

BLESSINGS – HELPING TO RETAIN THEM

PART I – The Problem of Fade-out.

1. The Problem

- Spiritual blessings often fade – but should they?
- Often such experiences bring anxiety and guilt – but should they?

This is partly due to not understanding what blessings are for.

This article helps us to know what to expect.

All Christians experience God’s blessings. Most, probably all, experience the *fading* of such blessings.

Spiritual ‘highs’ so often sink to spiritual ‘lows’; healings tend to relapse; the clarity of guidance and calling seem later to get drowned by other voices; and a real love-affair with God can swing so low as to doubt his love and faithfulness.

Less dramatically than the above, we have probably prayed for something and claimed it by faith, only later to find that we do not possess it. Important but unspoken questions may worry us –

- Did I ever really *have* a blessing?
- Has my blessing been *taken* from me?
- Did I once have a blessing, but now, through my own fault, have I *lost* it?

Such questions may strike at the very foundations of our beliefs about ourselves and about God.

2. Three causes?

When blessings appear to go wrong, we tend to look in one of three directions to find the cause: either to God, to the Devil or to Ourselves.

a) God. Our pride will often drive us to blame anything but ourselves, and faded blessings can lead to the conviction that God has a Chancellor-of-the-Exchequer mentality, i.e. he gives you something with one hand only to take it away with the other.

b) Devil. If our belief in God makes the first solution unacceptable, then all too many resort to the formula that the Devil has snatched their blessing away. The appeal of this solution is that it leaves both God and ourselves in the clear.

c) Ourselves. If, like so many Christians, we still live overshadowed by feelings of condemnation (which the Good News of the Gospel has not yet touched), we will blame ourselves, to justify and affirm our negative view of ourselves. E.g. *Things never turn out right for me. I’m no use. I wouldn’t expect a blessing to last in my case. I was wrong to have expected it...etc.* This approach may appear as humility, but pride may be at work here as much as in the earlier solutions, as the following lines remind us –

One day in saintly passion, I cried in desperate grief,

‘My heart is black with guilt, of sinners I’m the chief!’

Then stooped my guardian angel and whispered from behind:

‘Vanity, my little man, you’re nothing of the kind!’

[Author unknown]

While there are some facets of truth in each of these three ‘solutions’, they are all basically **wrong**. They are contrary to right belief about God, and ourselves, and each stems from a wrong understanding of the purpose and nature of blessing.

3. Three Misunderstandings

It seems clear that blessings wither rather than blossom usually because of one or more misunderstandings at three levels –

Misunderstanding the **Purpose** of blessing.

Misunderstanding the **Nature** of blessing.

Misunderstanding the **Outworking** of blessing.

The three major parts of this article will deal with each of these in turn, before concluding with some guidelines.

Note that (a) my remarks can only be in note form, and (b) you may have to apply, adapt, modify – or even discard! – some things depending on your particular situation. This article can do no more than *point you in the right direction*.

PART II – The Real Purpose of Blessing

4. Blessings and Living

A computer to some is an irrelevant mystery, to others it is nothing but a toy, but to the majority of those who have taken the time and effort to learn what it is really *for* it is probably an indispensable aid. **We need similarly to learn about the purpose and nature of blessings and how to live with them if they are to be for us what God intends.**

It is so sad that Christians often seem driven to confusion, doubt, despair and guilt – on account of God’s **blessing!** Since I cannot believe that a genuine Christian blessing can be wrongly *given* then the fault must lie with us, and with our understanding of it and our expectations.

- God doesn't waste blessings; he gives them for a **purpose** – whether it is the gift of money to the debtor; food to the hungry; fellowship to the lonely; etc. To speak of blessings as having just *one* purpose might appear to be too over-simplified to be helpful. But I am convinced that amid so much confusion about blessing that the over-all goal, or purpose, of all Christian blessing is worth stating. What is that goal?
- God's command for right living is clear and simple [Mark 12:29-31]
"...the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'
The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
 - THE PURPOSE OF BLESSING
IS TO EQUIP US BETTER
TO OBEY THESE COMMANDS

5. When Blessings overflow

God's blessings of us are part of the coming of his Kingdom on earth, and as such are meant to be **used** rather than hoarded, and generally to enrich not merely the individual, but the church and the world.

