

Experiencing the Depths of Prayer
Chapter 1: From the Shallows to the Depths
{as told by Jeanne Guyon, edited by Bob Clarkson}

As you pick up this book, you may feel that you simply are not one of those people capable of a deep experience with Jesus Christ. Most Christians do not feel that they have been called to a deep, inward relationship to their Lord. But we have all been called to the depths of Christ just as surely as we have been called to salvation.

When I speak of this "deep, inward relationship to Jesus Christ," what do I mean? Actually, it is very simple. It is only the turning and yielding of your heart to the Lord. It is the expression of love within your heart for Him. Possibly the best way to understand it is to feel as strongly and deeply affectionate toward God as you feel for your most significant others on earth.

Paul encourages us to "pray without ceasing." (I Thessalonians 5:17) The Lord also invites us to "watch and pray." (Mark 13:33, 37) It is apparent from these two verses, as well as many more, that we all live by this kind of experience, this prayer, just as we live by love of the deepest feelings for others. Imagine God as the 'perfect' Father, Mother, Friend and Mate!

Once the Lord spoke and said, "I counsel you to buy from me gold tried in the fire that you may be rich." (Revelation 3:18) Dear reader, there is gold available to you. This gold is much more easily obtained than you could ever imagine. It is available to you.

The purpose of this book is to launch you into this exploration and into this discovery.

I give you an invitation:

- If you are thirsty for love, come to the living waters. Do not waste precious time digging wells that have no water in them. (John 7:37 Jer. 2:13)
- If you are starving for love and can find nothing to satisfy that hunger, then come. Come, and you will be filled.
- You who are depressed, come.
- You who are rejected by others, come.
- You who are anxious about your unfortunate condition or miserable circumstances, come. You will find stress relief and contentment!
- You who have much anger and bitterness in your soul and need a superb counselor, come. Don't hesitate because you are too broken to be healed. Come be honest with God and you will be healed!

Dear child of God, your Father has His arms of love open wide to you. Throw yourself into His arms.

- You who have strayed from God and wandered away as sheep, return to your Shepherd.
- You who are sinners, come to your Savior.

I especially address those of you who are very simple and you who are relatively uneducated in the ways of God. You may think you are the one person most incapable of this abiding experience of Christ, this prayer of simplicity. You may think yourself the one farthest from a deep experience with the Lord; but, in fact, the Lord has especially chosen you! You are the one most suited to know Him well. So let no one feel left out. Jesus Christ has called us all.

Oh, I suppose there is **one group left out!** Do not come if you have closed eyes, ears, soul, mind and heart. Before you come, there is one thing you must do: You must first open your heart, soul and mind to new revelations from the Lord.

Continue reading and you will learn what it means to give your heart to the Lord and how to make it a gift to Him. Do you truly desire to know the Lord in a deep way? God has made such an experience possible for you. It come through the grace He has given to all His redeemed children. It comes by total trust and surrender of your life to His Holy Spirit's guidance. (John 16:13 "... into **all** truth!")

How then will you come to the Lord to know Him in such a deep way? Prayer is the key. But I have in mind a certain kind of prayer. It is a kind of prayer that is very simple and yet holds the key to perfection and goodness-things found only in God Himself. The type of prayer that I have in mind will deliver you from enslavement to every sin. It is a prayer that will release to you every Godly virtue.

You see, the only way to be perfect is to walk in the presence of God. The only way you can live in His presence in uninterrupted fellowship is by means of prayer, but a very special kind of prayer. It is a prayer that leads you into the presence of God and keeps you there at all times; a prayer that can be experienced under any conditions, any place, and any time. Is there really such a prayer? Does such an experience with Christ truly exist?

Yes, there is such a prayer! It is prayer that does not interfere with your outward activities or your daily routine. There is a kind of prayer that can be practiced by kings, by priests, by soldiers, by laborers, by children, by women, and even by the sick.

This is **not** a prayer that comes **from your mind**. It is **a prayer that begins in the heart**. It does not come from your understanding or your thoughts. Prayer offered to the Lord from your mind simply would not be adequate. Why? It is because your mind is very limited. The mind can pay attention to only one thing at a time. Prayer that comes out of the heart is not interrupted by thinking! I will go so far as to say that nothing can interrupt this prayer, the prayer of simplicity.

Oh yes, there is one thing. Selfish desires can cause this prayer to cease. But even here there is encouragement, for once you have enjoyed your Lord and tasted the sweetness of His love, you will find that even your selfish desires no longer hold any power. You will find it impossible to have pleasure in anything except Him.

