

The fellowship of prayer

What is the minimum number of people needed for a prayer meeting? The apostle Paul answered this question in his letter to the Romans. It is four! An effective prayer meeting requires the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and a faithful son of God who is willing to persevere in prayer. All three Persons in the Godhead need to be involved before our prayer is effective.

It is the Holy Spirit who helps our weakness because we do not know how to pray as we ought. He makes intercession for us with groanings too deep for words. It is the Son who searches our hearts and makes intercession for us according to the will of God. It is the Father who hears the intercession of the Son and responds by giving us mercy and grace to help in time of need. He responds by giving specific grace to the Son who, in turn, gives it to us through the Holy Spirit. This grace enables us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice and prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. The Father causes all things to work together for good as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

If all three Members of the Godhead are not involved in this way, then our prayer is nothing more than a vain and futile exercise. Sometimes, when we find ourselves reverting to a kind of liturgy when we pray, we need to ask ourselves: 'am I talking to myself?' If our prayer is simply a list of requests then we have lost sight of the true meaning of prayer. First and foremost, prayer is a fellowship. It is our opportunity to join the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the tremendous dignity and privilege that has been given to every believer who draws near to God.

References:

Rom 8:26-28 Mat 6:7
Heb 4:16 Act 2:42
Rom 12:1 Phm 1:6

Further Study:

1 John 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 3

Deep calls unto deep

We read in the book of Psalms, '*Deep calls unto deep ... the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me; a prayer to the God of my life*'. When we travail in the fellowship of prayer, we are drawn into the fellowship of the Father's burden and desire for many sons. The Holy Spirit is answering the deep cry of the Father for many sons as He prays through us. When the Holy Spirit prays and the Son begins to intercede, then 'deep is calling unto deep'. We will not always comprehend the substance of the Holy Spirit's prayer through us. But our spirit will bear witness to the burden of travail the Spirit has placed upon us.

It is the initiative of the Holy Spirit to intercede for us with groanings too deep for words. As we pray in other tongues and wait on God, the Holy Spirit is strengthening us with the power of Eternal Spirit which belongs to Christ. We are strengthened to persevere in hope for the revelation of our sonship. Having said that we persevere and wait eagerly for the hope of our sonship, Paul continued, 'In the same way *the Spirit also helps our weakness*; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words'. The Holy Spirit intercedes for and through us, according to the will of God. Other translations define 'groanings' as that which we 'cannot naturally utter'. When we pray in other tongues, the Holy Spirit is joining us to the travail of prayer by which life is multiplied. The travail of prayer is the yearning to bring forth new life, sourced in the very heart of the Father Himself.

References:

Psa 42:7-8 Jud 1:20
Rom 8:25-26 Luk 18:1-8
Heb 9:14 Php 1:4

Further Study:

Ephesians 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 4

Waiting on the Lord

One of the recurring themes in the book of Psalms is the admonition to 'wait on the Lord'. We are encouraged to wait on the Lord so that our heart is strengthened and we receive grace to walk the pathway which the Lord has set before us. The prophet Hosea directs us to 'return to your God, observe kindness and justice, and *wait for your God continually*'. We are reminded that 'the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth *be silent before Him*.' Prayer, at the first level, is never a list of requests. We draw near to God by praying in the Spirit to hear and to listen, not to offer the 'sacrifice of fools'. When we pray in the Spirit and seek God, we are waiting on God until He reveals the things which we cannot naturally see or apprehend.

The apostle Paul declared, 'If we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we *wait eagerly* for it'. God has promised to bring many sons to glory and His word cannot fail. However, the gap between His promise and its fulfilment requires us to wait in hope. For this reason, Jesus implored His disciples to watch and pray with Him in the garden of Gethsemane. We know that they grew weary and fell asleep because of sorrow. They had no capacity to wait in hope and join the fellowship of His intercessory prayer. Jesus said to them, 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'. This will be true for all of us without the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps our weakness by empowering us with the sevenfold Spirit of God to endure in prayer and wait on the Lord. In this way, we can wait with perseverance until the hope of our sonship is revealed in each and every season of our life.

