

How To Pray In The Spirit

Adapted by Richard W. LaFountain
(I Cor 14:15, Eph. 6:19, Jude 1:20)

"Praying in the Spirit" is not just a catch phrase or a make believe pretense at prayer. Jude mentions it in Jude 1:20. The apostle Paul speaks of it in his spiritual warfare teaching in Ephesians 6:18. We are to live in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), worship in the Spirit (John 4:24) and pray in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). John was "in the Spirit" on the Lord's Day while exiled on the Isle of Patmos. (Revelation 1:10) Should we not be "in the Spirit" when we pray and worship?

It is actually possible to be "in the Spirit" when you pray, and contrary, it is possible (lamentably, too often the case) to pray in the flesh and not according to the will of God, or the mind of the Spirit. There is a process by which the believer can enter into a state of waiting and rest in the Holy Spirit in which he can pray that which is on the heart of God. This is what it means to "pray in the Spirit."

It is entirely possible that you may never have prayed "in the Spirit." Perhaps that is why our prayer meetings are so dull and uninteresting. Much prayer is a recitation of our man made wish list before God, or it deteriorates into a monologue to God in which others are the primary listeners. This is not praying in the Spirit.

Praying over prayer lists can be a helpful and effective way of reminding oneself of what to pray for. But often for some people this kind of "list praying" is not far from "vain repetitions" in that it is very much like praying a rosary. I have seen prayer meetings where the church provides a list of requests and petitioners simply read the list to God as they pray, as if the purpose of prayer was to inform a God who is not aware of these things.

There is a place for the lists as reminders of immediate needs, but too much leaning on the fleshly mind will miss the mind of the Spirit. When we "zone out" during our daily litany of prayer concerns without ever entering into the "burden" for the need we are at best praying blindly, if not vainly. Prayer is never to be without feeling. The Spirit "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities" and "prays for us with groanings that cannot be articulated." The Spirit of God does not vainly list things he wishes would happen. He enters into the need, he considers it carefully, he feels it, he mourns over it, wears the need as a garment, he groans in pain over it, and he stretches out to the throne on behalf of it. So should we.

Here are seven steps in preparing our hearts to pray in the Spirit and according to the will of God. Praying in the Spirit does not come automatically. It is the fruit of a fully developed intimacy with God. Learn to know God and you will know the heart of God.

My Part (Internal)

1. Deal with Sin - (Me) Words, Actions, Thoughts, Attitudes, (W.A.T.A.)

Paul said, "I am the chief of sinners." Only pride says otherwise. Agree with Jeremiah 17:9 that "My heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Agree with God about your sins.

(Psalm 66:18, Ps 139:23-24, Is 59:1,2, Mt 5:23-24) *Put on your "sin-block"*

2. Deal with Self & Flesh - (Myself) *"The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak"*

Matthew 26:41 (who's on first? Who is on the throne?) Selfish desires and wants must be laid down.

Breathe in the Holy Spirit. Ask for the Holy Spirit to take control of desires. Be in the Spirit, worship in the Spirit and pray in the Spirit. (Romans 8:8, 8:27, James 4:3, Gal 5:16,25)

3. Deal with Thoughts - (I) Reign in the wandering mind. His thoughts are not Your thoughts.

Sin is not just transgression of the law, or acts of sinful behavior. It is also attitudes, and fantasies of the thought life. Jesus said "If a man looks on a woman to lust after her he has committed adultery in his heart already." Treat thought sins as sin. Tell God about what it is, confess it, forsake it, hate it.

(Is 26:3, Is 55:8, 2 Corinthians 10:3-4) *"Bring every thought into the captivity of Christ."*

Devil's Part (External)

4. Deal with the Devil - He is the hinderer, thief, liar, destroyer, murderer, deceiver

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Do it out loud. He is not a mind reader. Announce to the enemy that he is defeated by Christ on the cross, that you are safe in Him, that he has no rights before the throne of God. Expose the hidden things of darkness and reprove them. Announce the binding of Satan.

(Daniel 9, Zech 3, I Pet 5:9, Rev 12, Eph 6) Resist him steadfastly. Having not dealt with him we are hindered by him. He is allowed to go unchecked, unfettered, un-gagged. *"We wrestle not against flesh and blood but principalities and powers."*

God's Part (Eternal)

5. Agree with God - *"We know not how to pray as we ought."*

Tell God you do not know how to pray as you ought. You don't know where to begin, who to pray for, how to pray effectively. Ask the Spirit of God to be your guide and teacher. Make the disciples plea your constant plea, "Lord teach us to pray!" Romans 8:26-27, Proverbs 3:5, Luke 22:42 *"Nevertheless not my will but thy will be done."* Matthew 6:10 *"Thy will be done..."*

6. Believe God - To be effective in prayer you must believe that God exists and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Believe it! Expect God to lead you by His voice and revelation. (Rom 8:14) Believing prayer is acceptable to God. Wishing and hoping are not the same as confident believing prayer. (James 1:6-7, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 4:20)

7. Wait for God - Don't be afraid of silence. Be still and know that He is God. Speak nothing in prayer until He puts it into your heart and mind. Don't waste God's time with your droning on and on about little and nothing. Wait on the Lord. Wait for the heart of God. Wait patiently for His burden and direction. (Stand Still, be still, keep silence) Psalm 46:10, Psalm 27:14, Ps 37:7, Is 40:31

Too often we pray with prepared lists of requests in our hands. There is a place for the lists as reminders of immediate needs, but too much leaning on the fleshly mind will miss the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be articulated (or listed). Seek to pray the heart of God – which is the mind of the Spirit.