[...since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church. 1 Corinthians 14:12]

This ‘overflow’ from blessing is evident in many of the New Testament stories familiar to us: e.g. –

- **Jesus** is blessed by the Spirit to *minister to others*. [Luke 4:18-19] "***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free . . .***"
- The blessing of **healing** often overflows to *turn whole groups to God to glorify him* [e.g....so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "***We have never seen anything like this!***" Mark. 2:12b, see also Mark 1:45, 5:20, 7:37, Luke 7:16-17, 13:17, 18:43, Acts 9:35, 42.]
- The blessing which **Simon Peter’s Mother-in-Law** received overflowed in *service* [Mark 1:29-31]

- **Legion’s** deliverance was a blessing which overflowed into *witness*
[Mark 5:19-20 "*Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.*" And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.]
- **Bartimaeus’s** blessing overflowed into *commitment*.
[Mark 10:52. *Immediately he regained his sight and followed him in the way.*]
- **Mary Magdalene’s** blessing overflowed into *discipleship*. [Luke 8:1-2]
- The blessing that the **Cripple at Gate Beautiful** received overflowed into *wonder*.
[Acts 3:9]
- **Stephen’s** experience of the Spirit led to a vision of God and a *holy and peaceful death*
[Acts 7:54-60.]
- **St. Paul’s blessing** revealed Jesus and overflowed into *preaching* [Galatians 1:15-16]
- The blessing of the **Disciples in the Upper Room** overflowed into *mission*
[John. 20:19-23]

Each of these examples is an expression of a greater love for God or neighbour.

6. When Blessings don't overflow

Blessings do not *automatically* overflow in this way.

- Of the ten lepers cured, only one experienced *full* healing by allowing it to overflow in praise of God and the worship of Jesus.
[Luke 17:11-19. esp. v. 15. *Then one of them when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him...* Jesus asked "*Were not ten made clean?...your faith has made you well*". '*Making you well*' might equally well be translated '*saved you*', since the word describing the tenth leper's state was the great N.T. *salvation-word*.(Gk.*sozo*), a state far beyond the mere ritual 'cleanness' enjoyed by the nine.]
- The **Rich Young Ruler’s** possessions led only to sorrow and turning away from Jesus.
[Mark 10:22 *When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.*]
- **Ananias and Sapphira** were blessed in having property, but when they sold it, they were deceitful and sinned against the Holy Spirit. They contrast unfavourably with the Spirit-filled **Barnabas** who used his blessing of property to bless others [See Acts 4:36-5:11.]

Just as a car is given petrol, oil, air and water to go well, so God gives blessings to enable us to live well as he intended. A tank-full of petrol in a locked-up car is a useless waste. It becomes a blessing only when it is used for its right purpose.

7. When the purpose of Blessings is missed

Blessings are not best assessed by the excitement we might have on receiving them but *by their results and the use to which we put them*. The following is a true example of a common spiritual trap.

A prayer group, new to the exercise of spiritual gifts experienced its first prophecy.

[see esp. I Corinthians chapters 12-14]

One of the members later proudly and excitedly told a Christian leader: ‘We had a *prophecy* at our meeting this week.’ He replied, ‘I’m *so* pleased. What did God seem to be *saying* to you all?’ A sheepish look spread over the face of the prayer-group member. ‘I...er...um...*don't really know!*’ he admitted.

That which was given by God to guide or enrich the group or, through them, to help others, was rendered useless, and became like a damp firework. The prayer group so enjoyed the blessing's arrival that they gave no thought to what it had arrived *for!* God gives blessings for a **purpose**.