References:

Psa 27:14 Isa 49:23
Psa 37:9, 34 Ecc 5:1
Psa 52:9 Gal 5:5

Further Study:

Psalm 25

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

The Holy Spirit helps our weakness

It is important for every Christian to recognise that we do not know how to pray as we ought without the help of the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to guide our prayer so that we do not approach the Lord with our own views, agendas and preconceptions. Prayer driven by our own thoughts and emotions is called the 'sacrifice of fools'. King Solomon warns us that if we pray in this way, 'we do not know that *we are doing evil*'. We cannot approach the altar of prayer when we are governed by what we are 'feeling'. If we do, our prayer will be 'in the flesh'. If our mind is set on the things of the flesh, our prayer will be motivated by our anxiety and emotions. It will be incompatible with and antagonistic to the intercession of Christ.

It may contradict the approach of many Christians, but we do not need to say a great deal when we pray. It should be a comforting thought that our prayer is an opportunity to wait on God and be illuminated and burdened concerning what He is doing. King Solomon continued his warning saying, 'Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God'.

We must ensure that our prayer is an effective morning and evening sacrifice. When we draw near to spend time 'in the Spirit', we will be able to take every thought captive to Christ. It does not matter whether our sensory appraisals are accurate or not. God is not hearing our prayer unless we are praying according to the mind of Christ. This is why Solomon began his discourse on drawing near to God by saying, 'Guard your steps as you go to the house of God'.

References:

Isa 1:12-15 Rom 8:6
Eph 4:22 Psa 66:18
2Co 10:5 Mat 6:8

Further Study: Ecclesiastes 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 6

Christ searches our hearts

Paul reminds us that 'He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God'. This verse identifies the work of Jesus Christ. We recall the words of Christ in the book of Revelation, 'I am He who searches the minds and hearts'. His eyes are like flames of fire. There is nothing hidden from His sight. All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

When we pray, the Son firstly searches our hearts to scrutinise and challenge our motivations. We recall the prayer of King David, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me'. David understood that the foundation of his prayer could not be his anxiety or the motivations of the flesh. All prayer must be motivated by the love of God.

Further to this, the Son listens to the intercession of the Holy Spirit. He knows what the mind of the Spirit is and begins to pray for us and for the saints according to the will of God. Christ is seated in the most holy place and He 'forever lives to make intercession for us'. As we draw near to the throne of grace, we find that He is interceding for us according to our name and work in the season of God's will and purpose. He bears witness of our name before the Father. The Father responds to the intercession of Christ by giving us grace to do the works that belong to our name. This is the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the throne of grace.

References:

Rev 1:14 Rev 2:23
Heb 4:13 Psa 139:23-24
Rom 8:27

Further Study: 1 Chronicles 28

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 7

The intercession of Jesus Christ

The prophet Isaiah wrote concerning Jesus, 'He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and *interceded for the transgressors*'. We are unable to recover our sonship without Christ proclaiming our name before the Father. He writes the names of those who are dead to God in the hearts of His messengers. When those messengers go forth preaching the gospel and proclaiming the names of those who are lost, Jesus Christ is actively making intercession before the Father. We know that He has been raised to the third heaven where His ministry is the work of intercession. Christ has sat down in the mercy seat, where every name written in the Lamb's book of life is hidden within the ark of testimony. His intercessory prayer to the Father aligns us with our name, priesthood, and works.

The Holy Spirit connects us to the intercession of Christ by giving us His burden of travail. The intercession of Christ is the process by which He multiplies the life of God through His offering. He brings this life forth as a gift and gives it to sons of God as an individual possession. When we join His intercession, we are participating in His offering. The apostle John spoke of this privilege when he wrote, 'If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death'. The fruit of travelling in prayer is that God sends a messenger with a word that can change the direction of their life and save them from death. When they join His offering, they can receive His life and be saved. It is an amazing truth that our fellowship in prayer joins us to the offering of Christ which multiplies the life of God.

