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- *Religions compared to rivers flowing towards sea of God*
- *The importance of corporate worship and prayer*
- *Intercessory prayer*

God surrounds you with comforting love and sustaining presence.

The occasion of your gathering together in prayer is as a great river which receives its source of water from tributaries which spread throughout the land. There is a strength and a power which is recognized as you are spiritually joined or united in your powerful flow towards God. The ocean has countless rivers which feed into it, some passing through parched lands, some passing through green pastures, others from towering mountains. Some rivers are slow moving and change direction in endless ways as they find their way to the sea. There are other rivers, which because of the volume contained in them, change direction less frequently and flow with greater urgency to the coast. And so it is with your souls.

Though a river may find the ocean tortuously, it inevitably flows forward at whatever speed is proper. All souls in their earthly lives move forward in the direction of God, but some seemingly move more rapidly than others. These souls find strength, as a river finds strength; through joining with others, its course is more secure. Spiritual development proceeds according to the same principle. When souls are joined in their earnest traverse through life toward an awareness of God, there is a strength in unity which exceeds beyond your imagination. This sureness, this sense of purpose, makes it more difficult for life's contours to alter direction. It is for this reason that corporate worship and gatherings such as yours are necessary. It is due to this potential for strength, for sureness, that the world's many religions were initiated. This is the most important reason and continuing function for organized religion, as you call it.

The differences which exist are the result of attempts to describe in some finite way the characteristics of such unified spiritual momentum and to find ways of continuing its progress. The mistake which many make is to feel that in some way efforts may be achieved to hasten the progress or to alter the direction according to human perspectives. The fact remains that spiritual direction, experienced communally, has its own quality of speed and course. Though attempts may be made to alter it, the natural progression of the souls is directed by God as is the quality of motion of the rivers controlled by gravity.

Such gatherings as you now have are experienced many times over in the world today, and there is an increasing awareness of the need for achieving meaningful direction in life, the method of which being a hidden awareness of the realities of the spirit. As you meet in a group, your souls reach outward strongly, rapidly, and confidently. They reach for God's wisdom and direction and comfort. You all have the capacity to reach for God individually, but the sureness of your reaching is so much stronger as a group. Though God is always aware of your prayers offered individually as

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well as corporately, your souls sense a greater strength, a greater vitality, when united in prayer. Prayer as a group is ordained by God.

It is God's intention that the reaching of the soul be done in unison with others. It is not important which river transmits its contents to the ocean most rapidly. The laws of nature dictate only that those rivers find the ocean, but the course, when ventured alone, can be difficult and interrupted. Those rivers which are the joining of many others are most successful in responding to natural laws. Those souls who reach out and join other souls in their quest for God will be surer of succeeding in their goals. It is essential, therefore, that you not only seek ways of joining other souls but that you proceed without a spirit of competition or superiority or smugness. It is not important which soul reaches God first. It is important that all souls reach God.

It may seem difficult to apply such teachings to your daily lives when you cannot easily bring others into the folding arms of your own circle, but the exercise of such desire can be achieved through the petition of prayer. Prayer is the strongest union between souls. That you are engaged in prayer as a group is like cement which binds you together. It is not merely your physical proximity to one another. If you wish to join with other souls who are far away and wish to help them as they traverse toward God, this is done through prayer. Your prayers on behalf of others unite your souls with others. It is like cutting a pathway which is deep uniting two streams which are separated. The water from one stream will find its course by joining in strength with the other.

All of you have concerns about members of your close families. Your prayers are for strength, for endurance, for deliverance, for release. When you pray about these concerns in a loving and supportive tone, you are uniting with that soul and providing it with the strength which you share as a group. You are all aware of the existence of prayer groups who unite with one another, in one form or another, for the purpose of providing strength or refreshment of body or soul to others. They unite in their prayers towards single objectives that they may focus their spiritual energies as a concentrated, intense beam of light. The strength, the unity, which reaches outward is unfailing, direct and swift. The soul for whom the prayers are offered benefits most definitely from being joined with the strength coming from the union of souls.

We therefore suggest that in future opportunities for being with others in prayerful communion, time be taken to direct your prayers toward those who need them and not merely for yourselves. Of course, if one of you is in need of spiritual support, you can all pray for that. What is important is that you are not only opening your consciousness to the healing qualities of God, but you are also consciously directing your own healing abilities as reflections of God toward others. In this way, the spiritual group which you share can be enlarged many fold.

We rejoice in your finding time from your daily lives to be still and to listen and know the word of God. Remember the power which comes from a river joined by many

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tributaries. Search out for ways of joining other souls either as a group in prayer or through the power of your own healing prayers. You are all heading to the sea and once a part of that great body, you will recognize the sameness, the unity, the common bond of love and faith in God which you all shall have. It is this unity which you should focus your attention on and direct your efforts toward.

God surrounds each of you with love and radiates grace to all those whom you enfold in your love.

Amen.