

PRAY TOGETHER – STAY TOGETHER - WIN TOGETHER!

By Graeme Clark

Spurgeon asserted that prayer makes history. The first church committed itself to just four things, all key elements: the apostles teaching (God's word), the breaking of bread (communion), the fellowship (all together) and prayer. Jesus took time to pray regularly and Paul encouraged the believers to pray on all occasions. Please note that I am deliberately not putting in Bible references - I will explain the reason at the end.

Our personal relationship with Jesus is vital. We cannot have a second hand relationship with God. We are called to open our private selves to Jesus in ever increasing intimacy in order to let the Holy Spirit heal us; affirm us; teach us; challenge us; discipline us. The Bible is clear that God our Father loves this close private personal intimacy and seeks it with an eagerness which sent Jesus to the cross. The closer we get the more pleasure we give to God.



However, it is very easy to become self-possessed or self-contained so that in prayer we sit on our own and pray what we want to pray looking for what we want to receive. There is an element of evangelical teaching which puts a disproportionate emphasis on our importance to our Father God without pointing out that we are called to be obedient children. We are of course very important to God and our identity in Jesus needs to include a security that we are loved and looked on with favour. But if that means our walk is always on our terms we will become very spoilt children indeed. Jesus' definition of discipleship was that we learn to obey all that He has taught. Part of this clear teaching is that we are to seek out our Father, hear His voice and do what He commands. This includes prayer; that we pray what He wants us to pray. We know that God wants us to tell Him everything that we think, feel and desire but we need also to listen to what He thinks, feels and desires as He reveals that to us. It is possible that God desires us to be concerned about people that we are not currently concerned about; it is possible that God has priorities to reveal to us which we do not currently consider as priorities; it is possible that God has things for us to learn of which we are currently unaware. One of the ways in which we can miss these important revelations is that we are on our own following our own agenda.

The New Testament builds on the Old Testament teaching of a people set apart and shows us that we are Christ's body made to function together. This means to cooperate; to share; to be interdependent; to be aware that what we say or do affects others. It also means that we are designed to do together: to break bread together; to learn together; to worship together; to pray together. It is interesting the challenges people face in their Christian walk. It is not unusual to speak to fellow believers who find it difficult to worship on their own or to meet others who find it hard to pray in a group. We are called to two areas of growth; our individual walk with Jesus and to grow and work together as a body. An emphasis on one and not the other will always create imbalance.

Never more so than with prayer. Prayer is our main fighting weapon and our main tactic of defence. If we wish to see things happen then we must pray; if we wish to see dangerous situations defused then we must pray. I am deliberately using militaristic language because this is a war. The enemy does not want strong, balanced united soldiers. But we are an army and when we fight we must fight together. A good military tactic against a superior force is to split up the force and pick off individuals and small groups who become easy pickings by being cut off from the main force. We are designed to be a body; an army; a family. If we want to see friends and family; neighbours and work colleagues and the town of Bridgnorth won for Jesus then we need to be praying together. Almost every revival story you can read starts with a group of people coming together and breaking their hearts before God for the lost. It is a spiritual battle we are in and the enemy does not want the body to come together to pray, in fact he will do almost anything to stop that. We need only look at the levels of religious oppression we have seen around the world to understand what a battle we are in. The family, the friends and the church which prays together stays together and wins together.

Now to the Bible references. I have many, but I think the best way to learn is to discover for ourselves - so why don't you test this for yourself and let God reveal by His Holy Spirit what he wants to say.

Don't take my word for it, find out for yourself. Start with:

- **1 Corinthians 12**
- **Ephesians 4: 1 – 16**
- **Colossians 2: 16 – 19**
- **Acts 4: 23 – 31**

*Join us for Prayer at Bridgnorth Baptist Church
Wednesdays - 7.00am, 12.30pm and 7.30pm at Number Seven
Sunday mornings at 8.30am in the church*

*Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything by prayer...
with thanksgiving present your
requests to God.*

Philippians 4:6

