



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

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## Praying For The Unity of The Church

In the Bible, salvation is referred to as a "calling." The sinner is called out of sin and selfishness to faith in Jesus Christ and a new life of repentance and service toward God. As a believer, you have been called by God from the darkness of sin and damnation in hell to the light of love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

Yet, it must also be remembered that you are called to be a part of the body of Christ, the church. Every sinner that is called to salvation is also called to belong to the church. There are no exceptions in this matter. Every Christian is called to be a faithful and productive member of Christ's church.

You cannot separate Christ from His church. To be unfaithful to His church is equal to being unfaithful to Him. To deny His church is to deny Him. To forsake His church is to forsake the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

As a member of Christ's church, it is your responsibility to strive to maintain the unity of the church. It is your obligation to always be "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)." The church, the body of believers, is to be united in one mind, with one heart, and for one purpose.

In **Ephesians 4:3**, Paul declares two essential truths concerning the unity of the church. First, it is "the unity of the Spirit." The unity of the church is given by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit unites those who are in Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who joins believers together. You do not have to "work up" unity among believers. It already exists because believers are united through the Holy Spirit by their faith in Christ (**1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14**).

The second essential of the church's unity is that this unity must be maintained. Paul declares that believers must endeavor to keep the unity of the church. This reveals that the unity of the church can be weakened or destroyed. Because of this, believers must strive to stay united. Believers must make every effort to maintain unity in Christ's church.

As a believer and member of Christ's church, it is your obligation to make every effort to maintain the unity of the church. This is the divine command. This is God's demand of you. You have many privileges as a member of Christ's church, yet, you have the constant responsibility to endeavor to preserve and strengthen the unity of the church.

Unity in Christ's church is absolutely essential. As stated earlier, it is God's command of His church. Yet, it also affects the witness and the impact of the church on the lost world. The Lord Jesus Christ stated, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (**John 13:35**). The unity of the church shows that we have been saved by Christ and that we belong to Him. It also shows that the church is totally different from the world. The unity of the church is a testimony to the love and transforming power of Jesus Christ.

A lack of unity among believers sends the wrong message about Christ to the world. The church is the "body" of Christ. People know you by your body. When they see a picture of you, they identify you. Your body declares who you are. When people look at the church, they see the "body" of Christ. They are forming a view of Jesus Christ by what they see in the church. A divided church is a poor testimony to Jesus Christ. It does not declare a right and sound view of Jesus Christ.

It is time for churches to repent of division and the sins that cause them. Christ, who walks among the churches, is sickened by the pettiness and the lack of unity among His people (**Revelation 2-3**). Christ sees the lack of unity and is displeased. This is also ruining the testimony and impact of churches on those around them.

The church in America is not persecuted but ignored. It is ignored because it is a joke to most unbelievers. The reason for this is due to the pettiness and bickering that goes on in churches. Churches no longer struggle for the power of the Holy Spirit; they now have "power struggles" to see who can gain control of the church.

There are steps that you can take to maintain the unity of the church. You may be thinking, "I'm only one person. What can I do?" You can have a powerful impact on the unity of the church in which you are a member. You can do this by maintaining your relationships and pleading with God in prayer for the unity of the church.

## Maintaining Right Relationships

You must begin by maintaining a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Are you spending time with Him in prayer and the reading and studying of God's Word? Are you diligently confessing and repenting of your sins? Are you pursuing obedience to God's Word? If you are in a right relationship to Jesus Christ, you will be striving to maintain right relationships with other believers. If you are not doing this, you will be a hindrance to the unity of Christ's church.

Second, you must maintain right relationships with other believers. In **Ephesians 4:2**, Paul declares how believers can maintain right relationships with other believers. You must exercise humility, gentleness, and patience, along with a spirit of bearing one another in love. Are these characteristics evident in your life? Do you display these toward all the members of the church in which you are a member?

## Pleading For Unity

By maintaining right relationships to Jesus Christ and other believers, you can have a powerful impact on the unity of the church. You can be part of the solution to healing the church's divisions. Yet, you can also affect the unity of the church by praying to God for unity. You must wrestle with God for the unity of Christ's church. By praying, you can be a powerful instrument for restoring or maintaining the unity in the church.

There are two basic ways that you can pray for the unity of the church. First, you can plead several prayer arguments with God concerning the church's unity. These are biblical arguments that you can use to plead with God. You can wrestle with God for the blessing of unity with these prayer arguments. These prayer arguments are:

(1) Father, Your Son, Jesus Christ, has died to make believers one body (**Ephesians 2:13-15**). By dying on the Cross, He reconciled us to God in one body. Your Son's death brought us together. I plead that You will unify this body of believers due to Christ's death on the Cross. Glorify Your Son and His death by strengthening and deepening the unity of this church;

(2) Father, Your Son, Jesus Christ, prayed that His people would be one (**John 17:20-21**). He requested that His people would be one as You and He are one. I plead that You will answer Christ's prayer by making the believers in this church to have one mind, one heart, and one purpose. The Lord Jesus Christ said that You always heard Him. I call on You to do that now by deepening and strengthening the unity of this church.

