

## 4.5 In times of corporate prayer, how do we keep the focus on Jesus and His requests rather than on us and our requests?

As you consider how to begin a time of prayer, there are many ways to keep the focus on Jesus. One of my first memories of the first Prayer Summit I attended is of times when we began a session simply by reflecting back to Jesus some of His Scriptural names and titles. As I have facilitated times of prayer, I have often done a similar thing after singing a song about Jesus.

At a Congregational Prayer Summit in Canada we sang, “All of You is more than enough for all of me...” Coming out of that song I invited the nearly 100 people to begin sharing one by one who Jesus is to them. I encouraged them to complete the phrase, “Jesus You are my \_\_\_\_.” People began saying, “Jesus, You are my light.” “Jesus You are my rock.” “Jesus, You are my conqueror.”

After several minutes of this, I invited them to add to this by placing a “because” in front of the phrase and state some of the significance of the word they used to describe Jesus. So, now people were saying, “Jesus because you are my rock, I can stand on You.” “Jesus, because you are my justification, I don’t have to justify myself.” “Jesus, because you are the way, I can walk on You knowing I will get to where I am supposed to be.”

Other ways this could happen would be to invite people to complete one of the following phrases.

- Jesus, today I love You because You are \_\_\_\_.
- I know that You are \_\_\_\_.
- As my Savior You \_\_\_\_.
- Jesus, only You (can) \_\_\_\_.
- The best thing about You Jesus, is that You \_\_\_\_.

I want to emphasize that just because this is a simple activity, and people can enter into it rather easily, I do not see it as a trivial thing just to get people praying. In fact, I believe this could be one of the most significant means of worshipping God.

Think with me about when God first revealed Himself to Moses as, “I AM” (or “I AM WHO I AM”) in Exodus 3:14. This is the name that became so sacred to the Hebrews that they did not even pronounce it. Since God revealed to Moses that His personal name is, “I AM” is there a higher response to this revelation of God than for us to stand in His presence and agree with Him? When we stand before Him and declare that “Jesus (or Father) You are \_\_\_\_ (insert a biblical revelation of who He is)” are we not responding to Him in a way that corresponds to that revelation? I have seen in myself and in others that this simple exercise can lead to deep times of worship.

There are many passages of Scripture that focus on Jesus. If a group is less familiar with Scripture, you may want to print out a few passages like Colossians 1:15-20, or Philippians 2:5-11, or Hebrews 1:3-4, or Revelation 1:12-16. Or if the group is more familiar with Scripture you may simply ask them to turn to a passage of Scripture or Scriptural story that describes some aspect of who Jesus is. In either case you can ask them to read the passage over a few times silently, then read it out loud to the group and pray through it, perhaps changing some of the pronouns so the passage becomes a prayer.

The first three requests of the Lord’s Prayer also lend them-selves to focusing on Jesus as we pray.<sup>1</sup> You can ask people to read over these three lines (Let Your name be holy, Let Your kingdom come, Let Your will be done) and choose one of these lines to consider for a few minutes. Then ask them to ponder

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<sup>1</sup> See footnote 1 on page 38.

the implications of this line. Point out that these are the requests that Jesus wants us to pray and encourage them to get in smaller groups, such as 3 or 4 and personalize one of these requests. So, people might pray, “Jesus, since You have stated clearly that You want Your Father’s name to be holy here on earth like it is in heaven, please increase my capacity to see how His name is treated there so I can treat it like that here in my world.”

I was with about eight people in a home one evening for a planning meeting. As we entered into a time in prayer, I referenced the third request of the Lord’s Prayer (Let Your will be done). I encouraged them to pray about any aspect of what we had been talking about but to conclude their prayer with the words, “Jesus, so that Your will will be more accomplished in our church.” As we wrapped up the time of prayer, they commented that this suggestion brought a new sense of freshness and focus to the time of prayer.

These examples and suggestions may be helpful. But what helps most in seeking to keep our prayers focused on Jesus and His requests is not a specific prayer suggestion or activity. What matters most is that the facilitator continues to “fix their eyes on Jesus” during the time of prayer. If they do this and then dialogue with the Holy Spirit about how the Father wants to exalt Jesus in their midst, He will be faithful to guide them in specific ways to make this happen. Exalting Jesus is one of the favorite assignments of the Holy Spirit. So, when we ask Him how He wants to do that, He is excited to answer that prayer. And often times the answer comes in a rather creative manner.

There was a time when we had completed a song about the beauty of the Lord. As we did I suggested that people tell Jesus about some aspect of His beauty they appreciate. I encouraged them to start with the words, “Jesus I see Your beauty in \_\_\_\_.” This was a wonderful and creative time of focusing on many aspects of Jesus. Many people entered in. They prayed prayers like, “Jesus I see Your beauty in – the cross – the life of my husband – the stillness – in the morning sky – in Psalm 23 – in Your birth...”

I want to emphasize again that this did not happen because I planned it out. But rather this happened because, as I was singing about His beauty, I was also seeing with “the eyes of my heart” His beauty in different things. In my dialogue with the Holy Spirit about this, I sensed His direction to invite the other people into what I was already doing. It was His creative suggestion at just the right moment that allowed people to flow into this time of worship.

As you facilitate times of corporate prayer, listen to what is being sung, read, or prayed. Interact with the Holy Spirit about it. Ask Him how these truths could be prayed. Then don’t be afraid of His creativity. Be willing to try a new approach.

- **Blessed by Doing** – Be willing to try a new approach during your next time of prayer. Look over the answer above and either suggest something I have written here, or (better yet) ask the Lord for a fresh way to focus on Jesus and His requests.