

## Prayer and Orality

**W**hat role does prayer uniquely play among oral-preference learners? Even Jesus' disciples observed John the Baptist's disciples who were praying and wanted Jesus' teaching, too (Luke 11:1). Prayer lessons used to disciple me were developed by scholars who were among the 13% of Americans that are proficient at reading. It has shaped how I pray. Yet, I have never been disciplined on an oral "style" of praying.

Teaching needs to be done in an orality-friendly way. Jesus gave us many parables when teaching prayer. One example is the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8). And throughout the Bible there are a number of stories that help small groups discover adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplications (the A.C.T.S. acronym).

But when you go to pray, is there a difference among oral learners? The Apostle Paul urged all kinds of prayer. Praying by oral learners is to be encouraged! "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18 NASB).

Prayer is so intensely personal that many of us will do more modeling than teaching on prayer. Many new believers have a background where prayers are typically read aloud. Or possibly they are prayed aloud in a literate way, using bullet points to list prayer needs. Because of the heavily ornate and "flowery" public prayers in Bible studies as well as corporate worship, oral-preference learners may not believe they can pray publicly as well as privately. They develop a marred identity thinking they're not "good enough" to approach the very throne of God. Highly literate prayers have the potential to seal off free access to God for oral believers.

Here are some of my own observations. Consider these descriptive and not prescriptive, please! Praying among oral learners is likely to be more from the heart and free-wheeling. It can take on a sing-song fashion akin to chanting and poetry. There's often a melodic rhythm that begins to emerge. I've often heard the word "Lord" used more like punctuation. And the word/sound "and, uh" can start every thought so that the prayer can actually be one long run-on sentence. It also sends a signal to others that "I'm not done yet." It may contain personal accounts of troubles or detailed descriptions of the troubles of others. There may also be prayers that include memorized verbatim Bible verses or possibly entire Bible stories that convey what is on their heart. And they usually are not time-sensitive going much longer than well-honed prayer "highlights" used by literate worldview people who pray.

God hears our prayers – when we pray. So, why not teach on prayer using Bible stories and model prayer that opens up access to God for oral learners?

