great power and truth transcending that of a single person. From our earliest days in recovery, we have placed our faith in a *Power greater than ourselves*. We have experienced the reality of that Power as recovery; and now, as we consider prayer as contact with God, we can expect better understanding of God's will.

Prayer and meditation are not two distinctly different tools for communication with our Higher Power. When we are developing a relationship, there are various ways we relate to others. Our relationships can be deepened both by active conversation and by the meaningful silences we share with those we love. We may often find our conversations lead to contemplative silences, or the thoughts that occur during silent moments suddenly need to be shared. For many of us, our relationship with our Higher Power is also expressed in both ways: the solitude of meditation, and the active communication of prayer.

## Prayer

The key to any active communication is honesty. In prayer, we can honestly express our questions, doubts, fears, and even anger. Other than honesty, there is probably no restriction. A prayer can be a litany or a short outpouring of anguish. It can say, do, or be anything because it is a reflection of our needs. Prayers generally fit into several categories: guidance, praise and thanksgiving, confession, petition, and intercession.

Most of our prayers are a combination of two or more of these categories, depending on when and where they are offered. For example, we might as a daily habit pray a rambling prayer. Such a prayer may begin with wondering how we will face a particularly hard decision, recounting how we came to be in this position. From there, the prayer could be a request for guidance, a confession of wrongs we committed, and a conclusion of praise (perhaps in the sense of "Thy will be done").

We may find comfort in being able to just "talk" with our Higher Power. This intensely personal prayer is often a sharing of thoughts, much as we do with friends. Because it doesn't exactly ask for guidance and it isn't exactly a

prayer of praise, it may seem to have little specific purpose. It does have great value, however, because it emphasizes the trust and serenity of our relationship with our Higher Power.

Many of the prayers we offer in groups, in church or a synagogue are prayers that fit into a liturgy or a set situation. For example, many of us say the Lord's Prayer at the conclusion of our meetings. A traditional table grace might be said before a meal. These prayers, although often not so personal, are beneficial because they serve as reminders of our relationship with God. If we try to think through the words, they do become more personal for us.

### **Meditation**

Henri J. M. Nouwen, a theology professor and writer, speaks of the need for silence in his book *Out of Solitude*: "Somewhere we know that without silence words lose their meaning, that without listening speaking no longer heals, that without distance closeness cannot cure." Perhaps the balance so many of us seem to desire is so seldom found because we shun our own company. We recovering people especially may have known little joy, serenity, or calmness in the aloneness of our pasts.

The practice of meditation should hold little

fear for us today. Before recovery, being alone may have meant having to face guilt, anger, and disappointments by ourselves; we probably tried to avoid ourselves, and we were alienated from a Higher Power. No wonder we feared being alone. Now we can look forward to our quiet times in which we can commune with ourselves and our Higher Power in meditation and prayer.

Meditation, like prayer, is thousands of years old and is recognized as a spiritual exercise by many of the world's major religions. Meditation allows us to shed the burdens of our physical and emotional lives by centering on simplicity. Some people relax and allow themselves the calmness of resting within the care of God. Others center on an unthreatening openness with God, uncluttered with day-to-day details. Many others have found they prefer the guided meditation of a book which gives a daily reading, message, and prayer, after which they quietly reflect on that day's reading. In any of these types of meditation, we can communicate with our Higher Power because meditation offers us an opportunity to remove our minds from the self-centered details of our lives and open our spirits to God's impressions.

## How, When, and Where

Although we know there is no need to have absolute rules or guidelines for prayer and meditation, here are some suggestions which may help open us to more satisfactory communication with God.

- Trust, pursue, challenge, and expect.
- Prepare; choose a quiet place, if possible, and put everyday things out of mind.
- Listen; this can be a two-way dialogue if we're open to God.
- Surrender; we can accept once again our powerlessness.
- Discipline; we don't want to stay in touch only when we need something. Our relationship depends on frequent contact.

While these suggestions give us a direction, they are not absolutes. There are people who pray while driving to work, taking an elevator, or doing the laundry. As with any relationship, we need to feel free to say at any time, "Oh, by the way . . ." Our need to acknowledge God's presence and importance in our lives means we can and may share parts of ourselves in spontaneous prayer.

It's reassuring to know there is no right or wrong way to pray, to know our thoughts are

shared with our Higher Power and understood, and to know there is a wisdom and understanding which is often shared with us as we pray.

### **Hazelden Pocket Power Series**

A series of inspirational pamphlets small enough to carry with you wherever you go. Short enough to read in one sitting, each pocket-size, 16 page pamphlet uses traditional A.A. philosophy to deal with the different stages and emotions encountered during recovery.

**Accepting Criticism**

Order No. 5366

**Forgiveness**

Order No. 5364

**Freedom from Fear**

Order No. 1282

**Gratitude**

Order No. 1331

**Great Expectations**

Order No. 5365

**Honesty**

Order No. 1336

**Hope**

Order No. 1337

**Humility**

Order No. 1338

**Inadequacy**

Order No. 5360

**Just for Today**

Order No. 1339

**Letting Go**

Order No. 5351

**Living the Principles**

Order No. 5352

**Loneliness**

Order No. 5363

**Loving Relationships**

Order No. 5353

**Miracles in Recovery**

Order No. 5402

**Patience**

Order No. 5361

**Prayer and Meditation**

Order No. 5349

**Reaching Out to Others**

Order No. 5400

**Serenity**

Order No. 5362

**Surrender**

Order No. 5449

**Understanding Rejection**

Order No. 5348

**When Doors Close**

Order No. 5354

**Pocket Power Collection**

Order No. 5905

**For price and order information, please call one of our  
Customer Service Representatives.**

**Hazelden®**  
Educational Materials

Box 176, Pleasant Valley Road

Center City, MN 55012

(800) 328-9000 (Toll Free. U.S. Only)

(800) 257-0070 (Toll Free. MN Only)

(800) 328-0500 (Toll Free. Film and

Video Orders. U.S. Only)

(612) 257-4010 (AK & Outside U.S.)

Order No. 5349

ISBN: 0-89486-442-4