

Appreciate Differences

Our

Prayer



Gary Chapman's book *The Five Love Languages* has been on the Christian bestseller list for years. As a counselor, Chapman reveals various ways people express and receive love, particularly in marriage relationships: words of affirmation, spending quality time together, gift giving, acts of service, and physical touch.

Problems arise when a person doesn't understand that his or her spouse may speak a different "language" when expressing love, which can result in either person feeling unloved.

Similarly, Christians differ in the ways we express our love to God. How do these love languages relate to our prayer lives and our relationships with God and others in the Church? Some express love by service—by doing things. Others express love by spending time—with God and with fellow believers. I suspect people who express love through physical touch long to sense God's presence. They may seek experiential worship more than words of affirmation.

Our spiritual gifts and personality types influence how we pray, too. For example, a person with a gift of mercy probably gets excited about praying for people's needs. But a person with the gift of evangelism may become frustrated in a prayer meeting where the only requests lifted up are the needs of the Body. Why? He or she wants to pray for the lost.

In the same way, people with the gift of faith want to pray

for the big things. They won't keep coming to a prayer meeting that consistently focuses on the common "make-my-life-better, fix-it" prayers. And the person with an administrative gifting is frustrated if we don't pray with lists presented in a logically ordered manner.

Given the same request, a pessimist prays differently from an optimist. In praying for the area around a church, the pessimist will remind God of the problems—the broken homes, the drugs, and the gangs. The optimist will pray God's blessing on that same neighborhood. We need both types of prayer.

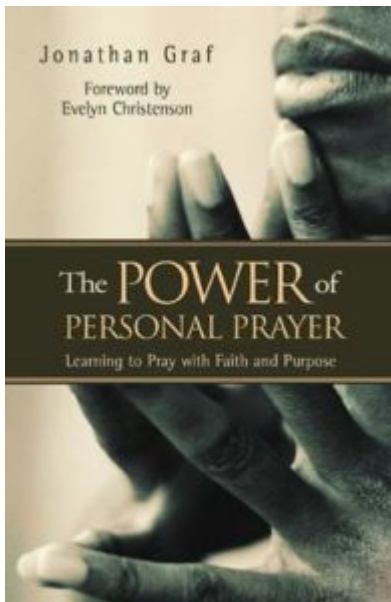
If we don't understand these different styles, we may get annoyed with others in the Body. Or worse, we may feel inadequate in our ability to pray: "I am not as emotional or passionate as so-and-so when I pray. My prayer must not be as good as hers." No! Nothing could be further from the truth.

A verse in Hebrews describes Jesus' prayers: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death" (5:7). He was an emotional pray-er. But does that mean we all should pray like that? No. The verse goes on to say that "he was heard because of his reverent submission." He wasn't heard because His passion came out in powerful emotion. He was heard because He determined to be obedient and submit to the Father's desires.

God created us all to be different from one another. And we should pray in different ways, too. We need to recognize this as we seek to pray together. No prayer is too simple. God does not judge any prayer's worthiness or effectiveness based on how it is delivered.

Be encouraged! God values your prayers.

—Jonathan Graf is the publisher of *Prayer Connect* magazine.



If you want to read more about prayer personalities, Jon has an entire chapter “Finding Your Prayer Style” on the subject in his book *The Power of Personal Prayer*.