

2003

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Monty Lynn
lynnm@acu.edu

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ORA ET LABORA
THE PRACTICE OF PRAYERFUL TEACHING¹



Monty L. Lynn
Abilene Christian University

Abstract: Although prayer is a central spiritual discipline for Christians, few contemporary scholarly discussions have ventured into exploring the role of prayer in college teaching. This paper extends the conversation by proposing a model of prayerful teaching. Practical suggestions are offered by which an educator might apply the concepts.

INTRODUCTION

Given the fact that Christian teachers cannot do anything to advance the kingdom of God in their teaching environment apart from the abiding presence, guidance, and help of the Holy Spirit, it behooves us to repeatedly seek the face of Christ in prayer. (Chewning, 2001, p. 115)

What does it mean to teach prayerfully? Although prayer is a central spiritual discipline in Christianity, few scholarly discussions have ventured into the role of prayer in college teaching. This paper attempts to re-energize the conversation by proposing a model of prayerful teaching.

Our focus will largely avoid discussion of prayer in the co-curriculum—such as in chapel—as well as teaching that is primarily evangelistic or catechetical.² Although the biblical treatment of prayer and one's resultant theology of prayer has immense implications for this discussion, our approach will be to glean from ancient and modern Christian writings on prayer and education, and let the reader make theologically informed judgments about these eclectic gleanings.

WHAT IS PRAYERFUL TEACHING?

One familiar place to begin a quest for understanding prayer in higher education is to consider the debate over prayer in American public schools.

Although prayer seems front-and-center in this discussion, it largely misses the mark for defining prayerful teaching. As Dean (1989) writes: "Much of what is being recommended as a prayer appropriate for use in schools is little more than the perfunctory recitation of an exceedingly noncommittal form of words or a quiet moment in which one reflects on a topic of one's choice-on God, if that is what one prefers" (p. 48).

Quaker educator Parker Palmer (1983) has written, "We cannot settle for pious prayer as a preface to conventional education." "Instead," he asserts, "we must allow the power of love to transform the very knowledge we teach, the very methods we use to teach and learn it" (p. 10). Pazmiño (1992) concurs: "Christian educators...assume the need for a conscious dependence upon God and an interdependence with God so that education can change people's lives" (p. 26). What Palmer and Pazmiño are describing is a distinctive of Christian education. And while there are many expressions of Christian education, it is perhaps most purely Christian when it is prayerful since prayer opens one to communion and dependence in God. This is why Calian (1997) affirms, "The cultivating of prayer ought to be at the core of the church-related college's education and vision" (p. 178).

Prayers are not always said prayerfully, and prayer in class does not assure prayerful teaching. Prayerful teaching assumes a humble and appreciative approach to learning-humble because it recognizes human limitations, and appreciative because God is acknowledged as the source of the created world and the origin of the resources we have to grapple with it. Thus, fundamentally, *prayerful teaching is an approach to education whereby the learner, teacher, content, and teaching methods are informed by an on going dialogue with God.* Hodgson (1999) writes:

The problem is principally one of ignorance rather than illusion or false consciousness. Christianity, with its Hebraic as well as Hellenic roots, radicalizes the perception of what is wrong: there is a fall, a sinful turning away from the one true God to false gods, to idols, above all to the idol of the isolated, self-absorbed self. The remedy for this problem is not recollection but salvation, conversion, transformation. Education is not so much the drawing-forth of what the human subject already knows inwardly, but the drawing-out of the human subject from self-centeredness to God-centeredness or reality-centeredness. Christ and the Spirit play central roles in this process. (p. 48)

Prayerful teaching intentionally invites God into all aspects of learning. Rather than injecting subjectivism into a modernist canon, its target is the welcoming of divinity into learning.

CLARIFICATIONS

One might suggest that the act of teaching should not be any more prayerful in the life of a Christian than is cooking, conversing, or playing lacrosse—all of life is seamlessly prayerful when one approaches it with openness to the presence of God. Yet for many teachers, prayer in class seems like the entrance of a foreign element. This is especially true in the teaching of technical subjects—such as accounting, French, or mathematics—whose content is difficult to “make” Christian. Similarly, some students or settings may be inhospitable to prayer. Attempts to shoehorn prayer into a subject or group of students where it does not fit may actually *degrade* the meaningfulness of prayer, one might argue, transforming it into an irrelevant ritual. But prayerful teaching is about much more than a worded prayer in class. In its essence, it is the *antithesis* of an empty rite. It is closer to Jesus’ parable of the kingdom of heaven being like “yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Mt. 13.33). By placing a major emphasis on simply being quietly working yeast, one can expect to enrich those open to such a witness, even without vocal prayer in class. The bread just quietly rises. Prayerful teaching is worked out within the unique blend of each professor, subject, and class. Even when its expression is subtle, its effect may not be, even if it only transforms the teacher.

