

I had received word that my artist friend was very ill, and as I travelled along to her village, I prayed continually for her healing and recovery. Not really being able to communicate with God at His¹ level, I ended up presenting the same words over and over again as I walked, sometimes calling out in a loud voice (as if that would really help). I also prayed that the Holy Spirit would interpret this human prayer for me in the infinitely higher language² of God.

I entered the town and went as soon as I could to my friend's house. I was overjoyed to find her well. After a bit, I spent a moment in prayerful thanksgiving. But my thoughts soon moved on to other things.

Later, I bowed to the ground and thanked God again, recognizing the fact that I was a sinner and was grateful for His grace. I realized that there was a great discrepancy between the amount of time I spent praying for something and the amount of time I spent in thanksgiving for the response. I tried to stay in contact with God all of the time³, and I did not feel that there was any kind of limit⁴ for requests. I always tried to remember to give thanks, but I knew that I did not always keep the proper proportion.

I found myself thinking of a parallel to one of the stories of Jesus as he healed the ten lepers⁵. The ratio of requesters to thankers was ten to one. So my own heart represents all of the lepers, with only a small fraction concerned with thanks. In this story, Jesus asked a probing question about the discrepancy. Considering this, I have made a commitment to devote much more time to thanksgiving and glorifying God⁶ no matter what the result of my prayers!

1. Romans 11:33-34
2. Romans 8:26-27
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Ephesians 6:18a
4. 2 Corinthians 12:7b-8 (not that Paul indicated that three times was a limit)
5. Luke 17:11-19
6. Philippians 4:6

Romans 8:26-27; 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 11:33-34; 33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV) pray continually, (constantly RSV)

Ephesians 6:18a; And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

2 Corinthians 12:7b-8; Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

Philippians 4:6; Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Discussion with someone?

fervent prayer, many times and repeats (more than the three times of Paul)

I think about the ratio of the number of prayers for a request of something in particular, and the number of prayers of thanksgiving after receipt of what was asked for

We should also give thanksgiving for God hearing us, even if we don't get what we want

Makes me think of the ratio of the men healed from leprosy; all ten appealed to Jesus for healing; one out of the ten gave thanks; perhaps my prayer ratio is similar (or not even as good)

Jesus Heals Ten Men With Leprosy – Luke 17:11-19

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."