

PRAKASH

THE MAN WHO WANTED TO EARN GOD'S LOVE

Aims of this Exercise:

- ✓ *To create an awareness that God's love is always a gratuitous gift*
- ✓ *We do not deserve it, nor are we capable of meriting it.*
- ✓ *To realize that God's love is absolute and unconditional.*
- ✓ *To help us to accept God's love*
- ✓ *To free ourselves from "pharisaic attitudes" regarding the observance of rules, regulations and other canonical and juridical prescriptions.*
- ✓ *To avoid empty ritualism and formalism in our dealings with God.*
- ✓ *To break free from compulsions, obsessions and scruples in the service of God.*
- ✓ *That we may perform our good deeds and virtuous actions not as a means to buy God's love, but as our way to show him our gratefulness. Love for love.*

PRAKASH WANTED TO SEE GOD!

Narrator: Prakash was craving for God's love. He wanted to see God. That was because he thought himself to be a holy man. Holy as he was, he had a dream and God spoke to him:

God: Prakash, do you really want to see me and experience my love?

Prakash: Of course, my dear God, I want it! I'll be delighted. I'm just waiting for that! Yes, just to have a glimpse of you is enough for me.

God: Really great is your desire to see and possess me. So will it be. You will see me. Prakash, yonder there, on the top of that mountain, far away from everybody and everything. There, I will embrace you.

Narrator: The next day, Prakash awoke restless. He was determined to climb that mountain to see God. The sight of the mountain and the thought of seeing God face to face almost lifted him off the ground. He exclaimed:

Prakash: Oh! My! What have I got to give God to deserve his love and see Him? I can't go just like that, with nothing. Surely he will expect me to bring something.

Narrator: He searched and searched to find a present worthy of God. At last he found something.

Prakash: Hmmm! This precious Vase is just "the" thing. Priceless, new, untouched, a jewel of a Vase! This is worthy of God. I know he will like it. It will make him very happy. I am so glad I found it.

But what, just an empty Vase like that? Uh! Like this, for God? No! Never! I got to find something precious to put in it. Shall I fill it with gold and silver, even diamonds, pearls and precious gems? No! No! God made all these things! He does not need them. I need keep in my Vase things worthier than all these earthly treasures.

What does God wants from me? Yes, from a holy man like me? I know. I found it! That's what he wants: my prayers, my help and service to others, my almsgiving, my penances and sacrifices, my good deeds and actions.

Narrator: Prakash was proud and happy to find out exactly what he thought God wanted from him to make Him happy. Prakash said to himself:

Prakash: From now on, I have to do plenty of good deeds for God, and for each good deed I do, I will place one shiny pebble in my precious Vase for God. When this gets full, I will climb that mountain and meet God. How happy will He be to see this beautiful Vase with all my good deeds! How pleased will He be with me! Of course, He will love me because of them.

Narrator: There was no end to his wanting to go on filling up his Vase with many and extraordinary good deeds. At long last, it was full, full to overflowing. Patience could hold him no longer. Quick he was up and on his way to see God, holding with the utmost care his precious beautiful vase. His flight of fancy got the better of him all the way: He kept muttering to himself:

Prakash: I have an appointment with God. He will be waiting for me. How pleased will he be with my Vase! I spent myself to fill it up just for Him, just to see Him, to win his loving embrace.

Narrator: When Prakash reached the top of the mountain, God wasn't there. Nobody was waiting for him. No! All was quiet and still. He looked around, he ran here and there. No one was to be seen. All was barren, empty and silent! He stood alone there holding his precious Vase in his hands. Finally, anxious in desperation raised a cry for help moaned:

Prakash: God, where are you? You called me to this mountain to meet you. Here I am, I kept my word. But, you are nowhere to be seen. I carried this precious Vase for you all the way up here. I filled this to the brim

Show yourself to me! O God! Are you not happy I have come to see you? Don't let me down, I sincerely want to see you, that's why I came, that's why I got this Vase of mine filled full for you. Don't disappoint me like that; do you not hear me anymore? What's the use of all I've done for you?

Narrator: Then, Prakash broke into tears. At that moment a voice was heard:

God: Prakash, who is playing around here? Why are you hiding from me? I can see you very well. Can't you see me? Why have you put this Vase in between us? Why do you stand behind it?

Prakash: But, I love you. I brought this Vase for you. My whole life is in it! It's just for you!

God: How do you expect to see me, and embrace me when you hide behind your Vase? If you do this, you will never have me! And I'll not be able to embrace you! .

Prakash: What? What do you mean that you will never be able to embrace me? You are God, you can do all things!

God: Only this time, Prakash, it is possible for you to see me. Only you can do it!

Prakash: I? I have done everything I possibly can!

God: Not yet, Prakash.

Prakash: Still, I have to do something?

God: Yes, you have! Get the Vase out of the way. Remove it from my sight!

Prakash: What's that you say?

God: Prakash, Just drop it! Topple it over! Break it! Throw it away! Do anything you like but, just let it go!

Prakash: No! My precious Vase. My beautiful Vase, My own, that I brought for you, filled for you!

God: Throw it away! I do not want it! Let it go! I LOVE! YOU!

Reflection Questionnaire

1. Why was Prakash unable to see God?
2. Why God did not accept Prakash's Vase and his good works?
3. Why many pious persons, are so keen to say lots of prayers and do plenty of good works, penances, and sacrifices?
4. What can our, conscious or unconscious attitudes may be, in our dealings with God?
5. Can our prayers, good deeds and actions win God's love for us and His forgiveness for our sins?
6. Can ever anyone by his own efforts merit eternal salvation? Why?
7. Then, what's the purpose of doing good deeds? Should we do them at all? Why?