Some might object that prayerful teaching might verge on being academically dishonest. If it is the intent of the teacher to allow God to be active in a course of study, but the teacher does not publicly acknowledge this interest, doesn’t that constitute manipulation? The intent is not to impose an unwelcome ritual, quell opposing voices, or turn the “lectern into the pulpit” as Hughes (2002) appropriately warns. It is simply to invite God into the mind and heart and action of learning. If the professor alone is aware of the invitation, he or she should take extra pains to educate ethically.

For some, prayerful teaching may appear to fall into a shallow approach to faith-learning integration—a form of integration wherein the teacher’s attitude and the college’s ethos exude “a positive attitude toward liberal learning because in God’s creation every area of life and learning is related to the wisdom and power of God” (Holmes, 1975, p. 47). Integrationists often suggest that pietistic integration does not penetrate to the philosophical roots of a discipline. But a pietistic approach to faith integration is the optimal origin for integration because it embraces a professor’s entire person and work, subjecting all one is and does to the lordship of Christ. As extrapolated from the writings of John Wesley, the Christian life calls people to orthodoxy, orthokardia, and orthopraxis—the word of Scripture combined with a pure heart and just behavior (Clapper, 1997). Piety provides the personal commitment to examine deeply and comprehensively multiple levels of integra-

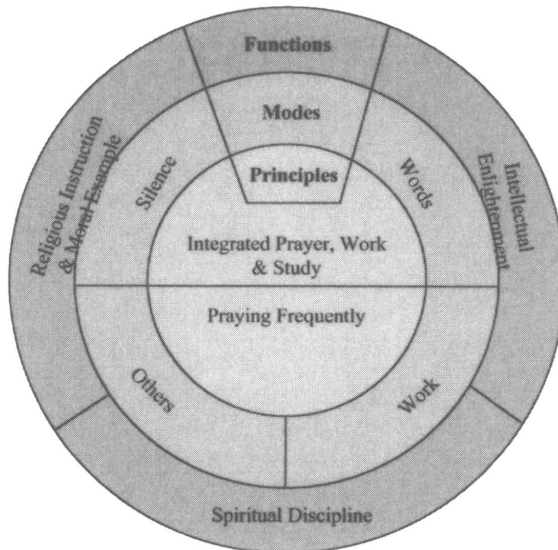
tion, including philosophical scaffolds, pedagogical methods, and the involvement of the student, teacher, and Spirit.

Finally, Jesus provides a warning that prayer can often be co-opted of its meaning when expressed in public for others to see (Matt. 6:5-6). It is quite possible for a prayerful teacher to never pray orally in class and for one who floods a course publicly with prayer to be meaningless. Prayerful teaching can be transformative without being public.

A MODEL OF PRAYERFUL TEACHING

Let's turn our attention to specific ways in which prayer can be infused in the life and work of a teacher. Figure 1 illustrates a model of prayerful teaching. The principles of prayerful teaching are depicted in the center—an integration of prayer, work, and frequent prayer. In the middle ring are the modes of prayer—in words, work, silence, and others. And in the outer ring are the functions of prayerful teaching that result—intellectual enlightenment, spiritual discipline, and religious instruction and moral example. We will begin in the center and work outward.

Figure 1: A Model of Prayerful Teaching



Principles of Prayerful Teaching

Many writers suggest that prayerful teaching cannot be found by elevating prayer to the top of a list of priorities. Moving professional reading or student mentoring down a notch in the schedule to make room for prayer is inadequate. Rather, we turn to two principles taught by Benedict of Nursia that provide a foundation for prayerful teaching and which themselves project wisdom. The first principle is for prayer to be apportioned from other activities, such as work and study, but be woven through all of life.³

In an effort to sum up the gospel in practical terms for a community of cenobitic Christians, Benedict of Nursia (480-547) wrote a Rule that became the basis for Benedictine and Cistercian communities, and later monastic Rules. Although Benedict wrote that “nothing should be preferred to the work of God,” by which he meant prayer, the *opus Dei*, Benedict suggested that a place for physical, spiritual, and intellectual activities should be preserved in the Christian life.⁴ It is *ora et labora*-a Benedictine motto developed in the 19th century meaning prayer *and* work, not prayer to the neglect of work, or work to the neglect of prayer.

