

Leading A Public Prayer

Text : **I Cor. 14: 13-19, 34-38**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. Though Jesus Himself condemned praying in public to be seen (**Matt. 6**), He prayed in public.**
1. **John 6** ... He prayed a prayer of thanksgiving when He fed the multitude.
 2. **John 11** ... He prayed in the hearing of others at the resurrection of Lazarus.
 3. **John 17** ... He prayed for all to hear in the upper room.
- B. From the very beginning, the Lord's church has practiced communal prayer.**
1. **Acts 2: 42-** They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
 2. **Acts 4: 31-** And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.
 3. **Acts 20: 36-** When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.
- C. The New Testament church was instructed about prayer in worship.**
1. **Refer to text** ... **I Cor. 14: 13-19**
 2. Thus, we know that prayer was part of the public worship.
 3. As worship, prayers in the Christian assembly must meet a certain standard.

With this in mind, let us observe some aspects of public pray, especially prayers in the Christian assembly.

I. The general guidelines for prayer apply to public. (Cf- **Matt. 6: 5-15)**

- A. All prayer must be offered to God with great reverence.**
1. We're told to go to God with boldness, but boldness is not arrogance.
 - a. **Eph. 3: 11b-12** ... in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12** in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him
 - b. **Heb. 10:19-22** ... since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ... **22** let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, ...
 2. Even Jesus approached God the Father with reverence.
 - a. **John 17:11-** ... Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, ...

- b. **John 17:25-** O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; ...
- c. **Matt. 6: 9-** Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

B. As an act of worship, ALL prayer must exalt God. Examples :

- 1. **Luke 1: 46-** And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, ..."
- 2. **Psa. 34:3-** O magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together.
- 3. Prayer is a privilege granted by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.
* **Christians must remember their position relevant to God.**
 - a. **James 4: 10-** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.
 - b. **Compare ... I Pet. 5: 6-** ... humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, ...

C. All prayer (*public or private*) must be an expression of faith. (**Not just ritual)**

- 1. **Matt. 21:21-** And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen."
- 2. **James 1: 6-** But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.
- 3. **Remember ... Eph. 3: 20-21** * **You cannot ask more than God can do.**

ILL.- During a time of severe drought, the church gathered for a special prayer meeting to ask God for rain. The only one to bring an umbrella was a little girl.

II. Specific to public prayer : The one who words the prayer leads the congregation.

A. The public prayer should seek to represent those being lead.

- 1. One's personal concerns should be left in his private closet.
- 2. The corporate pronoun "*we*" should be used as opposed to the personal "*I*."
- 3. The concerns of the congregation should be addressed.
 - a. Upcoming events (VBS , Gospel Meetings)
 - b. Success in acts of faithfulness (evangelism, benevolence, glorifying God)
 - c. Goals of the congregation (growth, start new ministry, mission, building)
 - d. The sick of the congregation (By name, not "those listed in ...")
- 4. It is an appropriate time to lay the problems of the congregation before the Lord.

B. When leading a prayer, one must consider how it affects the hearers.

1. Jesus was considerate of how His words affected the hearers.

John 11: 41-42 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." cf. **16:12**

2. The Apostles Paul command Christians to consider those who hear their prayers.

I Cor. 14: 15-16 What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. ¹⁶ Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?

3. Prayer should always draw men closer to God and to each other.
4. Try to avoid that which you know will cause a brother to be offended or distracted.

C. Common sense "You are not leading if no one is following."

1. No one can follow if they cannot hear what is being said.

- a. Speak loud enough to be heard. (*Project from your diaphragm as when singing.*)
- b. Face the greatest portion of the audience.
- c. Use the microphone whenever possible.

2. Hold your head up when you pray.

- a. Bowing is cultural, not commanded by scripture.
- b. Jesus looked up when He prayed.

John 17: 1- Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to Heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,

- c. **Never** project your voice down between the seats or toward the floor.

D. Use words easy to be understood by everyone. (speak clearly)

1. Never use disrespectful language (*slang*), theological terms or memorized phrases.
2. Use the language you use every day. (**As if talking to a friend on the phone**)
3. Do not use the outdated King James language. (**Thee, Thou, repenteth, etc**)

E. Those in the audience have the responsibility to pray **WITH the leader.**

1. Not just letting one's mind drift. (**Sometimes it's hard to tune out life.**)
2. He is leading you in prayer, not praying instead of you. **I Cor. 14** "say amen"
3. Let the leader know in advance if you have something on your heart.