8. The Attractions of Blessings: Signs & Wonders

a) The very attractiveness of extra-ordinary blessings can easily blind us to the purposes for which God gave them. I am thinking of the miracles I know happen. These are often in the New Testament included under the phrase **signs and wonders**. [Acts 14:3, see also John 4:48] Signs are meant to follow believers [Mark 16:17, KJV has *follow*, later translations tend to have *accompany*], the tendency is for *believers to follow the signs!* There is always an appeal in the extra-ordinary, but the extra-ordinary often blinds us to the use and purpose for which it is given.

b) There are many great dangers in this area – not the least being that there are counterfeit miracles. [See the article **SPIRITUAL WARFARE & THE ORDINARY CHRISTIAN**.] If God’s working in *extra-ordinary* ways is over-emphasised, then the vital awareness of him present and working in the *ordinary* is diminished, and this can undermine our Christian lives rather than encourage us. Furthermore, if God is sought in signs and wonders we mentally tend to ‘locate’ him exclusively in the dramatic and miraculous. When we do this, to meet God then involves seeking him in the *abnormal* rather than having our eyes opened to see him in the normal.

c) There are, for instance in America some extreme Christian sects who indulge in snake-handling.

[Mark 16:17-18 "*And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them;*"]

The media coverage of them is hardly likely to put it in context, but the over-riding impression it gives is of seeking **signs** for their own sake, and not as equipment for holiness or mission.

Few in the U.K. would follow their example, but the tendency to get pre-occupied with God almost exclusively 'in' the *extra-ordinary* rather than seeing him in the ordinary is common enough. It accounts, for instance, for some Christians' intolerance of medicine simply because they believe that miracles of healing take place.

[See the article **MEDICINE & GOSPEL: THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP**]

d) To affirm that God is ‘mightily present’ when signs and wonders are apparent may well be appropriate, but it can all too often lead to feeling him to be ‘mightily absent’ when they are not! This can be devastatingly negative to a Christian individual or group, and can lead to a diet of the extraordinary and to an addiction to sign-hunting in order to ‘encounter’ God. (This is something of a spiritual equivalent to drug abuse.)

e) The incarnation of Jesus Christ shows us that God has chosen to live *within* our lives rather than at their supernatural fringe. To ‘locate’ God, therefore, solely in the miraculous and deny him in the ordinary is not Good News, but bad; it denies both Cradle and Cross.

I believe that any tendency to ‘locate’ God only where obviously supernatural happenings are apparent is probably the biggest single factor that leads to **blessings being present but not expected, awaited, noticed, recognised, welcomed, received, or used!**

To locate God only where there are signs and wonders is like saying that air is only where we discern a gale, or warmth only where we see a fire.

The only ‘sign’ which we can focus on without fear of distortion and imbalance is the sign which Simeon discerned had been given by God through Mary, - **Jesus Christ** himself.

[Luke 2:34b-35a "*This child is destined... to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed -*"]

PART III – The Nature of Blessing

9. Five Common Misunderstandings

The purpose and the nature of blessing are so closely related that the categories merge. Here are five misunderstandings and errors related to the nature of blessing, or which hinder our reception of it.

i) **The danger of pigeonholing.** God is not like a dentist or a hairdresser – concerned only with one particular bit of us, i.e. the ‘spiritual’. He is more like a mother with a baby – lovingly caring for our *total well-being*. The tendency to ‘pigeonhole’ blessings into some box marked ‘spiritual’ or ‘physical’, etc. effectively robs us of much that God has to give us.

ii) **All 'parts' affect the whole.** Everything we experience, good or bad, touches **us** not merely a *part* of us. Thus our spiritual health is affected by food, finances and fitness, as well as by fellowship. St. Paul used this truth when likening the Church to a human body. *If one member [of the body] suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.* [1 Corinthians 12:26, but see the whole passage, 12:12-27.] No blessing can be isolated for long from us as a whole person.

iii) **Blessings are not for bottling.** A cleaning liquid can be kept in its bottle or can be poured out. Its only chance of ever cleaning anything depends on its being used. God's blessings to us are not to become sacred relics, but to be used according to their purpose.

iv) **Unwanted formulas.** In many areas of life it is useful to have a mental formula, for example the one which prompts you to do what is safe with a lighted match and a gas tap! Science produces rules or formulas by which we know things will happen, but there are large and important areas of life when scientific formula do not apply. The spiritual life is one of them, because it is to do with love and human response. Tidy-minded Christians are always prone to streamline Christian experience, and to reduce God's infinitely rich and wonderful ways of working by introducing labels and expecting everyone to conform to a few simple patterns.

