

Why God Honors an Effective Man of Prayer

We've all heard it before: Pray more, pray better and pray continually. What does it mean to pray?

Should prayers be verbalized? Does it matter? What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? With all the demands of a 21st-century man of God, how do you even start the monumental task of attempting to pray continually?

Certainly there are times throughout Scripture where prayers are prayed aloud and in front of a multitude of people: Solomon in 1 Kings 8 (and 2 Chronicles 6); the priests and Levites in 2 Chronicles 30; Job in front of his three friends; Isaiah's allusion to prayed-aloud prayer in Isaiah 26:16; the apostles together in Acts 4:24; and Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17.

According to my research, it is inconclusive as to the expression of prayer through vocal cords for any other prayer in the Bible. Even though it's written down in verbatim form, surely the Spirit of God that inspired our Scriptures knows each and every prayer said, regardless of verbalization.

There are also other times when prayed-aloud prayers are discouraged because they can draw undue attention to the prayer issuer rather than the message or intent of the prayer. Such instances Jesus addressed in Matthew 6:5 (also in Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47) while He was denouncing the teachers of the law who basically were praying just to satisfy the need of themselves or their constituents to hear a prayer.

Apparently, the apostles were so confused as to the method of prayer that they directly asked Jesus to teach them how to pray in Luke 11. Even the most pious of the fathers of our church were clueless when confronted with the example of Jesus

contrasted with their societal knowledge of prayer.

There are certainly examples where individuals make known their private prayers to the many for the encouragement of the many. Paul repeatedly informed the churches and various individuals of his personal prayers in every one of his epistles. Surely, praying together with the same intent helps in times where we need someone to agree with us in prayer (Matt. 18:19) and for the mutual bearing of burdens with your Christian brothers.

As men, we don't like letting other men into our personal problems or desires. But there's nothing wrong with it; in fact, it is right and true and good. And then we're confronted with the command to pray continually in 1 Thessalonians 5:16. By definition, we physically cannot continually pray aloud since God created us with the need to sleep, eat and socialize. Therefore, there has to be an underlying coordination with the Spirit of God who prays for you and issues prayers, while coordinating with your soul, when even your mind may not be aware (Rom. 8:26).

Praying, by definition, is a communication with your Creator—the one who knows you on the level of intent and desires. He knows you past all the external walls we put up as men. He knows what we are really praying for, regardless of any words we may actually be saying, at all times. His Spirit is inside us constantly searching us, discovering our hearts' desire, and detecting how we respond to various crises of ourselves, loved ones or community.

Jesus repeatedly went off in the wilderness or somewhere else by Himself to pray and commune with His Father. I don't think it's a coincidence that when He was raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11:41, one of the few times Jesus prayed aloud in the Bible, that He directly told His apostles and disciples that He was praying only so they could hear Him. Jesus also indicated that praying by yourself while behind closed doors

is acceptable and encouraged in Matthew 6:6. Jesus was leading by example when He went off alone for prayers and fellowship, and He actually taught that praying and fellowshiping alone with the Father is pleasing to the Father.

Since Jesus was the firstborn of many brothers (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18), we should expectantly follow His example and instruction in order to become the men of prayer that God expects of us. After Jesus, and after we accept Him as Lord, the Spirit of God makes His home in us, and He continually ushers us into truth and goodness.

As we increase and grow regarding maturity in the Lord and spiritual maturity, we are gifted with an exponential increase in ability to engage in successful praying. As we are transformed into the likeness of Jesus, the intents and desires of our hearts are molded to the intents and desires of the will of God. As the Spirit of God groans and intercedes for us when our intents and desires are congruent with the will of God, we issue effective prayers—whether or not we are actually verbalizing them through the linguistic approximations of our minds.

In conclusion, I believe that every man has two choices: to want to be like God or to want to live life his own way. One way leads to becoming mature in the Spirit, where you can effectively pray continually, and the other leads to becoming further from the character of Jesus, where your prayers are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 28:9). Therefore, whichever path you choose, even on a daily basis, depends on whether or not you can effectively pray—let alone pray continually.

Men, each day you must make a choice that today you want to be a little more like God, that you trust Him to mold you into the image of Jesus, and that you allow Him to highlight times, people and places where you need to be. If our intents and desires are truly congruent with being like God, becoming perfect even as He is perfect, then our hearts will

immediately commune with the Spirit of God to call forth a pleasing spiritual prayer to the Father. When the Spirit of God groans and prays with you, assuredly you should know that you're partnering with God and that it pleases Him.

Then and only then may we rest assured of the promises of Jesus in Matthew 21:22 and Mark 11:24, where we are promised that whatever we shall receive the desires of our hearts. Practically, this means that a little more God comes into our lives or circumstances and results in a little less suffering and pain.

Each day, every morning, make a conscious decision to trust God, to be like Him, and to want to become more like Jesus. If you do that, your desires will increasingly be in accordance with the Father's will, your prayers will increasingly become more effective, and you will see the power of God in your life. Are you ready to become an effective man of prayer?

For the original article, visit .