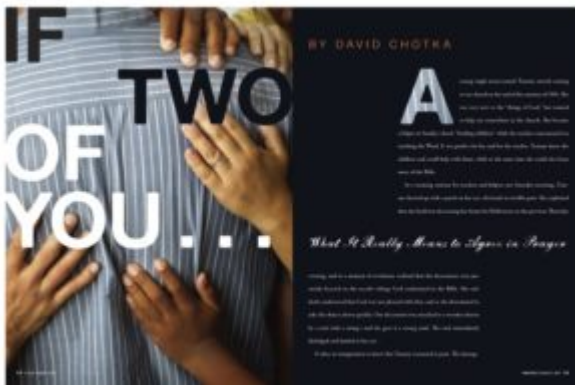


If Two of You . . .

What It Really Means to Agree in Prayer

By David Chotka



A young single mom named Tammy started coming to our church at the end of the summer of 1996. She was very new to the “things of God,” but wanted to help out somewhere in the church. She became a helper in Sunday school, “herding children” while the teacher concentrated on teaching the Word. It was perfect for her and for the teacher. Tammy knew the children and could help with them, while at the same time she could also learn more of the Bible.

At a training seminar for teachers and helpers one Saturday morning, Tammy showed up with a patch on her eye, obviously in terrible pain. She explained that she had been decorating her home for Halloween on the previous Thursday evening, and in a moment of revelation, realized that the decorations were primarily focused on the occult—things God condemned in the Bible. She suddenly understood that God was not pleased with that, and so she determined to take the objects down quickly.

One decoration was attached to a wooden shutter by a tack with a string—and she gave it a strong yank. The tack immediately dislodged and landed in her eye.

It takes no imagination to know that Tammy screamed in pain. The damage was done. All the peripheral vision from that eye was gone, and her forward sight, marred by a scratch across the cornea, was terribly impaired. The doctor said she lost all of her side vision, and he couldn't be sure what could be recovered with her forward sight. Her vision was blurry and extremely sensitive to any kind of light.

It was a strange turn of events. This happened because Tammy believed she was obeying the Lord's command not to be involved with the occult.

An Agreeing Moment

Brent (an elder), his wife Barb, another elder named Ralph, and my wife and I listened to her story. We were all people of prayer, and more specifically, Brent, Ralph and Barb were lead-teachers of our prayer ministry. We realized that God's reputation was at stake in this matter. When someone in the group spoke up and said, "God wants to heal Tammy's eye," the five of us sensed an increase of the presence of God. His compassion began to well up inside of us.

"Tammy," Barb said, "may we pray for God to heal you?"

"Oh, please!" Tammy replied.

Our numbers had increased by now with more people walking in for the seminar. So 14 of us gathered around our friend, placed our hands upon her, and began to beseech the Lord that this attack on Tammy's new faith would not have its full effect. We prayed for God to heal and restore her eye. The manifest presence of the Lord was very tangible and

palpable, while each of us in turn asked the Lord for mercy on this new believer.

"What's happening while we are praying, Tammy?" I asked.

"Fiery heat is flowing into my body and going into my eye!" she said. "The pain is subsiding!"

"Do you want us to keep praying?" someone asked.

"Oh, please!" she said.

And so we prayed for 20 minutes—until the pain completely vanished. Suddenly the intense presence of the Lord lifted, and we knew we were done. Tammy kept the patch on her eye, but all the pain and sensitivity to light disappeared. We had just experienced powerful agreement in prayer with each other.

Of course, as anyone would, Tammy went to the doctor to determine how to adapt to the damaged eye.

The doctor removed the patch. His jaw dropped.

"Doctor," she said, "what's wrong?"

"Wrong?" he said. "Why there's nothing wrong." In astonishment, he repeated, "There is absolutely nothing wrong!"

He checked her vision and found she had 20/20 vision straight ahead, with 100 percent peripheral vision on the sides.

"What did you do between Thursday and now?" he said.

"Well, on Saturday morning, 14 people asked the Lord Jesus to heal my eye," she replied.

The doctor declared that he didn't know about Jesus, but that he knew for sure there was no longer anything wrong with her eye.

We invited Tammy to testify to the rest of the church about what the Lord had done. We were all as astonished as the doctor. The Lord healed her eye through the prayer ministry of two or three who agreed that this must be done.

