

Your Secret Weapon Against Anemic Prayers

When they heard this, they lifted their voices in unity to God and prayed, "Lord, You are God, who has made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, and who by the mouth of Your servant David said: 'Why did the nations rage, and the people devise vain things?'" (Acts 4:24-25).

The early disciples not only studied and preached the Word of God, they prayed the Scripture. In fact, while the apostles were wrestling to find a solution in the midst of the growing pains of the church in Jerusalem, they emphatically declared they must continually give themselves to the ministry of the Word and the ministry of prayer as their priority (Acts 6:4). Ministry of the Word in this context obviously centers around proclaiming and teaching the gospel. However, I personally believe the ministry of the Word in the context of the early church included the application of the Scripture in prayer and in worship.

Praying the Bible is one of the most rewarding engagement experiences. It essentially demands we put our faith in God's Word and utter it back to Him, expecting Him to stay true to His Word in His time. We often do not know how to pray or we lack the language of prayer. The Bible provides us with the basic language of communion with God. Praying and agreeing with the truth in the Bible also assures us we are praying in the will of God, and He delights to perform that which was written in His Word.

This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. So if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have whatever we asked of Him. (1 John 5:14-15)

In the context of private prayers, the Word of God provides us framework, guidance, confidence in His will and language for prayer. In a group prayer context, the Word of God provides a solid point of agreement, which fosters unity in prayers and provides the core language of prayers.

Group prayers are often anemic in the church because the people of God have a limited language of prayer and are often embarrassed or shy to publicly utter their limited expressions of prayer. When the language of the Scripture undergirds our prayers, we have more confidence to utter them publicly and elaborate on them.

I pray the Bible in private and in public. In my private prayers, I have more liberty to let my emotions be mingled into my utterance and expression, but in public, unity in prayer with those with whom I pray is of the utmost importance. Therefore, I often use the text of the Bible, especially using as my anchor prayers prayed by saints as recorded in the Bible. From that shared foundation, I will continue praying by applying those biblical requests to our present context.

This is true when we pray with thousands of believers in a congregation or in a small group of two or three people. I love to pray through the Psalms privately and publicly. While writing *Bible 360°*, I have been praying through Psalm 91 with a group of fervent young adults. We pray through key phrases of each verse and apply them to our personal, family, ministry, missional and national needs. Let's take the first verse as an example:

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1, NKJV).

Several members of my prayer group were heard praying these utterances in Jesus' name, based on this psalm:

“Father, we desire to abide in Your secret place. In that secret place, reveal Your heart to us. We want to hear Your voice, and we want see Your face.”

“We delight to dwell under the shadow, the canopy of Your wings. There we find safety, comfort and delight. Come and cover Your people in the midst of our adversaries. Shine in and through Your people to touch those who are wounded and dying. Let Your shadow be cast long over them, and may they be spared from the heat of life.”

Praying the Bible keeps our prayers focused and unifies us in the will of God. As Christians from various traditions have different expressions and styles of praying, the biblical prayers provide a context for agreement in prayer irrespective of our liturgical tradition. Agreement is crucial when two or three or more believers pray together. Jesus told us that “‘If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:19, MEV). Psalm 133 promises blessings from the Lord when brethren dwell together in unity:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brother to dwell together in unity! ... for there the Lord has commanded the blessing, even life forever” (Ps. 133:1, 3). {eo}

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Nargis.