

What God Gives You in Prayer

The most limiting misconception about prayer is that its secret lies in the words we sandwich between “Dear God” and “Amen.” God has so much more to give us than just those things we know to ask Him for. He wants to give us Himself. And what does He want in return? Everything. Prayer is not an activity, but a relationship.

Teri bought an abstract painting from a junk store in California for \$5. Ten years later, she discovered that the “junk” she purchased was likely an original Jackson Pollock painting and could be worth more than \$10 million. Let’s project our imaginations into the future and suppose that Teri has been paid \$10 million for the painting that cost her \$5. Let’s imagine that she is sitting in the palatial mansion the money has afforded her and that she is dripping in jewels and draped in fine designer clothing, none of which she could have afforded previously. Imagine that I ask her, “What did that Jackson Pollock painting cost you?” How do you think she would answer that question? I think she would say, “Cost me? It cost me nothing. It gained me \$10 million and afforded me everything I own.” When the profit far outweighs the investment, we call it gain. The initial cost is swallowed up in the benefit it obtains, and it shows up on the “profit” side of the balance sheet.

Jesus challenged those who would be His disciples first to count the cost. “For who among you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost to see whether he has resources to complete it? Otherwise, perhaps, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to complete it, all who see it will begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to complete it’” (Luke 14:28-30). He made it clear that to be His disciple would cost a person everything. But Jesus also challenged those who sought to be His disciples to count the reward. After you

count the cost, then count the reward. "If you remain in My word, then you are truly My disciples. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:31-32). When the benefit far outweighs the cost, we call it gain.

"But what things were gain to me, I have counted these things to be loss for the sake of Christ. Yes, certainly, I count everything as loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have forfeited the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God on the basis of faith, to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Phil. 3:7-10)

Do you see what Paul is saying? He said that he gave up everything he valued because when he compared it to "the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord," everything he valued was rubbish. It was nothing. It was less than nothing. The worth of everything he valued was swallowed up in the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. If we could ask Paul, "What did radical discipleship cost you?" I think Paul would answer, "Cost me? It cost me nothing and gained me everything."

The call is radical. His call to you is that you surrender everything to be His disciple. And when you have emptied yourself of everything you have, He will fill you with everything He has. What does Jesus have to give you? "All that the Father has is Mine" (John 16:15). Once you have counted the cost, then count the reward.

Jennifer Kennedy Dean is an author, speaker, conference leader and executive director of the Praying Life Foundation. You may visit her online at .