If two of you agree . . . it shall be done. So says the Lord.

Conditions to Agreement Prayer

It is a promise that is familiar yet astonishing. These words of Jesus have caused many seasoned prayer leaders and intercessors to reorder their prayer lives in a moment of revelation. It is that moment of understanding that Jesus really means what He says—and we must take seriously His astonishing words and start standing on the Word. If you have a heart to pray, you are familiar with this promise:

“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered in My name, I am there in their midst” (Matt. 18:19-20, NASB).

But what does it really mean? All of us can testify of times when we thought we had agreed and it wasn't done.

And so we have this tension—knowing the fear of the Lord, standing on and insisting on the completion of a God-honoring promise, and not knowing what prevents the answer. This promise is vast beyond human imagining, and we know it. We also know we must embrace its realities and live it out, for it is the Word of the Lord.

Let's be clear: It is imperative that we pray together. Praying alone in the hidden place was a common practice of the Lord Jesus Christ—and most intercessors do this. Praying

together, however, is something Jesus requires us to do in order to see the unlimited power of God released and to “open earth to heaven.

“There are conditions in this expansive promise. Most of God’s promises work this way: God initiates; we respond. Please note that the text does not say “two or more” (as a justification of the need to gather for a public worship). Rather the text says “two or three,” referring to an ancient Hebrew legal principle. For a “fact to be established” there needed to be “two or three witnesses” (see Deut. 17:6, 19:15; Num. 35:30, and its New Testament applications in Matt. 18:16; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28).

The Lord had just taught that sin issues being corrected needed 2 or 3 witnesses. And then He extended that to indicate that “the fact” of His presence is guaranteed by the intentional gathering of two or three. To paraphrase the teaching of the Lord, “to agree in prayer that anything on earth will be done, two or three of you must ‘establish a fact’—first, the fact of the presence of Jesus among them, and then the fact of the urgency of the prayer need before the God who hears.”

Two or three must agree that God’s reputation is at stake and something must be done for God’s glory!

The Power of the Name of Jesus

Here then is what is required: There must be two believers in the Lord Jesus who have determined to ensure their lives belong completely to the Lordship of their Savior. This is what it means to “pray in the name.” The name of Jesus is not merely a string of syllables uttered like a magic charm. The name is the character, nature, personality, and presence of God Himself.

Within God's character lies the key to God's power. It must be made clear then that to "gather in His name" is to do far more than merely meet in a room with some ideas about what might be helpful. Rather, it is to enter into the character of Jesus Christ Himself, and to do this together. Sin issues must be dealt with, confessed, and surrendered. Nagging troubles and doubts must be taken to the cross of Christ and left there. Sharing life together around the things of God must take center stage.

Once it is clear that two (or three) believers are "in Christ" singly and "in Christ" together as far as they are aware, the second condition must be met: They must jointly discern what God wants done; they must be "agreed"!

All must be utterly convinced God wants something done. This is not merely something a couple of people think would be useful.

Jesus' power doesn't flow around what is merely "nice." Jesus' presence, power, and promises are manifestly present to a mutually submitted gathering of focused believers who make God's glory their only agenda. This is what it means to "gather in His name." Jesus' power is released through profound unity between the pray-ers. Without this kind of agreement, we have no power in our prayer together. The best this can do is kindle the faint hope that perhaps our single prayers might be effective when we say them aloud with someone else in the room.

An Urgent Appeal

Our asking and agreeing together must not merely be an asking after some need. Rather, our asking must be an urgent appeal to the Lord of the universe that God Himself must intervene around an agreed issue for the Lord's glory. It is filled with

urgency that this prayer must be answered—because the name and the reputation of God Himself is at stake.

Those who utter this prayer together must be prepared to do anything or sacrifice anything in their power to be a part of the answer. And if it is beyond their resources, they must surrender anything that God asks of them to see it done.

This is “the prayer of agreement.” It is mutual submission around the Word of God, in the presence of the Spirit, through the name of Christ the Lord—for the glory of God! Our corporate praying reflects this magnificent reality.

Brent, Ralph, and Barb prayed this way for Tammy—and God heard their prayer.

God has called us to agree. And when we do, God will hear our prayer too!

About the Author

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