

All the Prayers of God's People
Week 6
Private versus Communal prayers

Have you ever wondered why Scripture tells us to pray in private but also desires us to pray together? We will explore the reasoning for both in this missive today. Let's begin with personal prayer.

There are many reasons personal prayer is vital. Clearly Jesus's personal prayer life was very meaningful and important to him as Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16). So too are we called to pray and develop our relationships with God. Jesus modeled personal prayer and He also taught his disciples to spend time with God in private.

There are however, truths and pitfalls in personal prayer. Clearly God wants us to come to Him privately, like a son with a Father, a mother under her wing to grow spiritually. Like any of our relationships, conversation is an important aspect of that growth. It is how we get to know one another. Those who value personal prayer are sure to see their relationship with God strengthened and that is an accessible and beautiful thing to strive for in our lives!

However, those who limit their prayers to personal prayer only, are also prone to privatize their faith. Sometimes we can adopt a "me and God" only attitude. We may think we can have our own relationship with God apart from fellowship with others. Biblically, there is no room to live this way. We are never meant to pursue a relationship with God apart from the church as exemplified in the book of Acts and the growth of the church, which leads us to corporate prayer.

Corporate prayer is how the church was birthed and how it continued to grow. "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14). "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" Acts 2:42. And, "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" Acts 4:31.

Not only did the early church model corporate prayer, the apostles taught the churches to do the same. Paul taught Timothy, a young pastor, that he should get the church praying together. He urged them to gather everywhere, to gather together in united prayer. Corporate prayer, then is a vital part of growing fellowship in the church. It, too, is an important part of our spiritual growth.

Clearly God wants His people to come together in prayer, to minister to each other and to pray into the vision of the church. Those who value corporate prayer are sure to see their community grow in intimacy with one another. However, those who limit their prayers to corporate prayers are prone to make prayer more of a religious duty. Sometimes, like Jesus

said in the passage above, they can pray to simply be seen by others or to earn favor with God as we see in Sermon on the Mount, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:5,6). Corporate prayer cannot be sustained by someone who is not spending time with God personally, nor should it.

Corporate prayer is instead meant to be a way for us to share our burdens with one another and to minister with one another. In addition, we also learn how to pray more by listening to and praying with others. For instance, if you are a novice pray-er, it is often difficult to begin in public. You may wonder what words to use, if what you are praying is “right” or acceptable. We learn how to pray by listening to others and then practicing in small groups and eventually in the comfort of all God’s people. When we pray with others who care about different things than we do and thus pray with and about them, we grow to share in their burdens and care about and pray about things we would normally not pray about in our personal prayer life.

Prayer then is scripturally both private and corporate. The most important aspect of prayer we see is that it is our active and sincere conversation with God, our deepest longings, fears, joys and celebration. When these are shared only with God, we are heard. When they are shared with others, we rejoice together for God is bonding us and building the faith of the church together. What will you practice during this time of quarantine in your prayer life?

If you would like to join our Wednesday at noon prayer group, please click on this link or call in by phone where we can pray together!

Wednesdays at Noon

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/117025271?pwd=VTNhVjhSSlhsaXBDc0E3VGYxbXpLQT09>

Meeting ID: 117 025 271

Password: 019445

By Phone: 1(312)626-6799

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