

# TFTD L12 Talkative prayer

Thought for the Day, 22 March 2022



**Holy Habit: Prayer**

**Matthew 6.7-8**

**When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**

I'm going through an E.M Forster phase at the moment. I've just finished reading *Where angels fear to tread*, and we watched the film of *Howards End* the other day. Then, thinking about today's Bible text on "heaping up empty phrases", the words "poor little talkative Christianity" came to mind. Having looked it up (on Google of course), I discovered that it comes from Forster's *Room with a View*.

A lot of our prayer does tend to be rather talkative. We give God all sorts of information (which he already knows); we tell him what we think; we tell him what we think he needs to know or needs reminding about; and we often tell him what he ought to do (when he knows what is best).

Well, it's true that prayer is about talking to God; and that we shouldn't hesitate to share with God whatever is on our mind or in our heart. But prayer is equally about listening to God; it should be interactive, a two-way process. It's perhaps best described as conversation with God. But often it's the sort of conversation where we do all the talking and God can't get a word in edgeways.

In prayer we don't need to talk all the time; we don't need to fill up all the empty spaces with words. In our activist world we tend to think that

**silence means that nothing is happening.**

**But there is no need to be afraid of silence. One of the great things about spending time with someone we love is that although we have lots of things to say we don't have to talk all the time. There is such a thing as companionable silence.**

**Monks and nuns know about the value of silence. Not silence as nothingness, as inactivity, but alert, attentive silence; time when we try to free our busy minds from all the thoughts and worries and concerns that run around them most of the time and clog them up. And so prevent us from hearing the still small voice that is trying to get through.**

**There's an old prayer that puts all this rather well:**

**Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking; we beseech thee to have compassion on our infirmities; and those things, which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**John Murray**

**22.3.22**