

CONVERSATIONS

ON

PRAYER,

INTENDED

TO RENDER THAT IMPORTANT DUTY
A REASONABLE SERVICE

For Young Children.

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CONVERSATION I.

Why we must pray to God.



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

Mother. My dear Mary, come here, I want to talk with you now we are alone.

Daughter. Yes, mother, I love to talk with you; what shall we talk about?

M. Kiss me, my dear, and I will tell you.

D. There, mother, I give you two kisses. Now tell me.

M. Why, my child, now you are growing a bigger girl, and know what I mean when I talk with you, I wish you to learn to pray to God.

D. To pray, mother? what, is that as my father does when we kneel down?

M. Yes. When we kneel down, your father prays. I wish you to do so when you are alone.

D. What is it to pray, mother?

M. To pray, my dear, is to ask God for good things.

D. O, I always wish to have good things. I often ask you for good things, you know. When I come home from school, and am hungry, do not I ask you for something to eat?

M. Yes, my dear; and I give you such good things as I can, when you ask me. Now I wish you to ask God for good things.

D. Cannot I ask you, mother? You always used to give them to me, if you thought it was right.

M. Yes; but there are some good things that I cannot give you. When you are sick, I cannot take away your pain. And though I wish you to be always good, I cannot make you so.

D. I should like to be always good, and love you, and talk as we do now. And I should like to be always well. I do not like my head to ache.

M. Then you must ask God to keep you well, and make you always good.

D. God! mother, who is God?

M. God, is he that made the sun and moon to give us light, and the fields and trees to give us food. And he made you.

D. Did he make me? And did he make you, and my father, and my brothers and sisters.

M. Yes, my dear. And he takes care of us, by night, when we are asleep; and by day, when we go about. And he keeps us alive and well.

D. But, mother, I never see God, nor hear him speak.

M. True, my dear, there are many things that you do not see and hear, and yet you could not do without them. So you do not see and hear God, but he always takes care of us, and gives us all the good things that we have. That is the reason why I wish you to pray to him.

D. But why should I pray to God? cannot I pray to you?

M. You should ask me for what I can give you. But, you know, I told you I could not always make you good, nor keep you always well. None can do that but God.

D. And will God keep me always well, if I ask him.

M. I am not sure of that: he will if it be right. But, if you pray to him, he will make you good, and love you, and make good people love you.

D. Then, I will pray to him now; shall I, mother?

M. Yes, my dear; come, then, kneel down as your father does, and pray.

D. But, mother, I do not know what to say.

M. Why, what do you wish God to do for you?

D. To keep me well, and make me good.

M. Now, then, I will tell you. You must say as I say:

O Lord—thou hast made—all things ;
—and thou hast made me—I pray thee

—to take care—of me,—to keep me from harm,—to make me—a good child;—that I may love—what is good,—and always hate—what is wrong;—and that I may serve thee—as long as I live,—for Jesus Christ's sake.—Amen.

D. Is that all, mother? I do love to pray.

M. I hope you will, my dear child; but now you must try to keep out of harm, and to be good.

D. But, mother, I shall forget; will you tell me again?

M. Yes, my dear; and when you grow older, you must pray to God out of your own heart.

CONVERSATION II.

God will mind us if we pray to him.



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

D. Do you know, mother, I have been thinking about something.

M. Very likely, my child; what did you think about?

D. I wish you would guess;—something good;—what I love to talk with you about.

M. I suppose you mean about your prayer.

D. O, how soon you find it out! What a deal you do know, mother!

M. Why, my dear Mary, I am older than you, and have learned more; or else I should not be able to teach you good things.

D. I wish you would tell me, how you know so much about something.

M. What do you mean? I will tell you, if I can, and if it be right.

D. Why, about God. I dare say it is so, because you say so; but I cannot find out, how you know that God made all things, and made me.

M. I shall be very glad to tell you this. Do you know what book this is?

D. O, yes, mother; it is the Bible.

M. You are right; and the Bible is the word of God: it tells us what God has said, and what he has done.

D. But God did not make that book?

M. Not as you mean: God put into the minds of good men what to write, and others take it from what they wrote. Now what I know about God, and his making you, is from the Bible.

