

Do You Release These 12 Crucial Sounds of Prayer?

Each and every one of us has a part to play in God's orchestra of prayer. What is your special sound? What instrument do you play? The Holy Spirit directs the movements of this divine symphony according to the score of God's Word.

I have identified 12 distinct "sounds" that come forth in the orchestra of prayer. How many of these sounds are part of your prayer arsenal?

1. Thanksgiving

Prayers of thanksgiving are like the first movement in a symphony. They open the way to a concert of worship and intercession. The psalmist declares, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving" (Ps. 100:4), and that is what we do. That is what happened for the grateful leper in Luke 17:11-19.

According to Old Testament law, lepers were supposed to declare, "Unclean! Unclean!" wherever they went (see Lev. 13:45), and they were expected to stay away from other people. But 10 lepers approached Jesus for healing. Nine of them continued on their way, incredulous and in high spirits. But one turned around and came back to express his thanks directly to the rabbi whose power had healed him. He is the one whose thankful heart opened the way to more liberty, joy, and healing. The others were cleansed—but he was made whole. Jesus told him, "Your faith has made you well" (Luke 17:19b). Thanksgiving is an important quality of a healthy, whole person.

2. High Praise

What follows "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving"? It is "and into His courts with praise" (Ps. 100:4). Thanksgiving

and praise are not quite the same thing. There is a progression. First, we thank God for His goodness: "For the Lord is good" (v. 5a). Then, we praise Him for His greatness: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised"(Ps. 48:1a). Always remember that praise is one of the highest weapons of spiritual warfare. Praise opens prison doors and sets the captives free.

3. Worship

Following thanksgiving and praise, we move into heartfelt worship. Despite the fact that I am comparing these aspects of prayer to instruments in an orchestra, in reality, worship pertains less to music—which is how we tend to think of it in a contemporary church context—and more to an inner attitude of the heart. To worship is to bow down, to kneel, to prostrate oneself.

We might begin with joyful shouting, as Psalm 95 encourages us in its first few verses, because God is so great. Our expressions of praise, which can be chosen as an act of the will, may then lead us into heartfelt worship as the ultimate expression of surrender to God. Worship, according to the first point of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, is "the chief end of man." It is foundational to our faith, with or without audible musical notes.

4. Dedication (Consecration)

Building on what has come before, we present ourselves to God. We "present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service of worship" (Rom. 12:1b). This enables us to enter into the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17 as we are set apart for the Lord and sanctified. He prayed to the Father, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they may also be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:19).

Our prayers of consecration are a lovely sound to the Lord's

ears. He loves to hear “saving grace” prayers, too, but our dedication and consecration prayers show Him that we know we are not our own, that we were bought with a price. “I surrender all” resounds from the orchestra of prayer. Jesus Christ is our Master and Lord!

5. Prayers of Commitment

As we progress, our prayers of dedication and consecration lead to prayers of commitment, and we say, as the psalmist did, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth” (Ps. 31:5). As we commit ourselves to Him, we rest in faith-filled trust. He will take care of us, down to the smallest detail of our lives. “Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you” (Ps. 37:5, NLT).

Committing is an act; trust is an attitude. Whenever your load becomes too heavy, you cast your burden onto the Lord (see 1 Pet, 5:7.) You commit it to Him. And then you leave it with Him; you trust Him with it. You give it and then leave it.

6. Prayers of Petition

Many times, we pray simple prayers of petition in addition to prayers of commitment. We can expect each of our prayers to be answered—if they line up with the will of God. “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14, MEV). I like to say it this way: God came up with the original “World Wide Web.” His “WWW” consists of His will, His Word and His ways.

When you pray, do you ask the Bible way? “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you will receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24). This does not mean that you will have everything you fervently desire, but that you will align your desires with His as you walk in increasing holiness.

7. Prayers of Intercession

At last, we reach intercessory prayer (the primary topic of my book, *Strike the Mark*). Did you know that all those different “sounds” of prayer must be heard first? We have to come through the gates with praise before we can enter into the Most Holy Place.

Intercession is not “devotional prayer.” That form of prayer should have been covered already in your earlier time of communion with the Lord. Intercession is making prayers of petition on behalf of others, standing in the gap between man’s imperfection and God’s perfection. We confess the iniquity of others as if it is our own and we ask for God’s mercy. (See, for example, Isa. 59:2-15.) What a high honor it is, a labor of love, to be allowed to stand in the gap on behalf of other people!

8. Prayers of Supplication

The apostle James tells us that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13b). To pray according to mercy is always to pray according to God’s heart. This is much more difficult than it sounds—even impossible. In fact, you cannot lift up a cry for mercy without receiving God’s grace to do so.

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16, KJV). We cannot come boldly to the throne of grace in our own human strength. We must come with heartfelt thanksgiving, praise, and worship, surrendering our own agendas. Then we can receive His heart of mercy and pray according to His will.

9. Prayers of Command

At times, coming “boldly” entails uttering commanding words of prayer, as Joshua did when he spoke to the Lord and then released commands to the sun and the moon, so that the sun

stood still for an entire day (See Josh. 10:12-15.) It takes a profound gift of faith to do something like that.

The prayer of command is declarative in nature. Even though you may not play that “instrument” regularly in the prayer orchestra, it is important to know that it is an authentic biblical option.

10. Prayers That Decree a Blessing

Much more often, we utter prayers of blessing, even decreeing specific blessings. We can bless others with the words that the Lord gave to Moses, “May the Lord bless you and keep you.” Remember this key point: we are part of a speech-activated kingdom.

This is how God releases His blessings on His people: “They will put [‘invoke, NKJV marginal note] My name upon the children of israel, and I will bless them” (Num. 6:27). When, fueled by the gift of faith, you decree something that is according to the will, word, and ways of God, all things are possible! (See, for example, Matt. 19:26.)

11. Prayers that Thwart the Enemy

Can we utter prayers that denounce or limit the powers of darkness? Can we bind Satan from continuing his work? Well, Jesus illustrated the believer’s power to do so when He cursed a fig tree that was not bearing fruit, after which it withered and died. (See Matt. 21:18-22.) This is like a prayer of command coupled with righteousness and faith. Jesus inspected the tree and found no figs, only leaves, on it. It had given the external appearance of being fruitful, but upon closer examination, it proved to be unproductive.

This is the kind of prayer that draws a line in the sand and says, “Enough is enough. No more!” This form of prayer should be exercised with wisdom perimeters. It requires clear discernment and faith and should be employed only after

confirmation from God.

12. Persistent Prayers

The final sound in the orchestra of prayer is one of persistence. The orchestra keeps on playing even if the lights go out. There is the familiar parable in the book of Luke about the persistent widow whose appeal to the judge was answered only because she would not let it go. (See Luke 18:1-8.) Earlier in Luke, Jesus told another parable about a friend whose persistent entreaties produced results. (See Luke 11:5-8.)

Keep on praying. Don't give up. The more you pray, the more God will keep on drawing you into His heart. You and I have been called to be enforcers of the kingdom of light over the (temporary) kingdom of darkness. Giving up is not an option!

Target Practice

Almighty God, in Jesus' great name, I thank You that the fervent prayer of a righteous believer prevails! By the grace of God, I am adding these various sounds of prayer into my understanding. Holy Spirit, guide and direct me in choosing which instrument should be selected at the appropriate time and how to play it. I praise and thank You that You are teaching me how to release prayers that will strike the mark without fail in Jesus' great name. Amen and Amen! {eo}

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