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In Answer to Your Prayers

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Author of Divine Heritage / July 2009

Here's a statement which may seem inconsistent with the evidence of your experience: there is no such thing as an unanswered prayer. It's a myth like the sometimes advertised low fat cheese cake in that it's something that gets touted and too many times also gets misunderstood to mean something which is many degrees shy of the truth. For example, I don't care how low in fat a cheese cake is, if it's still high in calories or high in sugar, it's going to be fattening if indulged in, in excess of the very occasional moderate portion. Still, a good many people misunderstand low fat to mean nonfattening. Along the same line, a good many people falsely conclude that in the absence of a booming voice from the sky or even a booming voice in their head, or the non-fruiting of a wish come true in response to their prayers means that God (or whatever you choose to call that All-imbuing, enigmatic Something from which All things emerge) is either not present or sometimes unresponsive. This is never true. Your prayers are always answered. And I don't mean in the glib, "sometimes the answer is just 'no'," sense. You should know that God always offers a *thoughtful* response to your dialogue with *Him*. You just have to learn how to just as thoughtfully "listen."

God is within you. You've probably heard this proclamation before but what do you think it means? I'm about to put forth a personal understanding which I don't want to be mistaken for an argument. It is not my intent to try to convince you of the truth of the following statement, I merely offer this understanding to frame a forthcoming question. What we refer to, across all cultures, as God (that ever-present, absolutely-powerful, All-knowing yet unknowable Something which is the source for All that Is) is synonymous with what is also known as your inner being, your spirit. God is within you. God is your inner-witness. This being the understanding it seems appropriate to then ask: If God is within me, and is in fact my inner being, how is it possible to have a legitimate and meaningful conversation with something which is essentially the source of myself? Wouldn't such a conversation simply be me talking to and answering my own self? Well yes and no. Because you should also understand that your soul constitutes the embodiment of just one of the many numberless expressions of God. Think of your soul as a drop of water amid the ocean. Yes it would, to some degree, be truthful to say that even this drop is the ocean; but it would not be truthful to say this drop is The Ocean. A drop may be *of* the ocean but a drop, in seclusion, does not constitute the entire ocean. In this, your conversations with God are about you calling upon the unbounded resources inherent to the whole of yourself instead of relying on the limited resources of just your part, in self isolation, from this whole. But why is this calling even necessary? If we all have within us a spark of something divine, wouldn't we know that we possess this treasure? Well the fact is we do know, we just don't always believe.

Prayer is necessary because we tend to get so bogged down and drawn into the characters we play in life that we lose our appreciation for the holistic nature of life. We go through life buying into the outward appearances of things instead of trusting in our inward intuitions. And based on the outward show of things, we believe ourselves to be separate from him, separate from her, separate from this, that and the other... Not true. We are all different expressions of the same identity. And in prayer we open up to our connection to the One Life, the one fount from which All of creation springs, God. Heed that word – connection. Turn its meaning over in your mind. You connect to things you have a relationship with – a sympathetic bond with. Your union with God is formed through love – All kinds of love. You have all manner of relationships with the Higher Self within you.

There is indeed God the father (with whom our western culture is very much familiar with) *and* God the mother. But it does not end there. There's also God the son and God the daughter; God the brother and God the sister; God the lover and God the best friend... Not that there are many gods (this is not a promotion for polytheism). There is only one God. But there are many relationships, many ways of relating to, many ways we may choose to experience our connection to this One Being. But bear in mind that the relationship you choose often colors your expectation of *how* this thing you are relating to responds to you. It may color how you believe your prayers will be answered. You might, for instance, tell both your mother and your best friend about an experience you've had that's troubling you. But even though the story you tell is the same in each instance, your expectation of the response you receive from this one emotional outpouring will be influenced by your unique relationship with each person? Isn't this true? So your best friend could offer you the exact same counsel as your mother regarding this matter, but isn't it also true that you will receive this advice differently from each source? Again, your relationship affects your expectations, and your expectations affect not only what you hear but the way you choose to hear things.

As with any form of communication the message which gets imparted through this exchange is not so much about what literally gets conveyed but what we interpret from what gets conveyed. And the assumptions we come in with very much influence this understanding. So if, when we pray, we choose to relate to our innermost Self as if It were the judge and we, the lowly personality, are the beggar, and we proceed to appeal to God by laying out our case and opening negotiations for God to please grant us *such and such* as if God were a genie simply waiting to grant the worthy requestors a special wish, then our expectation of how our prayers will be answered by God might well be looked for (by us) in the material manifestation of whatever we've asked for in our prayers. And if it so happens that what we've asked for does not come about we might very well just assume that either God's answer to our entreaty to *Him* was "no," or God simply wasn't listening. But what if God simply responded to your outpouring in a different way? And while you were so fixated on anticipating your answer from *Him* to come *that* way, it actually came to you *this* way and you completely missed it? How many of us are guilty of this? Treating God as if *He* were simply a bestower of wishes for the repentant. To be clear, there isn't anything inherently wrong with relating to God as if *He* were a genie. Any relationship you choose to have with the All-pervading Self is good. Because no matter what the means, anytime you allow yourself to be more open to that truest part of your being, it's a good thing. And this is what prayer is. It's you

opening up and being more allowing of something bigger than your mere personal experience in life, being more allowing of something grander about Life!