Of course it is useful to give general names to experiences: ‘Conversion’, ‘Healing’, ‘Being Born Again’, ‘Being Baptized in the Spirit’, but we must not use them in formulas. God is not a computer, but a loving Father!

I have met countless numbers of folk who have been blessed by the Holy Spirit in a wonderful way, who have found that their blessing is not quite according to some formula or other. This has led them into questioning and depression, to feelings of inferiority and failure, to despair and to guilt! And all because some well-meaning Christian has reduced the Wind of the Spirit to some neat formula and led others to assume that God's actions are regular and uniform to everyone at all times. One would have thought that the obvious corrective to that error is to read Scripture, yet it is clearly possible to have an enviable knowledge of Scripture yet still to think in terms of formulas.

- The formula approach undermines the doctrine of Man and the doctrine of God. God has created each of us **unique**, and he relates to us as a **person**. In no way will the meetings of a **personal God with unique individuals** be identical time after time.

- Peoples' experiences of blessing will have similarities from time to time, but to assume that God's treatment of A and B is going to be the same and it will have identical results in each case – is simply foolish. God is not restricted to our mental tramlines!

v) **Ducks or Sponges?** 'Like water off a duck's back' we say, and sometimes we seem to have a waterproof coating on which the dews and waters of the Spirit cannot settle. This is most usually caused by **fear** either of ourselves, of God, or of others. [See the article **THE PROBLEM OF FEAR.**] Such fear causes us to bolt the door at which the Lord Jesus stands patiently knocking [Revelation 3:20, John 20:19]. We want to soak-up blessing, and be less like ducks and more like sponges!

10. The Wilderness Experience: Breaking for Blessing.

We tend to recoil at the thought of 'breaking', and see 'making' as its opposite; the first bad, the second, good.

- Breaking can be a vital part of blessing. [For a detailed look at this see the article **WILDERNESS – the Christian Experience.**] *Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me...* is part of a widely-used prayer to the Holy Spirit.

What appears to us as 'break-down' is often in God's hands a *break-through*.

There are many reasons for this and particularly the way that God so often turns up-side-down our assumptions and priorities. For instance -

- his strength is made perfect in our weakness. [II.Corinthians 12:9]
- true life is gained by losing it. [Luke 17:33]
- we bear much fruit, if, like grain, we first die. [John.12:24ff.]
- we need to grow 'down' and be like children, rather than grow-up, to enter the Kingdom of God. [Mark 10:15]

These up-side-down truths demand the *breaking* of many of our adult suppositions, priorities, assumptions and aims, or, in St. Paul's terms, a daily crucifixion of our old natures. [Galatians 5:22-24, 1 Corinthians 15:31] And when that happens – it is God **blessing** us – although it may not feel like it!

- **Addiction.** Many of us know about addictions but regard ourselves as free of them. Spiritual-addiction is, however, rife among Christians! Christians frequently, even 'usually', get addicted to Christian **things**. This becomes apparent so often when a difference between Christians raises emotions. Spiritual addiction is as much a *bondage* to be broken as an addiction to gambling, alcohol or anything else. And its breaking will be our blessing.

The devil aims to divert us from commitment to **God** to commitment to the **things-of-** God. Then he hopes to make us confuse the two! The sad history of the church shows a constant commitment and battling over the *things* of God rather than a corporate rejoicing in God himself.

Think of how often loyalty and love of, say, our denominations, our Scriptures, our sacraments, our ministries, our buildings, and our traditions (new ones as well as old!) gets

inflated to an over-dependence and addiction. It is salutary to remember that none of the things which now divide Christians has God deemed important enough to put into eternity! Such blessings are not our fortresses by right, given for our security, but blessings lent us to use in worship and witness, in maturity and mission.

- It is sometimes for our good that blessings are reduced, removed or even withheld. Wise parents give their children things not on demand, but as and when they know they will benefit most from them. The same principles apply in the spiritual life, and I suspect that much of our experience of blessings which seem too small, form part of our necessary experience and training to manage the greater blessings which lie ahead [e.g. the Parable of the Talents, Matthew.25:14ff.]