References:

Isa 53:12 Luk 23:34
Heb 4:14-16 Rom 8:34
1Jn 5:16 Heb 9:24

Further Study:

John 14

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

Led by the Spirit

When we are led by the Spirit in our morning and evening sacrifice, we will know when to pray and when not to pray for people and situations. The intercession of Christ is the only context for our prayer to be heard by the Father. Isaiah saw prophetically and was ‘astonished that there was no one to intercede’. In the days of His flesh, Jesus Christ offered up prayers to the One able to save Him from death and *He was heard*. As He travailed in prayer, the incense of His life as an offering was ascending and covering the mercy seat. By joining His intercession, we can boldly approach the throne of grace in His priesthood. Prayer is our entry into the deep fellowship of intercession between the Son and the Father.

John writes, ‘There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that you should pray about that’. He is reminding us that only prayer ascending as incense in the intercession of Christ is heard by the Father. A brother or sister sinning unto death is walking away from fellowship. On one hand, the Holy Spirit may burden us to pray for these ones, according to the intercession of Christ. Intercession might provoke a sovereign intervention in their life and bring them back to the offering of Christ and the provision of His life. However, we need to be led by the Holy Spirit, because we cannot pray for those who the Lord Himself is not interceding for. The instruction ‘not to pray for that’ reminds us that grace is not irresistible. It is a fearful thought that the Lord may cease to make intercession for us if we draw back from Him and depart from fellowship.

References:

Isa 59:16 Jer 11:14
 Heb 5:7 Psa 66:18
 1Jn 5:16 Jer 7:16

Further Study: Jeremiah 14

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 11

The travail of Christ

Intercessory prayer involves travail in the Spirit. The Bible likens the process of travail to the process of childbirth. We read in Paul's letter to the Galatians, 'My children, with whom I am again in labour until Christ is formed in you'. The word 'labour' in this verse can equally be translated as 'the birthpangs of travail'. Of course, Paul was not physiologically bringing children to birth! However, he was experiencing the travail of bringing forth the life of new creation in those he was accountable for as a father in the faith. Travailing in prayer is the activity of joining the work and heart of God the Father, to see life multiplied. It is the labour by which life is brought forth and multiplied in the lives of individual members of Christ's body.

In the Covenant of Yahweh, before the foundation of the world, Yahweh the Son offered Himself to the Father to become the Son of God. The Son offered Himself to see the Father's desire for many sons accomplished. When He offered Himself in this way, the Father declared, '*Today I have begotten You*'. This was the beginning of a travail to bring forth the life of new creation. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, 'He shall see the labour of His soul, and be satisfied'.

For the sake of illustration, the process of travail for a woman to bring forth a child is helpful. The travail to bring forth a child does not begin in the labour ward as the final experience of contractions. That is when the travail comes to a climax and then finishes. In truth, the travail to bring forth a baby begins on the day that the child is conceived. The travail of Christ began in the garden of Gethsemane and concluded with the cry, 'It is finished'.

References:

Isa 53:11 Php 1:8
Gal 4:19 Col 4:12
Psa 2:7 Luk 22:44

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Numbers 11

Proverbs 12

Joining His travail

The travail of Christ included the pathway of sufferings He endured from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross of Calvary. The shedding of His blood not only made atonement for the sin of the world; it multiplied the life of God. Our participation in the intercession of Christ joins us to His labour to see every son of God standing perfect and complete in the will of God. We can define 'travail' as the labour to bring forth new life. When we join His travail, we join His burden to multiply the life that the Father has committed to Him for the many members of His body. This is the meaning of Isaiah's prophetic words, 'As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see and be satisfied'. The Scripture proclaims that we were *born again* to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our participation in the sufferings of Christ is a participation in the circumcising work of the Father to bring us to maturity as sons, and a participation in the travail of Christ to see life multiplied by offering.