Any form of prayer is a constructive action. What's not constructive, however, is when your expectation of the response you receive from your prayers limits your ability to actually recognize this response when it comes. It makes perfect sense for you to feel like you're not being heard if you, yourself, haven't developed the capacity to really listen well. Communication is a two way exchange. It's just as much about you being receptive to other life outlooks as it is about you passing on your own, personal, life outlook to another.

In prayer we open ourselves up to an exchange between our personality in life and the divine within us that is the source of All life. We achieve this opening by being emotionally raw. That is to say whatever we're going through in life, whatever is on our hearts, we turn within and lay it all out, without pretext. It is by dropping our personal facades that we are able to experience our connection to the Grand Whole (and the limitless resources therein) more freely. But on the otherside of this exchange we often turn around and become unreceptive to really listening to the wisdom that comes back to us through this connection. It's like opening one channel only to block the other.

The way God expresses *His* responses to your prayers may take many forms. The response may come to you through the words of another person, it may be shown to you through the demonstration of some life experience, it may simply "occur" to you from within... No matter what form the reply comes in, however, there is one distinct quality which is indicative of all forms of divine responses. That is you will experience an out of the blue, out of character, *knowing*-feeling in your reaction to all divine responses.

Let's say, for example, that you are in the midst of a situation which has left you feeling like someone has just pulled the rug from underneath you. It's a moment in your life experience where everything seems very much up in the air and unnerving. You've been contending with feelings of angry, fear, stress, and many manner of other ill emotions. You've hit an emotional bottom and don't know where else to turn so you find private space, you go within yourself and breakdown. You let everything out. All that has you afraid, all that has you angry, all that has you stressed... You stop worrying about saving face, you stop being concerned about making a favorable impression, and you open your heart to something larger than your personal self. And as you do this something odd begins to happen. A feeling of comfort begins to come over you; a sense that in spite of how bad things look at the moment, everything is truly okay. It's a feeling that seems to spring out of nowhere because it is inconsistent with the mood of the life outlook you, even now, find yourself carried away with. You can't make sense of this inner change because nothing in your world has changed. Your personal perspective is still the same. The situation you're faced with still looks bad. But the anger, fear and stress you feel, though not gone, is quieted. It's inexplicable to you. So what's going on here? What's going on here is that God is responding to your prayers. And this is indeed a response.

The challenge you're facing right now may not find resolution in the way you may be dictating in your prayers but that does not mean your prayers are going unanswered. God is responding to you. It may not be in the way you were expecting or even hoping for, but that doesn't mean you should be dismissive of it. You need to be open to whatever divine response you receive. Forget what you were expecting; be appreciative

of what actually is. Remember, it is your inner witness you are talking to. This silent observer knows you better than you even understand yourself. Your prayer is being answered exactly the way it best needs to be answered for your greatest benefit. Don't allow your clinging to an expectation of how God should respond to your prayers make you unreceptive to how God actually responds to your prayers. As honest as you are in laying out whatever is on your heart in prayer, you have to be just as honest with yourself in taking to heart whatever you get back from prayer.

Your prayers are being answered not just some of the time, but all the time. And you will know you are receiving an answer to your prayers not because the response you receive satisfies any particular expectation you may have, but because you will sense a feeling within yourself which differs from the mood of your personal thoughts at that particular moment. It will be a mood which will feel out of character for you, and for good reason, because this mood won't come from your character (which is to say your persona / your soul). It will come from someplace deeper within you. So deep, in fact, it may seem as if it emerges out of nowhere. This won't be an intrusive feeling, mind you. It doesn't overthrow your personal mood, but simply peaks over it for some moments. When the Higher Self speaks to you the goal is not to take over your personal thoughts, your personal mindset, but to simply offer you something (wisdom, comfort, encouragement, direction...) which you may either accept or reject to any degree you choose. The divine counsel you receive through prayer is merely offered to you, it is not enforced upon you. These are the qualities you should look for in any divine response no matter what form the expression of that response takes. (Again, it may come through the lips of another or through an intuitive impression, through an emerging life experience or whatever else have you).

You might find it interesting to keep a prayer journal to account for your divine dialogues. Every time you pray, or you can even do this while you pray (sort of like letters to God), write down a little summary of your inner conversation with the Higher Self. After each entry leave a blank page where you can later record the response you received from that prayer and how you've come to interpret its meaning. This exercise has several benefits: A.) It will help you to be attentive to really listening for a response to your prayers. B.) It will help you to see more clearly the different ways the Higher Self is constantly speaking to you. And C.) Months from now, or even years from now, when you look back on your prayers and the responses you receive from your prayers, you will marvel at how well these response bear out. And having these consistent confirmations will make you more aware of your connection to that Something divine within you.

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