

Spiritual Intimacy & Prayer as Conversation with God in Igniting Movements to Christ



Prayer as described and modeled in the Bible is a two-way conversation between the believer and God, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ Our Mediator. Praying without ceasing practices the presence of God as we go through our days and nights aware of and in communion with Him. Extraordinary prayer is understood to be one of the foundational principles of church planting or disciple-making movements. At its heart is this continuous abiding in Jesus, the Vine, through whom we bear much fruit for His glory and to the extension of His kingdom on earth as in heaven. Just as Jesus Himself did nothing but what He saw the Father in Heaven doing, so we as His disciples also are called to be trustfully listening and obeying His instructions. In this way, we position ourselves to join Him as He is working, going where He is about to come, and announcing the advent of His kingdom. He confirms His Word with signs and wonders following.



Much is now being written about listening prayer at least at an individual level. As we spend time apart with God, we can hone our ability to hear Him as we sing and praise, read the Word, and quietly tune our ear to His voice, making space for Him to speak to us. The more intentional we are at listening to Him, the more clearly we are able to hear during the hustle bustle of our days and in times of greater pressure and distraction. Journaling helps us to develop greater confidence that we are hearing Him as we record what we believe He's saying and then see Him confirm through events and circumstances as they unfold. Although some time back, the thought among believers was that only certain specially gifted people we referred to as prophets or preachers "heard God," and we sought them out for "a word from the Lord," in this hour believers are realizing that God is calling each one to listen, pay heed, and obey His voice continually. In fact, disciple-making movements or church planting movements are based on the importance of interacting with God's Word, either orally through stories or the written Word, and obeying what God is speaking to us. The mature disciple is one who is obeying all that He is learning as he listens to God directing him day by day.



INTERDEPENDENT ON GOD AND ONE ANOTHER

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But, individual listening isn't all we're called to do as followers of Jesus Christ. We are called to be a Body, part of the family of God, interdependent on Him and one another. Over one hundred fifty "one another" commands are given in the New Testament, indicating the importance of the community aspect of our lives in Christ. We are being fitted together with every joint supplying by Him and growing up into the full measure of the stature of Christ. Something unique happens where two or three are gathered together in His Name: He is in their midst. Now, we know God is omnipresent—He is everywhere. So what does Jesus mean in telling us that He is among us when two or three are present together in His Name? I believe the Bible is teaching us that He manifests Himself in a unique way as we come together in community. When we do that, align ourselves with one another, tune our hearts together to focus on Him and His Presence among us, we experience Him in a heightened way that isn't possible individually. The Bible indicates that every matter should be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. In listening to God together in community, we offer God the opportunity to speak in stereo or even "surround sound" to us through confirmations and elaborations that come only in community. In fact, it seems that God will speak things to a group that He cannot or will not speak to a single individual.



CATALYZING MOVEMENTS TO CHRIST

"Abiding clearly indicates an intimacy of relationship where the connection is almost seamless."

Especially when we come together called by God to catalyze movements to Christ in areas with little access to the gospel, individual and corporate listening prayer are critical to the success of our efforts. John 15 is clear that unless we abide in the Vine, Jesus, we can do nothing. Abiding clearly indicates an intimacy of relationship where the connection is almost seamless. Obeying God's commands to love Him and to love one another depend on this kind of intimacy with Him and one another. Fruitfulness therefore flows from intimacy much as in a marriage relationship, bearing children is impossible without intimacy. Since His is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, our ability to accomplish His will depends on the free release of both the determination and the enabling to do His will for His glory. Doing things our own way will certainly not result in God-glorifying ends. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, not only individually but corporately as well.



CORPORATE LISTENING

"Psalm 133 indicates that the commanded blessing is where brothers (and sisters) dwell together in unity."

So what does corporate listening look like? How does it work? Coming together with others with the same heart and purpose is key. Psalm 133 indicates that the commanded blessing is where brothers (and sisters) dwell together in unity. The image of synchronized swimmers comes to mind in which a number of different athletes have trained themselves to move as one with each other following the rhythm of a single song. An orchestra would be another example of unity in diversity, many different instruments tuned to the same note and playing according to the rhythm set forth by the conductor. Each participant's contribution is as valuable to the whole as any other. A single contribution may totally shift the understanding of the communication so it is important to wait until each person has contributed their piece to the picture. And, each contribution lends nuance and shade to the message. Since the Bible indicates that the mind of man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps, perhaps even the order in which the messages are shared is significant and should be considered. Good artists paint in such a way that we feel drawn into the picture and perceive depth and complexity near to that of the natural world. Perhaps God is desiring His Body, His Bride to learn to hear Him more deeply, more broadly, more widely, more complexly than we have ever perceived before for this hour. The Bible speaks of growing up into the fullness of the measure of Christ Jesus—Jesus is coming back for a Bride with whom He is equally yoked. Shall we not exercise ourselves to move on to maturity in the Spirit and cultivate our listening hearts to be instantly, joyfully responsive to His voice, moving as one with Him and one another?

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Interested in more on listening? June 2, 2016, Godspace featured a piece entitled *Learning to Listen* By **Andy Wade** – What does it mean to listen, to really listen so that you hear and understand? And what are the many ways we can learn to listen? This month's **Author-of-the-Month, Keith Anderson**, explores this idea in his newest book, **A Spirituality of Listening: Living What We Hear**. <http://godspace-msa.com/2016/06/02/learning-to-listen/>

In the video in TED Talks entitled "Learning to Listen", **Julian Treasure** in about 9 minutes outlines five concrete steps to help us listen better. Reflecting on this video I realized that our imaginations and creativity are also often ravaged by the constant onslaught of noise in our lives. Implementing the five steps outlined by Treasure can begin to address both the spiritual and creative numbing that happens when we're constantly surrounded by noise. <http://godspace-msa.com/2016/06/02/learning-to-listen/>