

And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. JEREMIAH 29:13

“The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. . . . The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness” (Steps to Christ, p. 43).

Since childhood, I had a desire to be like Jesus. As I daily consecrated my life to Him, I prayed for Him to change me. He answered my prayer in a most interesting way.

My father-in-law, George, moved in with us after his wife passed away from cancer. We were happy to have him closer to us and wanted him to be part of our young daughter’s life. We hoped that living in our home and participating in family worships would have a positive spiritual influence on him.

We lived on a farm with a barn, lake, pasture, and wildlife that frequented the property. George was an avid outdoorsman, so this was a prime location for his retirement. Every morning he took a walk by the lake. One day when he didn’t return from his walk at the usual time, my husband went looking for him. He was slumped in a blackberry bush where he had fallen. Over the next few weeks, George complained that his legs and feet tingled, and he found it difficult to walk. Tests revealed a tumor which had metastasized onto his spine. His physician scheduled surgery to remove the tumor, which caused permanent paralysis from the waist down.

Rather than admit him to a nursing facility, we decided that I would care for him at home. I had no nurses’ training, only a crash course by the discharging nurse when we left the hospital. My day consisted of bathing George, caring for his bed sores, administering his medications, and transferring him from bed to chair, then back again. It was incredibly humiliating to him that he could not take care of himself anymore, and I took the brunt of his frustration.

My husband and I planned a weekend getaway and arranged for a young man to care for George while we were gone. The night before we were to leave, I tucked George into bed, kissed him on the forehead, and reminded him that we would leave in the morning for the weekend. With that, George angrily blurted out, “I’m your responsibility! You have no right to leave me with someone else!” I snapped back with, “You are a selfish, unreasonable old man!”

Instantly, I was convicted that my actions were wrong and very un-Christlike. Weeping, I ran to my room and fell onto my bed. “Lord, what is wrong with me? Why can’t I control my temper? Are you really working in my life?” The answer came so gently, “I am working in your life. I am answering your prayer to be more like Me. You are resentful of George. He takes up your time, leaving you feeling overwhelmed with no way out. Resentment is sin, and if you give it to Me, I will give you grace to continue caring for George.”

“Many who sincerely consecrate their lives to God’s service are surprised and disappointed to find themselves, as never before, confronted by obstacles and beset by trials and perplexities. They pray for Christlikeness of character, for a fitness for the Lord’s work, and they are placed in circumstances that seem to call forth all the evil of their nature. . . . [Then] He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service” (The Ministry of Healing, pp. 470, 471). “Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life”

(Steps to Christ, p. 23).

I saw what resentment looked like, and I did not want it to be in my heart. I confessed my sin and resolved to live for God. I asked Him to wash me and give me a new heart. I got up from my bed, dried my eyes, and asked George for his forgiveness. Peace filled my heart, and my defeat was turned into victory. We eventually had to place George in a nursing facility as his care became impossible for me to provide. We received a call one evening telling us to come because George had suffered a stroke. My husband sat beside him and whispered in his ear, “Dad, you know Jesus loves you? If you ask in your heart, He’ll save you.” The only visible sign that George understood was a tear that trickled down his cheek. In his last moments, I believe that he accepted Jesus as His Savior.

Suggested Format for the Prayer Time Praise

- Lord, we praise You that You give us strength and uphold us when we are weak.
- We praise You that when we fall, You do not forsake us.
- We praise You, Lord, that You cast our sins into the depths of the sea and remember them no more.

Confession

- Lord, forgive us when we’ve allowed self to gain the mastery.
- Please forgive us when we’ve misrepresented You to others.
- Forgive us for when we’ve clung to sin instead of allowing You to remove it from our lives.
- Lord, please search our hearts. See if there is any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting (Ps. 139:23, 24). [Spend a few moments in personal, silent prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to search your hearts.]

Supplication and Intercession

- Lord, help us to be patient and kind, showing Your love and pity to those who annoy and accuse us.
- Please help us to persevere through hardship, especially when love is inconvenient.
- We pray for those who care for elderly and/or sick family members. Give them patience, strength, and love.
- Lord, please ease the anxiety of those facing terminal illness. Grant them courage and the peace of Jesus.
- We pray for the 202 million people in the 41 least-reached cities of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division to know Jesus.
- We pray for the Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department of each local church as they seek God’s plan and reach out to their communities with loving service, Bible study, and personal witnessing.
- We pray for Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) as they meet practical needs around the world.
- We also pray for our list of seven or more people [name the names if appropriate].

Thanksgiving

- Thank You that You will set a watch before our mouths and keep the doors of our lips.
- Thank You for the Christlike love You give us for those who are difficult to love.
- Thank You that as Your character is formed in our lives, others will be drawn to You.
- Lord, thank You for hearing us, for answering our prayers, and for working behind the scenes to accomplish Your will.

Suggested Songs to Sing

“Rejoice! Ye Pure in Heart” (SDA Hymnal #27); “Live Out Thy Life Within Me” (SDA Hymnal #316); “O for a Closer Walk with God” (SDA Hymnal #315); “Because He Lives” (SDA Hymnal #526); “Abide with Me” (SDA Hymnal #50)

Promises to Claim as You Pray

- “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand” (Ps. 37:23, 24).
- “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).
- “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him” (Ps. 28:7).