The apostle Paul wrote, 'Just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, *it is for your comfort and salvation.*' It is important to note that Christ's sufferings are a finished work. When the Holy Spirit leads our prayer with groanings too deep for words, He is taking a component of the finished travail of Christ and giving it to us. This enables us to fellowship in His travail. As we join ourselves to the Lord in this way, we are 'one Spirit with Him'. Finally, life is given to those we are praying for on account of this fellowship and travail.

References:

Isa 53:11 Heb 4:3
1Pe 1:3 1Co 6:17
2Co 1:5-6 Joh 10:10

Further Study: 2 Timothy 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 13

All things work together for good

How does the Father respond to our prayer? Paul declared, 'God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose'. It is important to recognise that 'all things working together for good' is not automatic for every believer. It is only true for those who draw near to God and pray according to His will. If we are not receiving mercy and grace from the Father in the secret place, then all things are not working together for our good.

We recall that God pronounced judgement on all flesh in the days of Noah. The Scripture accounts that God was sorry He had made mankind. He declared to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me ... I am about to destroy them with the earth'. The world was destroyed by the flood in the days of Noah, and it is currently reserved for judgement by fire in the end of the age. He is not working all things together for good across the earth. Instead, He is working all things to bring a complete destruction to the old creation. Consequently, we read in Hebrews, 'How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?'

When we come into the secret place of His tabernacle, we are no longer subject to time and chance and the elementary principles of this world. It is an incredible thought that the very same things that are working together to destroy man, are working together for our salvation. We can be assured that every circumstance which befalls us in life is according to the sovereignty of God. This is the meaning of the apostle Peter's words, 'Greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials'.

References:

Gen 6:13

Heb 2:3

1Pe 1:6

Rom 8:28

Ecc 9:11

Pro 21:30-31

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

2 Peter 3

Proverbs 14

Prayer gives us wisdom from above

The promise of the Scripture is that God hears the prayer of the righteous, but is 'far away from the wicked'. This is why it is our goal to draw near to God when we pray. We can only do this through Christ who is seated in heavenly places. We could ask, what does it mean practically in our day-to-day life, to ascend to heaven in the incense of our prayer? It means that the motives, perspectives and decisions of our life will be governed by the 'wisdom that is from above'. We will be those who 'have the mind of Christ' at all times and in every situation. James described this wisdom as 'full of mercy' and 'peaceable' because it is firstly found at the mercy seat. It is peaceable because effective prayer gives us a peace that surpasses understanding. Our wisdom will be entirely earthbound if we do not have a prayer life that is synonymous with the morning and evening sacrifice.

James wrote, 'This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural and demonic'. When we conduct ourselves according to this wisdom, we will be completely sensual; that is, our every plan, view and response will be determined by our senses. This explains Paul's direction to Timothy, 'I want men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension'. This verse could equally be translated, 'I want the men always to pray'. The ascending aroma of our morning and evening sacrifice connects us in the Spirit continually to the intercession of Christ. Though we may only pray for a particular duration of time, morning and night, an aroma of our prayer will ascend as incense into heaven continually. We will be those ones who 'pray without ceasing'.

References:

Pro 15:29 1Co 2:16
Heb 4:16 1Ti 2:8
Jas 3:15, 17 1Th 5:17

Further Study: Daniel 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 17

Heard because of His godly fear

We read in the book of Hebrews that Christ ‘offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety’. The Lord hears our prayer when we are motivated by godly fear. This fear compels us to know who we are before God. We take up the morning and evening sacrifice, praying, ‘Not my will, but Yours be done’. As we travail and pray with godly fear, He inclines His ear to our cry. He meets us and draws us into Their fellowship. He remembers us according to our name recorded in the Lamb’s book of life. There is one overarching instruction we can receive concerning prayer. We must pray as Jesus Himself prayed, because He was heard!

The apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian church saying, ‘Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ’. The context of this verse was a discourse on the subject of headship. Paul made the point that when a man is praying, ‘he ought not have his head covered’. A ‘covered head’ simply refers to any competing agenda or motivation for prayer that impedes a man’s capacity to join the intercession of Christ. When a man is led by the Holy Spirit, he will ‘not have his head covered’ when he prays. The Holy Spirit actively sanctifies him to his name and to the burden of prayer that the Father is placing upon him. James described this prayer as the ‘effective prayer of a righteous man which can accomplish much’. Prayer inspired by godly fear will bear the fruit of confidence in our life. The psalmist rejoiced saying, ‘I will hear what God the Lord will say; for He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones ... surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him’.

References:

Heb 5:7 1Co 11:1, 7
 Luk 22:42 Jas 5:16
 Mal 3:16 1Pe 3:12

Further Study:

Psalm 85

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 18

The secret of the Lord

The psalmist declared, 'The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant'. The secret of the Lord is, firstly, the counsel of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the secret wisdom and knowledge of God that He keeps hidden within His own fellowship, for He has 'made darkness His hiding place'. This secret is only revealed to those who fear Him. When we fear God, we will seek Him in the secret place. He will make His Covenant known to us. He will give us the treasures of darkness and the hidden wealth of secret places.

Paul understood that man has not seen, heard or perceived in his heart 'all that God has prepared for those who love Him'. Likewise, David testified about the secret of the Lord saying, 'I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... my frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret ... and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me when as yet there was not one of them'.

When we draw near to God in the secret place of prayer, we begin to learn our name which has been written in the Everlasting Covenant of God. The secret place in the true tabernacle is the only place where the secret of the Lord is revealed. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'I have learned the secret'. The final statement concerning the secret of the Lord is the promise that we can inherit the substance of our name which has been hidden in secret from before the foundation of the world. Jesus spoke to the church in Pergamos about the promise of 'a new name which no one knows but he who receives it'.

References:

Psa 25:14 1Co 2:9
Psa 18:11 Rev 2:17
Psa 139:14-16 Php 4:12

Further Study:

Isaiah 45

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

The secret place of the Most High

The secret place is firstly called 'the secret place of the Most High'. The psalmist proclaimed, 'You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret in the light of Your presence'. The secret of the Lord concerning our life is hidden in the most holy place. Our name, our work, our days, and even our wanderings and our tears, are written in the Lamb's book of life. These are the secret things of the Father concerning our lives and they are hidden within the secret place of the Most High. When we pray in the Spirit, God reveals the things contained within the ark of the covenant through the Spirit. We recall the words of Paul, 'For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God'.

The secret place of His tabernacle is where we behold the beauty of the Lord in the corporate life of the body of Christ. King David wrote, 'In the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me'. The psalmist continued, 'My head will be lifted up above my enemies around me; and I will offer in His tent; sacrifices and shouts of joy and I will sing'. This describes the activity and joy found within the secret place of His tabernacle. The secret place of His tabernacle describes our corporate fellowship of offering and fellowship of prayer. The tabernacle is a house of prayer. This is why Jesus entered the temple of Herod and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers and said, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a robber's den".'

References:

Psa 91:1 1Co 2:10
Psa 90:8 Psa 27:4-6
Psa 56:8 Mat 21:13

Further Study: Psalm 31

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 20

The secret place of His tabernacle

We read in the book of Revelation, 'He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them.' When we enter the sanctuary, we draw near to God and come under the shadow of His mighty wings. There is a corporate reality on earth today where 'the children of men take refuge in the shadow of His wings'. We are hidden in His tabernacle. We are protected from the troubles that would befall us according to time and chance, from those who are enemies of Christ, and from the conspiracies of man.

