Lesson 2: True Prayer Defined

I asked folks attending one of my prayer seminars for their impression of prayer meetings. Here's an answer that others have echoed:

Most of the prayer meetings I've ever attended seem dull and ineffectual—just a long list of people with physical needs is prayed through. Hardly ever have I seen brokenness and true repentance on the part of the prayer participants along with honesty and openness.

Honestly Let Christ Come into Your Needs

United prayer that changes lives requires a different perspective. We must with open honesty let Christ come into the deepest needs of our inner life. He longs for heart to heart communion with us as individuals and as a group. Listen to our Lord's heart cry:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me."

**(Rev. 3:20)**

O. Hallesby, in his classic book on prayer, commented on this verse:

I doubt that I know of a passage in the whole Bible that throws greater light upon prayer than this one does **(Rev. 3:20)**. It is, it seems to me, the key which opens the door into the holy and blessed realm of prayer."[1](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-true-prayer-defined#endnote)**(Emphasis added)**

To pray is nothing more involved than to let Jesus into our needs. To pray is to give Jesus permission to employ His powers in the alleviation of our distress. To pray is to let Jesus glorify His name in the midst of our needs."[2](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-true-prayer-defined#endnote)

Christ is Unique

Christ is unique. No other founder of a religious faith ever stood at the door of a church or home and humbly sought to come in to share His love and meet their needs! Christ alone rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. From this position of power and authority He sent the Holy Spirit to take immediate charge of His body, the church, and fill His followers with His risen life. The Holy Spirit comes into our midst as the perfect representative of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit we commune with the Lord Jesus Himself. The church is thus a supernatural body, not a mere religious organization struggling on its own to follow the teachings of a dead founder!

Why Would Jesus "Seek Permission" to Enter Your Life?

Do you wonder why Jesus would seek permission to enter your private world and share the secret needs of your heart since you have already received Him as Savior? True, you have let Him in the "living room" of your life, but you may have some unsightly things hidden away in other "rooms" you would rather not let Him see! Perhaps there are some magazines or videos that you do not want Him to see. There may be anger, bitterness and lust hidden in the dark corners of your heart. You may be giving the Lord only limited access to your inner life. You will talk to Him only about sickness, jobs and other "safe" subjects. But He wants to settle down and be at home in your heart. He wants freedom to commune with you and expose strongholds of sin that hinder the full development of His holiness and love in your inner life.

What is Your Focus?

Furthermore, like many Christians you may have invited Christ into your private life, but you do not unite with your mate in asking Him to come into your marriage. When you do meet with others in prayer, is the focus on the presence of Christ? Are you agreeing with your prayer partners to let Him enter into your relationships to root out envy, jealousy, bitterness and strife and put humility, forbearance, longsuffering and pure love in their place?

Christ "At Home"

Christ wants to have the preeminence in all your relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus, "that Christ may settle down and be completely at home in your hearts through faith" (paraphrase of Ephesians 3:17a). Christ wanted to be at home in the hearts of the assembly. Just look at what the Holy Spirit acting as Christ's representative did in the praying church in Acts.

The church began with 120 believers meeting together for ten days in one accord in prayer (Acts 1:14-15). In chapter 2 the Holy Spirit took charge of them on behalf of Christ. They were all filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). Being filled with the Spirit meant that He took control of their inner life and reproduced Christ's love, joy, peace, righteousness, harmony and generous kindness in the whole congregation. They spontaneously shared a supernatural oneness of heart and spirit (2:42-47). Their witness was powerful and thousands were added to the church. In chapter 4 after they prayed with one accord they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (v 31). Amazing grace was upon them all and they were of one heart and one soul (v 32-33).

Thus Christ, working through the Spirit, created a new breed of humanity, a new kind of community--His living body, filled with His own life and with Himself as the living, active Head.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS THUS UNIQUE:

1. Christ is our life.
2. Our prayers can make Him preeminent in our midst so that the world will see in our praying community authentic Christianity that is like Christ.

This is how Christ glorifies Himself in meeting the deepest needs of our life as His body, the church.

United prayer is essential for the active leadership of Christ and the reproduction of His life in His body, the living church. Dr. George Sweeting, Chancellor of Moody Bible Institute wrote:

What breath is to life, prayer is to Christian health...Why does God want us to pray? Because prayer is the only way we can talk to God...God speaks to us through the Scriptures, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the circumstances of life. But we can speak to Him only through prayer. Prayerlessness literally cuts us off from God, robbing us of growth, power, fellowship, and life itself. Yes, prayer is absolutely necessary."[3](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-true-prayer-defined#endnote)

Research for Instructor:

Do you understand these key terms and phrases as presented in Session 2?:

* United prayer
* Christ is unique
* Strongholds of sin
* Focus on the Presence of Christ
* Agreeing with your Prayer Partners
* Christ at home
* A new breed of humanity, a new kind of community
* Christian faith is unique

Re-read the text and discover the answers to any of the above that you could not answer the first time through. Write your understanding of each term. Then compare with the definitions on pages X - XII.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are your greatest spiritual needs right now? Where do you feel empty?
2. Would you like to belong to a prayer group where everyone seeks to let Christ come into their deepest needs?
3. Is it too much to pray that the whole group would be filled with the Spirit?
4. What is your understanding of the author's description of a "new breed of humanity, a new kind of community, filled with the life of Christ with Himself as the living Head"?
5. How would families and small groups be affected by sharing in this new kind of community? Would they become a new kind of family? A new kind of group?
6. Comment on Dr. Sweeting's statement that "Prayerlessness literally cuts us off from God, robbing us of growth, power, fellowship, and life itself. Yes, prayer is absolutely necessary."
7. How has Christ been glorified in your life recently?

Endnotes

1 O. Hallesby, Prayer, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1941), 11.

2 ibid, 12.

3 George Sweeting, "Is Prayer Necessary?" (Moody, Dec. 1994,) 62.