Rather than segmenting life into sealed compartments, Benedict emphasizes three core activities-work, study, and prayer-which support one another. As Taylor (1989) has reflected on Benedict’s counsel: “Without prayer, study can become intellectually prideful. Without study, prayer can be uninformed. Without work, both can become removed from reality” (p. 38).⁵ One commentator on Benedict’s Rule illumines the ways in which work is complimented by prayer. de Waal (2001) writes:

Prayer and life cannot be separated one from the other; both are rooted and grounded in love. The love which we find in the Rule is never an abstraction. It is lived-out love, lived out in the context of our daily life and work, above all our daily contact with other people.... There is nothing sentimental in his attitude to what may be involved here. He is in fact describing life as most of us experience it: a ceaseless round of daily duties, cooking and then serving and then washing up; constant attention to the needs and claims of others, and all this probably in addition to the job for which we have been professionally trained.

St. Benedict is asking us to pray through all of this. Prayer undergirds and supports this life of activity. “Whenever you begin to do anything say a prayer” (Prol. 4). Meals begin and end with prayer. Routine duties are prefaced with prayer; the porter greets the guest or the visitor at the gate with a blessing. Material things are handled with as much love and reverence as if they were sacred vessels of the altar. All these short moments of prayer are moments of re-focusing. They are

moments to recall God's presence. St. Benedict's way to God does not live in any particular mystical experience, but in all the ordinariness of daily living. Prayer is a dimension of a life lived progressively for God. (pp. 103-104)

Daily, regular, moment-by-moment relationship with God through prayer assists the teacher in moving in this direction. But it will be sustained best by reserving a space for work and prayer, allowing each to meaningfully find expression in the other.

The second core principle is to pray frequently. Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray continually (Lk. 18:1), and the apostle Paul entreated Christians to pray often (Eph. 6.18; 1 Thes. 5.17) and to persevere in prayer (Col. 4:2; Rom. 12:12). Paul prayed constantly as well (2 Thes. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:3). The Psalmist (Ps. 113:3) entreated: "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised" suggesting praise be given at all times and places. On this basis, Benedict admonished monastic disciples to engage in private and communal prayers often.

Monastic prayer traditionally followed the Psalmist's exclamations: "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws" (Ps. 119:164). In the early church, prayer at various hours of the day carried specific meaning, leading Vermeiren (1999) to conclude about the Divine Hours: "Following the Lord's example, Benedict asks his monks to pray unceasingly, and make one single great prayer out of the whole of their lives: all their thoughts and actions are concerned with their relationship with God. Nevertheless, this unceasing prayer is focused on certain important moments of the day" (p. 93).

Prayer warrants a protected place in one's life and schedule if teaching is to become prayerful. Vest (1997) underscores the importance of reserving a time for participating in scheduled communal prayer:

Eventually, [regular periods of prayer]...create in us quite a different sense of the context in which we work, a new perspective on what is really important, and a fresh idea of what we are seeking to accomplish. They might change dramatically how we view our work, giving us among other things a sense both that our work matters to God and also that it is far less urgent than we thought. (pp. 95, 97)

Casey (1996b) makes a similar recommendation, that regular structure can be spiritually liberating and enriching. Like many other writers about prayer, Casey emphasizes the importance of creating a prayer practice that is sustainable, not ponderous:

I can sympathize with those who say it is not possible to do much about

prayer because daily events are too unpredictable. But I wonder if they are being completely honest with themselves. What may be lacking is not the opportunity to pray but the desire and will to pray-and that poses different problems. A routine of prayer has to be flexible if it is not to crack under the strain of reality. Structure does not have to be experienced as imposition. It can be liberating. It can enable us to insert into our life something we want included, without having to go through the drama of decision-making on each occasion.... By my calculation, the Lord's Prayer can be said quietly and reverently in about 30 seconds. It is hard to believe someone is so busy that a minute and a half cannot be found for prayer. Nor is this gift so meager as to be unacceptable to God. There are times in the lives of most of us when we can scarcely manage more than that. Even the smallness of our offering is eloquent. Like the widow's mite, it may be all we have (Mark 12:41-44). The gesture expresses our desire to give, and at the same time underlines our paucity of means. Moreover, prayer is prayer, no matter how limited in scope. It is a wedge that will, in time, open our heart wider to the divine reality. Its narrow edge allows it to penetrate more easily. (pp. 52-53)

Can regular daily prayer become a legalistic, meaningless rite? Of course. Can prayer be just another task in an already full schedule? Easily. And regular prayer can devolve into sentimental piety. But if the to do list is too full to include prayer, prayerful teaching will be snuffed out. Prayer in the midst of work re-centers us on God rather than on ourselves, and on priorities rather than urgencies. It opens us to an awareness of divine truth and functions as a witness and example to others.

