

## A Key Ingredient to Prayer—Any Prayer

Have you ever noticed that women tend to pray more than men? I don't know if that's the case in your church and surroundings, but it's been so in mine. Call a prayer meeting and more women than men will likely be there. Women are great at forming prayer groups. Men ... eh, not so much.

[Pew Research](#) bears this out While men do pray, more women than men pray daily and weekly. I have a theory as to why, but before I give you my conclusion, let me tell you a story.

I did my doctoral work on the practice of prayer. As a part of my work, I did a discipleship class on prayer at my church. Forty people showed up for the initial meeting at which I explained we would not simply talk about prayer, but we would engage in prayer with each other and, specifically, we would pray with our spouses.

At the conclusion of that session, one man told me he would not participate because he couldn't pray with his wife. It made him uncomfortable. Here was a man who had been married for years and had been intimate with his wife in every other way, but he couldn't pray with her?!

The reason: pride.

He was the provider for his household. He was the doer, the fixer, the one who took care of the missus. But inherent in prayer is a vulnerability, an acknowledgement that we need someone besides ourselves to handle things. At the foundation of any legitimate prayer is a dependence upon God, and that means humbling ourselves before Him.

Pride is not just a male problem; woman can be just as prideful. But despite all the gender confusion and dysphoria, our American culture still expects men to be manly men who stand on their own two masculine feet. Self-made men. Self-reliant men. Men who don't appear weak.

But we are weak! And until we admit that, we'll live under the illusion that we are more than we are.

But this is not a blog about men; it's about prayer, yet the issue I've raised about men is an issue that sits at the heart of prayer—regardless of gender. We won't pray as we ought—and our prayers won't be effective—if our

prayers are not undergirded by a recognition that we need God. That requires humility.

Consider the Model Prayer, the pattern for praying that Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:9-13). The prayer contains six requests, and every type of request can be found in this prayer.

- **Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy.** God, there is no room for pride in my life. You are the only one to be honored and glorified in any way.
- **Your kingdom come.** You are the Lord! You're the boss and You are in charge. It's your kingdom I desire, not mine.
- **Your will be done.** I recognize Your ways are better than mine. Your plans are better than mine, so I humbly submit to live under Your direction and will.
- **Give us today our daily bread.** I need you to provide as only You can. I humbly trust You in this.
- **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** I am a sinner, and I humble myself before You, seeking Your grace and forgiveness. While I'm at it, I drop my pride and let go of others' offenses against me.
- **And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.** Lord, because I am a sinner, I am prone to wander. Even at my best, I fail. I need Your protection.

Prayer calls for humility through and through. Some people pray the Model Prayer by rote as though the words themselves contained something mystical and magical. They're just words. But when we pray them sincerely and with a heart of humility, God steps in and acts!

“[If] my people, who bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

What a promise from God! But it begins when we humble ourselves and pray. There's no use praying if we don't begin with humility. A heart of humility is the key to answered prayer.