

"For where two or three are gathered together in My Name . . . ."

I was once talking with someone about prayer, and how it "works" – the idea in their mind seemed to be that if one organises one's prayers in the right way, says the right kind of words in the right setting, a kind of mantra, then the answers would be guaranteed – a sort of pressing the right buttons in the right order to get the jackpot – this outlook is in the realm of magic. We know from the Bible that God condemns all magic.

Our relationship to God is key in our lives. Prayer is no different. The Israelites were given clear guidelines by God through Moses. For us, what does Jesus say? Well, we need to be "born again", "born of water and the Spirit" as it is put in John 3:5. But Jesus goes further. In John 15:5 He says "I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (NKJ). This looks like two principles – one must be born again and remain in Jesus – principles that apply equally to prayer time as it does to daily living. In John 12:49-50 we see the relationship that Jesus has to God the Father, "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak [ie. how to say it]. And I know that His command leads to everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak". In the same way, Jesus being the head, expects us to do the things He commands, and to undertake them in the way He asks us to do it. We all need help with this.

Now let's turn to Matthew 18:19-20, which Lance Lambert in "The School of Prayer" sees as a key principle of corporate prayer, "Again I say to you if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them".

The second phrase qualifies the first – there cannot be any agreement between us (Jesus and us) unless we are fully branches of the Vine – Jesus is the Head, we are His body.

So, if God through the Holy Spirit is directing our prayers, according to His will and purposes, then our prayers are of true value. Indeed, if we are not praying the prayers that God wants praying, we might be praying "neutral" prayers which have no eternal value – to put it bluntly, if we are not praying the prayers that God wants us to pray we are exercising our jaws for nothing. Or worse still, we may find ourselves praying counter to God's purposes – as it says in Matthew 18:20 God needs to be in the midst of us. And we need to be listening to His voice.

Of course there are many other aspects to corporate prayer, what helps, what hinders, the place of praise and worship, preparation before a prayer time, prayer group leaders and much more.

I may say to myself, "I know all that, why am I bothering to write it down?" Well I, like most of us, need to be reminded of the need to actively determine to maintain a right and proper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with fellow believers to be fruitful in prayer. This is not easy, but Jesus will help us with this – apart from Me you can do nothing. What a privilege it is to humbly sit at the Lord's feet and pray the prayers God wants us to pray!

See Lance Lambert's "The School of Prayer" for valuable insights into 'The nature of Corporate Prayer; The leading of the Spirit; Watching & Praying; The manifestation of the Spirit; The place of the Word of God in prayer; Executing the will of God in prayer; Hindrances in prayer; and Intercession'. Also Stewart Dool's "The Preparation of Watchmen" from the PFI 2006 'Roadshow' (Tape/CD 2, from Set 4) **John Jenks**