

Is Your Prayer in Perfect Pitch?

By FRANKLIN PYLES

Learn to tune your prayers to the will of the Master

I was ready for music. The Sunday morning had been full of teaching and preaching at our inner-city church. Although the weather was cold, the atmosphere was joyous as we looked forward to Christmas. Our daughter's violin teacher had rounded up enough tickets for our whole family to hear *The Messiah* at Orchestra Hall. We hurriedly ate our lunch and set off for the performance.

The audience quieted as the musicians filed onto the stage. The first violinist, the Concert Master, walked onto the platform and played a note. When all the other musicians had tuned their instruments to his, they were ready to play together in harmony.

A Prayer Symphony

When we pray, we must tune our hearts to one note: the Master. Jesus said, "Again, 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" (Matthew 18:19, NIV).

What a tremendous promise! If we are in tune with each other, our prayers will be answered. A. J. Gordon, a pastor and educator of the last century, points out that the agreement Jesus is speaking of relates to Romans 8:26,27: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in

our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."

When Jesus speaks of two of us agreeing in prayer (Matthew 18:19), He uses the Greek word, *symphoneo*, which is the root of the English word symphony. It is the same agreement as in the Lord's Prayer where we are taught to say, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10).

Believers must first tune to the note that has been sounded in heaven by the Father and heard by the Spirit. Gordon said, "Agreement is not enough, it must be agreement in the Spirit. We must desire what He desires." Jesus is not teaching that two Christians can simply agree on anything at all, pray about it and put God under obligation to do it.

God is not a Genie

Some believe that the authority of a praying believer is so great that if he or she will name and claim something, it will be his/hers. One man picked up a "scratch-and-win" ticket in a fast food restaurant, stood and, in a loud voice,

claimed the million-dollar prize in the Name of Jesus. He did not win, but he did bring embarrassment to the cause of Christ.

God is not a genie who emerges from a bottle to carry out our feeble wishes. God is completely in control, and He governs the universe and our lives with infinite wisdom. We must seek the Holy Spirit's instruction on how to be in harmony with the will of God. When we agree with God, then whatever we ask will be done for us. Agreement with other godly Christians affirms our perception of what the Spirit is saying and strengthens our prayers.

When we pray for oneness with the will of God, the Spirit will teach us what God has for us. We will develop desire—a lust—to fulfill His will. From desire, the Spirit will carry us to ability.

Passion for His Glory

Passion for the glory of God will shape our lives and enable us to understand God's will for us. Our hearts will burn for God when they ignite with ardor for His glory. The flame kindles when we learn from the Spirit that God alone is worthy of praise.

He is the Creator, for apart from Him nothing was made. Spinning galaxies and flaming stars sing the

praise of God who spoke and called them into being from nothing.

He is the Redeemer, for before there was one spark of light or one atom in the universe, God willed to send His Son to redeem us. All of history was driven toward His coming—toward the cross—and now all of history drives toward His Second Coming.

Because His redemption flowed out of His love, we love God, and the Spirit stirs up love in us for other people. The more we love others, the more we want to share the good news of God's love with them. Sharing the gospel is an act of love that brings glory to Him.

The Mind of Christ

Simply reading an evening newspaper will make us realize how few people have allowed Jesus Christ to rule their lives. One tragedy follows another, one injustice dwarfs the last one.

The sensitive Christian, like Abraham's nephew Lot, is "vexed in his spirit," and cries out, *Dear God, I know*

You want something better in this world. You want peace and justice. You want those things to swell up and vibrate through our land and the countries of the world.

Pray passionately for the Church to be filled with the Holy Spirit and obey Christ's command to evangelize and teach the world. Jesus promised, in Matthew 24:14, that the completion of this task would usher in the last events of history. Let us work tirelessly, knowing that the Holy Spirit will transform what we do from mere good deeds to gifts from God.

In the same way that a good choir blends together in body as well as voice, God desires us to develop an outlook on life that Paul calls "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). This is another term for sanctification, which means to be set apart for God.

C. S. Lewis talked about having a beautiful dream, hearing music from another world, and all our lives wanting to get back into that dream and to

hear that music. Being in the image of Christ is like that. The Holy Spirit in us and making Christ real to us gives us an authentic experience of holiness. The closer we come to God in prayer, the more we vibrate with the heavenly tune, and the more we want to be one with it.

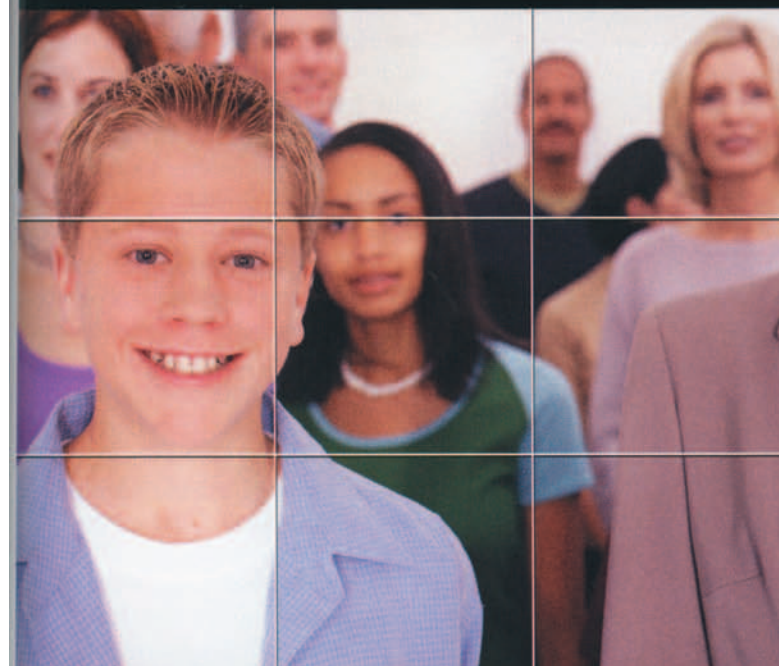
Ask the Holy Spirit to help you know Christ, become like Him and serve Him. Here is a sample prayer that captures the major theme of God's will for our lives:

Holy Spirit, I love the Lord Jesus and confess Him as my Lord. I confess that my desires are too often my own. Tune my heart to Christ, that I may love and enjoy Him, approach my daily life as He would approach it, become like Him in mind and character, serve Him and proclaim His glory. ■



Dr. Franklin Pyles is president of the C&MA in Canada.

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