

Engaging God Through Personal and Corporate Prayer
Message 2 of 6 in the series: "Engage: Participate, Join, Get Involved, Take Part"

A. God wants us to pray about everything.

"Don't worry about anything; instead, **pray about everything**. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

B. God wants us to pray personally and privately.

1. God wants us to actually pray. "You do not have **because you do not ask God**." James 4:2b (NIV)
2. God wants us to pray with right motives. "And even when you ask, **you don't get it because your motives are all wrong**—you want only what will give you pleasure... So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for **your loyalty is divided between God and the world**." James 4:3 & 7-8 (NLT)
3. God wants us to talk to Him openly and honestly without any religious posturing or pretense. "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. **But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private**. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!"
Matthew 6:5-8 (NLT)
4. God wants us to pray expectantly. "O Lord, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but you. Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. **Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly**." Psalm 5:1-3 (NLT)
5. God wants us to keep on praying and not give up if we don't receive an answer right away. "One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that **they should always pray and never give up**. 'There was a judge in a certain city,' he said, 'who neither feared God nor cared about people. A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, "Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy." The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, "I don't fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!"' Then the Lord said, 'Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? **Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?**'"
Luke 18:1-8 (NLT)

C. God also wants us to pray together with other believers.

1. When we become Christians, we become part of God's family. "So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, **you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children**. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father.' For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children." Romans 8:15-16 (NLT)
IMPORTANT! Since we are now part of God's family, we should ask God to help us meet needs, grow up, and get along. "Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. **Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed**. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." James 5:13-16 (NLT)
2. When we become Christians, we become part of Christ's body, The Church. God has arranged things so that our interdependence is essential to carrying out the mission God has given us. "The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ... **we**

have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part... If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But **our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.** How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. **The eye can never say to the hand, 'I don't need you.'** The head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you.'" 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13b-14, & 17-21 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Since God gave us a mission to accomplish and we won't be able to accomplish it unless we work together, we should ask God to help us work together well and to open doors for effective ministry. "Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. **Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words** so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So **pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him**, as I should." Ephesians 6:18-20 (NLT)

"I urge you, first of all, to **pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them.** Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth." 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NLT)

- Christians have been praying with and for each other since the church began. "**All the believers devoted themselves** to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper) and **to prayer.**" Acts 2:42 (NLT)

"As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. **When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God...** 'O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' **After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.** Then they preached the word of God with boldness."

Acts 4:23-24a & 29-31 (NLT)

- What if I've never prayed together with other believers?

- I may be afraid of what others will think of me. **Good News!** "...God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)
- I may feel unsure of what to say. **Good News!** "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, **we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.** And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will."

Romans 8:26-27 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! We can learn to pray! "Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'"

Luke 11:1 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

- Read Philippians 4:6-7 & 1 Peter 5:7. How successful are you at being able to discuss all of your problems, fears, dreams, etc. with God in prayer? (Some possible answers: I don't know how to pray. I only pray when in trouble. I pray about everything!)
- Discuss the following characteristics of a God-honoring prayer life:
 - We actually pray. (James 4:1-2)
 - We pray with right motives. (James 4:3-8)
 - We talk to God openly and honestly without any religious posturing or pretense. (Matthew 6:5-8)
 - We pray expectantly. (Psalm 5:3)
 - We keep on praying and don't give up if we don't receive an answer right away. (Luke 18:1-8)

3. Discuss the following reasons Christians should pray together:
 - When we become Christians, we become part of God's family. Therefore, we should ask God to help us meet needs, grow up, and get along. (Romans 8:15-16, James 5:13-16)
 - When we become Christians, we become part of Christ's body, The Church. God has arranged things so that our interdependence is essential to carrying out the mission God has given us. Therefore, we should ask God to help us work together well and to open doors for effective ministry. (1 Corinthians 12:12-21, Ephesians 6:18-20, Timothy 2:1-4)
 - Christians have been praying with and for each other since the church began. (Acts 2:42 & 4:23-31)
4. Why do you think praying together with other believers comes naturally for some people but is difficult or even frightening for others? Discuss how the following verses might encourage everyone in your group to pray. (Philippians 2:13, Romans 8:26-17, Luke 11:1)
5. Spend some time as a group praying together asking God to help everyone in our church pray more often, more earnestly, and with more openness to His will.