

Daily prayer and good health

By [Beverly Goldsmith](#), Christian Science [practitioner](#) and [teacher](#) in Brisbane, Australia.

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"When do you pray," asked the radio host. "Do you pray first thing in the morning or last thing at



Beverly Goldsmith speaking on radio

night?" This was the question I was asked while being interviewed as a Christian Science lecturer on the Australian program *Good Health Matters*. The program was exploring the connection between spirituality and good health for the first time, and the host revealed on air that she had never thought of prayer as having a part to play in maintaining health. And she certainly hadn't thought of it as a moment-by-moment activity one could undertake throughout the day.

At one time, I'd been in the same position. I wasn't aware of the significant role that spiritual thinking played in achieving well-being. But this changed when I began to read the Bible along with *Science and Health*. As I studied these two books, I learned that health and healing are the outcome of a person's close - and constant - communion with God. And I saw that God, as infinite Spirit, is the source of wellness. Since He is the divine cause, His creation, which includes each one of us, reflects the divine energy of Spirit. Because of this, every person includes God-given vitality, strength, wholeness.



So what has to be done to live an active, healthy life? I've found the answer is to pray daily to secure and preserve one's good health - and to be persistent with those prayers. In doing so, I include these three fundamentals:

1. Pray for and about yourself 2. Be specific 3. Pray regularly, every day, throughout the day.

1. Pray for and about yourself

Before praying for the world, or someone else, it's important first to be clear about your own relationship with God. Praying for oneself is not a selfish activity. I've found that if I want to be well and help others be well, my prayers have to be personal -about me, for me. Why? Because as an individual, I'm responsible for what I think, and thus how I feel. It's my job to examine my thinking and put out any unhealthy thoughts and fears. God created me, and everyone, in His intelligent likeness, which means each person has the ability and wisdom to think and reason spiritually about himself or herself.

Accepting responsibility for my well-being has led me to make sure that I pray for myself each day. I like to do this by affirming that whatever God is, I am, as His reflection. God has formed all of His children in His perfect image. Thus, as His daughter, I can affirm that as God is Spirit, so I am spiritual. As God is Life, so I am active. As God is Soul, so I am harmonious. As God is Love, accordingly I am cared for. I have inherited good health from my Father-Mother God, and this is permanent spiritual health because I am His reflection forever.

2. Be specific in prayer

To be effective, and to exercise control of the body, prayer for oneself should be focused. I like to think of it this way: If I needed to replace a leaking tap in the kitchen, I wouldn't engage an accountant to do the job. Curative and preventive prayer has to be more than just an all-purpose, general activity; it also needs to be precise, hit-the-nail-on-the-head scientific reasoning. In order to achieve this, it's vital to check on the thoughts we entertain.

Every day, all kinds of thoughts come to the door of consciousness. Some are spiritual, good, and are thus health-giving. Others are mortal, and produce illness and disease. Detecting which is which, is an essential defense in maintaining health.

Mary Baker Eddy described this form of prayer as the practice of spiritual anatomy. She wrote in *Science and Health*: "Anatomy, when conceived of spiritually, is mental self-knowledge, and consists in the dissection of thoughts to discover their quality, quantity, and origin. Are thoughts divine or human? That is the important question. This branch of study is indispensable to the excision of error. The anatomy of Christian Science teaches when and how to probe the self-inflicted wounds of selfishness, malice, envy, and hate. It teaches the control of mad ambition. It unfolds the hallowed influences of unselfishness, philanthropy, spiritual love. It urges the government of the body both in health and in sickness" p. 462.

This alerts me to be aware of what I let into my thinking. If thoughts of illness and fear are trying to come in - or have already entered my thought - then I have to shut them out. Ruminating over ill health, dietetic theories, or the latest bug going around does not result in wellness. Speculating about them intensifies fear and the possibility of succumbing to them.

However, just shutting out descriptions of disease is not enough. Defensive prayer not only closes the door on unhealthy thoughts and fears, but also immediately lets in spiritual conclusions about one's self. For instance, at one time I was feeling worn-out and overworked. As soon as I recognized the falsity of the conclusion that my work could cause fatigue and weariness, I shut out this notion by refusing to reiterate silently or aloud that I was tired from working too hard. Then I immediately affirmed that God was supplying me every moment with vitality and stamina, boundless endurance, and get-up-and-go. I recognized that the vigor of Life animated my being every second of the day, and that the spiritual source of these qualities could never be depleted. As I continued to reject the notion of fatigue and to replace it with the truth about my real tireless being, I was quickly back to my normal lively self.

3. Pray regularly, every day, throughout the day

To claim each day that wellness comes from God and is ours by reflection, is essential. However, health-sustaining prayer is more than thinking nice spiritual truths for a few moments and then walking away from them to get on with usual activities. The Bible teaches us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). This instruction advises me to do more than pray once a day for myself. It reminds me to be alert constantly, moment by moment, to what I'm letting into my thinking. This is active, alert prayer. It takes practice, but it's worth the persistent effort.

Praying specifically and consistently for oneself relates to every aspect of the day -from the routine activities to the more momentous events. That's why before I get out of bed in the morning, I spend five minutes affirming that my well-being is present and within. Then, even as I brush my teeth, shower, or do the laundry, I continue to check each thought to see if it is health-sustaining and Godlike. At night when retiring, I give thanks to God for His love and care, and I defend myself with the recognition that sleep cannot change my knowledge of the truth about my being. Mary Baker Eddy emphasized this point: "... if you fall asleep, actually conscious of the truth of Christian Science, - namely, that man's harmony is no more to be invaded than the rhythm of the universe, - you cannot awake in fear or suffering of any sort" *Retrospection and Introspection*, p.61.

Anyone can discover the benefits of praying specifically for himself or herself, throughout the day. The effect is powerful, restoring wellness and maintaining good health. It enables those who consistently fine-tune their prayers to live a happy, active life - and to bless others in the process.

Beverly Goldsmith is a Christian Science [practitioner](#) and [teacher](#) in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Visit her [web site](#) for more inspirational, healing [articles](#), [Takeaway Tips](#), and [E-Cards](#).