Infrequent prayer often merely punctuates the day, much like a tent stake penetrating the soil but not altering its composition. But frequent prayer is more like a fertilizer stake, spreading nutrients by inviting an abiding awareness of God's presence into the core of the day. In sum, the practice of prayerful teaching benefits from the full engagement of both elements-prayer and teaching-and its frequency provides constant waves for dissolving the treatment of prayer and teaching as separate activities.

Modes of Prayerful Teaching

The second ring of the model suggests four modes of prayer for the prayerful teacher-prayer in words, work, others, and silence.⁶ In all of these, the counsel of Casey (1996b) is salient: "Better to start with a little and upgrade ever so slowly, than to begin boldly and find it impossible to maintain one's pace. The life of prayer is more a marathon than a sprint" (p. 53). Since this ring lends itself to practical examples, several expressions are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Examples of Prayerful Teaching

Prayer through Words¹

The traditional approach to prayer. One uses words-spoken or thought-to bring one's praise, confessions, and requests to God (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:1).

- An order of topics (e.g., ACTS-adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication)
- Pray for students by name (e.g., one day each week, in their seats in an empty classroom)
- Prayer calendar-daily individuals or causes
- Campus breviary-a collection of prayers written by faculty, staff, and/or students
- *Lectio divina*-a meditative approach to reading scripture and other works
- Prayer journal-a notebook into which students can write and read each others' prayer requests
- Prayer box-a receptacle into which students write their confidential prayer requests for the professor
- Prayer cues-the naming and/or placing of objects, which remind one to pray (e.g., the wind, a photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr., a posted Scripture, a crucifix, fasting, etc.)
- Oral or silent prayer in class
- Written class prayers-distributed by the teacher to students (e.g., on book-marks, exams, syllabi, etc.)
- Prayer as part of a student writing assignment

Prayer through Work

Prayer expressed within one's labor. Accompanied by a constant awareness of God's presence, one's work becomes an offering to God (Col. 3:23; Eph. 6:5-9).

- A constant awareness of God's presence and conversation with Him
- A desire for consistency in life and prayer, thus one listens to God's call while teaching
- Work as an offering to God

Prayer through Service to Others

Seeing Christ in others-an awareness that one's students are Jesus incarnate (Mt. 25:40).

- Exemplars: Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Madeleine Delbr el

Prayer through Silence

Prayer is not exclusively cognitive-prayer in silence is more than simply not talking or thinking (Rom. 8:26b-27).

- Centering prayer
 - Silence in class
 - Prayer retreats or *poustinia*
-

Prayer through Words. The traditional approach to prayer is prayer through words. Also called “concentrative” prayer, in this mode one uses words-spoken and thought-to bring praise, confession, and supplication to God. This is perhaps the most common approach to integrating prayer in teaching too. Worded prayers may be verbalized publicly with students, spontaneously worded while walking to class, or offered with colleagues or elsewhere.

Some teachers pray for their students by name on a given day or over time. Some sit in each student’s seat and pray for each by name when the classroom is vacated. Privately, a teacher might pray for roommate peace and adjustment to college life, exams-not taken too seriously or lightly, clarity about future careers and vocational calling, thankfulness for campus ministries, homesickness, moral purity, financial stresses, the families of international students, divorcing parents, and so forth. You might collect confidential prayer requests from students as well. These can be collected in a prayer box or passed around in class, via e-mail, or other means.

Recorded prayers in biblical Scripture and biblical instruction on prayer suggest that there are many things one can bring to God in prayer-praise, requests, intercession for others, confession, lament. In an attempt to balance these and avoid self-centered prayer, many writers have recommended a particular order of prayer topics within a prayer, across a day, or throughout a month. Approaches like the “ACTS” approach, for example, can be used to focus one’s prayer regarding teaching on adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

To approach prayer systematically and communally, some campuses have created prayer calendars. An employee, student, department, or cause may be listed as the topic for prayer each day. Grace College and Seminary publishes such a guide on their campus (Grace College and Seminary, 2004). Or, one can divide the day topically. William Law, who founded a school for orphans in 17th century England, designated his personal prayer times and topics as follows:

Morning prayer: Praise and thanksgiving
 9:00 am: Humility
 Noon: Universal love and intercession
 3:00 pm: Conforming to God’s will
 Evening prayer: Self-examination and confession
 (Paulsell, 1993, p. 45)

Another structured approach to systematic prayer is creating or adopting a *breviary* or prayer book. The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* has been used since the reformation, but many similar devotional guides and collec-

tions of prayers are available (e.g., Job and Shawchuck, 1990). Some teachers have written and collected prayers for teachers and students (e.g., Farry, 1997; Murphy, 1979; Verhalen, 1998) while others have written a prayer or blessing for a class (e.g., for Rider University's education graduates [Prayers for College Students, 2004] and Abilene Christian University's business graduates [Senior Blessing, 2004]) or published prayers from their students, faculty, and staff, such as one compiled at the University of Notre Dame and St. Mary's University (McNally and Storey, 1975).

