

# The Prayer Meeting

by W.H. Griffith Thomas

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*W.H. Griffith Thomas emphasizes the critical importance and proper conduct of Prayer Meetings in strengthening church life and community intercession.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Corporate Prayer", "Church Growth"

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## Description

W.H. Griffith Thomas emphasizes the importance of Prayer Meetings in the Church, stating that it is the 'big wheel' that drives parish work and should not be neglected. He highlights the necessity of regular Prayer Meetings for the strength and growth of the Church, drawing comparisons to the effectiveness of Methodism and Evangelicalism. Additionally, he provides guidance on the conduct of Prayer Meetings, emphasizing punctuality, brevity in speeches, the use of devotional hymns, and the inclusion of variety through sentence prayers and devotional choruses.

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## Transcript

### Section 1. Its Importance.

The Prayer Meeting has been described as "the big wheel of the Church," a phrase which well indicates the necessity and importance of this part of parish work. No Church Service can possibly take its place; and unless there is a regular Prayer Meeting, parish work will never be as strong as it might, and ought to be. In a booklet published by the S.P.C.K., called *Prayer Meetings for Churchmen*, which, however, should really be called "*Prayer Meetings for High Churchmen*," there is a striking testimony to the value and advantages of these gatherings. The writer says that the only religious movement of recent times which has neglected Prayer Meetings is the Oxford Movement, and that it is this neglect which has prevented it from appealing to the multitudes to the extent which Methodism and Evangelicalism have done. The rest of the booklet is full of suggestions intended to lead High Churchmen to adopt this organization, and although the counsels are occasionally characterized by suggestions which cannot be accepted and approved by Evangelicals, the booklet itself is a striking evidence of the value of Prayer Meetings as an integral and prominent part of Church work.

The meeting should be held weekly if at all possible, and it will generally be found that Saturday evening is by far the best time. The Prayer Meeting ought to be made the center of intercession for the parish, and no other parochial or personal engagement should be allowed to interfere with it. Incumbent and Curate will naturally be there, and on no account will make any other engagement for that hour.

Section 2. Its Conduct. Very much will depend upon the conductor of the Prayer Meeting, for like everything else, the personal element bulks largely in a meeting of this kind. Perhaps a few suggestions may be found helpful by way of comparison. 1. The time as a rule should be one hour, and never longer. Punctuality in commencing and closing will be found useful in several ways. People ought to know that a Prayer Meeting arranged for eight o'clock commences at that hour, and it will be a great convenience if they get to realize that it closes at nine, or at least 9.15. 2.

The hymn book used at Prayer Meetings should be of a devotional type, and Hymns of Consecration and Faith, the Keswick hymn book, has the best number of hymns of this character. Sacred Songs and Solos perhaps partakes too much of the evangelistic element to be so generally useful. But the Keswick book in its experimental and personal element will prove of devotional service in such gatherings. It is of course interdenominational, but it is full of some of the finest devotional expressions, and no Church Prayer Meeting can fail to be helped by its use. 3.

A brief address should as a rule be included, with special emphasis on its brevity! The address should be based on Scripture, and devotional rather than purely exegetical in order to give point to the prayers that are to follow. It is a widespread and false conception that a Prayer Meeting is a place for instruction; and if the leader is imbued with this fallacy, and reads a long passage of Scripture and expounds it at length, he will do more than anything else to kill the Meeting.

Out of one hour, not more than ten minutes should be given to the address. Prayer Meetings are not for instruction; they are for the purpose of worshipping God in prayer, and praise, and testimony. 4. As a rule, the leader will himself open the meeting with prayer, or else get someone on whom he can depend to strike the right spiritual keynote of the gathering. 5. After the address the meeting will naturally be thrown open for prayer, emphasis being laid on the two essential requirements for public prayer: brevity and distinctness.

If those present "make long prayers," or speak indistinctly, or with head bowed toward the floor, the meeting will be injured. But if brevity and clearness are assured, the freedom of prayer will be in every way helpful. 6. Variety is one great secret of a good Prayer Meeting. The leader should invite "sentence prayers". Sometimes a string of prayers of one sentence, following immediately on one another will prove a most helpful feature. These sentence prayers will help the people to pray definitely for one thing, and will also enable some to open their mouths for the first time in public prayer who would not feel capable at the outset of praying at greater length. 7.

Occasionally the leader will find it helpful while the people are kneeling to start a devotional chorus. The singing will prove another element of variety and help to maintain the tone of the meeting. 8. Subjects of prayer should be invited from time to time and requests will be sent in which can be brought before God during the meeting. 9. The conductor must not feel concerned, still less troubled, if there are silences from time to time in the meeting. God often speaks through our silences, and if people for any reason do not feel led to offer prayer, the meeting can still wait upon God in quietness and feel assured of His presence and blessing.

The Society of Friends may err in one direction, but let not us as Church people make the mistake of erring in the other. 10. One Prayer Meeting a month, at least, should be devoted mainly to missionary topics unless there is a separate Missionary Prayer Meeting. At such a gathering special subjects will be announced dealing with various aspects of the Mission Field, including intercession for any members of

the congregation who are at work abroad, or missionaries in whom the Church has a special interest. Once again let it be said with all possible emphasis that no Church ought to regard itself as properly equipped for the spiritual work that it has to do unless it has a weekly Prayer Meeting.

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