

SPIRIT-LED PRAYING

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The wife of Billy Graham said this: "Pray when you feel like it, for it is a sin to neglect such an opportunity. Pray when you don't feel like it, for it is dangerous to remain in such a condition."

If prayer is important for you, take a moment right now to think about why. I think of several things:

- Prayer connects me with God
- Prayer alters my perspective
- Prayer prepares me for daily life

Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit as our Helper. More than any other thing He does for us, He helps us to commune with God (enjoy God's presence) and to communicate with God (discover God's will). Pentecostal praying is Spirit-led praying.

Romans 8:26 begins with these words:

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for.

Here is just one example of human weakness in spiritual life: praying with uncertainty. Who has never wondered what they should pray for or how to pray for it?

Paul also identifies the Holy Spirit as our Helper in this arena. Today, I want us to consider together four ways in which the Holy Spirit may help us to pray. Here are four ways you may expect the Holy Spirit to help you. Four ways in which your praying may grow: persistence, love, power, assistance.

This is a partnership made in heaven. It is the key to your spiritual maturity and effectiveness.

Persistent Praying

Ephesians 6:18 **Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.**

There may be times when praying aloud is not the most appropriate thing to do, but there is never a time or a place or a condition when prayer is inappropriate. The Apostle Paul has urged us to "pray without ceasing." This is not a call to hide yourself in a monastery; on the contrary! Rather, this is a call to find some reason in each of the activities of your busy daily life to thank God or make a request of God or confess your faith to God or offer praise to God. "All times and on every occasion."

Weariness, fatigue, and illness, or even hunger often diminish our vigor of faith for prayer. But the apostle says, "Stay alert and be persistent." God the Spirit not only gives us the desire, but also the ability to persist. Let the Breath of God be your second wind! If your faith is fading, ask Him to help you to pray.

Why? Because prayer is the lifeline of believers everywhere. We are all dependent on God for His help; all of us! From our next breath to the food we have to eat to our health to our significance in life. And when we need His help most is when we are at our weakest. That's when we need *someone else* to pray for us.

When I was feeling overwhelmed by circumstances recently, I asked three close pastor-friends to pray for me. I was not even able to clearly express my need because of my confusion, but they prayed for me. One immediately contacted me and expressed his appreciation that I had reached out. The other two assured me they would pray. As a result, God quickly lifted me and began to restore my spiritual energy.

Someone needs your prayers—I mean, *really* needs your prayers—today. You may know them and their need; you may never meet them personally. But, if you let the Holy Spirit lead you as you pray, He will alert you and energize your prayers.

Love-filled Praying

Romans 15:30 *Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit.*

The Apostle James has told us that it is impossible to love God while we are hating a brother or sister. One of the most common prayer-killers is love-grown-cold. Jesus warned us that the last days would be typified by waning love, not just in the world (where it never really got a start) but among Christians. You must beware its impact on you and your praying.

The Holy Spirit pours God's love into your hearts; that's His job. And we must receive it and spend it wisely, because He will not replenish what we fail to invest. To keep love from growing cold, you must intentionally invest it in others. Only as you give it away does God pour more back in.

Just as The Spirit's job is to pour God's love into your hearts, your job is to pour it out to others. Jesus has taught us to love our "wives" like He loved the Church and gave Himself for her, our "brothers and sisters" in the Church like members of our own bodies, our "neighbors" like we love ourselves, and our "enemies" also. Did He leave anybody out?

Is it difficult at times? Of course. So, we need a Helper. We need a Resource who will keep giving us this love. His name is Holy Spirit.

Empowered Praying

Philippians 1:19 *For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance.*

Last week, we read Jesus' promise that we would "receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon" us. Two important features of that power have to do with prayer, both in helping us to pray effectively, and in effecting powerful answers to our prayers.

To pray without the help of the mighty Holy Spirit is no more than mouthing pleasant thoughts. It's similar to sitting behind the wheel of a brand new automobile: it feels good and smells good, but without the key engaging the ignition it's just a nice thought. Our prayers must engage the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

Your prayers themselves are not the help, but the One who responds when we pray—He is the Helper. The power is not in your praying, but in the One who answers you.

Today, it is common to speak of “sending good thoughts and wishes” to those who are in need. But that is not a biblical idea. Good thoughts have little power; their encouragement lasts only moments. Prayer, on the other hand, reaches into Heaven to grasp the hand of God and then directs His hand to the need.

Prayer invites a meeting between the Mighty God and the needy person. That is the power of prayer. Failing to pray is failing to connect with power to help.

Assisted Praying

Romans 8:26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

We have already acknowledged that we often don't know what to pray for or how to pray. In this case, the Holy Spirit not only pours into us, He also pours out of us!

When our words come to an end, and we cannot think of what else to say in prayer, the Holy Spirit provides the very words to carry us on. We refer to this as “praying in the Spirit” or “praying in other tongues.” He gives us the supernatural ability to pray in a language we have never “learned,” and through words that we cannot understand with our minds we express our hearts (and His). Praying in tongues gives voice to our “groanings,” our longings, our yearnings. What marvelous assistance!

While we may not know what we are praying, the Father does. He knows just what the Holy Spirit is aiming at, because the Spirit always prays in complete and perfect harmony with the will of God. Do you know why? Because the Holy Spirit is God. He and the Father and the Son are one. His will is God's will. His prayers are Jesus' prayers.

Sweeping right over our short-sightedness and self-centeredness, the Spirit always prays the *right* prayers for the situation. Praying in the Spirit is the *best* way to pray.

We should not neglect praying with our minds, because it we need to engage intellectually in this partnership of prayer in order to develop our understanding of the will of God. Neither should we neglect praying in the Spirit, because He makes up the difference for our weakness.

Without Hesitation

In talking with people who are concerned because God doesn't seem to be answering their prayers, Pastor Bill Hybels uses a little outline he borrowed from a pastor friend of his:

- If the request is wrong, God says: No
- If the timing is wrong, God says: Slow
- If you are wrong, God says: Grow
- But if the request is right, the timing is right, and you are right, God says: Go!

But in every case—IN EVERY CASE—God invites us to present our requests to Him without qualification, without hesitation, and allow the Spirit to guide us as we pray!