



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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Subject: Prayer

A LEGACY OF PRAYER

Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them. Matthew 18:19-20

When the disciples came to Jesus with the request, "Lord, teach us to pray," they uttered one of the deepest and most significant cries which come from the human heart. Nothing is more fundamental than to communicate with Him who breathed into your nostrils the breath of life, making you a living person, created in His image.

But, for most of us who consider ourselves to be God's children, prayer is little more than token recognition of God, a kind of sending SOS signals when we are in trouble, or a passing whim whereby we let God know that we would appreciate His bailing us out of a problem, or giving us what we think we deserve.

"If I had one gift, and only one gift, to make to the Christian Church," wrote E. Stanley Jones in 1943, "I would offer the gift of prayer. For everything follows from prayer."

This month Guidelines celebrates its 53rd year of ministry. What is our Guidelines' Legacy, we ask ourselves? Guidelines is a ministry that has been built on two pillars: the Word and prayer. From the very beginning of our ministry, we've gathered each morning to pray together.

The late C. Peter Wagner said, "One hundred percent of the pastors I know preach on prayer and back prayer; and for 99 percent of them it's pure rhetoric." Wagner not only believed in prayer, he prayed and he led other pastors in prayer. Why not have a time when members of a church body come together and pray? "It just doesn't work," they say, adding, "People are too busy, too diversified." I'm not convinced.

One fundamental failure is that when people are supposed to come together for prayer, they talk, and talk some more, and talk about what they need to pray about; but watch the hour pass by quickly and notice that prayer is usually a postscript to the meeting!

Yes, you can pray alone, and there are some things which need to be settled just one on one, between you and God. Jesus had times of solitude for personal prayer. Yet there is something powerful, something energizing, something homogenizing about prayer together with others.

Jesus recognized this. He said, "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:19-20). He also followed that example. "After six days," says Matthew, "Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves." Again, Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him... Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed..." (Matthew 26:36-39).

Nothing builds close relationships like praying together, helping us lose sight of our own personal agendas and forgetting petty differences. Realize where there are two or three, the very presence of Jesus Christ Himself is in your midst.

Resource reading: Matthew 26:36-46