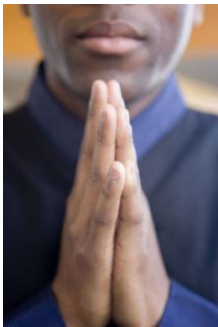


## The Whisperer, The KJVer, and Other Types of Group Prayer Participants You Don't Want to Be

Steve Burchett

My first opportunity to pray in a group came when some of my fellow students and I were standing in a circle, holding hands. The leader told us we could either pray or squeeze the hand of the person next to us. I was a squeezer that day. Since then, I have enjoyed praying and hearing others pray hundreds of times in both planned and impromptu settings. However, I have learned through my mistakes and the conduct of others that there are certain types of group prayer participants none of us should want to be:



**The Sleeper** – Colossians 4:2 says, “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it” (NAS). The goal is to be actively engaged, even if you’re just listening. This is impossible if someone is asleep. If this is you, evaluate your sleeping habits, and consider standing up in order to stay alert.

**The Non-participator** – This person isn’t asleep, but he may as well be. He’s not paying attention, and he’s not planning to pray. Maybe something is on his mind, or he just doesn’t feel like joining in. Regardless, he should remember to “count others more significant” than himself and to “look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4).

**The Whisperer** – God hears you even if you speak softly, but what about everybody else? The only way to be united in prayer (see Acts 1:14) is to hear what’s being prayed. Your prayer is important not only to God, but to the others in the group who benefit from hearing what and how you pray.

**The Rambler** – Typically, group prayer is designed so that many people may participate, so it’s unhelpful for one person to ramble on and on. Some might fall into this category because they try to pray through everything on the prayer list in one turn, leaving the rest feeling like there is nothing else to pray. Our praying should include significant detail and may even incorporate Scripture (see Acts 4:25-26)—short, clichéd prayers are not the aim. But beware of giving others an opportunity to drift off and lose enthusiasm.

**The Dominator** – This prayer meeting participant doesn’t necessarily pray too long, but he prays too often. In some prayer meetings, there will be individuals who pray multiple times simply because others are not speaking up, but “The Dominator” doesn’t even give people a chance. He’s very quick to jump in right after someone else concludes, which is excellent

unless it is done too often. He may even start praying before the other person is finished, forgetting that “love is not rude” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

**The Repeater** – Certain themes and ideas should get repeated, but this person is praying the exact content that somebody else prayed in the same gathering. Typically, “The Repeater” doesn’t know he is duplicating someone else because he’s not listening very well. Too much repetition causes a group to pray about less than what they could.

**The Preacher** – This person uses his opportunity to pray as a platform to preach to people in the gathering. This may especially be the case when there is a controversial subject that solid believers disagree about. For example, “Oh Lord, show the parents in our church who take their kids trick or treating how wicked that is.”

**The Gossiper** – This person often makes an appearance during the time when requests are being shared before the praying begins: “We really need to cry out to God for John. I think his marriage is really struggling right now.” “Oh, really, what’s going on?” “Well, I don’t know for sure, but I saw John and his wife having a serious conversation last week in Pastor Mike’s office, and I remember a few years ago how they went through some real struggles in their marriage.” “Really, what happened then?” “Well, I don’t know for sure, but I do know that he was having some problems on the internet, if you catch my drift.” “Okay, well, we need to ask God to intervene in a mighty way. He’s saved other marriages, He can save theirs!”

**The Distracter** – In the first church I pastored, I had no idea what a couple of ladies were doing in their purses during our prayer meetings, but it was loud and disruptive when we prayed. I’ve been distracted in some settings by people fidgeting with their cell phones. Maybe there was something crucial that they had to respond to immediately, but likely not. And when we are communicating with *God*, our other communications can typically wait.

**The KJVer** – This is the person who uses the old English of the King James Bible when he prays. It is appropriate for some to pray this way. They have many verses of the KJV memorized—the “Thees” and “Thous” naturally spill out. But others switch to this mode of speaking perhaps because they think it’s more reverent and accepted by God. Doesn’t God hear the prayers of those who are simpler and can’t use Elizabethan language?

“They lifted their voices together to God.” (Acts 4:24)

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