

What If Prayer Were More Like Love Than Work?

By Margaret Silf

*We were told from earliest childhood
that we would have to work to achieve our dreams.
Our so-called work ethic is all about personal achievement.
No wonder, then, that we expect prayer to work the same way.
The harder we work at it, we think,
the better it will be.
If it doesn't seem to be 'working', it must be our fault.
We must be doing something wrong.*

*But suppose prayer were more like love than work?
Suppose it were something
that is simply given,
And all we are asked to do is to be open to receive it,
And respond to the gifting?*

*There is nothing we can do to earn God's love,
or to achieve it by hard work,
Or pass an exam to obtain it,
Or compel it in any way.*

*We can only receive it with a joyful heart,
And respond to it with a generous life.*

And so it is with prayer.

*Prayer is God's gift,
And never our own 'achievement'.*

*Everybody who ever tries to pray
Is convinced that everyone else is doing it better!*

*It isn't true, of course,
Because the love of God is the ocean in which we all swim.
All we can do is become more aware
Of the reality of that ocean
And let this awareness inform the way we live.*