D. What a nice book that must be. I shall be glad when I am big enough to read in it. And does the Bible tell about God taking care of every-body?

M. Yes, my dear—of all men, and women, and children in the world, and of every thing.

D. Then, mother, what a great deal God must have to do?

M. Yes, my child, more than you or I can think.

D. Then, do you think he will mind what such a little girl as I want?

M. O, yes, to be sure he will. He must always think of you, and take care of you: else you could not be alive.

D. Well, but will he mind what I say, when I pray to him?

M. Yes, indeed he will: he has told us in the Bible, that we ought to pray to him; and he would not tell us to do so, if he did not mind. He says too, in the Bible; "Ask, and it shall be given;" and so it will, if what we ask be good for us.

D. But, mother, I am only a little child!

M. True, but God loves little children: he has said, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."—To seek God, means to pray to him.

D. O, to seek God is to pray to him? I shall mind and think of that.

M. That is one way of seeking God. Besides, he is our heavenly Father; and the Bible says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Though you are a little child, your father and I do not refuse you good things, when you ask.

D. No, mother—only if you are busy—

M. But God is never too busy; because he can do every thing, and he knows every thing.

D. I wish I knew, if he ever did mind what children prayed to him for?

M. Well, I can tell you he has done so. The Bible tells us about Josiah, that while he was yet young, he began to seek after God; and so God blessed him, and made him good; and it tells us of some others. Some day, I will lend you a book about children that prayed, and how good God was to them.

D. O, that must be a nice book. I shall be so glad. It is very good of the great God to mind little children.

M. Yes, he is very good to us indeed.

D. And may I pray to him always? Is he never too busy?

M. You may pray to him at any time when it is in your heart.

D. Then I will pray to him now, only you must tell me what to say. And, mother, I wish you would put in my prayer, that I love him, because he minds little children, when they pray.

M. Very well, I will :

O Lord—thou hast made—all things;—
and thou hast made me,—and dost keep
me alive. Thou hast told us to pray.—
I love thee,—because thou dost mind,—
when children pray to thee. Do thou—
take care of me—Keep me from harm,
Make me a good child,—that I may love
what is good,—and hate what is wrong ;
and that I may serve—and please thee,—
as long as I live,—for Jesus Christ's sake.
—Amen.

CONVERSATION III.

*Why we say, "For Jesus Christ's sake,"
when we pray.*



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

M. Mary, can you almost say your prayer by yourself?

D. Yes, mother: I am not quite sure that I say it right, but I think I do.

M. You are a good child, to try to get it into your mind; but do you know what all of it means?

D. Yes, I think I do; I am almost sure.

M. I fear you have not minded what one part of it means.

D. Why, mother: why do you think so?

M. Because, my dear, when you come near the end, you say it too fast, and seem not to think what you are saying.

D. That is, because I know it, and have it in my head.

M. Tell me then, child, why, at the end of your prayer, you say, "For Jesus Christ's sake?"

D. O, indeed I did not think of that. No, mother, I do not know what that means.

M. Do you know who Jesus Christ is?

D. No, I cannot tell that. I wish you would tell me.

M. When you can read the Bible, you may read a great deal about him.

D. O, I wish I could now; I wish you would tell me what the Bible says?

M. I can tell you only a very little now. The Bible tells us, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he came into this world, and was a little child, and grew up very good, and was very kind to every body; and taught them to love and serve God; and yet people

did not love him, but tried often to kill him; and at last they did kill him.

D. O, mother, mother, what wicked people they must be!

M. So they were, my dear: else they would have loved him, and minded what he told them.

D. Did not you say he was the Son of God? Then why did not God take care of him, and keep the wicked people from him?

M. I am afraid I cannot make it plain to you. When you grow older, you will be able to know more about it.

D. I wish I was older: I should like to know. Cannot you tell me something, only a little about it? Indeed, I do think, mother, I can know what it means.

M. I do not think you can, yet; but if you will mind, I will make it as plain as I can.

D. I will mind, mother; indeed I will.

M. Well, then, people were very wicked, and God knew they would be so, more and more; and then, he knew he must punish them; because it would not be right for them to go on being wicked, and for God not to mind it. Do you know what I mean?

