

Prayer grows through engagement

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“...I have heard many sermons preached on the subject of prayer, with special emphasis placed on *you ought to*. Unfortunately, I have heard little instruction on how to pray. Furthermore, I have seen fewer who lived a life of prayer.”

-Dr. Eugene T. Wilson in *Seventy: Everyone Needs a Team*

If you have ever lived in an area that was about to be impacted by a hurricane, you probably know the answer to this question. What are the first two items that every store runs out of in terms of groceries when a hurricane warning is issued? Bread and bottled water! People instinctively rush to the store and stock up on bread and bottled water and in a matter of hours, those shelves are completely empty. A shipment of bread or water that arrives barely makes it to the shelves as people mob the pallets before they can be unloaded. We don't clear the shelves of meat, milk, fruit, or cookies. Innately, we are all programmed to get bread and water when a storm is coming.



When Hurricane Irma impacted our city last year, God hit us with one of His revelatory lightning strikes. Everywhere my wife and I went, the run on bread and water was so apparent. Why was this the case? Because He designed us that way! God has placed in all of us the knowing that when a life-threatening storm is approaching, we need bread and water so we can survive. The phenomenon that we were observing was the physical manifestation of this spiritual principle. And prayer is the method that Jesus chose to access the unlimited source of the Word (“bread of life”) and the Holy Spirit (“rivers of living water”) that He is.

Let me ask you this, have you ever been frustrated by the lack of focus on prayer in your church? How about in the world around you? As our hurricane-induced example illustrates, it is not that people don't know about the need to or are unwilling to pray. Brother Wilson continues:

“The point is if we misdiagnose the problem, we will administer the wrong solution. Often times the problem is not unwillingness on the part of people to do what needs to be done; the problem is often lack of knowledge or know how. And yet many continue to major on *ought to* rather than *how to*.”

The Bible tells us that both John the Baptist and Jesus set the example of a prayerful lifestyle AND taught their disciples how to pray. “And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach

us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1 KJV). As people of prayer, whether we have a title or not, we can follow the example of our Lord as well as John the Baptist by providing loving instruction on how to pray and striving to live the life.

Here are some tips for people of prayer to help engage others on how to pray:

- Get to the altar yourself: Especially as leaders, we can get so focused on working the altar instead of being worked on at the altar. Never be too proud to respond to an altar call and just work on your relationship with Jesus. Doing so will not only set a powerful example to others, it will recharge and reconnect us so we can be more effective next time we do work with others in prayer.
- Be interactive: Praying for someone is very different than praying with someone. One thing that is taught as part of kid's prayer is L.A.B.B. and it really applies to adult prayer as well. (L)isten and observe before moving on to prayer. (A)sk questions (like Jesus did) to engage them as well as move closer to the heart of the matter. Remember to ask their name and tell them yours if needed. (B)uild faith by sharing examples of how Jesus has answered similar prayers in your life and the lives of those around you. (B)e bold and ask them to pray WITH you, then lead and coach them as the Spirit guides you.
- Build a team: Praying people attract praying people, so involve those that God connects you with in various avenues to create a team. Working with your pastor and being led by the Spirit, allow others the opportunity to lead parts of congregational prayer times. Organize and help lead your church in systematic prayer & fasting plans at different points throughout the year. Delegate responsibilities, trust your team and, as my wife so often says, "involve them so they can evolve."

People inherently know they need to pray to obtain the "bread of life" and the "rivers of living water" and most of them are willing to do so. They need help with the *how to*. As people of prayer, let's step up and major on *how to* rather than *ought to*. Lead by example, engage those around you and involve others to build a team.

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