I realize that some of you may feel that you are very slow, that you have a poor understanding, and that you are very unspiritual. Dear reader, there is nothing in this universe that is easier to obtain than the enjoyment of Jesus Christ! Your Lord is more present to you than you are to yourself! Furthermore, His desire to give Himself to you is greater than your desire to lay hold of Him.

How, then, do you begin? You need only one thing. You need only to know how to seek Him. When you have found the way to seek Him, you will discover that this way to God is more natural and easier than taking a breath.

By this "prayer of simplicity," this experiencing of Christ deep within, you may live by God Himself with less difficulty and with less interruption than you now live by the air which you breathe. If this is true, then I ask, "Wouldn't it be a sin not to pray?" Yes, it would be a sin. But once you have learned how to seek Jesus Christ and how to lay hold of Him, you will find the way so easy that you will no longer neglect this relationship to your Lord.

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Chapter 2: Launching Out

{as told by Jeanne Guyon, edited by Bob Clarkson}

I would like to address you as though you were a beginner in Christ, one seeking to know Him. In so doing, let me suggest two ways for you to come to the Lord. I will call the first way "**praying the Scripture**." The second way I will call "**beholding the Lord**" or "**waiting in His presence**."

"**Praying the Scripture**" is a unique way of dealing with the Scripture; it involves both reading and prayer. Here is how you should begin. Turn to the Scripture; choose some passage that is simple and fairly practical. Next, come to the Lord. Come quietly and humbly. There, before Him, read a small portion of the passage of Scripture you have opened to. Be careful as you read. Take in fully, gently and carefully what you are reading. **Taste** it and **digest** it as you read.

In the past it may have been your habit, while reading, to move very quickly from one verse of Scripture to another until you had read the whole passage. Perhaps you were seeking to find the main point of the passage. But in coming to the Lord by means of "praying the Scripture," you **do not read quickly**. You read very slowly. You do not move from one passage to another until you have sensed the very heart of what you have read. You may then want to **take that portion of Scripture** that has **touched you** and **turn it immediately into prayer**.

After you have sensed something from the passage and after you know that the essence of that portion has been extracted and all the deeper sense of it is gone, then, very slowly, gently, and in a calm manner begin to read the next portion of the passage. You will be surprised that when your time with the Lord has ended, you will have read very little, probably no more than half a page.

"Praying the Scripture" is not judged by how much you read but by the way in which you read. If you read quickly, it will benefit you little. You will be like a bee that merely skims the surface of a flower. Instead, in this new way of reading with prayer, you must become as the bee which penetrates into the depths of the flower. You plunge deeply within to remove its deepest nectar.

Of course, there is a kind of reading the Scripture for scholarship and for study-but not here. That studious kind of reading will not help you when it comes to matters that are divine! To receive any deep, inward profit from the Scripture, you must read as I have described. Plunge into the very depths of the words you read until revelation, like a sweet aroma, breaks out upon you. I am quite sure that if you will follow this course, little by little you will come to experience a very rich prayer that flows from your inward being.

In "praying the Scripture" you are seeking to find the Lord in what you are reading, in the very words themselves. In this path, therefore, the content of the Scripture is the focal point of your attention. Your purpose is to take everything from the passage that unveils the Lord to you.

Let us consider the second kind of prayer, which I mentioned earlier. The second kind of prayer, which I described as "beholding the Lord" or "waiting on the Lord," also makes use of the Scripture but it is not actually a time of reading. Remember, I am addressing you as if you were a new convert. Here is your second way to encounter Christ. And this second way to Christ, although you will be using the Scripture, has a purpose altogether different from "praying the Scripture." For that reason you should set aside a separate time when you can come just to wait upon Him.

What of this **second path**? In "beholding the Lord," you come to the Lord in a totally different way. Perhaps at this point, I need to share with you the greatest difficulty you will have in waiting upon the Lord. It has to do with your mind. The mind has a very strong tendency to stray away from the Lord. Therefore, as you come before your Lord to sit in His presence, beholding Him, make use of the Scripture to quiet your mind. The way to do this is really quite simple.

First, read a passage of Scripture. Once you sense the Lord's presence, the content of what you have read is no longer important. The Scripture has served its purpose. It has quieted your mind; it has brought you to Him. So that you can see this more clearly, let me describe the way in which you come to the Lord by the simple act of beholding Him and waiting upon Him.

You begin by setting aside a time to be with the Lord. When you do come to Him, come quietly. Turn your heart to the presence of God. How is this done? This, too, is quite simple. You turn to Him by faith. By faith you believe you have come into the presence of God. Next, while you are before the Lord, begin to read some portion of Scripture. As you read, pause. The pause should be quite gentle. You have paused so that you may set your mind on the Spirit. You have set your mind inwardly on Christ.

