

Prayer is how we talk with God, praise Him, thank Him and make requests of Him. However, God talks to us through His written Word. In this tract, I will show you that prayer is a part of our public worship and our private lives as well. I will also answer the following questions: How do we pray and by what authority do we pray? How should we pray in public worship? Finally, I will give you four steps to a better prayer life.

### **How do we pray and by what authority do we pray?**

Jesus starts answering this question in the following verse:

**Luke 11:1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup> So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. <sup>3</sup> Give us day by day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."**

In this example prayer, notice to whom the prayer is directed. It's the Father in heaven. We also need to understand that part of this prayer is obsolete because the kingdom Jesus speaks of came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). So, that part of the prayer has already been answered. However, we can still pray that the kingdom will grow. Jesus gives us more details about prayer in the following verses:

**John 14:13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.**

**John 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.**

**John 16:23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.**

What do all these verses have in common and teach? Jesus makes it easy to see that our prayers are to be directed to the Father, and we are to pray in Jesus name or by His authority. Based on Jesus' teaching of prayer, we are not supposed to pray to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus. Instead, we are to pray to the Father in Jesus' name. This is the example we find throughout the Bible (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17; Acts 4:23- 30). Now, let's move onto our next question.

### **How should prayer be done in public worship?**

In our public worship, we have two things happening during a prayer. First, a person is leading the prayer. Second, everyone else is listening to the prayer and making it their own. First, let's find out who should lead in prayer.

**James 5:16 The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**

James teaches us that we need a righteous person to lead the prayer. This means, we should never want a person living in sin or a non-Christian leading us in a prayer. Well, what about a righteous woman? Is it acceptable for her to lead prayer in a worship service with men present? Let's see what Paul says about this.

**1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.**

**1 Timothy 2:12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup> And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

Paul is not being a chauvinist pig. He doesn't have a bone to pick with women, nor does he view them as being lesser than a man. He is an apostle of God, and he is teaching us how God wants things done within His church. Now this word "silence" in our text doesn't mean absolute silence. If it did, then a woman couldn't tell her children to be quite or even sneeze or she would violate this scripture. All Paul is saying is that a woman should not take a position of authority over the man in public worship, which excludes her

from leading prayer when men are present. God has chosen the men to lead in the public worship. That's why Paul tells Timothy, "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8)." Since the men are to lead prayer in the church, I want share a few tips about leading prayer.

1. When you pray, pray with reverence and respect to God keeping in mind that you are praying for the church and not just for yourself.
2. When you pray, speak loud and clear. This way, everyone can hear you and be a part of the prayer.
3. If you are soft-spoken, then come to the front of assembly and use a microphone if one is available. If you will follow these three simple steps, you will know that everyone can hear you and take part in your prayer.

For the rest of us, we need to make sure we are listening carefully and not have our minds on something else. It's important that we think about what is being said and make that prayer our own. We can agree with the prayer by saying, "Amen" either in our head or out loud. We should always keep this in mind every time someone leads a prayer.

The last thing that I want to share with you is four steps to a better prayer life.

### **1. Your prayers must be sincere.**

A great example of a sincere prayer comes from David after he sinned against God.

**Psalm 69:13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, Hear me in the truth of Your salvation. <sup>14</sup> Deliver me out of the mire, And let me not sink; Let me be delivered from those who hate me, And out of the deep waters. <sup>15</sup> Let not the floodwater overflow me, Nor let the deep swallow me up; And let not the pit shut its mouth on me. <sup>16</sup> Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. <sup>17</sup> And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in trouble; Hear me speedily.**

As you read this prayer, you can hear the sincerity of David, and we need to follow this example by being sincere when we pray. Unfortunately, there are many today that pray without sincerity. Let me illustrate this with a story.

