

CBC Topic - Corporate Prayer

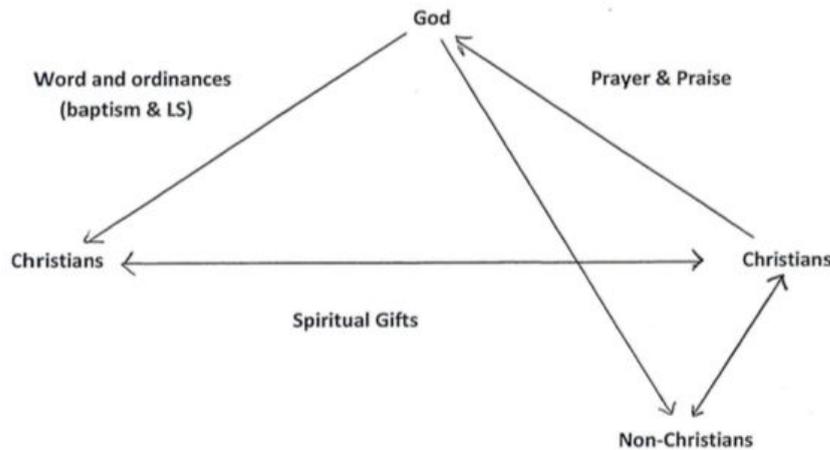
Sunday evening, 21st June 2018

Will Cockram

*"Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon their knees."*¹

Recap:

- All of life is worship - we are to be 'living sacrifices' in response to God's mercy (Rom 12:1).
- So we worship as we gather to engage with God (vertically), to encourage and equip one another (horizontally), in view of a watching world.



1. What is prayer? Us speaking to God.

*"A sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God (our Father), through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to his word, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the (sovereign) will of God."*²

*"A personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God."*³

1.1. A human instinct

*"Efforts to find cultures, even very remote and isolated ones, without some form of religion and prayer have failed. There has always been some form of attempt to communicate between human and divine realms . It's what Karl Barth called our "incurable God-sickness."*⁴

1.2. A spiritual gift through union with Christ.

1.2.1. To the Father (Matt 6:9, Romans 8:15-16)

1.2.2. Through the Son

¹ William Cowper

² John Bunyan, 'Praying in the Spirit'

³ Tim Keller, 'Prayer - experiencing awe and intimacy with God', p45.

⁴ Tim Keller, 'Prayer - experiencing awe and intimacy with God', p36.

- Mediator (1 Tim 2:5, Heb 8:6)
- In his name (John 14:6)
- 1.2.3. In the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:15-16, Ephesians 6:18)
- 1.3. A response
 - 1.3.1. To who God is
 - 1.3.2. To what He's done
 - 1.3.3. Pleading the promises

"So true is it that we dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord's gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon."⁵

2. **Why should we pray together?**

2.1. **It's a Biblical pattern!**

2.1.1. *Old Testament*

- E.g. Thanksgiving
 - Exodus 15
- E.g. Confession
 - Joshua 7 & Nehemiah 9
- The temple was to be a house of prayer (Isaiah 56:7)
- The Psalms!
 - *"Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. 24 Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression? 25 We are brought down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground. 26 Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love." Psalm 44:23-26*
 - They are messianic prayers, which are ours through union with Christ.

2.1.2. *New Testament*

- *Lord's Prayer - "Our Father"*
- The church at prayer in Acts:
 - *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42*
- *Epistles*
 - *"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Heb 4:16*
 - *"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." 1 Timothy 1-2*

⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.3

- Revelation 6:9–11

2.2. It does *us* good.

- 2.2.1. It teaches us *how* to pray - a teaching function of the gathering.
- 2.2.2. Through it God teaches us:
- To **depend** on him together.
 - To **purify** the desires of our hearts together.
 - To be **grateful** (and thus content) together.
 - To **appreciate** his kindness, generosity, and faithfulness together.
 - To **enjoy** God and the things he give us together.
 - To **trust** God to provide what we need together.⁶

