

PRAYER MEETINGS




Our brethren will excuse our offering them advice, and must take it only for what it is worth; but having to superintend a large church, and to conduct a prayer-meeting which scarcely ever numbers less than from a thousand to twelve hundred attendants, we will simply give our own notions as to the most efficient method of promoting and sustaining these holy gatherings.

1. LET THE MINISTER HIMSELF SET A VERY HIGH VALUE UPON THIS MEANS OF GRACE.

Let him frequently speak of it as being dear to his own heart; and let him prove his words by throwing all his vigour into it, being absent as seldom as possible, and doing all in his power to give an interest to the meeting. If our pastors set the ill example of coming in late, of frequently staying away, or conducting the engagements in a drowsy, formal way, we shall soon see our people despising the exercise, and forsaking the assembling of themselves together. A warm-hearted address of ten minutes, with a few lively words interposed between the prayers, will do much, with God's blessing, to foster a love for the prayer-meeting.



2. LET THE BRETHREN LABOUR AFTER BREVITY.

If each person will offer the petition most laid upon his heart by the Holy Spirit, and then make room for another, the evening will be far more profitable, and the prayers incomparably more fervent than if each brother ran round the whole circle of petition without dwelling upon any one point. Compare the subjects of prayer to so many nails; it will be better for a petitioner to drive one nail home



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with repeated blows, than to deal one ineffectual tap to them one after another. Let as many as possible take part in the utterance of the church's desires; the change of voice will prevent weariness, and the variety of subjects will excite attention. Better to have six pleading earnestly, than two drowsily; far better for the whole meeting that the many wants should be represented experimentally by many intercessors, than formally by two or three. As a general rule, meetings in which no prayer exceeds ten minutes, and the most are under five, will exhibit the most fervour and life; in fact, length is a deathblow to earnestness, and brevity is an assistant to zeal. When we have had ten prayers in the hour, varied with the singing of single verses, we have far oftener been in the Spirit, than when only four persons have engaged in supplication. This is an observation confirmed by the opinion of our fellow-worshippers; it might not hold good in all cases, but it is so with us, and therefore we thus witness.



3. PERSUADE ALL THE BRETHREN TO PRAY ALOUD.

If the younger and less-instructed members shrink from the privilege, tell them they are not to speak to man, but to God. Assure them that it does us all good to hear their groans and ineffectual attempts at utterance. For our own part, a few breakdowns generally come very sweetly home; and, awakening our sympathies, constrain us to aid the brother by our more earnest wrestlings. It gives a reality and life to the whole matter, to hear those trembling lips utter thanks for new life just received, and to hear that choking voice confessing the sin from which it has just escaped. The cries of the lambs must mingle with the