

This morning as we continue on in our series on worship we will be examining the topic of prayer. The simplest way to describe prayer is that is a way that we communicate with God and either praise him, make request, or express thankfulness. God talks to us through his written Word and we talk to him through our prayers. Our prayers are a part of the worship to God. 1 Cor. 14 is a chapter on worship and in verse 15 it says ***I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.*** So we conclude that prayer was a part the worship in the early church.

TO WHOM DO WE PRAY AND BY WHAT AUTHORITY DO WE PRAY? Jesus taught on this when his disciples asked how they should pray and in so doing he answers these questions for us. ***Luke 11:1-4 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. (2) And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. (3) Give us day by day our daily bread. (4) And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.***

In this example of prayer we notice to whom the prayer is directed. It's to the Father in heaven. It also addresses the kingdom to come. We need to keep in mind that this is a model prayer and the part about the kingdom to come is obsolete for the Christian today, because the kingdom is the church and that part of the prayer was answered on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. However we can still pray that the kingdom grows and in a sense will be made available (or come) to those that are not Christians.

Later, Jesus is talking with his apostles and told them more about how to pray. ***John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*** Here John teaches his disciple that prayers are to be directed to the Father but in the name of Jesus i.e. by his authority.

We can see this example followed in the NT. We have Peter and John being released from an appearance with the high court. ***Acts 4:23-30 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. (24) And when they heard that, they lifted up their VOICE TO GOD with one accord, and said, ...*** then some specifics are mentioned with a conclusion of ***(30) that signs and***

wonders may be done **BY THE NAME OF THY HOLY CHILD JESUS.** Notice in this public prayer they prayed to Father and they do so through the name of Jesus Christ.

HOW SHOULD PRAYER BE DONE IN PUBLIC WORSHIP? There are two types of prayer – private and public. A private prayer is more personal as you talk to God about personal matters in your life. But a public prayer is just that; it is public and many listen as their minds are directed by that prayer. In a public worship we have two things happening during a prayer. We have a person leading the prayer and the rest are listen to that prayer in silence and agree with it by an “amen.”

Before we look at these two different aspects of public prayer, let’s first look at who should lead in prayer. ***James 5:16b The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*** Certainly we all agree that we need a righteous person to lead the prayer. But does it matter whether it’s a women or a man? In our culture today, women take an active role in worship so is it alright for a woman to lead the congregation in prayer. Now if we want to be the church that Jesus built and worship in “*spirit and truth,*” then we will respect the authority of scripture over the logic of social acceptance, and according to scripture the woman is not to take the leading role over the man.

1 Corinthians 14, that chapter that deals with public worship, addresses this matter down toward the end of that chapter. ***1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*** Later in writing to young preacher Timothy, Paul gives these instructions. ***1 Timothy 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*** The key words in this passage are “*usurp authority.*” Now Paul is not being a male chauvinist here nor does he view the woman as inferior to the man. He as apostle of God is teaching through divine revelation how God wants things done within the church.

Now the word “*silence*” does not mean absolute silence or a women could not correct small children, sing during the song service, or so much as sneeze or she would violate scripture. The word silence in 1 Cor 14:34 comes from the Greek word (G4602) *sigāō* (pronounced see-gah'-o) which means to keep silent: - keep close (secret, silence), hold peace. The Greek word used for silence in 1 Tim 1:11-12 is (G2271) *hēsuchia* (pronounced hay-soo-khee'-ah) and means stillness, quietness, silence. Paul is saying that she is to hold her peace and not take a position (usurp) of authority over the man in public worship, She is to worship in quietness which excludes her

from leading prayers, preaching, etc when men are present. God has given men the role of leading within the public worship.

Now to the point of how a prayer should be done in public. Let me say that what I'm about to say on this matter is largely my opinion as scripture is silent on the matter. However, scripture does say, *1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.* Then down in verse 40 it says to *Let all things be done decently and in order.* So this matter of public prayer needs to be done in an orderly, non-chaotic way.

I want to give two tips for those who lead prayer. (1) When you pray, pray with reverence and respect to God and keep in mind that you are trying to pray for the church and not just for yourself. (2) Speak loudly and clearly so that everyone can hear you so they can be a part of the prayer.

Now to rest of us who are being silent, we need to make sure that we are listening carefully and not messing around with something else. We need to think about what is being said and make that prayer our own. We can show that we agree the prayer by saying amen either silently or aloud.

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 had committed a great sin. He came before God in prayer with all sincerity. *Psalms 69:13-17 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. (14) Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. (15) Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. (16) Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. (17) And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.*

As you read this prayer, you can just hear the sincerity of David and we would do good to be very sincere when we pray. There are some today that pray like the Pharisees. *Matthew 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.* The Pharisees of Jesus time

who loved the praise of men already had their reward. Our public prayers are to be from the heart and not some memorized speech. So, we must be sincere in our prayer life.

2. Must pray with faith. As Christians we should never doubt that God will answer our prayers. *James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.* Some versions read “*nothing doubting*” and that’s the idea behind the word “*wavering*.” We need to realize that God does indeed answer our prayers. God will answer our prayers but He will do so in such a way that is best for us. He might answer a prayer yes or no or even maybe latter; one example of no.

There was a time when the apostle Paul had an affliction that was called a “thorn in the flesh.” He prayed three times for God to remove it, but the answer was no. *2 Corinthians 12:9 My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* Here Paul’s prayer was answered with a “no” because Gods Grace was sufficient. We need to learn to accept Gods answer and trust his decision as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. *Matthew 26:39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Notice Jesus prayed for the cup to pass but he left it up to Gods will and not his own. Many today try to take matters into their own hands instead of letting God’s will be our guide. So we need to pray with faith and accept Gods answer.

3. We need to pray with humility. God will not hear a prayer if someone is haughty or self-righteous because God wants us to be a humble people just as Christ was humble before the father. Peter tells us, *1 Peter 5:5b ... be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* Jesus gives a great example of this. *Luke 18:9-14 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. (13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

Here we have self-righteous Pharisee who reminded God just how good he was and how he was glad he wasn't like the tax collector. I hope that you have never done this. However the tax collector came before God and wouldn't even look up to heaven and asked God for mercy with humble heart and in sincerity. This is the example we are to follow and if we do just as the tax collector we will be justified in our prayer. So pray with Humility.

4. Pray for the right things. Sometimes people think they can pray for whatever they want and they should receive it. They completely forget about the will of God and will even pray for things that God will not allow. For instance some people may pray for vengeance on those people they don't like. They will pray that bad things happen to someone or even that they die. *It's like the time when some college students were filling water balloons up and dropping them on people from their 3rd floor of their dorm. Well one night they realized they hit a police officer and they were scared so they suggested they pray about it. Now instead of asking God to forgive them for what they did, they prayed that the officer would not catch them.* You see they were praying for the wrong reasons and sometimes, because we are being selfish, we pray for the wrong things as well.

James deal with this problem. ***James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*** So let us remember that if we have the wrong motive and we are praying for the wrong thing God will not answer our prayer. However, when pray from heart and we pray for things in accordance with his will, He will answer. John put it this way: ***1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:***

We need to remember to use prayer in our everyday life because it's how we talk to God. We use prayer in our worship and in our private lives. Our prayers should directed to father in the name of Jesus and it is the men are to lead prayer in worship. Finally we need to remember that there are 4 steps to having a better prayer life. Our prayer needs to be sincere, we must pray in faith and realize that God does answer our prayers. We need to pray with humility and we need to pray for the right things. I want conclude with, ***Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.***

Invitation. Do you need to come?