

Praying in Sync

I enjoy marching bands. When I was in a high school marching band half a century ago, I was just worried about remembering the notes and putting one foot in front of the other.

Recently, Facebook, in its infinite wisdom about what I would like, started putting videos of marching bands in front of me. One day they put a video of the Kyoto Tachibana High School Marching Band from Kyoto, Japan in front of me and I got hooked.

This band not only plays well, but more than putting one foot in front of the other and marching down the street, these kids dance, high kick, swirl, and do intricate stepping moves. Watching them play and do the Charleston is amazing. They are in sync, and it is inspiring.

When it comes to prayer, being in sync is important if we want to be effective!

In Sync Sisters

In the 1940s, on an island in the Hebrides chain off the northwest coast of Scotland, two sisters got in sync with prayer and the world changed!

Peggy and Christine Smith, both in their 80s, suddenly felt a burden to pray for the young people in their community. It seems none went to church. But they did not just pray. They got in sync!

Two nights a week—Tuesdays and Fridays—they would pray from 10 PM until 3-4 AM. After months of this, they asked their pastor and elders to join them. And they did. They prayed together, in a barn next to the Smith sister's house, twice a week for months and months.

One night the Holy Spirit's presence powerfully fell on them and swept over the island, convicting of sin and bringing people—especially young people—to Him. What resulted was a 4-year revival and spiritual awakening that led more than 20,000 people into the Kingdom—more than half the population of the Hebrides.

The long term result was that many young people, saved in this revival, went in ministry and filled the pulpits of Scotland and England for decades to come.

If we want to see significant results from our prayers, we need to get in sync, too. But what needs to be in-sync for effectiveness in prayer?

We need to be in sync with God's will.

John tells us "This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him" (John 5:14-15, CSB).

When we pray about a situation, we are too quick to just pray the obvious good result. Instead, we should always ask the Holy Spirit, what we should pray. What is His will? What does He want to do in this situation.

If we do not hear a response, then we should pray Scripture (that is always God's will!). Let the Holy Spirit lead you to a passage, and begin praying it.

We need to be in sync with God's purposes.

John 15 has this principle spelled out. There we find the most quoted prayer promise: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for

you” (John 15:7 CSB).

We know from experience that we DO NOT always get everything we ask for in prayer! So what gives?

This verse has some conditions, that are often not met by believers. To understand what those conditions are, we need to understand John 15:1-6:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him **produces much fruit**, because you can do nothing without me. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:1-6 CSB).

As a believer, our primary purpose is to “bear fruit.” We do that by staying connected to the vine, Jesus, and drawing everything we can from Him. We take in His Words (read the Bible) and depend upon Him for our strength.

That being the case, when we go to prayer, (v 7) rather than pray the quick fix, it stands to reason that we would consider, “what’s the fruit-bearing” thing I should pray for in this situation?” When we do that, we get in sync with Jesus’ purposes.

We also need to be in-sync with fellow believers.

We do this by praying together with other Jesus followers. The

Bible supports praying together in a major way. Did you know that if you look at all the times prayer happens in Scripture, more than 90% of those times it is corporate—people are praying together!

In Acts 2, 4, 12, and 13, we see the Church praying together with amazing results.

Jesus also pointed out the remarkable power of agreement with fellow believers when we pray.

¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound^l in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, **if two of you on earth agree** about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:18-20 CSB).

What does “agree” mean here? The word used means “to consort,” which is more than just “hey, let’s both ask God to do this.” The dictionary says to Consort is: to agree or harmonize; to associate, join, unite; to be in one accord.

When we get in that position when we pray together as believers, there is real, Kingdom-advancing power! In Matthew 16, Jesus told His disciples: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven” (vv. 18-19 CSB).

That comes after Jesus says Hell will not be able to overcome the Church—a church that prays in agreement (binds and looses) about God’s will and purposes!

Get in sync with prayer!

—Jonathan Graf is the president of Church Prayer Leaders

Network and the author of *Restored Power: Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time*.

Watch recent message on this topic The Power of Praying Together that Jon preached at his home church, Christ Community Church in Brazil, IN. Start at about 4:10 to avoid the opening preliminaries.