Thoughts for Meditation and/or for Teaching

- All forgiveness, justification, all salvation is a gratuitous gift of God.
- All our efforts, all our good works cannot cause our salvation.
- They are only signs that we have been already saved by God.
- Our good works do not make us good.
- On the contrary; it is because God made us good by his grace, that we are able produce good works
- Someone wrote: “All the good in us is God’s crop. All the evil in us is our crop.”
- We stand before God in utter poverty and total indigence.
- We are radically incapable to win God’s love and ever see Him face to face.
- If we able to accept Gods love, it is because, He accepted us first.
- Since God has already accepted us- sinners as we are- all that is left for us is to accept his acceptance.
- We have to cast away all our fears about God, and open ourselves to Him, in absolute trust and confidence.
- We need not do good works to feel accepted by God.
- When we were still sinners and away from Him, God loved us already and sent us his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Redeemer.
- It is not because we are good that God loves us: good or bad, God loved us always. That was his choice and good pleasure.
- We have to do away with the pharisaical mentality which makes us think that God loves us because of our good works.
- Keeping God’s commandments should only be an expression of our gratitude towards Him for the love He has for us.
- The greatest of all commandments is the commandment to love God and neighbor!
- We should certainly observe laws, rules, regulations, and canonical prescriptions etc. but always with liberty of heart.
- We should not be slaves to any law, the only slavery we should willingly to submit to is the “slavery of love”. As Augustine put it: “Love and do what you will”
- All men alike stand in need of God’s justification and of his redeeming love.
- Before him there is no distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, Christians and Non-Christiana, Saints and Sinners, Male and Female.
- Clinging to our good deeds - as Prakash did - is an obstacle in our path to God. When we cling to them, they turn into idols, which we worship, and in which we trust!
- All our trust has to be placed in God alone! (“*Thou shall not have other gods before me!*”)
- God’s love cannot be bought by means of “good deeds” and the so-called “meritorious actions”. This would be sort of bribing God!
- We cannot merit anything before God. There is one who has already merited it all for us, Our Lord Jesus Christ!
- No creature whatsoever, in the entire creation, did merit salvation, not even our Lady! In her case; her goodness, her virtues and her holiness were sheer gifts of God! (*‘My heart praises the Lord...because he has remembered me, his lowly servant!.. people will call me blessed because the Mighty has done great things for me’*)

- An excessive preoccupation with good deeds shows distrust in God's mercy. We want to acquire more and more "merits" as if to safeguard ourselves against the wrath of God!
- Unawares, we may be turning our good actions into a sort of an "insurance policy" to cover the "risk" of being overtaken by the "justice" and "holiness" of God.
- We want a "guilt-edged insurance". Our only insurance is the infinite and unconditional love of God.
- Basically, the root-cause of many wrong attitudes towards God is selfishness. . We want to make sure that we attain salvation at any cost, even if it implied bending the will of God!
- Unconsciously, our first priority is "our salvation", Gods love" comes second place, and "God's will" take a third place.
- In our hearts, unformulated, yet terribly real, lies the primordial temptation of mankind "Thou shalt be like God". We want to have control of ourselves, of our destiny, of our salvation! We would like to be independent from God even in the area of our final destiny!
- We are afraid of unconditionally entrusting ourselves to God. Silently, our hearts keep whispering to us: "No one ever knows what God may do!"
- In our spiritual life, in our striving for salvation, in our dealings with God, our unconfessed attitudes might be worded thus:
 - **First we want to save ourselves; next we want to do the will of God.**
 - **First we want to love God; next we want God to love us!**
 - **First we want to be secure; next we want to trust God!**

Matter for Meditation and Teaching

Romans Chapters 3,4,5 and 9

Galatians 2/15-21, 3/1-29, 4/1-7

Ephesians Chapters 1 and 2.

APPENDIX

Note: In case you would like to use these jottings for group sessions, we offer below some additional materials

Group Activities

Activity One: Acting or Role-playing Gospel Texts

- ✓ Divide the large group into small groups of five or six persons each.
- ✓ Assign to each group one of the Gospel Texts suggested below.
- ✓ The group members will read the passage, discuss it and prepare an activity based on it.
- ✓ They may stage it with adaptations relevant to our day-to-day life.
- ✓ After each presentation, there will be an evaluation and short discussion.

Suggested texts

- The parable of the workers in the Vineyard. Mt 20/1-16
- Mary Magdalene. Lk 8/36-50
- Prodigal Son. Lk 15/11-32
- Zacchaeus. Lk 19/1-10/
- Lost Son Lk 15/11-32
- Pharisee and Tax Collector Lk 18/9-14

Actitiy Two; Group Prayer.

You may lead the group through a shared prayer.

Bring into it the main ideas of the day.

Ask the smaller groups to prepare and conduct the group prayer for 5 to 10 minutes each
Each group will choose hymns and readings, prepare a mini-commentary on the readings
and compose some original prayers.

By turns, they will lead the entire group through prayer.

Suggested hymns;

- Stand by me
- He is my everything
- Just a closer walk.
- God so loved the World.
- God is love.
- Just as I am.
- Take and receive
- Where he may lead me.
- With you as my guide
- My shepherd is the lord.
- Let the lord have his way.
- Into your hands.
- I surrender all.
- He's all I need.
- I'll say yes
- Thy loving kindness.