2.2.3. It fosters unity

“God’s people will become what they are—united in Christ—as we learn to speak to the Lord together in corporate prayer. Speaking together, after all, trains the desires of our hearts to be united in faith, united in hope, united in love. Corporate prayer in the church requires the church to agree, to be without division, to be of the same mind and judgment (1 Cor. 1:10). It’s one way the church “stands firm in one spirit” and “with one mind strives side by side for the faith” (Phil. 1:27)... and so we need each other! Corporate prayer teaches us that the way of redemption requires us to lock arms with others, speaking for them when they can’t speak and listening to them when we cannot speak.”⁷

2.2.4. Generally, we can pray for longer together!

3. What should we pray together?

3.1. Lord’s Prayer

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Matthew 6:9

3.2. The different kinds of prayers of the NT

- 3.2.1. Adoration (Psalm 95:6)
- 3.2.2. Confession & consecration (1 John 1:9)
- 3.2.3. Thanksgiving (Psalm 9:1)
- 3.2.4. Supplication/Petition (Phil 4:6)
- 3.2.5. Intercession (1 Timothy 2:1)
- 3.2.6. Dedication (Matt 26:39)
- 3.2.7. Imprecation (in certain circumstances - Psalms 69)
- 3.2.8. Faith (James 5:15)

4. How should we pray together?

- 4.1. In an orderly way that edifies (1 Cor 14)

⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.3

⁷ <https://www.9marks.org/article/biblical-theology-corporate-prayer/>

- 4.2. Not in vain repetition (Matt 6:7)
- 4.3. For how long?
- 4.4. With variety of styles
 - 4.4.1. Liturgical
 - 4.4.2. Extemporaneous
- 4.5. A variety of people
 - 4.5.1. The pastoral prayer - speaking and interceding on behalf of the many.
 - 4.5.2. The open prayers

Spurgeon on the prayer meeting (preaching from Acts 1:14)

The prayer-meeting is an institution which ought to be very precious to us, and to be cherished very much by us as a Church, for to it we owe everything. When our comparatively little chapel was all but empty, was it not a well-known fact that the prayer-meeting was always full? And when the Church increased, and the place was scarce large enough, it was the prayer meeting that did it all.

There are some hindrances before the people come. **Unholiness hinders prayer.** A man cannot walk contrary to God, and then expect to have his prayers heard. **Discord always spoils prayer.** When believers do not agree, and are picking holes in each other's coats, they do not really love one another, and then their prayers cannot succeed. **Hypocrisy spoils prayer,** for hypocrites will creep in, you cannot help it. But there are some things which hinder the prayer-meeting when we are at it. One is **long prayers.** It is dreadful to hear a brother pray us into a good frame, and then, by his long prayer, pray us out of it again. Long prayers spoil prayer-meetings, for long prayers and true devotion in our public assemblies seem pretty much to be divorced from one another. Prayer-meetings are also hindered **when those who get up to pray do not pray,** but preach a little sermon, and tell the Lord all about themselves, though he knows their own better than they do, instead of asking at once for what they want. Prayer-meetings are often hindered **by a want of directness,** and by beating about the bush. I did admire a prayer I heard last Monday night, in which a brother said, "Lord, the orphanage wants 3,000; be pleased to send it." Prayer-meetings are sometimes hindered **by a want of real earnestness in those who pray,** and in those who pray in silence. I fear that much of our prayer is lost because we do not sufficiently throw our hearts into it. But the prayer-meeting may also be spoiled after we have been to it. "How say" say you. Why, by our asking a blessing, and then not expecting to receive it. God has promised that he will do to us according to our faith, but **if our faith is nothing, then the answer will also be nothing.** **Inconsistency,** too, in not practically carrying out your desires will also spoil the prayer-meeting. If you ask God to convert souls, but you will not do anything for those souls; if you ask God to save your children, but you will not talk to them about their salvation; if you ask God to save your neighbours, and you do not distribute tracts amongst them, nor do anything else for them, are you not altogether a hypocrite? You pray for what you do not put out your hand to get. You pray for fruit, but you will not put out your hand to pluck it, and all this spoils the prayer-meeting. Earnest prayer, however, is always to be followed up by persevering efforts, and then the result will be great indeed.