

IMPROVING OUR SERVICE

Lesson 3 Public Prayers

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Public Prayers.

1. There are many aspects of prayer that should be studied: principles of acceptable prayer, positions in prayer, types of prayer, purpose of prayer, parts of prayer, Jesus' example of prayer, how God answers prayers, places and times for prayer, etc. Study your Bibles to learn more about these important areas of prayer.
2. This lesson focuses on the oral aspects of leading a public prayer in the assembly.

B. Public Prayers Are...

1. Important.
 - a) You are speaking to the Almighty God of heaven! What a great honor and privilege! You are leading the hearts of men and women to God!
 - b) You influence God and you influence those who pray with you.
2. Needed.
 - a) 1 Timothy 2:8.
 - b) A Christian can learn how to pray better (Mt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:1).
3. Edifying.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 14:14-17.
 - b) James 5:14-18.

II. FIVE PUBLIC PRAYER MISTAKES.

A. Praying To Be Seen of Men.

1. Matthew 6:5.
2. Concentrate on God, not on the audience around you.

B. Praying with Vain Repetitions.

1. Matthew 6:7.
2. Do not use the same worn out, habitual, formalized phrases. This can be distracting or cause a person not to pay attention. Vain, repetitive prayer can be empty and boring instead of fresh and edifying. It is not the words that are a problem, it is the empty, thoughtless repetition of those words. I should ask myself: Am I honestly concentrating on what I am saying in my prayers?
3. Examples of vain repetition:
 - a) "guide, guard, and direct us"

- b) “in the end save us if we have been found faithful”
- c) “if we have been found faithful, give us a home in heaven”
- d) “bless all for whom it is our duty to pray”
- e) “bless thy ministering servants everywhere”
- f) “be with us through the further exercise of this service and on throughout the walks of life”
- g) “ready recollection”
- h) “bring us back at the next appointed time”
- i) “go with us to our respective places of abode”
- j) “we are thankful for another opportunity...”
- k) “partake in a manner well pleasing to thee”
- l) “which represents... blood ... body”

C. Praying Too Long.

1. Keep in mind the short attention span of the audience. You don't have to mention everything you think of at one time in your prayer.

D. Praying the Same Prayer.

1. Some have one memorized prayer for all occasions.
2. There are several kinds of prayers that should be offered to God: thanksgiving, supplication (petition), praise, confession, and intercession (see Supplement 3).
3. Learn from the examples of prayer offered in the Bible. One way to have different words to say in your prayers is to read your Bible daily and use the language of the Bible verses that you have been reading. Reading the Psalms especially will give you different words to say in your prayers.

E. Praying to Preach A Sermon.

1. Remember who you are praying to. You are praying to God, not the church.
2. Remember the purpose of payer: pray to God and with the audience. You do not pray to the audience. The sermon is for preaching, not the prayer.

III. BETTER PUBLIC PRAYERS.

A. Be Heard (see Supplement 1).

B. Be Orderly.

1. Announce that you are beginning your prayer with something like, “Let us pray...” This way, all will begin together. Close your prayer “in the name of Jesus” (Jn. 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23, 24, 26).
2. Organize your thoughts ahead of time. Check the schedule to see if you are assigned for prayer and prepare your mind ahead of time what you will say. Some write down things to pray for and then review their list right before they

pray. Others read from their notes while they are praying. This is perfectly fine to do.

C. Be Respectful.

1. Use language that is appropriate for talking with God. You do not have to pray in “the King James language” (with “thee” and “thou”), but neither should you address God using irreverent words.
2. Say things that are appropriate for the entire congregation and easy to be understood by all, young and old, so that all can truly say “Amen.” Remember, you are leading a public prayer, not a private prayer.

D. Be Sincere.

1. Some seem to “run” through their prayers just to finish quickly.
2. Be yourself. Your prayer should come from your heart, not simply a memorized prayer or a prayer that copies what others say.

E. Be Alert.

1. Be mindful of the specific needs of the church and the worship service. Listen for things said in the announcements, the songs, Bible class, sermon, Lord’s supper, or collection, to include in your prayer. Remember special opportunities also: gospel meeting, lectureship, special Bible class for men and women, visitation group, etc.
2. Be careful not to repeat things that have already been prayed for in the service. If you lead a prayer in the assembly after one has already been led earlier, pray for different things, not the same things.
3. Offer a prayer appropriate to the right occasion of the service: opening prayer, closing prayer, Lord’s supper prayer, contribution prayer, prayer for baptism, or public confession of sin.

F. Be Specific.

1. Pray, calling persons by name, stating exact circumstances, asking for specific requests, etc.

IV. CONCLUSION.

A. Let’s Go Out Now and Lead Good Public Prayers.

B. Class Motto: “I Will Try To Do Better!”