D. O, yes, mother! When I have been naughty, you have said you must punish me, and must shew me you were angry at what is wrong, and that it was a bad thing to be naughty.

M. But, my dear, if God punishes wicked people as much as they deserve, they will never be happy any more. He must be always angry with them, and they must suffer great pain, for ever and ever. Do you mind me, and know what I mean?

D. Yes, mother, because people are so very wicked, God must be always angry with them, and then they must be always in pain.

M. Well, my dear; but God is so good, that he did not wish to make them always unhappy, though they deserved it.

D. That was very good and kind in the great God.

M. And so, because he did not wish to punish people as they deserved, he took this way—that if his Son, Jesus Christ, would bear a great deal of pain, and would let wicked people put him to death, why, then he would forgive such people as were sorry they had done wrong, and wished to be good.

D. Pray mother, tell me this that is come into my head. If God wished not to punish wicked people, could he not forgive them? and why should he let them put Jesus Christ to death?

M. You know, my dear, if we do not punish people that do wrong, we do not show that we think they do wrong. And that would not be right. We should shew we hate what is wicked.

D. Yes, mother.

M. So, God meant to shew how he hated what is wicked, when Jesus Christ suffered so much pain, and was killed.

D. But Jesus Christ was not wicked?

M. No, my dear; but it was something like this: Can you think of a little girl being very naughty indeed?

D. Yes, mother.

M. So naughty, that if she was punished as much as she deserved it would kill her.

D. Yes, mother.

M. But suppose her father did not wish to kill her, and yet wished to shew how very angry he was forced to be.

D. Yes, mother.

M. And, if she had a brother, a great deal stronger than she, who was able to bear the pain which she deserved.

D. Yes, mother.

M. And, if he wished to bear it, that she might not suffer it.

D. Yes, mother.

M. And her father was willing he should, if only she would be sorry, and love her brother very much.

D. Yes, mother.

M. Why, then, you know, she might see how her father hated her being naughty, and yet she might not die as she deserved. So it was, that God let Jesus Christ suffer pain, that if the people would be sorry for what they had done, and would love him, they might be safe.

D. But, did Jesus Christ like it?

M. My dear, he could not like the pain: but he pitied people so much, and wished so much to save them, that he was willing to bear it for them.

D. O, that was very kind, indeed? And so, mother, Jesus Christ is dead? I am so sorry.

M. No, my dear child: he was dead, but he came to life again, and went up to heaven. He is very happy now, and he saves all those who are sorry for their sins, and pray that he may make them good.

D. I do not think that I quite know what it all means. Perhaps I shall, when I am older, and read in the Bible. I am glad that I am not wicked; and that Jesus Christ had not to bear so much pain for me.

M. What, my child! Did you not say just now, that sometimes you had been naughty, and that I had been forced to punish you?

D. But I mean, mother, that I am not *wicked*, to make God obliged to punish me; and so Jesus Christ had not to suffer so much pain for me.

M. You do not think right.—When you are naughty, you not only displease me, but God too. He sees every bad thing you do, and he hears every wrong word you say, and he knows every thing that comes into your mind.

D. O mother, I did not think of that! Is God angry as well as you, when I am naughty? I will not be naughty any more, for I love you; and I love God; he is so good to me.

M. Yes, my dear child, if Jesus Christ had not suffered so much, God must have punished you; and then you must have been in great pain for ever. But now, if

you pray to him to forgive you, and make you good, because Jesus Christ suffered so much, he will mind what you pray for.

D. I am sorry I have been naughty. I wish God would forgive me. I wish Jesus Christ would make me good and happy.

M. Shall I put that in your prayer?

D. O, I wish you would, mother.

M. I will then; now mind and think of what you say:

O Lord,—thou hast made all things;—and thou hast made me,—and dost keep me alive. Thou hast told us to pray. I love thee,—because thou dost mind when children pray to thee. Do thou take care of me. Keep me from harm. Make me a good child; that I may love what is good,—and hate what is wrong;—and that I may serve and please thee,—as long as I live. I fear I have often been wicked,—and deserve thine anger. But do thou pity me,—and forgive me, and save me,—because Jesus Christ—suffered and died. Amen.

