

Studies in Christianity Christian Worship #8

S#1.

Corporate Prayer

S#2.

Text : **John 17: 1-20**

A. We all pray so we have a tendency to take prayer for granted.

1. I have often heard lesson about prayer, but not about praying in the assembly.
2. In 2009 I preached a lesson on corporate prayer.
 - a. It was so unusual a denominational preacher offered to pay to use it. (*I give all free*)
 - b. Most don't think about the differences so we will consider some of them.
3. Before we complete our study of the Christian's assembled worship, I want to look briefly at the unique characteristics of a public prayer.

S#3.

B. Lord willing, we will do more lessons generally on prayer, but for this one :

1. Should we have public prayers?
2. The delivery of a public prayer.
3. The contents of a public prayer.
4. Why can't women lead prayers?

I. Are prayers in the assembly required or at least permissible?

S#4.

A. There are those who say public prayers are never acceptable.

1. They cite the teaching of Jesus :

Matt. 6: 5 – When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. **6** But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.
2. “so that” indicates that Jesus was discussing MOTIVE rather than location or content.
3. Thus, one who leads a public prayer must have the proper motive.

S#5.

B. Public prayers could not be sinful because Jesus Himself prayed in public. S#6.

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.

C. The early church had prayer together when they assembled.

1. The early church received instructions about prayer in their assembly.

I Cor. 14: 14 – For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is **S#07.** unfruitful. **15** 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? **17** For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.

- a. Must be heard and understood by others.
 - b. Those who hear and understand should say "Amen." (*verbal agreement*)
 - c. The prayer should contain blessings and the giving of thanks. "if you bless"
 - d. The prayer should edify those who hear it. "the other person is not edified."
 - e. The one leading should put some thought into it. "I will pray with the mind"
2. The first converts prayed together:

Acts 2: 42 – They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' **S#8.** teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

3. The early church gathered together for prayer when they were under threat.

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.

D. By these we see that the first century church was given to corporate prayer

II. The public prayer requires special effort in the delivery.

S#9.
S#10.

A. We have already seen that the scriptures require a public prayer to be heard.

1. A prayer is addressed to an audience, NOT to a pew or the floor. (**John 11**)
 - a. Do not bow your head when leading a prayer unless using a mic.
 - b. Bowing one's head while in the audience projects between the pews to the floor.
2. Always use a microphone if one is available.
 - a. The very best circumstance is to come to the table mic. (*go up during last verse*)
 - b. The elders have purchased two hand-held mics just for this purpose.
(*Don't be embarrassed, when you're in your pew, no one will see you using a mic.*)
- *c. Using a mic is also a matter of loving the brethren. (*several have difficulty hearing*)
3. When a mic is not available use your common sense.
 - a. Step out to face the majority of the audience.
 - b. Stand erect, hold your head up and project from your diaphragm. (*singing muscles*)

B. A public prayer must be an appropriate length.**S#11.**

1. When Jesus prayed at the tomb of Lazarus (**Jn. 11**), His prayer was brief.
2. When He prayed in the upper room (**Jn. 17**) His prayer was more lengthy.
3. There is no exact correct length for a prayer.
 - a. A prayer at the table will be shorter than most other prayers.
 - b. One prayer in an assembly is often considered the “main” prayer. It’s longer.
 - c. If a prayer is too long or hard to hear people get distracted. *Can’t say amen.*
 - * d. The length of prayers is largely cultural. (*to area and to local custom*)

C. Public prayers at functions other than in the church are more difficult.**S#12.**

1. One must consider to limitations of the host before accepting request to lead.
E.g., *I will not lead a prayer where they forbid “in Jesus name.”*
2. Prayer should be appropriate to the gathering, not to a church setting.
E.g., *Not appropriate to pray for one team to win at a game.*

III. What should be included in a public prayer ?**S#13.****A. One should not discuss personal things in a public prayer.****S#14.**

1. Generally, anything that requires the pronoun “I” is not appropriate. (*representing*)
2. Never pray for personal injuries **or** sicknesses **or** one’s own family.
3. One’s personal goals or politics should not be part of a communal prayer.

B. Public prayers should not be led by parrots.**S#15.**

1. True illustration : Elder led the same 15 minute prayer every time.
As teenagers we timed it and marked his progress.
2. True illustration : Organizing funeral, elder told me to ask a specific brother to pray “*his funeral prayer*” is appropriate for this circumstance.
3. The young learn to pray by listening to the seniors pray, but should never memorize prayers or even phrases to be used. (*Prayer is heart to heart w/ God*)
- * **You can tell a preacher who does not study because he is repeating exactly what his teachers taught him in college.**
Many do the same thing when they pray.

