

When a Scriptural Truth Shouldn't Be Taught



My little grand daughter Gabrielle, who is almost 5, loves to “drive” the tractors with Grampy when she comes to visit. I have a large garden tractor and an all terrain working vehicle we like to go on. She sits on my lap and helps me drive around.

I was a little shocked during her last visit at what she knows how to do—put the key into the ignition; turn it; what a gas pedal does; what the steering wheel does. Actually that is too much to know for someone her age. If she were not an obedient little girl and knows not to go to the barn without me, I would be nervous!

There are some principles regarding prayer that are like that—they could be dangerous if an individual is not mature enough to use them. Jesus understood this. He taught on prayer a number of times over His years with the disciples. But there was a progression when it came to the depth of what He taught. Two huge—and quite powerful—truths about prayer He did not teach until the night He was betrayed: that they should pray in Jesus’ name and the truth of John 15:7, ask whatever you wish in my name and it will be given to you. The disciples

were not ready before that point to take in those truths and use them—they weren't mature enough until they had spent three years being mentored daily by Jesus.

Modern believers don't get disciplined for three intense years before hearing those truths, however. I wonder if some of the struggles people have with prayer is that they tried to practice truths they weren't mature enough to handle yet. The truths did not work because of that fact, and they gave up praying, or they become like so many who tack on "in Jesus' name, amen" on the end of their prayer without an ounce of understanding. They never learn to tap into the power that is behind that phrase because it is only a formulaic thing a prayer is supposed to have.

Or immature believers who hear someone teach on John 15:7 and think they are supposed to get everything they ask for . . . but don't. Confusion and skepticism take over their prayer lives. And their prayer lives are possibly permanently harmed because they learned something too soon.

One of the biggest popular prayer things taught to anyone today by many teachers and churches is how to hear/listen to God and pray for someone. What a wonderful thing for someone to know how to do. But these teachers seem clueless to its dangers in the hands of any believer who is not mature enough yet to handle it.

A few years ago I sat under an excellent teacher (I won't name her) who was teaching a group of people how to do that. I loved her teaching. There was a practical demonstration at the end. A 35-40 year-old woman was the subject we were supposed to pray for. After a short season of asking the Holy Spirit regarding what we should pray for her, eight or ten people shared what they heard. I think even the teacher was a little embarrassed by how "all over the place" the comments were. She tried valiantly to tie a few together before we prayed for the woman.

I could have told her two things that went wrong. First, only outgoing personality people (almost all under 25) shared what they heard. My fear was that most shared because as an outgoing personality they had a personal need to talk. I don't doubt that they heard something, but it was probably more a thought their mind created, not the voice of the Holy Spirit. Second she never should have taught that broad an audience on that practice. Praying in that way is something usually that should be reserved only for those who are spiritually mature.

I love healing prayer and these methods, but I would only teach them to people who I know have strong walks with God, who spend a lot of time in the Word, and have a strong enough prayer life that they know what the voice of God sounds like! Much havoc is brought upon churches and people through that practice when spiritually immature people know a little bit about how to do it. Certainly people need to learn by trying and failing, and grace needs to be given. But so to does wisdom need to be practiced regarding who should be taught what when.

My point is on all these prayer truths—and many others as well—that not every believer is ready for every prayer truth. Some deeper truths need to be presented and learned only as a believer grows more mature. This is especially true of these truths that have “power” attached to them.

I don't have time to write it, but I would love to see a book on prayer that explores a discipleship progression of prayer practices. That would be valuable to a prayer leader or discipler.

I would love to hear your thoughts on the subject.

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