

Dishonest Praying

by Claude A. Ries
in "Wesleyan Methodist"

Perhaps one of the most insidious tactics of Satan is his ability to help Christians pray dishonestly. Of course they do not mean to but they do and therein lies the peril and tragedy.

Glibly do we pray, "Hallowed be Thy name." That is—"let it ever be hallowed sacred in my life" and then we go on through the whole day without once thinking of hallowing it except to go through some set form at meal times.

We pray, "Thy kingdom come," and instead of honestly meaning it with all there is of us, we withhold our means, time, and the very ability necessary to help make that prayer come to pass as far as our life can count.

"Oh God, do bless the whitened-harvest mission fields and cause thy name to prosper there," we pray. Then out of our abundance we give three, four or five dollars a year to ease our conscience for having prayed (?) for missions.

How easily we say, "Have your way, Lord," and then go on reserving certain areas and activities of our lives for our own particular pleasure instead of "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Pointedly does Editor Roy Smith point out that "it is a dangerous matter to confess a sin which we have no intention of forsaking, to plead for a cause in which we have no special interest, to declare a love that does not dominate our decisions and our choices. The beginning of real prayer, therefore, is in honesty and it is harder to be honest with ourselves than with any one else on earth. But unless we are honest we do not really pray. Prayer is a very dangerous exercise of the soul, unless we propose to be absolutely honest in our praying."

Little Donny was kneeling at his grandmother's knee. "If I should die 'fore I wake," he began. "If I should die 'fore I wake"—"I pray . . .," "Go on, Donny," prompted Grandma. "Wait a minute, interposed the little fellow scrambling to his feet and hurrying away down stairs. Soon he was back. Dropping to his knees, he took up the petition where he had left it.

When the little fellow was carefully tucked in his bed, Grandma lovingly rebuked the interruption in the evening prayer. "But I did think what I was saying, Grandma, that's why I had to stop. You see, I'd upset Ted's menagerie, and stood all his wooden soldiers on their heads, just to see how he'd tear round in the morning. But if I should die 'fore I wake—why, I didn't want him to find 'em that way, so I had to go down and fix 'em right. There's lots of things that seem funny if you're goin' on livin', but you don't want 'em that way if you should die 'fore you wake!" "That was right, dear; it was right," commented the voice with a tender quaver.

A good many of our prayers wouldn't be hurt by stopping in the middle of them to undo a wrong or to question whether we honestly meant them or not.

What kind of prayers are you and I praying? Honest ones or dishonest ones?

Pray. Stop praying. Then pray—pray honestly!

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If the church is to go outside its walls into the highways and byways, it will need the help of every member.

—K. Morgan Edwards.

Steps to the Altar (No. 7)

by Rev. George E. Failing

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU COURT?

Ordinarily, two weeks is too short a period and two years is too long! There are exceptions, of course. I could imagine an unmarried lady of twenty-five years of age arriving on a mission field and discovering an eligible young man. I would suppose that dating and courting might take considerably less time than it would have for the same people five or eight years sooner. And I also can think of a young couple who "find" each other in College Freshman or Sophomore years who believe it would be wise to postpone marriage until graduation from College, or even from Grad school.

Courting is not done by the calendar! People in love, or falling in love, do not periodically stop to review just how they are proceeding, so far as days and years are concerned. Courting is designed to accommodate one person's life and plans to another. It is the ideal time to become "one in heart." The wedding ceremony itself does not make two people "one."

Courting, in a true sense, should never come to an end. However, courtship should result either in the opinion that the "two" were not meant for each other, or that they were. If they believe that their courtship should issue in marriage, then there will be plans to make and many factors to consider. The effort to accomplish their plans smoothly and to the advantage of both parties concerned is an advanced education in preparation for the regular considerations involved in married life. One person should not unduly "rush" another or establish personal deadlines for an answer. Love is over considerate.

May I venture to suggest some cautions especially to be heeded during courtship?

First, respect yourself at all times. You have your own history of training and family background. Don't flaunt that! Moreover, you have your own conscience, your own personal ideals, your own convictions of what things please and displease the Lord. Keep faith with yourself. Don't let your ideals sag, or your character deteriorate, or your personal devotion languish while courting the love of a friend.

Second, respect the other person. Think too highly of him (her) to place him in an embarrassing situation, to exact of him a rash promise, to expose him to the ridicule or misunderstanding of his friends and family. Hold sacred and inviolate the affection and confidence of your loved one. He who does not respect another is not worthy of another's respect. One need only mention the dangers of "petting" or heavy love-making". True love-making must always be ethical and decent.

Remember that heavy petting makes it almost impossible to discover God's will and to arrive at a safe and sane judgment. Emotional over-involvement produces a "heady" feeling that easily overlooks otherwise observed dangers and refuses to listen to the advice of godly friends. Modest clothing, good manners, and close association with godly people will help a young person maintain his moral and spiritual equilibrium during the teen-and-twenty period.

Third, don't take steps you will later regret. Over-emphasis on the level of physical attraction is fraught with danger. It is difficult to speak candidly here. Let the mere suggestion suffice for the wise. Marriage is still meant to be a surprise. Thrice blessed are those who make courtship the threshold of marriage—but only the threshold.