11. Blessing by 'Remission'

There is sometimes confusion because it is assumed that the only way God can bless us if we are ill is to cure us.

The medical world uses the term *remission* when a sufferer is still ill but eased of the symptoms for a period. No one who has suffered much will doubt for a moment the very real blessing of having symptoms lifted for a while. Such blessings enable one to have a 'breather' and to gather one's mental, physical and spiritual resources again for the future.

The blessing by 'remission' is not the same as the blessing by 'cure'. God frequently blesses by a remission, an easing of symptoms. Sometimes such an easing will enable us to reflect on the deeper causes or the eternal dimension and goal of life. Only **time will tell** us whether a blessing is a 'remission' or a 'cure'.

The blessing of 'remission' with the easing of symptoms can sometimes be lost because it is assumed that it is a cure gone wrong! Such beliefs lead to guilt, anger and frustration.

If you have a remission – rejoice and thank God for it with all your heart, do not wreck it by interpreting it as a failed-cure. Time will tell.

I remember when my own crippled mother got up and walked instantly after being anointed. [See the article **ANOINTING with OIL**]. We played it very low-key for quite a few years until it was clear that it was most certainly a **cure** (of which in the forty following years she has never had a relapse.) Had it been a temporary remission, God would *not* have been glorified had we witnessed too early and inaccurately so that those we told of her 'cure' then learned that she was lame again. To call changes 'cures' or 'healings' before it is known that that is what they are, is presumptuous, cruel and dishonours God rather than glorifying him. As if that were not enough, to label 'remissions' as 'cures' when they are *not*, undermines and diminishes the very blessing which God has given us!

It is good to be reminded that Life is fatal – everyone dies of it sooner or later! Cure is not about avoiding ageing or avoiding death.

PART IV – The Outworking of Blessing

There are many ways in which we misunderstand the outworking of blessing, and here are some notes on the most common reasons why blessings do not blossom as they should.

12. 'Take up your bed!'

In the New Testament stories of the healing of the bedridden this command is given by both Jesus and Peter. [John 5:8-9, Mark 2: 11-12 (see also Matthew 9:6, Luke 5:24-25), and Acts 9:32-34.] The command was an integral part of the healing and must be noted carefully.

Until their healing these folk had been for long periods *dominated by their beds*. To have the ability to walk, but *still* to live mentally dominated by their beds would probably have resulted in at best a partial healing, and perhaps a relapse back into the security of sickness rather than face the demands of healthy living.

Without the healing of past patterns of thought, behaviour and expectancy, a blessing of physical cure has little chance of survival. When a physical cure is given, it is only the beginning; with the change at one level must come the necessary changes at all others.

What is true of blessings that seem predominantly physical is equally true of blessing of other areas of our lives, social, emotional, spiritual, past, etc.

Many people pray for the blessing of a cure not so that their lives should be transformed but just to ease their present pattern. Change can be traumatic. One blind man told me that he would not be able to cope with an instant healing because of the total upheaval and change it would bring to his life. I do not write that in any criticism of him; I know that we cannot cope when too much around us changes too quickly. I have included it here because it concerns blessing. While we may want blessing in *theory* (and even complain about our lack of it!), we may not welcome it in *practice*, or, once given, may quench it rather than face its upheaval.

13. 'Go!'

To receive a blessing is only a *beginning* of a greater wholeness or holiness. In the fuller accounts of Jesus' encounters with folk he is frequently recorded as giving very firm orders to maintain God's blessing. Often this is insisting on a U-turn, at other times it is specific direction of things to avoid if a relapse is not to take place. Here are some examples:

8. ***"Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has had on you."*** Such was our Lord's command to counteract the past life of someone whose demonic possession had cut him off from home, society and witness. [Mark 5:19.]
9. ***"Go in peace and be healed..."*** was Christ's command to the woman who was trembling in guilt and fear at his feet. To leave Christ in peace would be a U-turn that would bring her real healing. [Mark 5:34].
10. ***"See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded."*** Jesus knows best! Different people in different situations are ordered to do different things. While 'Legion' was told to go and tell and enjoyed the excitement of obeying that, the leper had all the disappointment of being commanded to keep quiet! Having been rejected by society because of his ailment,

Jesus' main concern now is to ensure that he is accepted by society. He commands him therefore to keep the requirement of the Jewish Law, and allow a priest to examine him, to confirm the cure, and to go through the full ritual requirements. [Matthew 8:4, see also Leviticus 14:1-32.]

