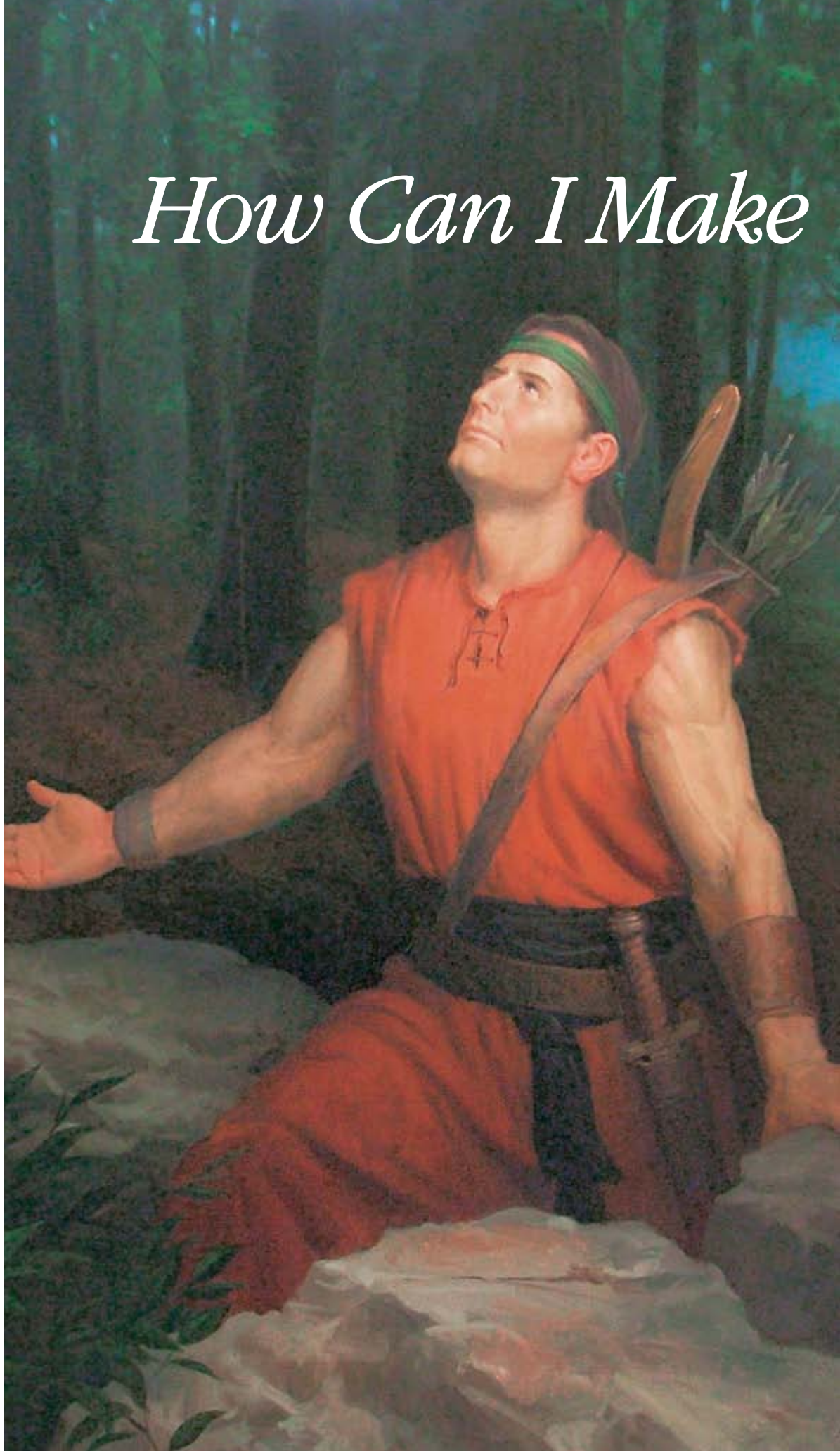


# *How Can I Make*

**W**hen Enos prayed, He prayed about himself first and then about the Nephites and then the Lamanites—even his enemies were a part of his concern. That really makes prayer meaningful, to focus on others.



# DAILY PRAYER

## *More Meaningful?*

*A member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles answers teens' questions about prayer.*

**H**ow can I make daily prayer more meaningful? It's a good question, and it's one that applies to all of us. President Hinckley used to say that sometimes when we pray it's like we're picking up a phone, ordering groceries, and then we hang up the phone—we put in our order, and we don't think any more about it than that. But if we take a few minutes just to think about our particular need in a given moment, then prayer becomes more meaningful.

In 2 Nephi 32:9 it says: "Behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul."

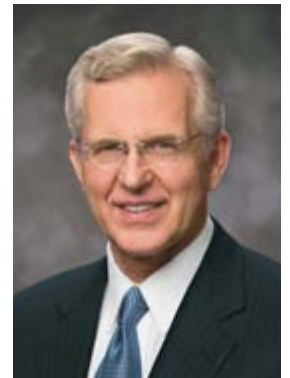
Everything we do ought to be done with an eye toward our Heavenly Father's blessing and consecrating to our good all of our activities in a given day. So if we sense our need and think about it, prayer becomes more meaningful.