Lectio divina is an ancient practice of meditating on Scripture or other writings (cf. Casey, 1996a; Magrassi, 1998; Pennington, 1998). It is a contemplative way of interacting and conversing with a text, rather than simply reading through it. Scripture perhaps has been most commonly used in *lectio*, but other materials (e.g., poems, hymns, literature) can be used as well.

Writing down prayers and spiritual reflections has long been helpful in reminding God's people of his acts and love. Keeping a spiritual journal with a group of students may help the group become more aware and observant of the spiritual nature of life, and it shows the development of perspective and events over a spiritual journey. A spiritual journal might be patterned after Scriptures—that is, it could contain narrative, poetry, dreams, letters, history, prayers, sermons, testimony, and other genres.

On the campus of Biola University, Coe (2002) integrated worded prayer in his course assignments to nurture spiritual development among students. Two examples from his course on "Perspectives on Human Nature" are:

[1] Ask God and your soul the degree to which your Christian life, your pursuit of the ministry, being a professional, and your trek through seminary and graduate school relates to what Horney calls the False Idealized Self and its search for glory.

[2] Practice *Lectio Divina* in the presence of God and your soul regarding the theme of "Belonging to God" (Rom. 14:7-8: "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"). (pp. 106-107)

These are only a sampling of ways in which worded prayer can leaven a professor's and student's academic pursuits. The other three approaches to prayer—prayer through work, service to others, and silence—may be less familiar than worded prayer, but are rich soils to cultivate.

Prayer through Work. In Rahner's (1960) prayer titled "God of My Daily Routine," the noted Swiss theology professor expressed his desire for the hectic and mundane busyness of life to become prayer in itself:

My soul has become a huge warehouse where day after day the trucks unload their crates without any plan or discrimination, to be piled helter-skelter in every available corner and cranny, until it is crammed full from top to bottom with the trite, the commonplace, the insignificant, the routine....I now see clearly that, if there is any path at all on which I can approach you, it must lead through the middle of my ordinary daily life....I must learn to have both "everyday" and Your day the same exercise. In devoting myself to the works of the world, I must learn to give myself to You, to possess You, the One and Only Thing in everything. ...in You, all that has been scattered is re-united....in Your Love all the diffusion of the day's chores comes home again to the evening of Your unity, which is eternal life. (pp. 46, 48, 51, 52)

Rahner eloquently expresses his desire to lay his everyday activities before God. If nature (Ps. 148) can praise God without words, cannot people? But how is this accomplished?

There are several ways in which work-and specifically teaching-can become a prayer. Three, each of which has its advocates and exemplars, are: (a) developing a constant awareness of God's presence in one's work; (b) recognizing that life must be consistent with prayer to give glory to God so one listens to God's call while teaching; and (c) offering the best of one's ability as an offering to God. In each of these, the overlay of work and prayer is quite different. In practicing the presence of God, work potentially can be a distraction from prayer, but one may be strengthened to do difficult and at times distasteful tasks because of an awareness of God's presence. In hearing God's moment-by-moment call, faith forms one's responses and actions, and thus one's work. In offering work as prayer, work becomes sanctified and the quality and purpose of one's work takes on meaning. We'll briefly explore each of these.

Nicholas Herman of Lorraine (1611-1691), or Brother Lawrence (1989) as he is more commonly known, was a 17th century lay brother who was assigned to work in the kitchen of a French Carmelite monastery. Although he was not formally a teacher, he is an archetype of prayerful work relevant to higher education. Over a period of 10 years, Brother Lawrence experienced two changes in his prayer life: He focused increasingly on God's love and less often on his faults and challenges at work, and he practiced a constant awareness of God's presence and conversed with Him, not just the times of liturgical prayer. Steindl-Rast (1984) provides a more recent testament and expansion of this concept:

If we call it mindfulness or wholehearted living, it is easier to recognize prayer as an attitude that should characterize all our activities. The more we come alive and awake, the more everything we do becomes prayer.

