

How Should I Pray?

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Question: This one has to do with praying in the Spirit. Steven Gibney writes, "Brother Tim, I have a question about prayer. How long should I pray? Should I come first in worship or does it matter? Sometimes I sense my own need and frailty that I just begin to weep and cry out for mercy and grace. What is praying in the Spirit? How do I know that I am?" Does anybody know where he's getting that from? Praying in the Spirit? It comes to us from Ephesians 6. Listen, "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication."

Discussion:

Tim: So very quickly, "how long should I pray?" My answer I put here: Your whole life. I mean, think about it, praying at all times in the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing. Luke 18:1 You ought always to pray and not lose heart. Romans 12:12 Be constant in prayer. Our whole life needs to be a life of prayer. It's like someone said, prayer to the Christian is like breathing to the natural man. You come forth into the world and you begin to breathe. You come forth into the Kingdom of God, and you begin to pray. And the Spirit of God is the Spirit of adoption. It's the Spirit by which we cry, "Abba, Father." What are all those "Abba, Father's?" They're prayers. They're crying out to God. Jesus identifies in Matthew 6 that there are times we go into our closet. There are times we get away from the commotion, we get away from the crowd.

I was just reading Count Zinzendorf's life that he would make it a point to send people away, and he would travel certain parts of his journey all by himself. He liked to speak out loud and personally to Christ. And he would just walk as with a friend for miles and miles and miles. Just openly conversing with Christ. We need that. We need times alone.

How long? Jesus says this, "When you pray, go into your room, shut the door and pray to your Father, who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret, will reward you." He doesn't say how long that should take, but brethren, if you're really trying to bear the burdens of your brothers and sisters in the church, let alone your own burdens, and you're really trying to hold up the spread of the Gospel - that's one of the things that was prayed for. Paul wanted prayer. Pray for me. Spread of the Gospel. If you're praying for our missionaries, you're praying for the spread of the Gospel, you're praying for the evangelistic efforts in this city; you're praying, and you're really giving yourself to pray; can you do that in 30 seconds? Can you do that in a minute and a half? It says you pray like that in secret, your Father who's there in secret, hears in secret, will reward you openly. Does it mean so little to you of the rewards of God that you would just go into your closet and pray five minutes a week?

Now then, he asks the question about should we start in worship. All I can say about that is, look, there are all sorts of ways to pray. I just thought of the early church praying Acts 4, "They

lifted up their voices together to God..." Listen to how they prayed: "Sovereign Lord." Now see, they're glorifying the Lord there. There's worship in that. They're identifying Him: Sovereign. And He's Lord. Who made the heaven and the earth. They're identifying Him as the Creator. "And the sea and everything in them. Who through the mouth of our father David your servant said by the Holy Spirit." He's the one that speaks to us. "Why do the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, rulers were gathered together against the Lord, against His anointed; for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed." So He's the God who anoints. He's the God who predestinates. "Both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and people of Israel to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestinated to take place. Now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to Your servants to continue to speak Your Word with all boldness."

You know what, when you begin to pray, and you begin to identify God the way He is, in terms that are glorifying and praiseworthy to Him, it will excite you to pray better. Not only is it glorifying to Him, it encourages you to think on who this God is. So, I encourage it. It's definitely biblical. It's definitely in that biblical prayer. And just to tell you, when they prayed like this, "the place in which they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and continued to speak the Word of God with boldness."

Then he asked this question: "What is praying in the Spirit?" Well, let me tell you this, I'll tell you what it is, praying in the Spirit is at the end of all this armor that we need to fight demonic powers. Do you remember this? We fight not against flesh and blood, right? Isn't that how this chapter starts? All this warfare talk? Praying in the Spirit is the kind of prayer you need to pull down demonic strongholds. It's the kind of prayer you need to go up and fight against these principalities and powers and wicked dominions in high places.

I don't know that I can exactly define what praying in the Spirit is, but I can tell you this, typically when you're praying in the Spirit, you have a sense of it. Or when you're in a prayer meeting and you hear other people pray in the Spirit, you have a sense of it. And I'll tell you this, the kind of prayer that brings down demonic strongholds is not where you just whip out your laundry list, and "Lord, heal Aunt Tilda's toe, and Lord, help my neighbor who lost their dog, and Lord, help..." I mean, when you just throw out the cheap little laundry list... What kind of prayer is it that pulls down demonic strongholds? I'll tell you what it is. It's when people begin to recite the character of God like they did there in Acts 4. It's when they begin to recite the promises of God until that Spirit takes that promise and lights them up on fire so that they are able to lay hold upon God and have what they're asking for, and not let God loose, though He shake them like that angel of the Lord did with Jacob. And they hold on till they get what they pray for.