The psalmist rejoiced in the protection of God in the secret place of His tabernacle. He declared, 'In the secret place of His tabernacle, He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock'. He then rejoiced, 'Now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, *therefore* I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle'. The secret place of His tabernacle is the fellowship of the body of Christ. It is the context where we present our bodies as a living sacrifice and offer 'sacrifices of joy'. We meet and fellowship as brethren in Christ in the secret place of His tabernacle.

When we assemble together to minister to one another and partake of the elements of the New Covenant, Christ is active in His priesthood. He is our great High Priest. He speaks to us 'words of eternal life' and equips us with grace to fulfil our name. Further to this, the protection and provision of the secret place of His tabernacle, extends beyond our weekly meetings together. The protection of the secret place extends into our daily lives as we live a life of offering and prayer within the camp of the saints.

References:

Rev 7:15 Psa 27:5-6
Psa 36:7 Psa 17:8
Joh 6:68 Psa 57:1

Further Study:

Ruth 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Our personal prayer

The third component of the secret place is the secret place of our personal prayer. This is our prayer as individuals, couples, families and households as we dwell within the camp of the saints. We remain connected to the mind of Christ as we pray in the Spirit throughout the week. In this way, we continue seeking the Lord as households each day. However, our houses are not the context of our priestly service. Our corporate fellowship is the place where we wait for one another and serve one another in love. The foundation of our prayer is assembling together at the altar of Christ, our Passover. The true tabernacle of His body is where we function as priests and bring the offering of our sonship.

Jesus said, 'When you pray, pray to your Father who is in secret'. The Scripture calls this place our 'inner room', or our prayer 'closet'. This refers to the privacy of our own life. This is where the Father observes our tangible commitment to prayer, fasting, and giving alms. Jesus instructed His disciples saying, 'When you give alms ... when you pray ... when you fast ... go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you'. 'Giving in secret' does not mean our approach to offering is done in isolation or without consultation. Rather, Jesus is saying that when we offer at the altar, we can inherit the name revealed in secret. We come out from the secret place to give alms and to offer according to our name. We are then known by our fruit in the midst of the assembly. As we order our lives this way, there is an ongoing cycle of offering and proving the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

References:

1Co 11:3 Luk 6:44
Gal 5:13 Jas 3:12
Mat 6:4, 6, 18 Jud 1:12

Further Study: Psalm 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 24

When you pray

Jesus made a number of practical comments to His disciples about prayer. In the first case, it is apparent that we need to pray at definitive times each day. Drawing near to God is a proactive and definitive action. We need to adopt an appropriate posture, place and mode of prayer in the faith of the morning and evening sacrifice. For the priests of the Old Testament, the morning and evening sacrifice of incense occurred when they trimmed the lamps. This process was a planned routine, with a certain duration and goal in view. Similarly for us, we must employ a disciplined and prioritised approach to our prayer. This is the only way that we participate in the faith of the morning and evening sacrifice so that our prayer can ascend as incense.

When we draw near to God, we readily confess that we do not know how to pray as we ought. If we desire to pray effectively, we need to ask the Lord to 'teach us to pray'. We do not inherently know the mind of Christ or the will of God. We need help to pray without being distracted by our personal agendas. This highlights the importance of praying in other tongues. We must clear our mind from other distractions and be led by the Spirit. When we do this, our daily prayer becomes a dynamic fellowship with the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Participating in this fellowship is the antidote to 'using meaningless repetition' when we pray. Jesus said that we should not suppose that we will be heard for our many words. Instead, we draw near in the Spirit to wait and to listen. In turn, we believe that God will draw near to us in the secret place.

References:

Exo 30:7-8

Rom 8:26

Luk 11:1

Mat 6:7

Jas 4:8

Dan 6:10

Further Study:

Acts 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 25

The camp of the saints

When we consider the journey of the nation of Israel as the ‘church in the wilderness’, we note two distinct elements. Firstly, the tabernacle of Moses was the centrepiece of their camp. Secondly, the Israelites were camped around the tabernacle under the four banners. The tabernacle was their place of worship and their family lives revolved, both physically and culturally, around the sanctuary. The tabernacle, together with the camp of the saints, comprised the church in the wilderness. When the nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River and took possession of the promised land, they no longer camped around the tent of meeting. Instead, the land was apportioned by lot as a possession to each of the tribes. The ‘camp of the saints’ effectively stretched throughout the entire land.