CONVERSATION IV.

We may pray for one another.



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

M. Softly, softly, my dear Mary. Come in, and shut the door very gently.

D. Why, mother, are you not well?

M. Yes, but your dear little brother is very poorly.

D. O, I am sorry for that. What is the matter with him?

M. He has had a great deal of pain ; but he is a little better now, and is gone to sleep. Look at him, how pale he is.

D. So he is, poor, dear, little brother ! I am so sorry. Will he soon be well ?

M. I hope he will ; but that must be as it pleases God.

D. Why did God let him be bad ? was he naughty, and so God was forced to be angry with him ?

M. He is too young, my dear, to know what it is to be naughty ; but had there not been sin in the world, there would be no pain.

D. But God can make him well, mother ?

M. Yes. He can if he pleases.

D. Then my little brother must pray to God, to make him well.

M. He cannot do that, for he does not know what it means.

D. Poor little dear ! what must he do then ?

M. He can do nothing ; but cannot you do something for him ?

D. O, yes, I will tell him my pretty prayer.

M. He cannot learn it ; and he cannot tell what it means ; so if he could say it, that would not be prayer.

D. What then, mother, can I do? I should be glad if God would make him well.

M. Can you not pray to God for him?

D. What does that mean, mother?

M. I mean, when you pray, can you not ask God to make him well?

D. Yes, mother, I can, if you put it in my prayer.

M. I will, if you wish me to do it.

D. I am quite sure, I wish God would make him well. But—

M. But—what, my Mary?

D. But may I pray to God to be kind to my brother, too?

M. I suppose, my dear, you mean to ask me, if God will mind when you pray for other people, as well as when you pray for yourself?

D. Yes, mother, that is it; that is what I mean.

M. Then, I can tell you. God is so kind as to let us pray for others, when we wish him to do them good.

D. Does the Bible say so?

M. Yes, it tells us of a good man, who had a son, and he wished his son to live: so he prayed to God, and God minded his prayer, and blessed his son.

D. But that is very good indeed of God:

M. Besides, the Bible tells us we ought to pray for one another.

D. When they do not know how to pray for themselves, like my poor little brother?

M. Yes, my dear, and for other people too: good people always pray for one another.

D. Then, mother, do you pray for other people? and does my father?

M. To be sure we do; and if you mind, when your father prays, you will hear him pray for you.

D. Then God does not want me to pray to him?

M. Yes, he does: your father and I know what *we* wish God to do for you; but you must ask God for what *you* wish him to do for you.

D. O, then, we must pray for God to be kind to us, and to other people too?

M. That is the way; now you know how it is.

D. Then I will pray for my little brother. I do wish God would make him well, indeed I do.

M. And is that all you wish for your brother?

D. Why, I wish—let me think about it—O, now I know—I wish he may be good and love God, and know about Jesus Christ.

M. Then, suppose I put it in your prayer, that you wish God to *bless* him. For God to bless him means,—to give him every good thing. And when you grow bigger, and know more, you can put it in other words.

D. O yes, mother, that will do; I shall be glad to grow bigger, and know more.

M. Do you not wish God to bless somebody else?

D. I will tell you. May I ask God to bless you? and my father? and my brothers and sisters?

—*M.* Yes.

D. Then I am quite sure I do wish he would bless you. Will you put all in my prayer?

M. As you wish, I will. Now you had better say your prayer, and go to bed.

O Lord, thou hast made all things; and thou hast made me, and dost keep me alive. Thou hast told us to pray. I love

thee, because thou dost mind when little children pray to thee. Do thou take care of me; keep me from harm. Make me a good child; that I may love what is good, and hate what is evil; and that I may serve and please thee, as long as I live.

I fear I have often been wicked, and deserve thine anger,—but do thou pity me, and forgive me, and save me,—because Jesus Christ suffered and died.

