

## Prayer of Invocation

You said, Lord Jesus, that where two or three are gathered in Your Name, there You shall be. We are gathered here in Your Name, Dear Lord. Please presence Yourself in our midst through the work of Your Holy Spirit. Open our hearts, minds, ears, and spirits to be receptive to Your work in our lives.

Amen.

## Introduction

In the devotion I did for this past Thursday I mentioned that today's sermon would be about prayer with the Saints and that it is part of a series I am doing based on the book by David Pawson, called *Practising the Principles of Prayer*. I heartily recommend that you listen to that devotion as well as the first one if you have not done so, since there is a definite progression. You can find them on our web site — [willows.org.za](http://willows.org.za) — under the *Resources* menu. The first devotion was called *Prayer, Part 1: Prayer to The Father and through The Son* and the second, *Prayer, Part 2: Prayer in The Spirit*.

That brings us to today's topic:

## Prayer With the Saints

### Introduction

As an aside, this is a *topical* sermon (the title gives that away), so though I do reference Scripture, most of the time I will be speaking about principles, *plus* I want to concentrate on *practicalities* because prayer is practical, and praying with the Saints is *active!*

When I first read the book and saw that there was a chapter with this title I must admit that I did not think there was much to gain much from that chapter. After all, I had attended *many* prayer meetings in my life. Some were really great but to be honest, most were quite boring. I have an idea that most of us would have the same kind of experience regarding corporate prayer, but I have to ask: is that because praying with the Saints is boring, or because the Saints actually don't know how to pray together?

When I read the book, this chapter was my favourite! It was absolutely remarkable and it soon became clear to me that we

can actually enjoy praying together to the point where we look forward to such times.

Sure, it is difficult at the moment because of COVID, but honestly, if we take care of each other's safety and each other's concerns then we can definitely pray together; it just requires thought, planning, and consideration.

I want to read two passages from Acts, the first is Acts 4:29–31 and Acts 12:5–16 — mostly because they illustrate the Saints in prayer, but also because Acts is a very exciting book both to read as well as to study. If your Bible reading has been a bit rusty, then this is a good place to start. Instead of doing the TV vegetable thing this afternoon, take a walk around the block, then sit down and start reading Acts.

With that said, let's jump in! This happens after Peter and John had been detained by the chief priests and told never to speak about Jesus again. We pick up on the end of the corporate prayer after their release.

29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

This was not Pentecost, by the way; it was a *different* occasion. It's only in Chapter four, so you'll get there quickly this afternoon ;-)

Now for the bit from Chapter 12. King Herod had just killed James the brother of John and had arrested Peter, planning to bring him before the people. At this time Peter was in prison and was guarded by four squads of soldiers.

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

6 Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak round you and follow me." 9 And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

12 When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. 15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!" 16 But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed.

It's funny, but it's also sad. DISPLAYED A LACK OF FAITH.

“Stop praying for yourself! Pray for others and let others pray for you!” RECOUNT CIRCUMSTANCE.

OTHERS CAN PRAY FOR YOU FAR MORE EASILY IF THEY KNOW **WHAT TO PRAY FOR** AND THE USUAL WAY THAT HAPPENS IS **BECAUSE YOU TELL THEM**.

CHAP’S REACTION TO MY THANKS OF ONCE MORE HAVING A JOB (AFTER THREE YEARS OF NOTHING).

Our life group has this habit of people bringing prayer requests each week. Sometimes they are for themselves, but mostly they are for others. Even so, when a personal request is made, then *someone else* prays into that. NOT VEILED CRIES FOR HELP: THOSE NEED TO BE LOUD AND OBVIOUS.

AS PER DEVOTION, PRAYER IS PART OF OUR OFFENSIVE WEAPONRY.

SPIRITUAL REALM IS *BUSY* AND NO *PRIVATE* PRAYER.

THERE ARE BATTLES GOING ON: RECALL DANIEL’S PRAYER AND THE ANGEL EXPLAINING HIS DELAY IN COMING. SEE DANIEL 10:1–14.

How important is praying together? Well, from Pawson we have that if we look only at the New Testament, and split it into the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation we will find that in each of these there is more about praying together than there is about praying alone (Remember, alone is not private.) The promises in the Gospels are nearly all made to people praying together than to those praying alone. The practice in Acts is nearly always praying together rather than praying alone. The precepts in the Epistles are nearly always praying together. Finally, the predictions in the book of Revelation are about people praying together.

So, praying *together* is very important! Again, remember that with our knowledge of God’s Word it is part of our offensive weaponry.

Although only one chapter in his book, this is a vast topic so will mostly only touch on the parts, but I want to encourage you either to buy this book or to download the teachings on which it is based. You can download the MP3s for free at [www.davidpawson.org](http://www.davidpawson.org). (The .com version is the fully commercial one while the .org version has many free resources.) On the left choose “Christian Behaviour” under which you will find the topic “Prayer”.