III. One must never lead a prayer to be seen of men. (Check egos at the door.)**A. Though the audience must be considered, prayer is directed to God.**

1. **Matt. 6:5** ... Jesus warns us about praying to be seen of men.
2. Signs of prayer addressed to men :
 - a. Using a special “Holy Tone” not used in conversation.
 - b. Using a special vocabulary for prayer. (**Thee, thou, special words or phrases**)
* **Pray like you are talking to a friend in high position.**

B. A prayer should never draw attention to the one leading it.

1. Do not use an unusual approach which the hearers will find distracting.
2. Do not make the prayer exceptionally long or short.
(**As a general rule, public prayers should not be very long. drift after 4 min**)

C. Every word in the prayer should be addressed from the speaker’s heart to God.

1. Prayer is not the way to communicate with anyone in the audience.
2. Don’t preach in your prayer.
3. In most instances, quoting scriptures is not appropriate in prayer.

D. The repeated use of tire old phrases is not prayer, just performance.

1. Young men listen to the older men to learn the traditional phrases.
 - a. “Be with us through the further exercise of this service.”
 - b. “guide, guard, and direct us”
2. Often new Christians pray more from the heart than the seasoned leaders.
3. **Prayer is a sincere expression of the heart of a servant to his Master.**

IV. Those who lead worship must be men.**A. God has ordained that women be in submission to men.**

1. This is not to infer that women are of lesser value or stature.
2. To rebel against God’s order is to rebel against God.
3. Culture cannot override the commands of God. (**God is eternally consistent.**)
4. Even in the home, man does not have the right to overrule God’s commands.

B. God gave specific instructions for women in worship.

1. Women must be silent in the assembly.

I Cor. 14: 34-35 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. **35** If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

2. Specific instructions are given concerning prayer.

I Tim. 2: 8- Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. (Cf. - **I Cor. 11**)

- a. This is a gender specific command.
- b. The word used is men as opposed to women. (*aner* = male, *anthropos* = person)
- c. **Men** are to pray in EVERY place. **Thus**, women may never lead men in prayer.

IV. A prayer should always be appropriate to the occasion or situation.**A. There is no one prayer fits all.**

1. There are certain groups we are required to pray for, but not in every prayer.

Example : At a funeral, it would inappropriate to pray for national leaders.

2. Each prayer must express the heart of that group on that specific day.

Example : It would be inappropriate not to mention mothers on Mother's Day.

When a congregation is grieving, their grief should be in their prayers.

B. When someone responds in an assembly, the prayer should be centered on them.

1. The prayer for the respondent should be :

- a. specific and appropriate to the need,
- b. personal to the respondent,
- c. And brief. (*no unrelated things and never used as dismissal pray*)

2. The prayer should consider the effect it will have on the respondent and all who hear.

C. Christians sometimes lead public prayers outside the assembly.

1. When we eat at a restaurant we give thanks for our food.

- a. Jesus gave thanks for the food before feeding the 5,000 (**Luke 9:16**)
- b. This prayer should be quiet and brief. (**It can be silent with all bowing.**)
- c. Never unnecessarily draw attention to yourself. (**To pray or not is a witness.**)

2. When called on in a civic gathering.
 - a. Consider the hearers and the effect of your words.
 - b. Pray sincerely for the occasion, not just perform a rite.
 - c. Stay true to your Christian faith.
3. When praying in an outside “religious” gathering.
 - a. All of the above still applies.
 - b. A refusal is a witness just as much as words spoken.
 - c. Be true, but avoid being judgmental or condescending. ... **Col. 4: 5-6**

* **“Wisdom is the greater part of valor.”**

CONCLUSION :

- A. **We’re all called on to lead a prayer from time to time. (honor & privilege)**
 1. It behooves us to give our responsibility some serious thought.
 2. The leaders bring the hearts of the audience before God.
 3. Let’s all prepare ourselves to do so well.
- B. **A public prayer is unlike anything else we do in the assembly or wherever.**
 1. In addition to being a privilege and an honor; it is a responsibility.
 2. It’s difficult to consider the audience and still keep one’s mind centered on God.
- C. **Private prayer is the best preparation for public prayer.**
 1. We develop our comfort zone for prayer in the closet on our knees.
 2. If you pray regularly, **you** can lead others in prayer with ease.
- D. **May none of us ever waste an opportunity to pray ... ANYWHERE.**
 1. Never refuse when asked.
 2. **NOTE :** Call on people in advance so they can think about what they will say.
 - a. We commonly give thought before approaching anyone in high position.
 - b. Calling on people at the last minute causes them to just repeat stock phrases.

Let us truly make the church “a house of prayer” Luke 19: 46 (Cf- Isa 56:7)

INVITATION :

Note : *When you preach this you need to stay with the outline.
If you go here and there preaching the gospel, it will run long.*