

Stages of Prayer in Saint Bernard Monastic Wisdom



I Am the Way: Stages of Prayer in Saint Bernard (Monastic Wisdom Series Book 28) by Edwin E. Moise

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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In his profound writings, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, a renowned Christian mystic and monk, offers a comprehensive understanding of the stages of prayer, guiding us through the transformative journey of communion with God. Drawing from his deep spiritual insights and the rich monastic tradition, Saint Bernard's wisdom continues to inspire and illuminate our path towards a deeper and more meaningful prayer life.



The Stages of Prayer

According to Saint Bernard, the stages of prayer can be broadly categorized into three main phases:

1. **Elementary Prayer:** This initial stage is characterized by a beginner's approach to prayer, often marked by distractions, dryness, and a

sense of distance from God. Saint Bernard emphasizes the importance of perseverance and humility during this phase, encouraging us to trust in God's grace and to keep striving for communion with Him.

2. **Advanced Prayer:** As we progress in our prayer journey, we may enter a stage marked by greater focus, devotion, and a deepening sense of God's presence. Saint Bernard refers to this as "discursive prayer," where our thoughts and affections are directed towards God in a more sustained and intentional manner. This stage involves cultivating a receptive and contemplative heart, allowing God's love to penetrate our being.
3. **Union with God:** The ultimate goal of our prayerful journey, according to Saint Bernard, is union with God. This is a profound state of communion, where the boundaries between our self and God dissolve, and we experience a deep sense of intimacy and love. Saint Bernard describes this stage as "contemplative prayer," where we are drawn into a mystical encounter with the divine, transcending the limitations of our intellect and emotions.

Practical Insights for Deepening Prayer

Beyond outlining the stages of prayer, Saint Bernard also offers practical insights and guidance for those seeking to deepen their prayer life. Here are a few key principles:

- **Practice Daily Prayer:** Saint Bernard stresses the importance of establishing a regular and consistent prayer practice, regardless of our feelings or circumstances. By setting aside dedicated time for prayer

each day, we cultivate a discipline that fosters a deeper connection with God.

- **Cultivate Humility:** A humble and receptive heart is essential for progress in prayer. Saint Bernard encourages us to approach God with a sense of our own unworthiness and to rely on His grace rather than our own efforts.
- **Embrace Silence and Solitude:** Silence and solitude are powerful tools for deepening our prayer life. By withdrawing from distractions and creating space for stillness, we open ourselves to God's presence and allow His voice to be heard.
- **Study Scripture and the Lives of Saints:** Saint Bernard highly valued the study of Scripture and the lives of saints as means to nourish our prayer life. Through these sources, we encounter the wisdom and experiences of those who have walked the path of prayer before us.
- **Seek Spiritual Direction:** For those seeking guidance and support in their prayer journey, Saint Bernard recommends seeking the counsel of a spiritual director. A wise and experienced guide can provide valuable insights, encouragement, and accountability.

The Transformative Power of Prayer

Engaging in prayer is not merely a religious duty; it is a transformative journey that has the power to shape our lives and bring us closer to God. Saint Bernard believed that through prayer, we experience a profound purification of our hearts and minds, preparing us for a deeper communion with the divine. Prayer empowers us to face the challenges of life with

courage and resilience, knowing that we are not alone but are held in God's loving embrace.

By embracing the stages of prayer outlined by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and incorporating his practical insights into our spiritual practices, we embark on a transformative journey that leads us towards a deeper and more meaningful relationship with God. Let us embrace the transformative power of prayer and allow it to guide us towards a life of love, purpose, and ultimately, union with the divine.



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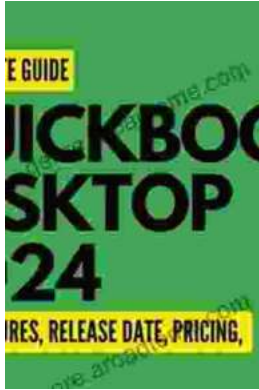
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