Bless my father and my mother,—and my brothers and sisters,—and all my friends. I pray for these and all other good things, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

M. Now kiss me, my dear.—Good night.

D. Good night, mother. I wish my little brother may be well to-morrow.—O, I forgot—you know I said, “Amen.” I wish you would tell me about that.

M. I am glad you ask me what you do not know.—Just now, I told you your brother was ill; and you said, “I wish God would make him well,—indeed I do.”

D. Yes, mother, and so I do.

M. What do you mean, when you say, “Indeed I do?”

D. I mean, mother, that *I am quite sure* I do wish God would make him well.

M. So, when you have prayed to God for what you wish him to do, you say—Amen.

D. Does that mean I am quite sure I wish God to give me what I pray for?

M. Yes: you know it now.—Good night.

D. Good night, mother—I know it now. Amen means, I am *quite sure* I wish God to give me such good things.

CONVERSATION V.

We must try as well as pray.



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

M. My dear child, what is the matter with you? you seem frightened, and ashamed; and your eyes are red, as if you had been crying.

D. O, mother, my head aches very bad.

M. I am sorry for that, my dear. Do you know what makes it so? Did your head-ache make you cry? or did crying make your head-ache?

D. I believe—I am afraid—I think, indeed, crying makes my head so bad.

M. Well; but my dear girl, why did you cry? what could make you cry?

D. Indeed, mother, I think it was, because my governess found fault with me, and said I was naughty, and a good deal more, mother.

M. O, Mary, I am very sorry for that: I am sure she would not find fault with you without a cause. What made your governess angry with you?

D. Only, mother,—only, because I did not say my book,—and—and—

M. And—what?

D. And, mother, tore it a little bit—I mean a few leaves. I was only pricking the pictures with a pin.

M. Then, Mary, I see how it was. You were idle and played with your book, when you should have been getting your lesson;—and then you could not say it,—and your governess was angry because you could not say your lesson, and had spoiled your pretty book;—and that made you cry,—and crying made your head-ache. Was not that the case?

D. Yes, mother.

M. Then, I think you were very naughty; you deserved to be punished. Your governess was in the right to be angry with

you. I think I must be angry with you too. .

D. O no, pray, mother, do not: indeed, indeed, I am very sorry; I will not be naughty any more.

M. Do not say I will not; but I hope I shall not. How, Mary, can you think that I will teach you to pray if you are so naughty?

D. But, you know, mother, I did pray to God, before I went to school.

M. I do not know that. I know you said a prayer; but you cannot pray, if you do not wish God to do what you ask.

D. Indeed, mother, I did pray, and I did wish too.

M. Well, what did you wish God to do?

D. To keep me well; and yet my head is very bad.

M. That is, because you have been crying. And you must not expect God to keep you well, if you do wrong.

D. But, mother, I did pray, and wish to be good. And yet I was not good: I could not say my book, and I spoiled it.

M. That was a very sad thing. And did you try to be good?

D. No, mother; I prayed to God to make me good.

M. But, child, you could not think God would make you good, if you did not try as well as pray. If you really wish to be good, and to do good, you will try as well as pray.

D. Indeed, indeed, mother, I do wish I had been good, and said my book. I do wish to be good now.

M. I hope you do. But then I must tell you again, you must try. When you were a baby, I used to teach you to walk, as I teach your little brother. I held you up, and guided you,—but if you had not put out your feet, and tried to step, you never would have been able to walk. So you must pray to God to help you, and then you must try to be good too, or else you will be naughty after all.

D. O, mother,—I know it now—I have found it all out: I must ask God to help me, and then I must try to do as well as I can.

M. Yes, my dear, that is the way.

D. So, if I want to be safe, I must pray to God to keep me, and then try to keep out of harm?

M. Yes.

D. And when I have to learn my book, or some other good thing, I must pray to God to help me, and then try all I can;—and so it will be done.

M. You are quite right, that is the way.

D. What a good mother you are. I do love you. . I wish you would let me— May I, mother?

M. May you do what, my child?

D. May I kiss you?

M. Yes, now I hope you are sorry that you have done wrong, and will not do so any more.

D. Then you are not angry with me now?

M. No, not now.

D. Then,—there is once, because you are not angry with me ;—and twice, because you make me know such good things.

