

seem to gain little fruit, and are often scarcely conscious of any progress.

And, moreover, each has practically to learn for himself how to pray. We may gain some encouragement, some little help from others, but the real secret of prayer we must learn for ourselves. How can anyone teach another the form of conversation and method of intercourse with a friend? It grows, unfolds, develops of itself; it is intensely personal. We may learn something from the experience of others as to where dangers lie, as to possible self-deception, the need of perseverance through times of darkness and coldness; but the inmost secret of prayer must be our own. It is the deepest expression of the soul's personal relationship with God. It is, indeed, in one sense like, but in another unlike, the prayer of anyone else. If God has given us any power in prayer, we shall find it impossible to communicate the secret of that power to anyone else; when we try to tell that we fail. We may repeat the prayer that we say, and tell of some of the trials and struggles through which we have passed, but we cannot tell just that which gave the power and strength to our prayers, for in fact it is our relationship to God Himself; it is the expression of all that we mean by our spiritual life.

Yet there are certain dangers that are common to most people, and certain principles upon which growth in the life of prayer must be based.

Now, in considering the act of prayer itself, we must remember that it is composed of a natural and a supernatural element—the act of the person who prays, and the help which God gives. Different classes of minds are in danger of laying undue stress on one or another of these parts, as if it comprised the whole, but all true prayer involves both.

Therefore due consideration must be given to both parts. If the best musician in the world were playing on an organ that was out of tune he could not produce good music, and, if the Holy Spirit were to breathe over our souls in prayer while the strings were lax from carelessness, He could not produce the music that God loves to hear. Our prayer may fail, therefore, not because God does not help us, but because we have not taken proper care in preparing ourselves; the strings of the mind are out of tune. We shall never get so high as to be able to leave out of consideration our own preparation and