

Because we want to flow with God's Spirit as He leads us into prayer, it would seem wise to maximize the effectiveness of our corporate efforts (Prayer leader please take note). Let us consider some of the common errors that frequently occur during a prayer gathering, whether it be large or small:

- 1) **The one who is praying dominates the time with longwinded prayers.** Prayers must be Spirit-led; and of course, you are to flow with the Spirit for as long (or as short) as He gives utterance. But do not drone on in the power of the flesh.
- 2) **Announcements are made within the prayer.** Let's say that Joe broke his arm. The prayer will usually go something like this: "Dear Lord, you know that Brother Joe broke his arm this past Tuesday and was taken to Mercy Hospital etc. etc." It would be better to stop the prayer, address the congregation, explain the situation, and then pray. Surely God knows all of the details; you do not need to remind Him. Also, be sure that your prayer is not gossip!
- 3) **Horizontal, instead of vertical "prayers"** How many times have you heard a short sermon included in the prayer? In fact, it is seldom directed toward the throne of grace, but rather to the attendees, to teach or exhort. Don't fool yourself, beloved; this is not prayer.
- 4) **There is a lack of focus upon the One who hears our prayers.** When you pray aloud are you wondering how others perceive your petition? (Is it doctrinally correct; does it sound spiritual enough?) Or, are you fixed upon the Lord... thinking of Him and speaking directly to Him?

- 5) **The flow of the Spirit is cut short** by a well-meaning pray-er who changes the subject of prayer before the entire objective has been met. For instance: the current topic is spiritual revival in your city. A few people have already prayed for certain aspects of this multifaceted issue and the Holy Spirit intends for there to be several more prayers offered regarding this subject... but then, someone begins to pray for those suffering with AIDS. Surely this is a noble prayer, and it may indeed be Spirit-led, but the timing is off. Allow there to be a "dead spot" of at least a minute before changing topics, so the fullness of God's purposes can be accomplished.

Ride the wave of the Holy Spirit for as long as He leads. You may enjoy intensive prayer for a half-hour, sometimes for several hours. You will know when the session is over... the steady stream of intercession simply dries up. Here is a rule of thumb: If you have to think about what to pray about next, it is usually time to take a break, or to end the meeting. *Dear disciple, don't become legalistic about these things, but lovingly instruct them.*

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# Your Prayer Life

"... pray without ceasing..." 1Thes. 5:17

This is where things get quiet, when guilt rises... or worse yet, self-justification and excuses: How much time do you spend in prayer, beloved... in your "closet" and throughout the day?

We could write volumes about the value of prayer and the command to pray... or give examples of the Apostles' praying, but you have heard it all before; haven't you? And I'm sure you realize that prayer, in various forms, is mentioned in the Word hundreds of times. (It seems rather interesting that our text, with only 3 little words, merits being a verse by itself. I wonder why?) Not to mention that you are well aware of the fact that God does nothing in the earth except through prayer - correct? Nevertheless, much of the Church remains prayerless, impotent and fruitless... and appears to be on the verge of irrelevance. When will we learn?

If you are truly desirous of becoming a significant player, I mean one who is running the race to win, a true disciple of Jesus Christ, then you must hear this: Search the New Testament and the extended collection of biographical journals (past and present), and you will be hard-pressed to find any servant of the Most High, who accomplished their God-given assignment, consistently bearing fruit, without having an EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER LIFE. Come now; God Incarnate needed to pray - at times He prayed all night. Do you think that you can somehow bear eternal fruit while sidestepping this necessary ingredient? You have been deceived! Endurance, diligence, humility, faith — all of these are essential, but there is no substitute for fervent prayer.

Some would say, "You pray, I'll work." I'm sorry, dear child, if you really want to become like Jesus, you will both pray and work just as He did! Use the following as a guideline, not a law: All Christians should pray at least 1 hour per day. If you are a leader, 2 hours should be the minimum. (Some pray 4 hours or more.) Remember this: The more work you do and the more responsibility you have, the more you must pray. There are many who look good and sound good and act like they have spiritual power, but they do not.

Make no mistake, there are times and seasons of prayer just like any other spiritual activity... including seasons of lesser or greater intensity. There are also times of deep brokenness when you simply can't pray very much. (It seems religious to even suggest it.) If you are there now, please don't be discouraged by this teaching. At the proper time, the Lord will revitalize your prayer life... ask Him.

*You can gradually build your prayer time, you know. What prevents you from adding 5 or 10 minutes to your daily routine? Maintain this additional prayer until it becomes a part of your life... and then increase it again. Pray in the Spirit throughout the day. In this manner, you will begin to live in the Spirit, rather than merely paying an occasional visit. Without a doubt, believe this promise: "... He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).*

## **The Simplicity of Prayer**

*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7*

So many books have been written to help reveal the intricacies of talking with God! Much revelation has come to the Bride through the pen of E.M. Bounds, Andrew Murray, Watchman Nee, and Jeanne Guyon. Unfortunately, legalism and intellectualism have also expressed their logic and methods leaving much to be desired. A manual about how to pray cannot teach you to pray any more than a driving manual can teach you to drive. Yes, you can ingest the basics but you can really only learn by doing. How much time do you spend practicing your prayer life?

There is no need to understand how prayer works. This may only muddy the water. There is no formula. Why do men always want everything neatly wrapped? Your finite mind will never grasp infinite wisdom, but prayer can be as simple as this: You pray, God answers! Learn His will in the matter, believe His promise and ASK.

There is nothing mystical about child-like faith, Christian. A four-year-old jumping from the kitchen chair expects her father to catch her. You too can ask and expect God to answer. He has promised to do so. Just believe.

Long, flowery prayers are OK; and written prayers serve a purpose. But what could be better than speaking to God from your heart? Express your feelings. Praise and thank Him. Repent, cry, question, trust, ask and ask again. This is simple prayer. Anyone can do it. Why not now?

*"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).*

## **The Prayer Meeting**

*"I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." 1Tim. 2:8 "So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary... where many were gathered together praying." Acts 12:12*

Prayer has been on the increase in many parts of the world... and that is a very good sign. Prayer meetings are springing up everywhere. Even the clergy are crossing denominational boundaries to meet together for intercession! As you know, throughout Church history, God has stirred extraordinary prayer before He did something of significance. Be attentive, dear saint, God is about to do something.