(3) Father, Your Son, Jesus Christ, has stated that the world will know that we belong to Him by the love that we have for one another (**John 13:35**). The strength of our witness and the impact that we have on the world depends on our love and unity. God, unite Your people in love so that we may have a powerful witness in this area for You. For the sake of Your gospel, deepen and strengthen the unity of this church;

(4) Father, I plead that You will grant that the believers who make up this church will grow in their understanding of the truth. Our unity is based on the truth of Your Word (**Ephesians 4:13; 2 John 1-2; 3 John 1**). Father, feelings change; Your truth is absolute, eternal, and unchanging. Father, feelings can melt away in the heat of controversy; Your words are pure words like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times (**Psalms 13:6**). Because of this, I plead that You would grant that the believers of this church would have a deeper appreciation, knowledge, and understanding of Your Word so that our unity would be deepened and strengthened;

(5) Father, in Your Word, You declare that we are to be "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind (**Philippians 2:2**).” This is Your will for this church. This is Your desire. Since this is Your will and Your desire, create these things in the believers who make up this church by the power of Your Holy Spirit. In Your Word, You have declared that if we ask anything according to Your will, You will hear (**1 John 5:14**). This is Your will, O God! I am pleading that You will create these things in the believers who make up this church;

(6) Father, in Your Word, You declare that nothing should be done through selfish ambition or conceit (**Philippians 2:3**). You also command that we should do all things without complaining and disputing (**Philippians 2:14**). Again, this is Your will, Father. This is what You desire for the church. You have promised to hear and answer when I ask according to Your will. Make this a reality among Your people;

(7) Father, in Your Word, You command that we are to esteem others better than ourselves (**Philippians 2:4**). You also declare that we are to look out for the interest of others. This is Your will for this church; this is what You desire for this church. I am pleading for You to make this a reality among the believers of this church because it is Your will;

(8) Father, You have determined to make us like Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son (**Romans 8:29**). You want to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. Jesus humbled Himself and became a servant (**Philippians 2:6-8**). God, I plead that You will create the same attitude in us (**Philippians 2:5**). I beg You to make us like Christ. Cause us to become servants who will esteem others better than ourselves and who will look out for the interest of others;

(9) Father, in Your Word, You declare that You want us to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel (**Philippians 1:27**). You want us to be salt and light (**Matthew 5:13-14**). You want us to give a positive, powerful witness to the truth. You want us to stand united in our declaration and defense of the truth. This is impossible if we are not united. Lord God, I plead that You will deepen and strengthen the unity of this church so that we may boldly and powerfully proclaim Your Word;

(10) Father, You have made clear in Your Word that division in the church grieves the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:30-31**). The Holy Spirit is grieved when there is bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (loud quarreling), evil speaking, and malice in Your church. When Your Spirit is grieved, Your church is powerless. We have no hope or help when the Holy Spirit is grieved. Restore our unity or deepen and

strengthen our unity so that Your Spirit will not be grieved. Grant a deeper stronger unity to this church so that the Holy Spirit will be pleased to release His power in this fellowship and through this fellowship.

Another way that you can pray for the unity of Christ's church is through pleading the "one another" statements of the New Testament. These statements declare the will of God for believers concerning their unity and how they are to relate to one another. These statements show what God desires among believers and what He wants to produce in believers. Because of this, you can plead these requests with confidence. Since these requests are in line with God's will, plead with God to make these a reality among the believers that make up the church in which you are a member. Trust that God will hear and answer since these requests are in line with His will.

- (1) Father, enable the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to realize that we are members one of another and are totally dependent on each other (**Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:14-26**);
- (2) Father, cause the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to be lovingly devoted to one another just as a close knit family is (**Romans 12:10**);
- (3) God, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would honor each other above themselves (**Romans 12:10**);
- (4) Father, I ask You to make the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to be like-minded in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 15:5**);
- (5) Lord, I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would accept one another in love. Deliver the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church from making hypocritical judgments about each other and/or showing partiality among members (**Romans 15:7**);
- (6) Father, I plead that You will fill the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church with the truth of Your Word, love, and humility so that we can admonish one another (**Romans 15:14**);
- (7) God enable the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to greet one another with concern and love and not with superficial, vain talk that means nothing (**Romans 16:3-6, 16**);
- (8) Lord, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would bear one another's burdens in humility and love (**Galatians 6:2**);
- (9) Father, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church will serve one another with a sacrificial, selfless love (**Galatians 5:13**);
- (10) God, enable the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to bear with one another in patience. Deliver the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ from an easily offended spirit (**Ephesians 4:2**);
- (11) Lord, cause the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to submit to one another in love (**Ephesians 5:21**);
- (12) God, I plead that You would cause the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to encourage one another and build up one another with the Word of God (**1 Thessalonians 5:11**);

