

PRAYING WITH OTHERS

More than once in the Gospels, Jesus says, “When you pray.” Not *if* but *when*. Regular prayer is an expectation for Jesus’ disciples. It doesn’t take long thinking about this to understand why. We *need* prayer. But prayer can be difficult, especially when we try to pray with others.

The Problem

Many believers do not know *how to pray* alongside someone else who is praying. They do not know how to engage and stay engaged. So, their mind wanders. Rather than praying with the other person, they are thinking of about their schedules, their family, their problems, or their next meal. Maybe this is you?

This inability to pray with others has negative effects on our spiritual life. Consider four. As a church, it will mean we lack the unity of the whole congregation in prayer. The early church prayed *together with one voice* (Acts 4:24). How can we do this if we aren’t even praying? Second, we can be disengaged at crucial moments when gathered in worship. We pray during our worship services and prayer itself is worship. In fact, prayer may be the most significant act of worship apart from hearing the Word preached. Are we neglecting this act of worship? Moreover, if we aren’t able to engage with someone else praying, we will miss the opportunity to learn how to pray better. Public prayer is an opportunity to learn (1 Cor 14:19). We can learn truths about God. But we can also learn to pray better (Luke 11:1). Finally, if we are distracted while others pray, we can even lose our confidence in prayer over the long term. If not engaged, we train ourselves not to take prayer seriously.

The Solution

The way forward is two-fold. It begins with remembering the importance of prayer for our spiritual health. Jesus expects us to pray just as he did (Luke 18:1–8). He saw prayer as an essential part of our life with God (John 15:5–11). And based on this emphasis from Jesus’ life and teaching, the apostles and early church prayed often (e.g., Acts 2:42). Remembering the importance of prayer is crucial.

But we must also actually *pray*! A helpful way to begin is to learn a basic strategy for praying with others who lead in prayer. Some are wary of such things, fearing it kills our reception to the Spirit's leadership. But the Bible teaches otherwise (1 Tim 4:7–8). Jesus even taught an outline for a spiritually vibrant prayer life (Matt 6:9–13)! Such strategies actually provide a framework to keep us engaged and ready to follow the Spirit's leading.

The Strategy

One strategy for staying engaging while praying with others is the *ARC* method. It is meant to remind you of three ways to stay engaged: agreeing, repenting, and connecting with someone who is praying. Let's unpack what this looks like.

First, **agree with the person praying**. When someone prays, think about what they are saying. Are they stating biblical truth? Are they expressing a biblical desire? If so, intentionally affirm your agreement with these things—agree with them in prayer. Mental agreement can lead to heartfelt agreement. How do we do this? Either quietly with your mouth or silently with your mind, use words and phrases like: *yes, amen, please, we need it, help us, etc.*

Next, **repent when appropriate**. There are two ways to do this. You can begin by turning positive affirmations of biblical truth into opportunities for repentance like this:

Person praying: "Father, you are loving."

Your response: "Father, forgive me for not loving much."

Person praying: "We're called to evangelize."

Your response: "I'm sorry for not sharing Christ more."

Person praying: "We are the body of Christ."

Your response: "Forgive me for being disconnected from others."

Or, you can also take up their confessions of sin as your own and repent:

Person praying: "We do not pray as we should."

Your response: "That's me, Lord; forgive me."

Person praying: "We're sorry for faithlessness."

Your response: "I'm sorry for not trusting you more."

Person praying: "We confess our pride."

Your response: "Yes, Lord; you know my pride."

Finally, **connect** the other person's prayers to needs in your life. Do this, by moving from the general things they are praying about to specific things in your own life.

Person praying: "Give us humble hearts."

Your response: "Kill my pride when I'm with Bill."

Person praying: "We need greater patience."

Your response: "Give me patience with my kids."

Person praying: "We praise your lovingkindness."

Your response: "You've been so kind to provide while I've been off work."

Hopeful in Prayer

Using the acronym *ARC* may help you remember this strategy—*Agree, Repent, Connect*. But remember this is just a strategy. It's not important if you use this one or another one. What's important is to take seriously the life of prayer offered to us in Christ. A life of joy and comfort as we call out to our heavenly Father, asking for the good gifts we need to live for his glory in his sin-scarred world. Do not forsake the blessing of pray—especially pray with others.