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The Art of Prayer

17. What Is Praying in the Spirit?

The chapter explains what Paul and Jude mean by 'praying in the Spirit.' The author recounts his own search as a Baptist pastor to understand the phrase, then lays out the two ways it happens and the benefits of praying in tongues.

Key takeaways

- Praying in the Spirit happens two ways: in your own known language, and in other tongues.
- Praying in your known language means becoming so absorbed in God that you lose track of time and speak under divine inspiration.
- There are two kinds of prayer: mental (with the understanding) and spiritual (out of your spirit). The church has leaned too hard on mental prayer alone.
- We often don't know what to pray for, so the Holy Spirit prays through us — sometimes in tongues, sometimes in groanings.
- Praying in tongues has real benefits: it magnifies God, edifies (builds up) the one praying, and gives spiritual rest and refreshing.

- Like a batter needs practice, being keen to spiritual things takes time spent praying in the Spirit.

Passages worth keeping

“We cannot help others; we cannot edify others unless we ourselves have been edified.”

Why self-edifying prayer in tongues matters — you fill up before you pour out.

Scripture referenced

- **Ephesians 6:18** -- The command to pray 'in the Spirit' — the phrase the chapter investigates.
- **1 Corinthians 14:14,15** -- Paul's two kinds of prayer: with the spirit and with the understanding.
- **Romans 8:26** -- The Spirit helps us pray when we don't know what to pray for.
- **Jude 20** -- Praying in the Holy Ghost builds up the believer.
- **Isaiah 28:11,12** -- Tongues as rest and refreshing.