Eventually, even our prayers will become prayer. Some people find it easier to eat and drink prayerfully-mindfully-than to say their prayers prayerfully.... Does it seem easier to recite a Psalm with recollection than to eat or drink or walk or hug with that same wonderment and concentration? It may well be the other way around. For some of us, saying prayers wholeheartedly may be the crowning achievement after we have learned to make every other activity prayer. (p. 48)

One contribution that Brother Lawrence and Steindl-Rast illustrate is that with God's help and a certain amount of discipline (or surrender), one can learn to work with a vibrant awareness of God's presence. Brother Lawrence admits that this constant awareness took years to cultivate. Eventually, it allowed him to do distasteful tasks without emotional upheaval. Although prayer and work were fused for Brother Lawrence, his focus is more on prayer filling time and actions at work than on work itself.

A second, slightly different approach to prayer through work is a recognition that life must be consistent with prayer to give glory to God; thus, one listens to God's call while teaching. Taylor (1989) describes this approach to prayerful work from Benedict's perspective:

Prayer was not an activity isolated from other activities. Rather, the life of a monk was to be his prayer. Benedict was far less concerned about performance during periods of prayer than about the quality of daily life.... This should come as good news to those who have often felt that, in order to "really seek God," one must spend hours daily in terribly advanced forms of prayer. It is enough to hear the Word of God and keep it in everything we do throughout the day. Therefore, when one is dissatisfied in one's prayer life, the Benedictine method would be to look at one's life and deal with what is dissatisfactory there rather than to look for some new, better way to pray. Our prayer is a mirror of our life. (pp. 33-34)

In this balance of daily activity, one is called to constantly "listen," which is Benedict's first word in his Rule. The call that Benedict writes about is not a one-time call, but a daily, moment-by-moment call: "To listen closely, with every fibre of our being, at every moment of the day, is one of the most difficult things in the world, and yet it is essential if we mean to find the God whom we are seeking" (de Waal, 2001, p. 43).

Vest (1997) underscores the point: "A call from God is not primarily a call to do something. Instead, it is to be a faithful partner and friend, and from that identity, vocation naturally emerges" (p. 40). This sense of call is different from a one-time call to the teaching profession or the call to profess

Christ Jesus as savior. It is a call that can be heard as clearly in moments of work as in prayer and study. Daily, regular relationship with God through prayer assists the teacher in moving in this direction.

Perhaps the most direct and simple equation of prayer through work is the third view of work itself as an offering to God. Colossians 3:23 is often invoked: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Likewise, Ephesians 6:5-9 says:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

An older witness to this idea is plain to see in Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working, nor playing, nor knowledge, nor wisdom."

Taylor focuses the importance of motivation and purpose in the classroom (1989): "One is not to engage in study in order to become a good student-one is to do so in order to grow in God's grace.... With this purpose, the distinction between study and prayer becomes blurred" (pp. 39-40). Thus, the quality of one's work and one's diligence in work may become an offering to God, a prayer in itself. This approach can be manipulated to elevate work above other life activities, or justify the product of one's work without regard to the methods or costs used to create a product. But the Benedictine principle of integrated balance should be recalled-"excellence" in life and work does not mean excelling in work to the exclusion of study and prayer. Rather, excellence is work and study balanced and infused by prayer.

Prayer through Service to Others. Seeing God in others creates a visible manifestation of prayerful teaching. It makes one aware that students and colleagues are Jesus incarnate: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt. 25:40). This is often a type of prayer practiced by those working with the poor, such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement.

This approach is evident in Mother Teresa's daily prayer, "Jesus, My Patient." A modified prayer could be prayed about one's students:

Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of your sick, and, whilst nursing them, minister unto you.

Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you, and say:

“Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.”

Lord, give me this seeing faith, then my work will never be monotonous.

I will ever find joy in humouring the fancies and gratifying the wishes of all poor sufferers.

O beloved sick, how doubly dear you are to me, when you personify Christ; and what a privilege is mine to be allowed to tend you.

Sweetest Lord, make me appreciative of the dignity of my high vocation, and its many responsibilities. Never permit me to disgrace it by giving way to coldness, unkindness, or impatience.

And O God, while you are Jesus, my patient, deign also to be to me a patient Jesus, bearing with my faults, looking only to my intention, which is to love and serve you in the person of each of your sick.

Lord, increase my faith, bless my efforts and work, now and for evermore.

Amen.

(Muggeridge, 1971, pp. 74-75)

Although expressed in words, Mother Teresa expressed a desire to see rather than to verbalize and to act as a result of seeing. As a Catholic laywomen working amongst the French atheistic working class, Madeleine Delbr el (2000) reflected a similar perspective:

For us, the whole world is like a face-to-face meeting with the one whom we cannot escape.