The onus to uphold the culture of the camp of the saints, the unity of the Spirit, became the province of each individual household throughout the land of Canaan. Similarly, when we depart from church each week, we remain part of the camp of the saints by the fellowship of prayer in the Spirit. The apostle Paul said, ‘Even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit’. And to the Corinthians he wrote, ‘Though absent in body but present in spirit, in the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, I am with you by spirit’. The camp of the saints is not defined by physical proximity; it is defined by our unity in the Spirit. We recall the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, ‘God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth’. In this way, believers across the face of the world are part of the camp of the saints. The true tabernacle is the ‘house of prayer for all nations’.

References:

Act 7:38 Num 34:13
Num 2:2 Col 2:15
Num 33:54 1Co 5:3-4

Further Study:

Isaiah 56

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 26

The bonds of the Spirit

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, 'I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'. The Greek word for 'bond' means 'that which is bound together'. When a person becomes a member of the body of Christ, the Lord begins knitting their heart with the hearts of other believers. This is being 'knit together in love'. As we give ourselves to this process, we form eternal bonds with our brothers and sisters in Christ. These bonds describe the connection between those who are joined together in Spirit.

There are three principle contexts in which 'bonds in the Spirit' are formed and strengthened. They are the fellowship of serving and offering, the fellowship of prayer, and the fellowship of worship. When we participate in the diverse activities of offering, we will achieve practical and material outcomes. However, while these practical outcomes are important, offering is fundamentally about the bonds of fellowship we are forming.

Similarly, we invite our brethren to know us in spirit when we fellowship in prayer and worship. When we lead in prayer or sing during our body ministry time, we are allowing others to know what is in our heart. We open the window of our heart and join the fellowship of the saints in the unity of the Spirit. When we assemble together for our corporate prayer meetings, we must stir ourselves to function. We are there to be known in the Spirit and to strengthen the bonds of the Spirit. This is why the apostle John instructed us to 'greet the friends by name'. When we can greet our brothers and sisters in Christ 'by name', we intrinsically know who they are and how we are bound to them.

References:

Eph 4:1, 3 Psa 133:1
Col 2:2 Joh 17:21
3Jn 1:14 Gal 3:28

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Acts 4

Proverbs 27

The bond of perfection

We can contrast the relationships we foster in the body of Christ with friendship in the world. Friendship according to the world is largely based on familiarity, similarity, mutual interest and security. However, when we are bound together in the Spirit, our eternal bonds are not a function of these characteristics. Many Christians would testify that, had they not found salvation, they would never have met the believers who are now 'in their hearts to die together and to live together'. Our bonds in the Spirit continue into the new heavens and new earth because they are not broken by death.

Jesus warned us that in the days just ahead, 'many will fall away, will betray one another, will hate one another and most people's love will grow cold'. Eternal bonds of peace will strengthen us for the season of trial so that we do not betray one another. We must never allow ourselves to remain in an offended position. If we do, we will be drawn away from fellowship, break the bond of the Spirit and become those who bite, devour and destroy one another. Jesus defined the highest expression of the unity of the Spirit when He said, 'Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends'.

In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he admonished them to 'put on love, which is the bond of perfection'. The process of God that knits us together with bonds of love is the perfecting process by which the church is strengthened to overcome. Finally, 'bonds of perfection' describe the perfected church's capacity to remain in the unity of the Spirit. We read in Colossians, 'Epaphras sends you his greetings, always labouring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God'.

References:

2Co 7:3 Eph 4:3
Col 3:14 Gal 5:15
Col 4:12 Joh 15:13

Further Study:

1 John 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 28