

# Immersive Prayer

THE POWER TO CHANGE OURSELVES  
AND CHANGE OUR WORLD



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Labyrinthe Press

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## Introduction

FOR MANY YEARS, I believed that prayer is something that you set aside time to do in moments of need or was a part of some great occasion for celebration or other must do list of activities demanded by the church, obligation or habit. Since my primary school headteacher tapped me on the head during a school assembly to caution me not to cover my whole face with my hands rather than resting my palms neatly one against the other, for many years I believed that there was a right way to pray.

Admittedly, I've long given up worrying about having to include essential words and phrases in my prayers. These days, my "Amen's" and "In Jesus's Name" only tend to feature when I pray in public. However, these, and others ingrained by my mainstream Christian upbringing still linger, even though they don't now hold particular meaning for me. Yet, despite my backsliding on the teaching of my elders, I know that I'm not alone in coming to a fresh understanding of how to pray—nor, indeed, what prayer is really about.

It's quite a revelation to realise that prayer shouldn't be a discipline or an ordeal, and to learn that it can involve great joy and at times deep sorrow, and is not a tiresome ritual to be agonised over.

To come to understand and experience prayer as being more than *just* being in a conversation with—but is instead an act of being fully immersed in the presence of the Divine—is awesome. Yet, it doesn't stop here.

Intercessory prayer (which we'll also occasionally refer to in this book using the non-denominational language of *intention holding*), is truly participative. This means that praying is not just a case of wanting something to happen and trusting that The Almighty will grant our request, but actively playing a vital role in enabling this to happen.

Why this is so, and how we can come into this experience, is the main subject of this book. We'll take a broad look at what it means to invite and participate

with a power that has proven its ability not just to transform ourselves, but the lives of others too. This will involve us appreciating many essential teachings found in the Christian Bible, and which recur in the scriptures and writings of the sages and mystics of many traditions. We'll see that some of what we encounter also resonates strongly with what quantum physicists and other pioneers of research in the sciences are pointing to, giving further credence to the sacred texts of old, were such assurance needed. To further add to the picture, we'll also draw on research into the efficacy of prayer and intention holding.

I should say at the outset that while much of what we'll cover will focus on the words that will be familiar to many Christians and Jews, this book is intended for people of any faith or none, as well as those who have no particular religious affiliation. Indeed, the lens through which I often interpret biblical texts might be thought by some to be non-mainstream. I will occasionally refer to non-canonical texts, and bring in mystical and non-conventional interpretations of the teachings found in the gospels and elsewhere. In particular, as someone who has long appreciated the commonality of teaching of different faiths, I'll often make reference to what's to be found in the wisdom of other traditions. For me, and I hope for many readers too, such cross-reading will prove to be not only informative, but help amplify or explain a perplexing teaching found in our own tradition.

The broad thrust of the book is to explore the links that make up this common ground, and which can tell us something about what it means to be fully engaged in prayerful practice and in willing impact for others.

In the following chapters, we'll look at such things as the nature of reality, what it means to transcend our sense of being independent beings, and, fundamentally, what it means to be a spiritual being. We'll question whether prayers need to be aligned with divine Will if they are to be answered, and whether we can ever truly have impact in a world in which upholding individual free will is paramount.

From this, we'll discern important principles that have profound implications for anyone who wishes to enhance their prayer life or intention practice, and in turn, be able to summarise a number of guidelines to put what we learn into practice.

The essential argument we'll develop runs as follows:

- We are more than physical beings, having the ability to invite and fully embrace a power much greater than ourselves that has the capacity to communicate with, and transform, the lives of both ourselves and others.
- This power is what we might understand as being divine, and is both within us, and fully accessible to us.
- When we combine this power with our own volition, we can essentially direct it to the object of our prayer (whether we see this in the

sense of actually sending or radiating a healing energy, appeal to the higher self of another being, or making an immediate connection with or becoming entangled with them).

- In this way, we can impact anything that has life anywhere on earth, and indeed, anywhere governed by the rules of the cosmic order of which we are a part.

One point that bears repeating is that this kind of prayer is totally active. It requires immersion in, and merging with what people of different worldviews may variously know as divine grace, spiritual healing or universal consciousness. Fundamentally, it means becoming an open and willing vessel for this energy or power to move through, but in a condition in which we call the shots in terms of where we wish this power to flow.

For most faith traditions, this corresponds with the idea that we can be co-partners with the Divine in the continuing act of creation. Inviting, receiving, and merging with this power is therefore not just about connection, but is fundamentally about relationship.

However, there are some principles at play that we need to recognise. These are necessary for acts of creation to be spontaneous and evolving rather than predetermined. Significant among these is the need for everyone to have free will to choose to act as they will. This fundamental right must be respected. Later, we'll see very clearly why this has to be so.

The implications of what we discover might strongly guide how we approach and engage with prayer. They may determine how we want to frame our prayers. And, they may bring home a whole new meaning to what we understand as prayer. Certainly, for me, this is an understanding and experience that's far removed from the structured discipline and prescribed formulae that I learned as a child.

Embarking on such a wide-ranging and mysterious topic as this, it's inevitable that I will have forgotten much, and not be aware of much more. The greatest lesson that I've gained through my own experience, especially from occasional mystical insights, is how limited my understanding is, and especially that which has been slowly gained through studying and intellectual reasoning. Our discussion of scientific theories will be similarly limited and can never reach a conclusion—I'm well aware that even by the time I put down my laptop after drafting the last sentence of this manuscript, there will be a host of new learnings and discoveries that could be added. So, in a real sense, this is an ongoing journey of discovery, and my hope is that what I've been able to write will inspire you to take great strides on your own journey, and to have the curiosity and wonder to keep enquiring.