C. The prayer should concern the congregation as a whole.**S#16.**

1. We pray with regard to the occasion ... “*Bless this assembly, lesson, audience ..*”
2. Pray for the work of the church ... programs, missions, growth, influence, etc.
3. Pray for the sick of the congregation or those linked to it.

D. Pray for the work of God's church worldwide. (*There is ONE body.*)**S#17.**

1. Free flow of the gospel in other lands.
2. Missionaries carrying the gospel to far places.
3. Christians that are facing persecution.

E. Intercessions for our leaders.**S#18.**

1. We are to pray for our leaders whether they are good or bad.

I Tim. 2: 1 – First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, **2** for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

S#19.

2. When I Timothy was written Christians were ruled over by a Roman tyrant.
3. God raises up rulers and none reign without His approval.

Dan. 2: 21 – It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. (cf – **Rom 13: 1-7**)

S#20.

- a. God reigns sovereign. *Who are we to question why He brought Nero to power ?*
- b. God sees all time as now and everywhere at once. (*The heart of the ruler*)
- c. Job learned of the lack of wisdom in questioning God.

IV. Why are women not allowed to lead prayers in the assembly ?**S#21.****A. This is a “hot button” issue in today's culture.**

1. Women are now demanding to be permitted to do anything men can do.
 - a. In the secular realm some women can do anything a man can do so they want the same to be true in the religious world.
 - b. However, secular culture does not determine how God's church is administered.
2. The scriptures speak with the authority of God.

- a. It says God will judge all immorality.

I Cor. 6: 18 – Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

S#22.

- b. Irrespective of culture, both premarital and extra marital sex is forbidden.

Heb. 13:4 – Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

- c. All sex is between a man and the woman he marries, **thus**, all practicing homosexuals / lesbians are condemned by God.

I Cor. 6: 9 – Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, **10** nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. S#23.

- d. American culture no longer condemns sins of immorality, BUT God does.
- 3. Likewise, American cultural no longer distinguishes between male and female roles, **but** God is unchanging yesterday, today and forever. **Heb. 13: 8**

B. The submissive position of woman dates back to the curse in Genesis 3. S#24.

- 1. The Apostle makes the reason for a woman's submissive role very clear.

I Tim. 2: 11 – A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. **12** But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. **13** For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. **14** And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. S#25.

- 2. **Gen. 3: 16** – To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." **17** Then to Adam He said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. **18** Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; S#26.
- 3. We do not inherit the guilt of their sin, but we inherit the consequences.
- 4. As long as there is pain in child birth and there are weeds in the garden the curse remains in effect.

C. Women are not permitted to lead men in prayer. (*exercise authority*)

- 1. Men are to lead the prayers EVERYWHERE. S#27.

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

- b. anér = a male human being; a man, husband (*gender specific*)
(anthrópos = a man, one of the human race.)

- 2. Women are not to have speaking parts in the assembly.

- a. **I Cor. 14: 34** – 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. (*something they do, not done to them*) S#28.

- b. Culture is dominated by non-Christians. Christians are ruled by Christ.

- 3. This is NOT to indicate that women are less capable or less spiritual.

- a. During the earthly ministry of Jesus a group of women sustained Him.

- b. Even today, the church relies on the spiritually minded women.

- * 4. Christianity more than anything else has elevated women, **BUT** not to leadership.

CONCLUSION :

A. With this lesson, we have done little more than scratch the surface.

S#29.

1. We've seen that God expects prayers to be part of our assembled worship.
2. We have observed a few elements of the presentation of a public prayer.
3. We then turned our attention to the content of a public prayer.
4. Finally, we observed that some of the most spiritual members are not permitted to lead prayer, **i.e.**, women.

B. In future lessons we will look at :

1. The influence of the Psalms on prayers.
2. The contents of the typical prayer.
3. Developing your prayer life. (etc.)

C. How is your access to God ?

1. Do you talk with God daily ?
2. If you don't have a relationship, do you want one?

INVITATION :

If we can assist you in establishing or re-establishing .. come now

S#30.

Lesson Text :**John 17: 1-20**

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, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 " I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 " I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 " They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 " Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

20 I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.