

Adventures in Prayer

Book Sample Excerpt:

After ministering at the altar with dozens of earnest Christians, I started seeing an alarming pattern—the tendency to lump all forms of prayer into one basket. All prayers are not the same any more than all sports are the same. Think about it. While basketball, volleyball, and soccer all use a ball to score points, each of these sports have a different set rules to help the players achieve a specific outcome. But if a basket player attempted to employ the same rules as a baseball player, there would be chaos and utter confusion on the court. The same thing goes with prayer.

There are many different types of prayer. Yet each prayer has different principles to help you reach definite outcomes. But more on that later. I want to take you back to the altar where after much discussion with many petitioners, I was inspired to develop a Bible Study course and write this book.

“What’s on your heart? How can I pray with you today?” I asked warmly.

“Oh, whatever you have in your heart to pray for,” came the reply with a smile.

“Well, hun, “ I began amusedly, “the word of knowledge is not in operation right now, so I need a little more detail in order to pray effectively with you.”

Instead of self-correcting, some would double down on their initial stance, “No, just pray whatever the Lord brings to your heart.”

Realizing I needed to go another route, I would switch to teaching mode.

“Ma’am, when you came to this altar and stood in the prayer line, there had to have been something specific or pressing that was on your heart. If you are coming to have me pray “the prayer of agreement”, it is important for me to know the following: a) what we are praying about? b) can we find biblical support for it? c) and what scripture are you standing on so that I can join my faith with yours?

Shockingly, they would shrug their shoulders as if to indicate they had no prayer request at all; or if they did, it was too private to voice aloud.

But vague prayers get vague results. And why pray if you aren't expecting results? That's just an exercise in futility. As it relates to the prayer of agreement, the Prophet Amos said in the Old Testament, "How can two people walk together unless they are in agreement?"

Now some mistakenly think they are being humble by coming to the altar aimless. But people never go to the auto shop and say to the mechanic, "I just want you to know that I came into the shop with no particular concern with my vehicle. What do you want to check first?"

That mechanic would think they were a nut job! And he would be right! This fruitless approach would never be employed in any other arena, yet somehow when it comes to church and spiritual things, we approach God in this similar fashion.

And while some attempt to pray futilely, others actually come to the altar with a heartfelt prayer request. But when I ask them what scripture they're standing on, I'm met with silence and blank stares.

In that moment, I know I must shift again from prayer partner to teacher in order to walk them through the principles of the "prayer of agreement." Jesus spoke about this specific type of prayer in Matthew 18:19–20. He said, "Again I say unto you, 'that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or more are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.'"

What struck me is how many believers were unfamiliar with what this prayer is all about. While some had heard of this genre of prayer, they still had no idea what the principles were or how it worked.

Too many Christians approach the altar thinking the prayer minister alone carries the weight. That is to say, they feel that once they have brought the prayer request before God, it is up to the prayer minister to exercise faith on the petitioner's behalf. Without realizing it, they've taken a passive posture and once they hear the word "amen" they maintain an arms-length approach to the request, rather than a firm, unshakeable resolve in the spirit.

If you want results in prayer, you cannot be passive. You've got to lean in, invest yourself in the process, grow your faith, train your spiritual ear to hear, and learn how to respond skillfully to the Holy Spirit. It's not an earning; it's a turning. And this is when the power is released.