We encounter his living casually right there on the busy street corners.

We encounter his imprint on the earth.

We encounter his providence in the laws of science.

We encounter Christ in all these “little ones who are his own”: the ones who suffer in body, the ones who are bored, the ones who are troubled, the ones who are in need.

We encounter Christ rejected, in the sin that wears a thousand faces. (p. 55)

Mother Teresa’s and Madeleine Delbr el’s prayers are reminiscent of Jesus’ Matthew 25 parable of people who cared for a disguised Christ:

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?”

When did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you?"

Then the King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me." (verses 37-40)

It is not difficult to imagine these conditions as symbolically, if not literally, characterizing students-destitute, in need of life, lonely, and imprisoned. How does one come to see students as Jesus? For most, only after intentionally and frequently praying for eyes to see is this vision sustained. This avenue of prayer reminds us that prayer is not a solitary activity, but it is reflected in right actions too, actions that take us beyond ourselves. Prayerful teaching does not end in quiet meditation. To quote Delbr el (2000): "We find that prayer is action and action is prayer. It seems to us that truly loving action is filled with light" (p. 57).

Prayer through Silence. The first word in the prologue to the Rule of Benedict is "Listen!" As used here, listening means deeply considering events, acts, nature, students, and the world around us, and obeying Christ's lead. Many Western Christians view prayer as an exercise of the intellect; praying without words and concepts seems foreign. But prayer is not simply a matter of thinking, a matter of the mind. It is a communion of the heart, which can occur in deep ways in silence.

There is more to silent prayer than the absence of words. Keating (1992, 1994) mentions eight varieties of contemplative prayer, including "centering prayer" which focuses on receiving rather than concentrating, on submitting to God's presence instead of concentrating on a biblical text or idea:

The primary function of the sacred word is not to push thoughts away or to thin them out. It is rather to express our intention to love God, to be in God's presence, and to submit to the Spirit's action during the time of prayer.... All methods that lead to contemplation are more or less aimed at bypassing the thinking process. The reason is that our thinking process tends to reinforce our addictive process-our frenzy to "get something" from the outer world to fuel our compulsions or to mask our pain. If we can just rest on a regular basis for twenty to thirty minutes without thinking, we begin to see that we are not our thoughts. (Keating, 1994, pp. 68-69)

Romans 8:26b-27 says: "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." Prayer in silence is enjoined by Habakkuk's decree that "the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (2:20), but just as much by the Psalmist's exclamation, "Better is one

day in your courts, than a thousand elsewhere” (84:10).

Although Quaker and Catholic theologies differ immensely, both offer rich traditions of prayer in silence. Three works that provide a Quaker interpretation of silent prayer include Loring (1997), Cooper (1990), and Palmer (1983); Palmer’s is explicitly directed toward education. Both traditions support the idea of prayer retreats, or *poustinia*, where one spends a few hours to several days in prayer, silent or verbalized (cf. de Hueck Doherty, 1975). Prayer without words may be unfamiliar and it may take some practice before it feels natural. But it is a rich path for communing with God in ways that can bless the teacher to slow down and be healed by God’s presence and love and in turn allow that love to radiate beyond oneself.

Functions of Prayerful Teaching

Although conversation about prayer in academic teaching is largely silent today, it was not so among patristic and medieval educators. Medieval epistemologies and pedagogies differ from many of those in vogue today, and it is intellectually precarious to merge views on knowledge, divine revelation, and spiritual formation from across the centuries without acknowledging the diverse contexts of each era in which the views were forged. Considering the expanse of historical thought, however, provides a baseline against which we can compare the present, and it stimulates new thoughts.

Lynn’s (2004) survey of biblical, patristic, medieval, and modern writings on prayer in higher education suggests that there are three recurring functions of prayer in teaching: intellectual enlightenment; spiritual discipline; and religious instruction, witness, and example. These functions constitute the outer ring of the prayerful teaching model (Figure 1).

Prayer as intellectual enlightenment affirms God as the source of true enlightenment, unlocking understanding and guiding toward higher wisdom. Augustine, Bonaventure, and Ignatius reflect this view and emphasize that learning is born from divinely aided reflection on personal thought and experience. Writers who promote this view do not abandon the contribution of reason and study to knowledge when paired with faith, but view prayer as an invitation to God to illuminate what is dim and blurred in human sight.