There was a wealthy man who went wading out in the ocean when a big wave swept him out to sea. He began to struggle to save his life, but all his efforts failed. When it looked like he had no chance of survival, he prayed. He said, "Lord if you will save my life, I will give you half of all my money." A few moments later, he had managed to make it a little closer to safety and now he says, "Remember Lord, I promised you 25% of all my money if you will save my life." A few moments later, his safety was still questionable, but it looked more hopeful so he prayed and said, "Lord, keep up the good work, just a little more help and I will be safe. Don't abandon me now! Remember I promised you 10 % of my money if you will save me from drowning." Well, a few minutes later the man finally was able to touch the ground. He prayed to God one last time and said, "Thank you Lord for saving my life, and don't forget my promise to you. If you ever need anything, I will seriously think about giving you some of my money."

While it's easy for us to see this man's lack of sincerity to God, many people are just like him today. They make little plea bargains with God. However, when things workout for them, they disregard what they said they would do. People who do this will not be pleasing to God. So, we must be sincere in our prayer life.

### **2. We must pray with faith.**

How many times have you prayed to God and doubted that He would answer your prayer? As Christians we should never doubt. James says, "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord (James 1:6)." So, we need to realize that God answers our prayers. After Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He illustrates how they must be persistent when they pray with faith.

# The Truth About Prayer



**Luke 11:5** And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup> 'for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup> "and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? <sup>8</sup> "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. <sup>9</sup> " So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Not only does this parable show that we must pray in faith, but it also shows that we must be persistent. So, God does answer our prayers, but He will answer it in a way that is best for us. He might answer a prayer with a yes, no or maybe later. Paul gives us a great example of God saying, "No" to prayer.

**2 Corinthians 12:7** And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul's prayer was answered with a no because God's grace was sufficient. It is important that we learn to accept God's answer and trust in His decision as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

**Matthew 26:39** He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Notice, Jesus prayed for the cup to pass, but he left it up to God's will and not His own. Many people today try to take matters into their own hands instead of

accepting God's answer. However, Christians must learn to pray with faith and accept God's answer.

### 3. We need to pray with humility.

God will not hear your prayer if you are haughty or self-righteous because God wants us to be humble just as Jesus was humble before the Father. Peter says, "Be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5)." How many times have you heard of someone praying to God with the attitude that they deserve something because they have done so many good deeds? I have heard this type of insincere prayer in movies and no doubt, many in the world have this same attitude. Jesus gives us a great example of an insincere prayer in following verses:

**Luke 18:9** Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: <sup>10</sup> "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' <sup>13</sup> "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' <sup>14</sup> "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

This self-righteous Pharisee came to remind God how good he was and how he was glad he wasn't like the tax collector. How many of us have prayed to God and told Him how good we are or how better we are than someone else? I hope that you have never done this. If you have, you are just like this self-righteous Pharisee and you will not be justified in your prayer. However, the tax collector came before God and wouldn't even look up to heaven. He asked God for mercy with a humble heart. This is the example we are to follow. If we do, we will be justified in our prayers as well. So, don't forget to pray with humility.

### 4. Pray for the right things.

Sometimes, people think that they can pray for whatever they want and they should receive it. They completely forget about the will of God and they will pray for things that God will not allow. For instance, some will pray before they enter a casino asking God to help them win big. Some have even prayed for vengeance on those they don't like. I want to share with you a story that illustrates praying for the wrong thing.

Some college students were filling up water balloons and dropping them on people from their 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Well, one night they realized they hit a police officer and they were scared to death. So, one of them suggested they pray about it. However, instead of asking God to forgive them for what they did wrong, they prayed that the officer would not catch them. They were praying for the wrong reason and sometimes when we are being selfish, we pray for the wrong things as well. James says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures (James 4:3)."

So, if we have the wrong motives and we pray for the wrong things, God's answer to our prayer will always be no. However, when we pray from our hearts and we pray for things in accordance with His will. He will acknowledge and answer our prayers to make things work out best for us based on His wisdom. So, let us always strive to pray for the right things.

In conclusion, we need to remember to use prayer in our everyday life because it is how we talk to God. We use prayer in our worship and in our private lives. Our prayers should be directed to Father in the name of Jesus. The men are to lead prayer in public worship and we are to take part in that prayer. Finally, we need to remember there are four steps in having a better prayer life. Our prayer needs to be sincere. We must pray in faith and realize that God answers our prayers. We need to pray with humility and for the right things.

**Hebrews 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

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