Maybe you can listen while driving, washing the dishes...

## 5. Prayer with the saints

- The biblical basis

- Gospels

- “If two or three...” Matt.18:19

- Jesus taught more on prayer the night before his crucifixion: Jn.14,15,16

- There is a lot of “in My Name” there, but it is mostly to the plural you.

- Acts

- They (120 of them) were praying together for the 10 days between Ascension and Pentecost. IMAGINE 120 OF US PRAYING HERE DAILY FOR 10 DAYS

- Thousands were added to their number the day of Pentecost, then they baptised them and taught them: fellowship, breaking of bread, communal prayer. REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT SHARING NEEDS? PRAYING TOGETHER ALSO ENCOURAGES AND HELPS TO BUILD UP FAITH.

- Lots of examples of corporate prayer, e.g. Ch.12, with Peter being freed from prison.

- God called missionaries after people prayed.

- Epistles

- Almost every call to prayer is in the plural, even when Paul is asking prayer for himself.

- Revelation

- Many examples of corporate prayer in Heaven. The prayers of the saints as incense before God.

- Why we should pray together

- It is a school: You learn when you listen to others’ prayers. PART OF THAT LEARNING INCLUDES HOW NOT TO PRAY,

BUT HOPEFULLY THERE WON'T BE MUCH OF THAT. BUT YOU GET TO SEE MORE AND IN DIFFERENT WAYS,

- It is a fireplace: You are fired up by its energy. Attend an on-fire prayer meeting and see! THINK HERE OF THE IMAGE OF A COAL TAKEN FROM A FIRE VERSUS BEING WITH OTHER COALS.

- It is a powerhouse: Often, God moves almost tangibly. Church growth expert Dr Donald McGavran noted that for all their differences, **all** growing churches have **only one thing in common**: they have small groups of people who regularly come together to pray for non-Christians by name. Lots of small groups, not one large one.

- Difficulties (six are listed here)

- Those who don't pray out loud: The reason is often psychological. To get over it, start by writing a one-sentence prayer (include Amen!), then read it out loud at the next prayer meeting. Next time memorise your one-sentence prayer. Do this for a while, and eventually you will be fine. WE ARE MEANT TO DISPLAY GRACE AND FORGIVENESS, SO NO NEED TO BE ALL CONCERNED ABOUT HOW OTHERS WILL INTERPRET YOUR PRAYER: YOU ARE PRAYING TO GOD, NOT TO THEM!

Sometimes the reason is spiritual (unforgiveness is common), so sort that out. **Look at 1 Tim. 2:8 in this regard.**

- Those who are too quiet: If need be, stand up: posture impacts volume. Open your mouth and speak loudly. Ask someone afterwards if your volume was OK. Practice!

- Those who pray too long: Time yourself. **30 seconds is a long time.** Look at the Book of Common Prayer for short examples. Many short are better than one long. RECOUNT IMPACT OF THIS AT ST. JOHN'S: WRITTEN-OUT PRAYERS CAN BE JUST AS POWERFUL AS PRAYER IN THE MOMENT. WOULD YOU PREFER MUSICIANS WHO NEVER PRACTICE

BUT JUST DAWDLE AWAY ON THEIR INSTRUMENTS, OR A PREACHER WHO DOESN'T PREPARE AND THEN RAMBLES ALONG? PREPARATION IS A GOOD THING — JUST LEARN HOW TO READ WITHOUT SOUNDING LIKE YOU ARE READING.

- Stereotyped prayers: Prayer is alive; don't always pray the same thing.

- Prayer as if alone: In corporate prayer, pray corporately. Change your thinking. REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT THE REBUKE I GOT ABOUT PRAYING FOR MYSELF. HERE IS AN EXCELLENT QUOTE (I HAVE NO IDEA WHO SAID IT, THOUGH): ONLY CRITICISE PEOPLE AS MUCH AS YOU HAVE PRAYED FOR THEM.

- Discontinuity: If you listen, you will notice a flow in the prayers. Pay attention and be sensitive to The Spirit. Don't break the flow. You will feel when things change.

- Group size

- Prayer cell: Two or three. Good place to start, but also for more intimate prayers. We need many!

- Prayer meeting: up to about half your congregation. This has to be regular, and should include those active in the congregation, otherwise you get Mary & Martha syndrome.

- Prayer service: the entire congregation. An aid is speaking a common prayer out loud as a group. Also, use a roaming microphone!

- The Church visible. We are all part of the on-going prayer of His Body throughout the world. In times of crisis there can be regional or even global prayer; just watch out for politics.

- The Church invisible. All in Heaven and earth who call on His Name.