If the need for some who receive blessing is to be told to *do* things; the main need of others who receive blessing may be the command *not* to do things!

- ***"See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so nothing worse happens to you"***
Jesus seeks the man out after his blessing, and finds him in the Temple. He had been a cripple for thirty-eight years, although he stayed in a place of natural healing! Jesus had challenged him with the vital question ***"Do you want to be made well?"*** In what way was the man prone to sin that Jesus should command him to stop? Paralysis must certainly restrict many usual opportunities for sin! Perhaps the man's sin was being unwilling to face change, i.e. to refuse to grow. [John 5:2-15.]
- ***"Do not even go into the village"*** This was Jesus' command to the blind man. Jesus earlier had taken ***the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village***. After laying hands on him the first time, he saw people ***'like trees walking'***. Jesus laid hands on him again. Jesus obviously felt that it was better for the man to receive his ministry in a secluded spot. Jesus was very gentle with him. Scripture does not disclose Jesus' reasons for forbidding the man to go straight back. Today's experience shows that it is often right to *stay with* a time of blessing for as long as you can, to reflect on it and allow it to 'sink in', rather than have everything immediately swamped by normal life.
[Mark 8:26. Some ancient texts add ***"...nor tell it in any town"*** which the KJV follows.]
- ***Jesus sternly ordered them, "See that no one knows of this."*** All writing is a matter of selection, and I was tempted to omit this reference! Jesus' command to the two blind-men-now-healed must rate high among his most difficult commands to obey! Matthew does not disclose Our Lord's reasons, or what else he said. [Matthew 9:30.]

But when I reflected on this command in relation to today, one message seems very relevant. There are blessings that are private and rightly so. In a society which assumes that all private matters should be public, and in churches where once confidentiality ruled but does so no longer, a reminder that not everything should be public may be timely. Contrary to so many media messages, the lives of others and of ourselves are sacred. We must not be guilty about the propriety of keeping some things just between God and ourselves, and if our motives are right we must not be pressurised into disclosing sensitive information.

PART V – Short Programme to Maintain Blessings

- Live simply, and a **day** at a time.
- **Enjoy** God's blessings.
- Focus on what you feel God has done/**is** doing.
- Don't get fussed about what he seems **not** to be doing.
- You are **unique**, let God deal with you in his way.
- Don't **measure** your weaknesses against others' strengths!
- Seek always to **grow** and to welcome the changes that are a sign of it.
- Expect God to work through seemingly **negative** things as well as positive ones.
- Pray daily for the coming anew of the **Spirit** and for his gift of love.
- **Forgiveness**. How many blessings are shrivelled by the lack of forgiveness, and how many blessings are multiplied by its presence!
- Go out now into life and witness to what God has done, **don't wait** until some imaginary date when you will 'find it easier' or be 'better suited for it'.
- Remember that sometimes it is only in '**going**' that our blessings become apparent.

"Go...." And as they went they were cleansed

[When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were made clean. Luke 17:14.

The Man at the Pool's experience was the same -

Then he went and washed and came back able to see. John 9:7b

He would have remained blind had he stayed with Jesus and not obeyed him.]

Prayers –

*Heavenly Father, equip me,
that I may love you with all my heart, with all my soul,
with all my mind, and with all my strength.
May I love my neighbour
as you enable me to love myself,
because on the Cross, Jesus has displayed your everlasting love for me.*

*Lord,
I thank you for all your blessings that I/we have received
Forgive the times when we have misused or ignored them.
Help us to understand you better,
to receive all that you have to give us
and to learn all that you have to teach us.
that we may grow-up into the likeness of your Son,
even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*