

PRAYING TWICE

He who sings prays twice
Attributed to Augustine

When you sing you pray twice
Johnny Cash

I wish I could sing, but that's a spiritual gift that I did not receive; however, that does not stop me from trying. Over the years I practiced prayer in many different ways. About twenty years ago, I tried something new and it has made all the difference in my prayer life. I decided to take an hour walk every morning. I would talk with God, and I would sing my favorite hymn, which is, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." As time went on I added hymns that expressed the Christian year, and so I added the following Hymns:

Advent: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus
Christmas: Hark the Herald Angels sing
Epiphany: Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies
Lent: Come Sinners to the Gospel Feast
Easter: Christ the Lord is Risen Today
Pentecost: Spirit of Faith Come Down
Kingdomtide: Rejoice, the Lord is King

I was surprised to discover that I could memorize 8 hymns. Then more hymns came to me one at a time, and soon I had memorized another 22 hymns, for a total of 30 hymns in English.

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
Amazing Grace
Just as I Am Without one Plea
O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
Ask Ye What Great Thing I Know
Depth of Mercy, Can There Be?
Love Divine, all Loves Excelling
O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done?
Am I a Soldier of the Cross
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
Take My Life, and Let It Be

I Want a Principle Within
My Jesus I Love Thee
Alas and Did My Savior Bleed
A Charge to Keep I Have
Marvelous Grace of Our Loving Lord
Ye Servants of God
Crown Him with Many Crowns
Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone
Blest be the Tie that Binds
Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing
More Love to Thee

That wasn't the end of it. Iban hymns started to make their way into my head. The following I have memorized without any difficulty:

Apai Kami di Serega
Pugi Tuhan ke Berekat
Brei Mulia ka Apai

Leboh meda Regang Nuan
Isa Kaseh ka Aku
Beribu Dilah Belagu

I saw my singing as my way of praying. The more hymns I memorized and sang, the more I felt that I was doing my part in prayer. I was praising and thanking God for all that He has done, The hymns say it all and give me the language of prayer. When I was in University, I tried to memorize Scripture. I managed to memorize two verses that meant a great deal to me. They are John 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. These two verses of Scripture promised that God loved me, and that he intended to transform me. Through these two simple verses of Scripture, God was speaking to me and answering all my prayers. About the same time that I was memorizing and singing hymns, new verses jumped out at me from the New Testament. They came in the following sequence. As I memorized one, the next one appeared to me, and I began to memorize it. Below are Scriptures that I have memorized, and I consider them all to be God's part in prayer.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

John 3:16

Ephesians 2:8-10

Romans 12:1-2

John 11:34-35

Matthew 18:19-20

Acts 1:8

Revelation 21:22-23

Revelation 21:24-25

Revelation 22:5

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:3

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Leviticus 19:18

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Leviticus 19:2

Micah 6:8

Amos 5:24

Isaiah 49:6

Jeremiah 31:34

After I memorized the New Testament verses, I read that Martin Luther suggested that we read the Bible backwards. That's what I was doing by memorizing New Testament verses first. After I did this, Old Testament verses began to pop into my mind. I've listed them above, next to the New Testament verses.

As I memorized the hymns I sang to God, and in His words of Scripture, I began to see a theme. That theme was Jesus Christ as the Light of the world. It began as an act of divine creation and it will end with a pure light that will overcome all darkness. A hymn, written by Kathleen Thomerson, penetrated my mind and became my prayer, which God promises to answer:

I want to walk as a child of the light;
I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world;
The star of my life is Jesus

In him there is no darkness at all;
The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God.
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.