(Remember that you are not doing this to gain some understanding; rather, you are reading in order to turn your mind from outward things to the deep parts of your being. You are not there to learn or to read, but you are there to experience the presence of your Lord.)

While you are before the Lord, hold your heart in His presence. How? This you also do by faith. Yes, by faith you can hold your heart in the Lord's presence. Now, waiting before Him, turn all your attention toward your spirit. Do not allow your mind to wander. If your mind begins to wander, just turn your attention back again to the inward parts of your being. You will be free from wandering-free from any outward distractions-and you will be brought near to God.

The Lord is found only within your spirit, in the recesses of your being, in the Holy of Holies, this is where He dwells. The Lord once promised to come and make His home within you. (John14:23) He promised to meet those who worship Him and who do His will. The Lord will meet you in your spirit. (It was St. Augustine who once said that he had lost much time in the beginning of his Christian experience by trying to find the Lord outwardly rather than by turning inwardly.)

Once your heart has been turned inwardly to the Lord, you will have an impression of His presence. You will be able to notice His presence more acutely because your outer senses have now become very calm and quiet. Your attention is no longer on outward things or on the surface thoughts of your mind. Instead, sweetly and silently, your mind becomes occupied with what you have read and by that touch of His presence. Oh, it is not that you will think about what you have read, but you will feed upon what you have read. Out of a love for the Lord you exert your will to hold your mind quiet before Him. When you have come to this state, you must allow your mind rest.

How shall I describe what to do next?

In this very peaceful state, swallow what you have tasted. At first this may seem difficult, but perhaps I can show you just how simple it is. Have you not, at times, enjoyed the flavor of a very tasty food? But unless you were willing to swallow the food, you received no nourishment. It is the same with your soul. In this quiet, peaceful, and simple state, simply take in what is there as nourishment.

What about distractions?

Let us say your mind begins to wander. Once you have been deeply touched by the Lord's Spirit and are distracted, be diligent to bring your wandering mind back to the Lord. This is the easiest way in the world to overcome external distractions. When your mind has wandered, don't try to deal with it by changing what you are thinking. You see, if you pay attention to what you are thinking, you will only irritate your mind and stir it up more. Instead, withdraw from your mind! Keep turning within to the Lord's presence. By doing this you will win the war with your wandering mind and yet never directly engage in the battle!

Before we close this chapter, I would like to bring up one or two more points. Let us talk about divine revelation. In the past, your reading habit may have been to wander from one subject to another. But the best way to understand the mysteries that are hidden in the revelation of God and to enjoy them fully is to let them be imprinted deeply in your heart. How? You may do this by dwelling on that revelation just as long as it gives you a sense of the Lord. Do not be quick to go from one thought to another. Stay with what the Lord has revealed to you; stay there just as long as a sense of the Lord is also there.

As you begin this new venture you will, of course, discover that it is difficult to bring your mind under control. Why is this? Because through many years of habit your mind has acquired the ability to wander all over the world, just as it pleases. So what I speak of here is something that is to serve as a discipline to your mind. Be assured that as your soul becomes more accustomed to withdrawing to inward things, this process will become much easier. There are two reasons that you will find it easier each time to bring your mind under subjection to the Lord. One is that the mind, after much practice, will form a new habit of turning deep within. The second is that you have a gracious Lord

The Lord's chief desire is to reveal Himself to you. In order for Him to do that, He gives you abundant grace. The Lord gives you the experience of enjoying His presence He touches you, and His touch is so delightful that, more than ever, you are drawn inwardly to Him.

Consider thinking about God in the same manner in which your thoughts and emotions are for your dearest friend or mate. It is this very depth of relationship that the short and simple prayer lends itself quite well. As with those you hold dear, there is a constancy of awareness of them even when they are far from you. As you feel God in proximity in feeling, you will find yourself lost in affectionate thoughts of Him. And as your affections deepen, your concentration will become stronger and your time with Him much more satisfying!

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Chapter 3: Depths-Even for the Unlearned
{as told by Jeanne Guyon, edited by Bob Clarkson}

I would like to address this chapter to those of you who do not like to read or may not be able to read.* It is because you cannot or do not read that you may feel that you are in a weaker state than most Christians. You may feel you are unqualified to know the depths of your Lord. But in fact, you are really blessed. The blessing in not being able to read is that prayer may become your reading! Do you not know that the greatest book is Jesus Christ Himself? He is a Book who has been written on within and without. He will teach you all things. Read Him!

