

The Unattended Prayer Meeting

We often hear complaints that the prayer meeting is the least attended meeting in the church. Many pastors have tried to encourage prayer but have finally confessed failure when the numbers have been so low and interest so poor. Seldom have I heard them seeking a reason other than the 'lack of commitment' of their people. **Maybe there is another reason.**

We saw the Lord move among our young people in our church in Wales in the mid 70s. As their youth leader, I encouraged them to attend the prayer meeting each week. They knew none of the usual form for prayer meetings so began to pray spontaneously for one another as the Lord led. I was amazed to see how often and how clearly, they knew others needs – as though the Lord had directed them (as indeed He had). Our prayer meetings became exciting places of fellowship, expecting God to do something new each week. Indeed, they were so exciting that some of the 'weaker brethren' – those who resist any form of change – left the prayer meeting! We began to wait upon the Lord for Him to tell us what was on His heart and we began to pray with '**direction**'.

I have attended so many prayer meetings where the same words are said each week by the same persons (albeit sincerely) and each one present waits his or her turn to say their (usual) bit, usually changing the topic of the prayer. Not only do others stop coming to such meaningless prayer meetings but, I suggest God does too, even though we may say “where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst” (totally out of context, for Matt 18 is all about reconciliation and restoration of broken relationships – not prayer meetings!)

Beth Alves (Intercessors International) tells of 12 men in a boat all rowing furiously – but getting nowhere! 3 were rowing north, 3 were rowing south, 3 to the west and 3 to the east! How much further they would have traveled if in 3 different boats (prayer meetings) or had all been given the same compass bearing (direction) to start.

I suggest that each prayer meeting should start with a hymn and Scripture followed by 15 minutes or so of SILENCE where each person present waited on the Lord for direction. He is able to speak by Scripture, by a word of knowledge or a picture, or by the still, small voice. Each person would be given a few moments to tell what they believe the Lord is saying – you'd be surprised how often His voice comes through loud and clear in the corporate hearing of all present. Then they would pray in that direction, each being able to say “Amen” to each prayer.

I had a brother teach my church how to hear God's voice this way. In two years we saw our numbers double and a new building built to seat many more people, fully paid for in three years. God had heard our prayers because we had heard His heart!

When are we going to let the Lord attend His own prayer meeting??