

Grow in Prayer by Listening to Others Pray

One of the simplest ways to learn to pray and to grow in prayer is to listen to others pray.

That makes perfect sense when you consider how you learned to talk to others when you were just a little child. You listened to your parents and others as they repeated words and you followed their lead. In the same way, we learn to pray by listening to others pray.

It might be as basic as listening to someone say a blessing at meal time. Perhaps if you are in a small group at church, your best models are often people just like you who are leading the way in prayer. Of course, you can always pay careful attention to prayer prayed publicly in worship services. It takes very little effort to simply listen and pay attention to the prayers of others.

I would suggest you listen most of all to content. What are the topics they are praying about? If you are listening to several people, as in a group or class, are there topics that surface more than others? That may give you suggestions as to important things to cover in prayer.

I also suggest you pay attention to the passion with which a prayer is uttered. That's not always easy to discern. But I love to listen to those who seem to go beyond simply saying words but allow their passion to express itself in their voices and words.

You might also watch their face as they pray. Are you seeing an earnestness in their requests? Is there joy in the words of worship? The face often reflects what is taking place in the heart. Sometimes even watching their body language helps us grow in prayer. Are hands raised in prayer? Do they stand or

kneel? Is there a particular way they pray that seems to match your personality and style?

Now we have to understand that when we are listening in this way, we are not in a class with a professor of prayer showing us how to pray correctly. We are just listening to people like us as they voice their prayers to the Lord. Sometimes they will be in a prayer rut themselves. Or they will not have a focus in prayer that might be helpful to you. But you can learn from any and every prayer that is prayed.

You will find, after you have begun to really listen to others pray, that there will be those whose prayers have special meaning to you. When this happens, start spending more time listening to their prayers and learning from them. That affinity you have discovered with those prayers will become your teacher as you begin to model your prayers after theirs.

The purposes of this is not to try to imitate the prayers of someone else, but to deepen your own prayer life by learning from them. God is not judging our prayers by whether we “get them right.” He is looking at our hearts as we pray. Listening to others simply feeds our heart and gives us more options and greater depth as we grow in our own prayer life.

Action Step: Whose prayers will you listen to this week in order to deepen your own prayer life? Place yourself with others by attending a prayer meeting or small group this week.

–Dave Butts, president of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the author of 11 books, including *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God*.