

C. Corporate Prayer

There is no action on the part of Christian people more frequently stressed than that of prayer. Conversely, there is no activity less regularly engaged in by Christians. This is especially true of corporate prayer. We all feel guilty over not praying enough; but few of us have a clear “vision” and excitement about the potential power that comes through corporate prayer.

What Is Corporate Prayer?

The word “corporate” means “combined into one.” Corporate prayer is prayer engaged in by two or more people, for the purpose of focusing on one or more specific needs. It is based on Jesus’ teaching about prayer in Matthew 18:19, which states, “If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them.”

The Early Church And Corporate Prayer

In both the Old and New Testaments, we read repeatedly of God’s people coming together in groups as small as two, or as large as thousands, for the purpose of praying corporately. This was especially significant for the early church, in light of Jesus’ promise to grant “anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven.” Therefore they fully believed His promise, making it a part of their lives.

They all joined together constantly in prayer. (Acts 1:14)

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

Why Is Corporate Prayer So Important?

1. **Jesus’ Promise:** All who have carefully studied the promise given in Matthew 18:19 agree on what Jesus is saying: When more than just one person prays, there is greater spiritual effect than when we pray alone. Why is that true?
 - a) **Corporate prayer keeps our praying from being selfish.** Selfish and self-willed prayer cannot find an answer from God. It is harder to pray selfishly when we are praying openly with others.
 - b) **It is humbling to pray with others.** We have to lay aside our pretenses and humbly submit ourselves to God, for our praying to be blessed (James 4:6).

- c) **As others pray with us, it often helps to clarify what God wants.** Corporate prayer helps us to more clearly discern God's will through the greater objectivity that comes through others (Proverbs 11:14).
2. **Spiritual Warfare:** When the Bible describes the challenges Christians face, it uses the language of war (2 Corinthians 10:3,4; Ephesians 6:10-20). Paul and other Bible writers warn us our conflict is not between human beings but against the unseen spirits of darkness. Our weapons are not material but spiritual—primarily the weapon of prayer. When we “agree together,” this gives even greater force to our praying.
 3. **Missed Opportunities:** James 4:2 simply states, “You do not have, because you do not ask.” We often complain because a need is not being met or a problem resolved. Often this is due to our own failure. We don't ask God, who is the source of all solutions and blessings. This is true for us as individuals as well as for churches.
 4. **Protection Against Pride:** Often churches become ineffective because of pride. Ministries which once were greatly used begin to take credit for what God has done (Daniel 4:28-38). Corporate prayer serves as a protection against forgetting who is the source of our power and blessing.
 5. **Support For The Leadership:** A famous Christian leader was once asked the secret of his success. He humbly replied, “My people pray for me.”

A wonderful illustration of how this works is given in Exodus 17:8-16. Moses had sent Joshua to fight the Amalekites, who had attacked Israel. As long as Moses held his hands up to God in prayer, Joshua overcame the enemy. But fatigue caused him to drop his hands; then the Amalekites prevailed against Israel. So Aaron and Hur came alongside Moses and held up his hands until the enemy was defeated.

This story is a wonderful allegory of the role praying Christians play in the success of the ministry. Literally, they uphold the hands of those who are called to lead the fight in the spiritual battles of the church.

What About You?

Are you involved in a group who prays regularly for God's direction and blessing of the church, its ministries and leaders? Please come and join us Sunday at 9:00am. If you would like more information about how you can join in corporate prayer with other believers call the church office. Also, please check out our Prayer page on our website: www.CCSaintPaul.org.