**WAYS TO PRAY WHEN WE CANNOT PRAY**

Sometimes it's not that we don't want to pray—it's that we cannot pray. What then? Here ore some suggestions for breaking through when we find it difficult to pray.

1. Keep trying. Don't give up—that's just what the enemy wants! Say the words, even if the feelings aren't there. God hears us even when we feel as though He doesn't.

2. Sing hymns. Sing hymns (hot express the way you feel—or want to feel. If you're uncomfortable hearing yourself sing, play a tape or CO. "It Is Well with My Soul," "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," "And Can It Be?," or "How Great Thou Art"—hymns like these hove a way of releasing our pain and ushering us into the Father's presence.

3. Rest on promises. Use your Bible concordance to discover promises that will help you in your present circumstances. Write down what you find. Personalize it by inserting your name. Read what you discover batk to the Lord. Ask Him for faith to believe.

4. Write your prayers. If stress or panic is the trouble, your thoughts may be too jumbled to pray. Writing—either longhand or on the key­board—helps to focus the thoughts, so they line up single file. Sit down and write, "Dear Father," at the top of your page, and then tell Him what you are feeling. Don't ask Him for anything until you've expressed all the raw emotion. Don't worry if it doesn't sound spiritual—He can take it! And He cares.

5. Look at the heavens. If you're awake with your troubled thoughts but cannot proy, sometimes a look at the heavens can put things into perspective, just like David said in Psalm 8. I've been known to lie on a stadium blanket in my front yard at 3 a.m.—no one sees me but God.

6. Walk away. When anger is the problem, walking away from the people or the situa­tion can help. I find it nearly impossible to pray when I'm fuming at the person in the same room with me. But when I excuse myself, I am able to talk it over with Him more objectively.

7. Fast. Longing to restore our communication with God is a need greater than our need for physical nourishment. Fasting is a symbolic means of expressing that sense of urgency to the Lord.

8. Cry to God. Are your prayers choked by tears? Sometimes weeping is praying. Job poured out tears to God (Job 16:20); David asked God to record his tears on His scroll (Ps. 56:8); Paul says that the Spirit intercedes for us when we can­not pray—with groans that words cannot express (Ro. 8:26). Go ahead and cry—crying to God is praying. He hears.

9. Thank God for the pain. If you've never done it before, it sounds like a pat or even callous solution; but Scripture teaches us to give thanks in everything. Sometimes I've had to thank God out of sheer obedience because I didn't have a thankful fiber in my body. Thanking Him, however, helps us to release our control of the situation, which often is just what is needed to reopen the channels of communication with the Lord.

10. Share your burden. Sometimes the bur-den is just too heavy for one person. Go to a trusted friend and say, "I can't pray. Will you pray for me?"

—C. Hyle Bezek