

No-Sweat Prayer

Anywhere, Anytime with Anyone

Do you ever feel your prayers sound empty or powerless, especially in a group? Do the articulate words of others intimidate you? Does tension mount inside you when the person next to you says, in Jesus' name...? Do you wonder what others will think if you don't pray?

Praying in a group can be as anxiety producing as public speaking. Maybe even reading about it right now is making you sweat. That anxiety can prevent us from praying effectively, or from praying aloud at all.

“Prayer,” as Charles H. Spurgeon said, “. . . is not a mere mental exercise, nor a vocal performance, but it [prayer] is deeper far than that—it is spiritual communion with the Creator of heaven and earth . . . Prayer is a spiritual business from beginning to end, and its aim and object end not with man, but reach to God Himself” (Warren Wiersbe, *Classic Sermons on Prayer*).

Lack of confidence or fear is a tool in the hands of the enemy used to undermine the confidence of a potential intercessor. This in turn deprives the believer of the influence and blessing of collective prayer. When we pray in “one accord,” we build strength, unity, and love for one another. Prayer in Jesus' name builds a fortress that the powers of darkness cannot invade. There is power in corporate prayer.

In our prayer closet, our Father is always ready to hear. We also have the promise, “If two of you on earth agree about anything . . . it will be done. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:19 - 20 NIV). Therefore, when we pray in unity, silently or audibly, we have the promise that Jesus is in our midst. His presence is power.

If you lack confidence to join audibly in the chorus of prayer, perhaps one, or all of these four strategies will build in you the strength to overcome not only the enemy, but your internal struggles as well.

1. Develop Personal Worship

Prayer, like most things, improves with effort. The law of sowing and reaping can be invoked for our good. Your personal devotion and meditation will sow the Father's mind, purpose and will in you. “I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence” (Proverbs 8:30b). When we establish undivided time with Jesus (the ultimate priority of priorities), the wonderful assurance of who

we are in Christ develops in us the confidence we need. We realize the Lord shows no favoritism, and our prayers of praise, no matter how basic, are sweet music to the ears of God.

When alone with God we can praise Him in song, pray, and sing the Psalms as a form of worship. Like King David, we can express our heart in dance before the Lord (See 2 Sam. 6:14). Listening to worshipful music draws us into the presence of God, which helps us reflect on His Majesty and goodness to us.

By incorporating various acts of worship on a regular basis, we strengthen our spirit, thus developing courage to confidently step out of our comfort zones. Praising God on a regular basis reminds us to whom we are speaking—not the prayer group—but to our Creator and blessed Savior.

2. Read and Memorize the Word

“Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105 NKJV). Unless we read the Word, and memorize scripture, we will have no lamp to light our path. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom . . .” (Colossians 3:16 VER?).

To aid in memorization you can write verses on 3x5 cards and post them throughout your home. Singing or listening to scripture on tape, reading and studying the Word, and journaling scriptures are tools that will reinforce your ability to plant the Word deeper into your heart. When we pray in a group, our focus should be on the petitions at hand, not on what we are going to say. With the Word in our heart, we can trust the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrance a scripture appropriate for the moment.

Additionally, highlighting scriptures or developing special markings of verses that are personally meaningful sharpens recall. When you pray with others, you can find these marked scriptures at a glance, thus building confidence when you pray in a group.

3. Pray Sentences Prayers

Imagine the ability to pray without hyperventilating or the pressure of speaking elaborate prayers. Sentence prayers exclude the “and, but, and furthermore, God.” For example, we can pray, “Lord, please give Gary wisdom to discern your will concerning this job change.” Sentence prayers are just that—a sentence short and to the point.

Once you pray your one sentence, stop and give someone else the opening to pray. A short, concise sentence allows everyone the opportunity to pray for the topic or issue at hand. (This also helps

the group to pray in one accord.) Not only does praying in sentence prayers produce confidence for intimidated intercessors, it has a positive effect for those who can pray in groups without intimidation. Those comfortable in praying audibly must learn to *shorten* their prayers. And when a seasoned intercessor prays a sentence prayer, it lessens the pressure felt by those who aren't as seasoned.

The next time you are in a prayer group or Bible study, take a leap of faith and say a sentence prayer. Glenda applied this tool and found that she now can pray in a group without feeling overwhelmed. Moreover, she feels that she can take the lead with confidence. Sometimes she even worries she won't be able to keep quiet! Just like Glenda, you can build confidence to pray aloud with assurance in any group setting.

4. Look Up Not In

Our ability to pray corporately is birthed from our prayer time at home. As we enter God's sanctuary, life falls into its proper perspective. As the beauty of Christ and the power of the indwelling Spirit fill your heart through private prayer, your spiritual eyes will start to look *up* and not *in*. The more we understand God's character, the easier we can approach His throne with confidence. There, we find a new freedom in which we can express our heart in the presence of others.

We no longer need to worry about the distraction of what we are going to say, because our focus is off ourselves and on God. Prayer is all about Jesus.

When Christ is the spotlight, our thoughts center on praying in one accord and the power of His presence that strengthens us.

The No Sweat Prayer Challenge

In the next 30 days, incorporate these four confidence-building strategies into your prayer life. Then join a small prayer group, or start one yourself, and begin praying audibly. Take the challenge:

- Develop Personal Worship
- Read and Memorize the Word
- Pray Sentence Prayers
- Look Up not In

The expression of your heart and love for the Father is yours alone. No one can express your heart better than you can. Your dialogue with the Savior is unique. Let's agree to cross over the line of our comfort zones and allow God to stretch us. Let's allow our praise and requests to blend with the group

like a sweet aroma to the Lord. It is our privilege – we do not have to sweat prayer anywhere, anytime or with anyone.

---Diane Ramirez