

Why Addiction to Topic-Driven Prayer Can Leave You Frustrated

The Holy Spirit schooled me in the important concept of effective and efficient prayer one day when I was alone in prayer at Revolution Church at the base of Pikes Peak in Manitou Springs, Colorado. Keep in mind that I have always been a “prayer guy.”

I caught the fire of love for Jesus in my early years when I was in the place of prayer, and that hunger for intimacy with God has never ceased. This particular day I found myself praying very good prayers, but these particular prayers weren't on God's agenda for me that day. I was praying for church growth, for people that came to mind, for strategic ideas and other good and important topics. However, they were topics that came to mind based on human insight and yesterday's revelation. I had no leading that those focuses were also God's focus for me in that moment. I was praying blindly.

“Therefore I also, after hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, mentioning you in my prayers, so that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints” (Eph. 1:15-18)

Understand, blind prayers aren't bad. It's a very good thing to intercede for any number of pressing issues. However, I was learning that prayers based on human insight alone were simply

not efficient. This particular day something else was on God's heart, and He was instructing me to avoid distraction—even honorable distraction such as praying for people in the church—and to have laser precision by praying what was on God's heart. Prayer is all about agreement. If God's calling us to stand in the gap for one thing and we're focusing on another thing, we are actually misaligned.

Topic-driven prayer, or prayer that originates from a list of needs, should serve a minor part in the life of intercession. We don't want to lean on our natural logic when functioning in the supernatural.

In fact, you'll notice that topic-driven prayer tends to become quite repetitious, so much so that it can define the culture of your prayer life. Have you noticed how people tend to pray over and over, day after day, for the exact same things?

I was talking to someone recently who made a brilliantly simple analysis of this pattern: "If we ask God to move on an area once, why would we need to do it again? At some point the repetition becomes evidence of doubt that God has responded to the initial request."

This is true! I've actually been teaching this for years. When moving into a prayer watch or a corporate prayer meeting, the most powerful and effective thing we can do is pray in the Spirit. Then, from that place, we can easily discern what God is searing on our spirits and come into agreement with that. As I transitioned away from petition-driven prayer and into revelation-driven prayer, it has become extremely uncommon for me to pray for what is logical, what I prayed for previously or from a list. That type of prayer is de-energizing. It's soul-heavy versus spirit-heavy. It results in frustration and doubt that God is actually moving.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your

own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6, MEV).

However, if we move from mostly asking to mostly decreeing, declaring and commanding, our entire prayer culture will shift dramatically. We are God's agents of change. We are to enforce God's will in prayer much more than we are to request God to move on our behalf.

"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17, MEV).

The principle I live by is simple: If I know what God's will is (and I am instructed to know just that) then I don't petition. There is no need to. I switch from being inquisitor to being enforcer. I know God's will and I am the one to enforce it, to cause it to come to pass. The mountain is there for me to move.

"A quick way to become disillusioned and discouraged in the place of prayer is to become plagued with what I call petitionitis or to discover addiction to petition. The thought that God is simply waiting for us to ask Him for something so He can perform it for us is exceedingly short sighted. We should discuss our desires with God, but the idea that this is the limit of prayer is tragically flawed. Yes, we can ask God for things, but the adventure begins when we allow God to reveal His requests to us. It simply makes sense to fuel our prayers with the revelation of what God is working on with us at that moment. One of the most exciting questions we can ask God is, 'What are You thinking about right now?' If God revealed that a terrorist attack is scheduled to be carried out in our city within the next 12 hours, and He is attempting to reveal instructions for intercession on that issue, it wouldn't make sense to spend precious time praying for other things." –Revelation Driven Prayer

When I was leading churches in Colorado and Detroit it was

extremely rare for us to corporately pray from a list. In fact, I can't remember the last time we did that. We'd simply come together and pray on fire in tongues for up to an hour before we'd be ready to share what we sense God is calling us to pray for during that meeting. We'd continue praying in the Spirit while people boldly prayed out in English what God had revealed to them. Others would write the prophetic revelation down on white boards in the room.

Others would draw prophetic pictures. Others would hit their face and groan in the Spirit. It was very common for us to go entire meetings without asking a single thing of God, yet we made significant progress.

Is it possible to work off of a predetermined list of topics and still have a fiery and effective prayer meeting. Well, I do believe it can happen. It's true that I have been in some such prayer meetings that had some very real spiritual zip on them.

I know some people can come alive in petition-heavy prayer meetings if they are truly Holy Spirit driven, so I want to be careful not to dismiss other forms of prayer that truly have effect for some.

The point of this article is to help awaken people to a fresh realm of Spirit-fueled intercession. Asking over and over again for the same thing most always results in frustration. If honest, most would admit that faith actually decreases with that method.

Doubt increases as they wait and wonder if God is moving. The reach of the prayer is limited to what we can analyze with our human senses. The invisible realm of possibility and promise is minimized while our natural analysis drives the intercession. On the contrary, revelation driven prayer is fueled by what we know God is in agreement with.

There is no wondering even if there is delay. We are

convinced. Even the most fervent topic-driven prayer meetings can leave people questioning whether God is going to respond or not.

In fact, I was once in a meeting with one of the nations premiere prophetic worship leaders who wanted me to consider helping bring a fresh prophetic thrust to their prayer events. Understand, these events were attended by hundreds of people who were contending for revival, and the ministry is known for its prophetic heartbeat. However, the intercession was a bit repetitive and driven by what was obvious. The prayer topics were great, but there was an additional step into the invisible realm that would have taken it even further than it was.

Even great prayer ministries can benefit by becoming revelation driven.

“Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the totality of the Almighty?” (Job 11:7, MEV).

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable are His ways!” (Rom. 11:33, MEV).

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25, MEV).

“I am actively contending that the dry seasons of struggle in the prayer room that has weighed on so many will not remain the norm. The cry is for regular, perpetual revelation to rain down from heaven on a continual basis. If we are to walk in the Spirit, we must have the ability to see and hear and discern in the Spirit. Instead of simply praying along with the prayer leader in the room for the nation of Egypt, for example, we’ll receive, on both a personal and a corporate level, clear and active revelation about Egypt or whatever is on God’s agenda for that session. The more people that receive a strong yes in their spirits as intercession is being led,

the more agreed they are and the more effective it is. It's good to pray for what seems obvious any time of the day. It's better to pray in a specific moment for whatever issue God's calling us to focus on. The goal is to lay the list aside as much as possible and wait until God tells us exactly what to agree on. We'll find ourselves more alive, refreshed and strengthened as we ride on that wave instead of pressing ahead without it. As we minimize our agendas and expect God to give us precise instructions for prayer we'll see the testimonies sky rocket around the world." –Revelation Driven Prayer {eoa}

John Burton has been developing and leading ministries for over 20 years and is a sought-out teacher, prophetic messenger and revivalist. John has written nine books, has appeared on Christian television and radio and directed one of the primary internships at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City. Additionally, he has planted two churches, has initiated two city prayer movements and is currently directing a prayer- and revival-focused ministry school in Detroit called the School of Prayer. John's mandate is to call the church in the nations to repentance from casual Christianity and to burn in a manner worthy of the King of kings. He is equipping people to confront the enemies of God (established religion, Jezebel and so on) that hinder an extreme, sold-out level of true worship.

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