

**“Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth  
but from falling in love.”**  
Richard Foster in *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, p. 3

### Ordinary time - The Spiritual Discipline of Prayer

This week we take a fresh look at what is at the heart of the spiritual discipline of prayer.

#### Scripture:

I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Luke 15: 18 - 20

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:37-39

#### Voice of wisdom:

“God has graciously allowed me to catch a glimpse into his heart, and I want to share with you what I have seen. Today the heart of God is an open wound of love. He aches over our distance and preoccupation. He mourns that we do not draw near to him. He grieves that we have forgotten him. He weeps over our obsession with muchness and manyness. He longs for our presence.

“And he is inviting you - and me - to come home, to come home to where we belong, to come home to that for which we were created. His arms are stretched out wide to receive us. His heart is enlarged to take us in.

“For too long we have been in a far country: a country of noise and hurry and crowds, a country of climb and push and shove, a country of frustration and fear and intimidation. And he welcomes us home: home to serenity and peace and joy, home to friendship and acceptance and affirmation.

“The key to this home, this heart of God, is prayer.... (Prayer) is about a love relationship: an enduring, continuing, growing love relationship with the great God of the universe. And overwhelming love invites a response. Loving is the syntax of prayer. To be effective pray-ers, we need to be effective lovers. In ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,’ Samuel Coleridge declares, ‘He prayeth well, who loveth well.’ Coleridge, of course, got this idea from the Bible, for its pages breathe the language of divine love. Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth but from falling in love. This is why the great literature on prayer is frankly and wonderfully erotic. ‘The Trinity,’ writes Juliana of Norwich, ‘is our everlasting lover.’ ‘O my love!’ exclaims Richard Rolle... ‘Jesus, Lover of my soul,’ pleads Charles Wesley. ‘Let me to thy bosom fly.’

With simplicity of heart we allow ourselves to be gathered up into the arms of the Father and let him sing his love song over us.” Richard Foster in *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, pgs. 1-4.

## Study 39

### Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at prayer?

Reflect on how the story of the prodigal son can be a picture not just of salvation, but of a life of prayer. How does it relate to your prayer life?

Is the idea of prayer as a love relationship one you are familiar with, or is it a new idea for you? Either way, try expanding on this idea, describing prayer in terms of an intimate, ongoing relationship.

### Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

This week use some of your prayer time to develop a “syntax” of love. Begin (or end) your time by expressing your love for God - and expressing how you receive his love for you. It might be more comfortable at first to do this in writing.

If this whets your appetite for learning more about prayer, I would encourage you to get a copy of *Celebration of Discipline* and/or *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, both by Richard Foster.

©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place ([dwellingplaceindy.org](http://dwellingplaceindy.org)), and as a student of The Renovare Institute ([renovare.org](http://renovare.org)). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke ([recess.racke@gmail.com](mailto:recess.racke@gmail.com))