Beyond that, it's important to remember we shouldn't just be praying about ourselves, because there are a lot of people in our sphere of acquaintance who have great needs as well, and we ought to be remembering them and what kind of help they need from the Lord. Those kinds of prayers are like when Enos prayed. He prayed about himself first and then about the Nephites and then the Lamanites—even his enemies were a part of his concern. That really makes prayer meaningful, to focus on others.

Lastly, when you're grateful, when your prayers include a lot of thanks to the Lord for your blessings, they become much more meaningful.

### **How do you have the Spirit with you when you pray?**

This is crucial. It makes all the difference. Remember the promise we find in Moroni 10:4. It tells us to pray about the Book of Mormon "with a sincere heart, with real intent." And when we say "sincere heart" and "real intent," it means that you want to know the Lord's will and you want to do it, that you're committed, as you pray, to knowing and doing His will. And that makes prayer very meaningful. If we're just praying for what *we* want and we don't want to know His will, it won't be the same feeling or have



**By Elder D. Todd Christofferson**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



the same meaning.

Years ago when I was serving as a bishop and was weighed down with all of the problems members of the ward seemed to have, I began praying about finding solutions and ways to help. I got some impressions in answer to my pleas for help. Then, it seemed that the Spirit would guide my prayer so that what I was praying was guided by the Spirit as well as what came back in answer to my prayers. And I think that's the most meaningful kind of prayer we can achieve, where the Spirit guides the prayer as well as the responses from our Heavenly Father. And I believe that comes when we really do want to know what the Lord wants and we're committed to do whatever that is as we pray.

### **How often should we pray?**

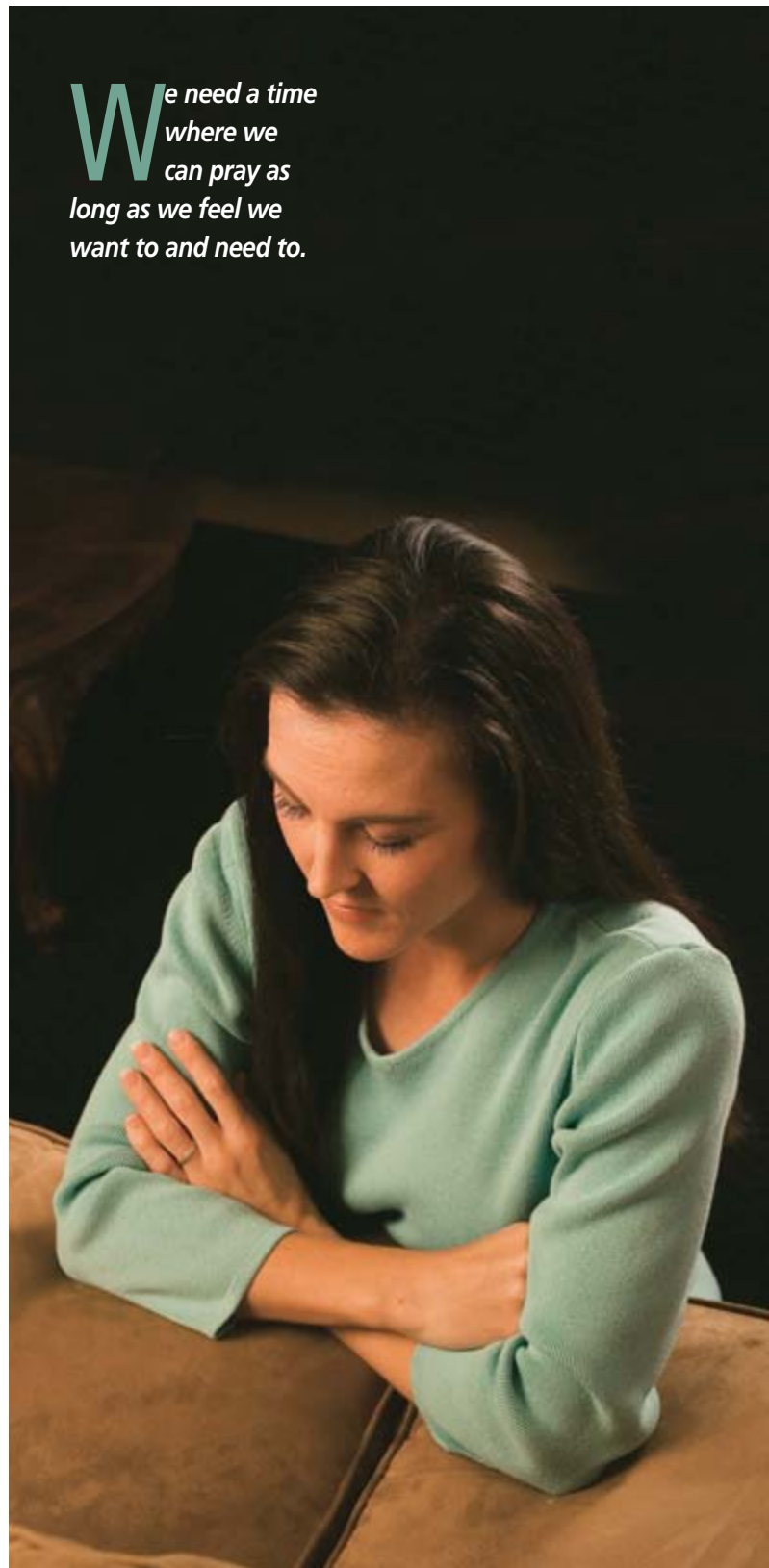
There really is not a rule. We don't have a set number. I think as you go through a day, it's natural to pray about things as they come along.

