



Prayer of Thanks

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What began as a simple prayer of thanks opened my eyes to the immeasurable blessings I have received from the Lord.

There I was on my knees beside the bed, ready to say my personal prayers—prayers that were so often full of petitions and pleas. Now, however, the thought came into my heart that I needed to offer a prayer of thanks only. How long would such a prayer take? I didn't know, but I did know that if I offered the usual short list of thanks, there would be little risk of falling asleep on my knees.

I paused for a while before starting and realized that I did need to make one request of the Lord—that He open my eyes to my blessings.

Beginning to pray, I found myself expressing thanks for the same things I always acknowledge in my prayers—my wife and children, my testimony and Church membership, and my health. But this time I found myself contemplating each of those blessings, pausing, allowing the Spirit to deepen my understanding. A pattern of prayer mingled with meditation began.

Giving thanks for my wife, I was led to a deeper realization of how much I owed to her deceased parents for the nurture that had produced this woman who is, in turn, such a blessing to me.

Expressing gratitude for my own parents brought thoughts of my more distant ancestors. Understanding flowed into my mind that they had endured lives much harder than mine. They had lived according to the light available to them in their time. Family traditions of goodness and honor produced the grandparents in Germany

and the great-great-grandmother in England who accepted the message of the restored gospel.

Grateful for my testimony and Church membership, I then found myself thinking of how much I owed Joseph Smith and the great prophets before and since. And then came thoughts of my own humble teachers in Primary and Sunday School, in Aaronic Priesthood and seminary, who patiently taught the gospel to this smart-mouthed kid.

I'm no Enos (see Enos 1:4), but for me this turned into a fairly long prayer because the Spirit continued prompting me. I am also no Enoch, who beheld all the inhabitants of the earth (see Moses 7:21). But in my own limited way, I saw more clearly than ever how my life has been blessed by the goodness of countless others.

I was also left with the distinct impression that the flow of blessings into my life was deeper and broader than I could comprehend. As I gave thanks for my health, I understood that I had been protected and preserved innumerable times, that I had been blissfully unaware of the harmful infections I never contracted and the accidents that never happened because the hand of the Lord was over me. In how many other ways had I been blessed without even knowing?

Perhaps the answer won't come until I stand to be judged and I see my life with penetrating clarity. Then, despite my present attempts to be gratefully aware, I expect to be astonished and overwhelmed. All of these lessons I learned from a prayer of thanks. ■