

Study 3

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Romans 8:26

Prayer is not merely an intellectual exercise. That is, it's not about praying the right words and sounding spiritual to impress either God or others. It is like everything else in the Christian walk- a Spirit-led activity (Rom. 8:14). To pray in the Spirit involves praying in a way that we co-operate with the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and we pray in a "spiritual" language.

1. Have you ever felt that you should pray for someone, or something, which was a matter of urgency? Describe those circumstances and whether you ever discovered why you had to pray-

I have heard many stories of uncanny coincidences where someone was prompted to pray urgently for someone else to later discover that just at that moment the person



who was being prayed for was in dire need. The most striking example of this is the story Ian McCormack.



Ian was a young Kiwi who living a wild life of surfing and back-packing around the world. He was scuba diving off the Island of Mauritius when he was repeatedly stung by deadly box jelly fish. Just at that moment his Christian mother in New Zealand was woken by the Holy Spirit to immediately pray for her wayward son. But Ian died. His body was placed in the hospital mortuary. But while his mother prayed Ian was having a prolonged NDE (“Near Death Experience”). The result was that he was returned to his body and was commissioned to become a preacher! You can read his story at-
<http://www.ianmccormack.org/>.

2. Have you ever had someone tell you that they *felt* specifically to pray for you? Describe.

3. According to 1Corinthians 14:4 what are two ways a believer can pray?

First Corinthians 14:15 seems to be suggesting that we can sing our prayers (praise) either in our own learned language, or in a “tongue”. Have you ever considered *praise as singing prayers*?

Praying in tongues is different to speaking in tongues. *Praying in tongues* is about us speaking prayerfully to God (note 1Corinthians 14:2). *Speaking in tongues* is one of the nine spiritual gifts (of 1Cor. 12) which is like prophesying and is therefore speaking *from* God to others (1Corinthians 14:3).



4. What benefit for the believer is there in praying in tongues according to 1Corinthians 14:4?

Frank Houston was a man who moved in an extraordinary gift of the Word of Knowledge. As a young man he was a disillusioned Salvation Army officer. But then he encountered the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and began praying in tongues. He found that after he prayed in tongues, often just prior to retiring for the evening, he would awake knowing something he hadn't previously known and feeling strangely stronger. He taught that 1Corinthians 14:4 was just as true today as it was when Paul wrote it to the Corinthians.

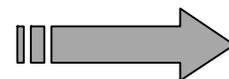
Prayer is a command of God, and is to be practiced both in public and in private; yes, such a command brings those that have the spirit of prayer, into great intimacy with God; and the prevailing prayer, will receive great things from God, both for the person that prayed, and for those that are prayed for. Prayer opens the heart of God, and is a means by which the empty soul is filled. By prayer the Christian can open his heart to God, as to a friend, and obtain fresh testimony of God's friendship to him.

John Bunyan, written 1662

5. How does James 4:3 contrast with praying in the Spirit?

6. According to Ephesians 6:18 are there times when we can pray without the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Even though we have the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 6:18 still charges us to persevere and endure in prayer. This should dispel the myth that when the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit (and led by Him in prayer) it is easy to remain focussed in prayer for a



long period. Even Spirit led believers who enjoy praying will find that prayer can be hard work. But for the believer, God’s command is also God’s empowering. That is, when the Bible commands us to pray with perseverance it is a command that the Holy Spirit can enable us to obey.

It’s amazing how people who say they are undisciplined manage to find time to eat and sleep yet never time to pray.

John Piper

To pray with perseverance is to pray regularly, consistently, and habitually. This type of praying is distinct from randomly, on-the-run, or only-spontaneously. The Holy Spirit can help us to pray with perseverance.

Praying without ceasing means at least three things. First, it means that there is a spirit of dependence that should permeate all we do. This is the very spirit and essence of prayer. So, even when we are not speaking consciously to God, there is a deep, abiding dependence on him that is woven into the heart of faith. In that sense, we “pray” or have the spirit of prayer continuously.

John Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God*, page 157

7. What happens to the believer when they pray in the Holy Spirit according to Jude 20?

Some Christians refer to their regular time with God as their “quiet time”, or “daily devotional”. Over the years I have developed a number of habits for my quiet time which begins when I wake (usually before anyone else in our household). I take my Bible, a Prayer-Journal and a pen, and go to a room to be by myself to read and to pray. Do you have a regular, habitual time which you set aside to meet with God?

8. According to John 14:17, why are we (and not the world) able to know the Holy Spirit and His leading?

Amen.

