

Why Even Bother Praying Anymore?

When I recently heard Christians suggesting that a prayer initiative for America was useless I was struck to the core with the realization that the Body of Christ is far from unified. I mean, if we can't unify around prayer, what can we unify around?

For all the impactful prayer movements in the Body, I still run into some believers who seem embittered by the efforts. They throw up their arms and ask, "Why even bother praying anymore?" because they don't see the fruit of their supplications. Yet faith is the evidence of things not seen (see Heb. 11:1). I shudder to think what would happen if we stopped praying for America.

What's the solution to this disunity? More intercession, more equipping, and more love.

Here's the deal: With rights come responsibilities—and both apply to prayer. We have the right to come boldly to the throne of grace for anything we need—but we also have a responsibility to pray. Jesus said, "*When* you pray," not "*If* you pray" (see Matt. 6:6). Jesus wouldn't have told us to pray if it was a useless endeavor.

Indeed, the Bible commands us to pray instead of getting anxious (see Phil. 4:6). We are charged to pray for those who persecute us (see Matt. 5:44). We are supposed to pray for those in authority (see 1 Tim. 2:1-4). God's prayer list is quite specific. When we pray His Word in faith, He hears us. And we know if He hears us, He answers us.

Jesus also addressed our motive for praying—it should be for heaven's reward, not man's (see Matt. 6:5-6). If our prayer meetings are simply spiritual warfare showcases where one

prayer warrior works to out-pray the next, we're hypocrites (see Matt. 6:5). Our prayer motive should be to bring glory to God by bringing His will to the earth—not to bring glory to ourselves because we can bind the devil with more vehemence or pray the Word more eloquently. That's called religious performance!

Ephesians 4:12 explains the primary purpose of the five-fold: to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Part of that equipping includes teaching on pure intercession motivated by love.

We all have the ministry of intercession just like we all have the ministry of reconciliation. The Holy Spirit can work through any one of us to launch prayers that bring transformation to situations, lives and cities just like He can work through any of us to share the glorious Gospel of Christ. He's looking for willing vessels with the right motive—and that right motive is love. Love (and obedience) should move us to prayer.

As more saints are equipped to intercede in alignment with the heart of the Father, the prayer movement becomes like a proverbial snowball rolling down a hill. Although our prayers are not solely results-focused, the results will eventually become visible if we remain faithful to believe God's Word doesn't return to Him void. Let us not become weary or faint in praying for God's will. We will reap a harvest from our faithful prayers if we do not give up (see Gal. 6:9). And reaping a harvest of prayer results can sure light a fire in the heart of a believer who wants to see God's Kingdom manifest. As that fire spreads, so does God's will across the earth.

Sure, we can intercede alone, but look how the intercession momentum builds as we move corporately—in unity. Jesus said, "You may ask me anything in my name, and I will do it" (see John 14:14, NIV). But look what happens when we add just one

more: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (see Matt. 18:19, KJV). If one can put 1,000 to flight, two can put 10,000 to flight (see Deut. 32:30). And remember what happened when the disciples in the Book of Acts got together to pray corporately? "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in heart and mind" (see Acts 4:31-32). They were unified in prayer.

So therein lies one part of the solution to the disunity in the Body of Christ. Instead of focusing on denominational differences, which spiritual gift should be exalted over another, or even why we aren't seeing the prayer answers we labored for in a nation, we should be coming together in unity to pray out of a heart of love for Jesus, receive a refreshing from the Holy Ghost, and be equipped to speak the unadulterated Word of God boldly. As we do, it will breed an atmosphere that sets the stage for us all to reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God—and see prayer answers.

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