Elder David A. Bednar talked in a general conference about prayer and praying always (see "Pray Always," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 41). He said if our morning prayers are looking out toward the day and what's coming, we're previewing the day in our prayer. In our evening prayers, we report to the Lord on what's happened through the course of the day. We may be thanking Him for blessings received, we may be repenting of a few things that happened that were not right, and then there are all the prayers in between. It just becomes part of a stream of prayers. It's all part of a pattern, and that goes on day in and day out and week after week and through the years. That's what it means to have your heart drawn out in prayer to Him.

One other scripture comes to mind, from Alma 37:36–37: "Cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

"Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night

**W**e need a time  
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lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

Sometimes it's a very, very simple prayer in a stressful crisis (“Help. Please help me.”). So we're talking about our thoughts going to Heavenly Father. Our prayers can be brief through the course of the day, and it's just what flows out of us naturally. The closer we get to Him, the more that happens automatically and we feel that closeness. It's like having a friend and walking together through a hallway at school. You want to turn and talk to each other about what's going on at the moment. And as you draw closer to God, that companionship, that friendship, if you will, tends to develop in the same way.

That being said, don't forget that we ought to look for opportunities when we can have long prayers, when we can have a quiet time and will not be interrupted. We need a time where we can pray as long as we feel we want to and need to, where Heavenly Father can teach us and talk to us at length and not just always be responding to a quick prayer—that's fine for the moment but not all we should ever do.

### **What if we don't get an answer to our prayers when we want it or need it?**

That's an interesting question. It brings to mind something that Elder Richard G. Scott said in a general conference talk: “What do you do when you have prepared carefully, have prayed fervently, waited a reasonable time for a response, and still do not feel an answer? You may want to express thanks when that occurs, for it is an evidence of His trust. When you are living worthily and

your choice is consistent with the Savior's teachings and you need to act, proceed with trust. As you are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit, one of two things will certainly occur at the appropriate time: either the stupor of thought will come, indicating an improper choice, or the peace or the burning in the bosom will be felt, confirming that your choice was correct. When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision” (“Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 10).

It's a valuable experience sometimes to pray and not immediately receive the answer you feel you need. It's all conditioned, of course, on our living the way we should, continuing to seek His guidance, and being open to those promptings.

We ought to remember we don't dictate to God the timing of His answers to us and the content of what comes in response to our prayers. I learned this when I was about 16. I was in the pageant at Hill Cumorah. I lived in New Jersey at the time, and they had some of the youth from New Jersey and New York as participants. I thought I had a deep belief in the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and felt that they were true and that the First Vision was as he described it. I thought, “This is the perfect chance. I'll go to the Sacred Grove one night after the performance and get the final confirmation I need there.”

So I did. I went there late one night. It was a beautiful summer evening. Nobody else was there—perfectly reverent and peaceful. And I prayed. I didn't ask for anything specific. I just said, “Can I have some confirmation of my belief?” Really I wanted a

***think that's the most meaningful kind of prayer we can achieve, where the Spirit guides the prayer as well as the responses from our Heavenly Father.***

**G**od loves us; He knows what's best for us, and our job is always to be willing and ready to receive.



testimony of my feeling about the Prophet and the Book of Mormon.

Nothing happened. I prayed a long time—I'm sure more than an hour. Nothing. I was really disappointed. I said, "What did I do wrong? Why didn't the Lord answer me? Wasn't it the perfect place, the perfect time? What should I have done that I didn't do?"

Later, what I was looking for came, but it was at home in a quiet moment when I was reading the Book of Mormon. That witness from the Holy Ghost flooded over me, and I knew. I knew I knew. And when I looked back on the experience, I said, "Why didn't He answer my prayer then? Why was it later?" I learned two important lessons from that:

First, you don't have to be any place special for the Lord to answer your prayer. You don't have to make a pilgrimage to Palmyra or Jerusalem or anything like that. He knows where you are. He knows your name. He can answer you right here, right now, any moment.

And second, you don't dictate to God. You just don't tell Him what and when. That comes according to His will and His timing and His wisdom. He loves us; He knows what's best for us, and our job is to be open. Our job is always to be willing and ready to receive. Then He knows what's best and when to answer us and how to answer us. So, after all is said and done, we still have to live by faith.

Prayer is one of the things that will give us the strength and the power to be examples of the believers. The influence of the Lord, the meaningfulness of our prayers, His guidance in our life day to day, the strength that comes with all of that really does make it possible for us to consistently be examples of the believers in everything we do. **NE**