



By Elder
Juan A. Uceda
Of the Seventy

A Personal
Relationship with
Our Heavenly
Father through
Prayer



When was the last time you felt something as you were praying?



When I use a mobile phone to call my mother and father in New Jersey, USA, I can hear their voices clearly. I do not know how it is possible, without any cable or visible connection, that I can talk to them so far away. But I know it works!

Now, please do not ask me how it is possible that millions of people can pray at the same time, and in different languages, and our Father in Heaven is ready to listen and to answer at the same time. I cannot understand how that happens. But I know it works!

Just like a mobile phone, prayer works, even though we may not understand exactly how. But there are some things about prayer that we do understand.

Pray from the Heart

We read in the scriptures, “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened” (Luke 3:21). Jesus teaches us that a prayer from the heart can open heaven. He said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7).

Today, we usually use the word *ask* to request something. But in the original Greek, the word is *aiteo*, which means not only to ask but also to beg, crave, or implore. The heavens will not be opened if we just *say* prayers. They will be opened if we *beg*, if we *crave*, if we *implore*, if we pray from the heart.

When you pray, do you feel like the heavens are opened? When was the last time, as you were praying, that you felt something?

Prepare to Pray

To avoid falling into routine prayers using vain repetitions (see Matthew 6:7; 3 Nephi 13:7), we should prepare ourselves to pray. I suggest reading a scripture or briefly pondering our blessings. Each one of us can find ways to prepare for personal prayer.

Pray Even When It's Hard

Every now and then, we rush through prayers or pray out of routine. Sometimes we do not pray with faith in Jesus

Christ, and sometimes we do not pray at all. But it's at those moments when we lack faith or don't feel like praying that we most need to pray.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) said: “When it is dark as midnight darkness, when there is not one particle of feeling in my heart to pray, shall I then say, I will not pray? No, but [I say] . . .

knees, bend yourselves upon the floor, and mouth, open; tongue, speak; and we will see what will come forth, and you shall worship the Lord God of Israel, even when you feel as though you could not say a word in His favor. That is the victory we have to gain. . . . It is between the spirit and the body; they are inseparably connected” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:207).

Satan does not want you to pray because he knows that the moment you start praying from the heart, you obtain spiritual power and he loses influence over you. A mighty prayer enables you to face challenges such as anxiety, depression, and doubts about your own faith.

If you do not remember the last time you felt something as you were praying, then do something about it. Through

prayer, you can establish and maintain a personal relationship with your Father in Heaven.

Spend a Moment in Heaven

When you desperately need help from heaven, prayer can give you power to make the right decisions. A prayer from the heart is indeed a moment in heaven, and even though answers may not always be immediate, a moment in heaven can help you to chart your course in mortal life.

In a world where people “call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20), you need to know that the heavens are open to you.

Prayers offered from the heart, mighty prayers, can give you spiritual power to face such things. When the heavens are opened, we can feel peace, comfort, joy, and love, even though we may not immediately gain complete understanding.

Follow the Savior's Example

We can learn a lot by studying how the Savior prayed.

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35).

Jesus prayed first thing in the morning and sought a solitary place to pray. Do you pray first thing in the morning? Do you avoid distractions? Do you unplug yourself from the world and strive to establish a connection with the heavens?

Luke also records that Jesus “withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Do you have a place of prayer where you go when you wish to petition your Father in Heaven?

Remain Humble

Matthew tells us that the Redeemer, as He prayed, demonstrated humility. “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

What does it mean that he “fell on his face”? The word for “fell” in the original Greek is *pipto*, a verb that means “to descend from an erect to a prostrate position.” When the





Believe that
you can receive
spiritual power
to overcome. . . .
Spend a moment
in the heavens.

moment comes for personal prayer, remember that you are going to address the most intelligent and powerful being in the universe, “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). Before such a being, I cannot be casual. I feel compelled to kneel.

Jesus Christ also set an example when He said to His Father: “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” When you say, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt,” do you truly mean it? What changes do you need to make in your mind, heart, and actions to truly be sincere?

Seek Earnestly

As you strive to be humble, honest, and sincere in your prayers, you will find it easier to accept Heavenly Father’s will, even when it may not match what you had in mind. Again, we turn to the example of Jesus Christ: “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:44).

When facing a difficulty, do you spend time asking yourself, why me? Or do you pray more earnestly? The expression “more earnestly” comes from Greek words meaning “without ceasing, fervent.” So Jesus teaches us that in moments of trial, we have to pray fervently, without ceasing. I invite all those who are going through times of distress to turn to the living God.

Times of distress can provide a great opportunity for our Heavenly Father to teach us. Our hearts soften and our minds wrestle for answers. If we seek Him, He is there.

Believe That He Will Listen

The Savior said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Be not afraid, only believe” (Mark 5:36). Believe that God the Father will listen to you. Believe that He “will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2). Believe that you—yes, you—can feel peace and comfort. Believe that you can receive spiritual power to overcome.

Mighty prayers *do* reach the heavens. In the book of Psalms, King David says, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17). One of the meanings of the word *pray* in Hebrew is “to speak.” And that is what we do when we pray to our Heavenly Father: we speak to Him.

When we offer a mighty prayer, we have the attention of the most powerful, merciful, and loving being in the universe. We spend a moment in the heavens. And we all need a moment in the heavens, especially when we are going through difficult times.

I know beyond any doubt that there is a God in heaven. He is your Father and my Father. He lives. His name is Love. His name is Mercy. In spite of being nothing before Him, I can kneel down before my Maker, and I can speak to Him. And He, in His infinite mercy, answers back, again and again and again. ■

From a Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional address, “A Personal Relationship with Our Heavenly Father as Taught by the Lord Jesus Christ,” given on November 28, 2017.