Although knowledge has ethical implications, prayer as the conduit for divine illumination seems to deal mostly with matters of the mind. A second function of prayer-as spiritual discipline-deals more with the heart. Contemporary educators such as Parker Palmer and John Coe suggest that prayer also serves as a spiritual discipline, humbling prideful scholars and emphasizing the teaching of compassionate knowledge (Coe, 2000; Palmer, 1983). In this function, prayer humbles prideful scholars, fashions compassionate and righteous purposes for study, boosts the will of one to learn, and buoys the

tired and challenged student and scholar.

The third function of prayer in higher education is to impart religious instruction and moral example. This function was championed by early Jesuits in their formative pedagogical document *Ratio Studiorum* and by John Baptist de la Salle, an 18th-century French education reformer who emphasized piety, religious deference, and moral example as complements to academic learning (de la Salle, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2002).

The subtlety of distinctions among these three functions in prayerful teaching may indicate they are more related than separate. But if it does not distort the case too much, one might say that intellectual enlightenment extends content, spiritual discipline transforms method and purpose, and religious instruction and moral example parallels and compliments knowledge with spiritual truths.

CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions may be drawn from this study of prayerful teaching?

First, two Benedictine principles provide a foundation for a healthy prayer life: a balance of mutually supporting activities—prayer, work, and scripture—and prayer offered frequently and regularly. Second, prayer can be infused in teaching through a rich variety of modes: through words, work, service to others, and silence. Third, from the ancient world to today, prayer can function in teaching as a conduit for intellectual enlightenment, an expression of spiritual discipline, and an opportunity for religious instruction and moral example.

Prayerful teaching can be expressed in several ways. Each teacher must seek his or her own rhythm in the task of making their prayer life and classroom obtain richness and breadth. But can a regular, balanced and integrated approach to prayerful teaching transform “the very knowledge we teach, the very methods we use to teach and learn it,” suggested by Palmer (1983, p. 10)? I believe it can, but not by our own might. If prayerful teaching conveys one idea, it is that Christian educators depend upon God to learn to see and live as Christ. “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mt. 19:26b). As educator Martin Luther wrote (1909):

I call upon You:
 I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you;
 I shall teach the people.
 I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon Your Word.
 Use me as Your instrument—but do not forsake me,
 for if ever I should be on my own,
 I would easily wreck it all.
 (band 43, p. 513)

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¹Although responsibility for ideas expressed in this paper remain mine, I benefited enormously from the critique and encouragement of several individuals, including John Kelly of St. Benedict's Farm, Mary Forman, OSB of St. John's Seminary and the Monastery of St. Gertrude, and David Wray of Abilene Christian University.

²The educational philosophy of many 19th-century American universities counterbalanced curricular and co-curricular activities: The classroom trained the mind, and the co-curriculum boosted the student's social and spiritual development. Until about 1900, many universities-including state-supported schools-required students to attend chapel, evening or morning prayers, and/or Sunday sermons. Many observers and participants debated whether required religious services contributed to the spiritual growth of students and faculty.

³Benedict's integrated balance also applies to the structure, practice, and ethos of community life-indeed its intended application was communal more than individual. Thus, applications of these concepts may also be made of the schedule and life of an entire academic community. Although not developed here, Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual exercises, his learning model of experience, reflection, judgment, and action, provides an alternative prayerful core (Kolvenback, 1993).

⁴Other monastic Rules and practices placed a heavier emphasis on one of the three partitions of a monk's day. For the Dominicans, study was emphasized (Thimmesch, 1992); for the community at Cluny-a monastic reform movement launched in 910-public liturgy was preeminent (Kardong, 2001). Benedict did not coin the idea of moderation, but it deeply seasons primitive Benedictine life.

⁵Benedict used "prayer" to mean both private prayer and communal prayer scheduled at set times throughout the day. "Work" referred to the various manual labor jobs that had to be completed for the monastery to be self-sustaining. "Study" was commonly reading, contemplating, memorizing, and meditating (lectio divina) upon biblical and patristic texts. While scriptural study will not be explored here, it is impossible to imagine teaching being prayerful without the leavening of Scripture in the life of a teacher (Ps. 119:99).

⁶These four approaches mirror three of Foster's (1998) six types of spirituality: Prayer in word is evangelical; prayer in silence is contemplative; and prayer in work and service to others is incarnational. Foster's three other spiritualities are: charismatic, holiness, and social justice. While not explored here, these three types of spirituality are likely manifest in the outcome of prayerful teaching. Because of a teacher's relationship with God, the content one chooses to teach might be influenced by a Christian call to social justice. Likewise, the methods a teacher uses might be modified through holiness and charismatic perspectives, which both emphasize life changes that occur out of a desire to live in concert with God's Spirit.

AUTHOR

Monty Lynn, Ph.D., Brigham Young University, is Professor of Management at Abilene Christian University.



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