(13) Father, I plead that You would guard the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church from being conceited toward one another. Keep the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church from provoking one another and envying one another (**Galatians 5:26**);

(14) Lord God, cause the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to always be kind and tenderhearted toward one another (**Ephesians 4:32**);

(15) Father, enable the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to always be forgiving toward each other as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us (**Ephesians 4:32**);

(16) God, cause the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to speak the truth in love and not to lie to one another (**Colossians 3:9**);

(17) Father, I pray that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would abound and overflow with love toward one another (**1 Thessalonians 3:12**);

(18) Lord, enable the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to have mutual concern and love without preferring one before another (**1 Timothy 5:21**);

(19) Father, I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would exhort one another to faithfulness and good works (**Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25**);

(20) God, cause the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to not speak evil of each other (**James 4:11**);

(21) Father, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would not hold grudges toward one another (**James 5:9**);

(22) Father, cause the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to have a burden to pray for one another (**James 5:16**);

(23) Lord, enable the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to have genuine compassion for one another (**1 Peter 3:8**);

(24) God, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would exercise hospitality toward one another (**1 Peter 4:9**).

The primary strategy of Satan against the church is to destroy the unity of the church. He strives to divide believers. He is the author of confusion, insensitivity, oversensitivity, hatred, lying, and church splits. He works to divide believers because it renders the church powerless. A divided church is a defeated church.

The question is: Will you be a help or a hindrance to the unity of the church? You will be one or the other. There is no neutral position in this matter. You will either be an instrument of God to restore and strengthen the unity of the church or a tool that Satan uses to weaken or destroy the unity of the church.

## Learning To Praise God-His Attributes

In the last edition of *The Prayer Closet*, we examined how to praise God through His names. In this issue, I want you to understand that you can praise God for His attributes or character. The character of our God is a rich source of praise for our prayer lives and our worship of Him.

The depth and strength of your praise is determined by your knowledge of God's character. The deeper your knowledge of God, the stronger and richer your praise to God will be. In order to deepen your knowledge of God, you need to study what God says about His character or attributes. As you learn about God, you need to turn every truth that you learn about God into praise to Him. You need to discipline yourself in this practice.

The last pages in this issue are a list of the attributes of God along with Scripture references which describe them. This list is provided to help you gain a deeper understanding of who God is. I want to challenge you to search the Scriptures concerning the character of God. Your main pursuit must be the knowledge of God. This will strengthen your faith and prayer life. It will deepen and strengthen your praise to God. God wants you to know Him as He has revealed Himself in His Word. This is your responsibility and privilege before God.

I have divided God's attributes into His incommunicable and communicable attributes. This is the most commonly used method of classifying God's attributes. In a sense, there is no way to "classify" God. He is beyond our comprehension. Yet, He has revealed Himself. We can know much about God. Classifying God's attributes is not perfect but it is helpful in learning what God has revealed about Himself.

When I use the term "incommunicable," I means those attributes that God does not share or communicate to others. These characteristics are those that only God can and does possess. These attributes belong only to God. When I use the term "communicable," I mean those attributes that God shares or communicates to man. These characteristics can be created in the believer by the work of the Holy Spirit. These characteristics are those that God produces in the lives of His people.

An example of a communicable attribute is wisdom. God alone is all-wise. Yet, He grants His wisdom to the believer who asks for it (**James 1:5**). To some extent, His wisdom is shared with us. Yet, it is never fully shared with us.

In order to help you learn how to praise God through His attributes, I have prepared a worksheet. After you study the passages dealing with the particular attribute, work through the questions on the sheet. You can use these to help you in developing your praise of God. It is my hope and prayer that this worksheet will help you focus on God's attributes and how you can praise Him. Strive to turn everything that you learn about God into praise of Him. Use your knowledge of God to give Him the praise that He is worthy of and desires.

## Praying Through The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are God's revelation of His standard for His people. These verses declare what God demands of His people. Those who have been saved by God are called to live a life of obedience to God's Word. God's people are to live according to the standard that God has revealed. God's salvation brings great blessing and privilege. Yet, it also brings the responsibility to obey God's standard, His holy Word.

In order to help you put these truths into practice in your life, I want to challenge you to pray through these commandments. I am asking you to plead with God to make these truths a reality in your life. It is not enough to simply read or know the Word of God. You must put its truth into practice in your life. If you will plead with God to enable you to obey Him in these principles, it will radically change your life.