The first thing you must learn, dear friend, is that the kingdom of God is within you."(Luke 7:21)
Never look for the kingdom anywhere but there, within. Once you have realized that the kingdom of God is within you and can be found there, just come to the Lord. As you come, come with a deep sense of love. Come to Him very gently. Come to Him with a deep sense of worship. As you come to Him, humbly acknowledge that He is everything. Confess to Him that you are nothing.

Close your eyes to everything around you. Begin to open the inward eyes of your soul, turning those eyes to your spirit. In a word, give your full attention to the deep inward parts of your being. You need only believe that God dwells in you. This belief, and this belief alone, will bring you into His holy presence. Do not allow your mind to wander about but hold it in submission as much as possible.

Once you are in the Lord's presence, wait, be still and be quiet before Him. He speaks softly, but you will hear it!

And now, there in His presence, simply begin to repeat the Lord's Prayer. Begin with the word, "Father." As you do, let the full meaning of that word deeply touch your heart. Believe that the God who lives inside you is indeed so willing to be your Father. Pour out your heart to Him as a little child pours out his heart to his father. Never doubt your Lord's deep love for you. Never doubt His desire to hear you. Call on His name and remain before Him silently for a little while. Remain there, waiting to have His heart made known to you.

As you come to Him, come as a weak child, one who is all soiled and badly bruised—a child that has been hurt from falling again and again. Come to the Lord as one who has no strength of his own. Come to Him as one who has no power to cleanse himself. Humbly lay your pitiful condition before your Father's gaze. While you wait there before Him, occasionally utter a word of love to Him and a word of grief over your sin. Then simply wait for a while.

After waiting, you will sense when it is time to go on. When that moment comes, simply continue on in the Lord's Prayer. As you speak the words, "Thy Kingdom come," call upon your Lord, the King of Glory, to reign in you. Give yourself up to God. Give yourself to God so that He may do in your heart what you have so long been a failure in trying to do. Acknowledge before Him His right to rule over you.

At some point in this encounter with your Lord, you will feel deep within your spirit that it is time to simply remain silent before Him. When you have such a sense, do not move on to the next word—not as long as this sense continues with you. You see, it is the Lord Himself who is holding you to silence. When that sense of waiting before Him has passed, go on again to the next words of the Lord's Prayer.

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Praying these words, humble yourself before the Lord, earnestly asking Him to accomplish His whole will in you and through you. Surrender your heart into His hands. Surrender your freedom into His hands. Yield to your Lord His right to do with you as He pleases.

Do you know what God's will is? His will is that His children love Him. Therefore, when you pray, "Lord, Your will be done," you are actually asking the Lord to allow you to love Him. So begin to love Him! As you do, beseech Him to give you His love. All that I have just described to you will take place very sweetly, and it will take place very peacefully, throughout the entire prayer.

Let us look now at another possibility. There may come an occasion while you are with the Lord that you will wish to lay aside the Lord's Prayer. Perhaps you will wish to come to Him as your shepherd. Come to Him, then, as a sheep who is looking to his shepherd for his real food. As you come to Him, utter something like this: "Oh, loving Shepherd, You feed Your flock with Yourself, and You are really my daily bread." It is proper for you to bring all your needs to your Lord. But whatever you do, do it believing one thing; that is, that God is found within you.

I realize that you might be one of those who has a set pattern, or ritual, to your prayers. You should not burden yourself with the rituals you have learned. There is no need for using repetition or memorized prayers. Instead, simply repeat the Lord's Prayer as I have here described. It will produce abundant fruit in your life.

Dear child of God, all your concepts of what God is like really amount to nothing. Do not try to imagine what God is like. Instead, simply believe in His presence. Never try to imagine what God will do. There is no way God will ever fit into your concepts. What then shall you do? Seek to behold Jesus Christ by looking to Him in your inmost being, in your spirit.

Let us close this chapter by looking at a third way in which you may begin a deeper encounter with your Lord. You may come to the Lord by looking to Him as your Physician. Bring to Him all your sicknesses so that He can heal them. But as you come to Him, do not come with anxiety or restlessness. And as you come, pause from time to time. This period of waiting silently before the Lord will gradually increase! Furthermore, your own efforts at praying will grow less and less. Eventually there will come for you that moment when He will gain complete control, when you will continually yield to God's working within you.

As you can see, what has begun as something very simple will grow! It will grow to become a very real and vital relationship between you and the living God. When the presence of the Lord really becomes your experience, you will actually discover that you have gradually begun to love this silence and peaceful rest which come with His presence. There is a wonderful enjoyment of His presence. This wonderful enjoyment of His presence will now help introduce you to yet another level of prayer!

We will go on to this second level of prayer in the next chapter. It is a depth of prayer that can be experienced by all believers, the simple as well as the scholarly.