I'll tell you what, you don't pray in the Spirit when you've grieved the Spirit. When you've got all sorts of sin and wretchedness in your life. And that Spirit of God, He tends to energize and He tends to be effectual in God's people's lives when their eyes are set upon Christ. These are things that I would say. You want to pray in the Spirit? Don't grieve the Spirit. You want to pray in

the Spirit? Set your eyes on Christ. You want to pray in the Spirit? Set your eyes on the character of God. You want to pray in the Spirit? Set your eyes on the promises. A

nd I'll tell you this, you don't pray in the Spirit unless you pray. And it's not going to be these cheap little flippant things. And I'm not saying it's always got to be all dramatic, some of the times, like this guy, he feels frailty and feels weak and all he can do is weep; some of the most "in the Spirit" prayers may be where you can't even get a word out. All it is is a weep or a groan or a tear that runs down your face. It doesn't have to be all dramatic and everything. But it's where men with pure hearts are ascending the hill of the Lord and they're laying hold on the arm of God. That's praying in the Spirit. And though it may be a sigh, it may be a groan, it's pure men that pray like this. Pure women. Not those who defile themselves and grieve the Spirit of God.

I can't exactly define all of it, but I'll tell you what, I know when in the depths of my own soul a promise of God has come to my heart where I am determined to have it and not let go of God. I've heard men pray before, where I've just entered in. And you know it. You folks know it. You've been in prayer meetings and you've heard some people pray and it's just kind of like a drone that it doesn't feel like there's been a laying hold on God. It's just kind of talking and it's just going on; where others, they've just been lifted up and they say, "God, You are like this." And then the whole congregation just kind of says, "Yes!" "And Lord, we need to have this." And it's like, "Yes!" "Lord, we'll not be denied." And you just feel there's this swaying and the Spirit is moving. Where other times, it's just this chatter and this drone.

But you guys know what I'm saying is right. You can sense it. You can feel it. There's certain times when people pray and it's like I'm lifted away; I'm in another place, I'm carried up. May God give us that. And we have times like that in our prayer meetings. And I'm thankful for it. May God give us those kind of times in our personal lives as well. Well, that's it for today. Any questions or comments anybody want to make? Did I kill you with time?

(from the room) How would you exhort somebody who feels discouragement?

Tim: I would say this, pray through your discouragements. Live through your discouragements. Press on in your discouragements. I'll tell you one of the most discouraging things for me, is the silence of Christ. And what I mean by that is when you pray, and then there's no answer. And you pray again. And there's no answer. And if I were to bring in a real life situation, I would bring in the Syrophenician woman. "Lord, my daughter's got a demon." He didn't answer her. She kept pressing the matter. Then, when He did answer, He says look, you're a Gentile dog. I didn't come for the dogs, I came for the children. She said, "Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall off of the table." She kept pressing Him; she kept pressing Him. There are times for me, that's great discouragement; but the silence of Christ is not meant to turn us away. And it's not meant to communicate to us that Christ doesn't love us. It's meant to stir those longings even deeper, to press the faith even further. If you look at that Syrophenician woman, just pressed her to become more violent in her attempts to get a response from the Lord. And in the end, she had what she came for. So, in the midst of our discouragements, I would call the

Syropeonician woman... Because why are we discouraged? We get discouraged because we don't have certain things that we want. That's really what it is. Discouragement comes because I want something that the Lord is not giving me. He's gone quiet on me. If you think about it. I mean, are you discouraged when all the things that give you joy and happiness and pleasure are all being heaped upon you? Typically not. Typically, we're discouraged when we feel something's lacking. We either feel His face is withdrawn, we feel there's something we feel so pressed to have from Him; and He's gone silent.

(from the room) I heard an analogy once that prayer is like digging for buried treasure. And that some people around you are going to hit that treasure before you do, but that doesn't make you stop digging. It's still down there.

Tim: And Spurgeon's likened it to shaking a fruit tree trying to get the fruit to fall off. And that a lot of people quit beating on the tree one stroke before... if they would have hit it one more time, it would have fallen. And it's true, we have not, because we ask not. And those that press through, are the ones that receive what they ask for. Do you know George Mueller prayed fifty-some years for one of his brothers every single day that God would save him, and God finally did save him? God saved some of his family members who he prayed for every day of his life after he died. He didn't even get to see it in this life.