

PRAYING

Private Prayer

And

Public Prayer

“Lord, teach us to pray.” (Lk. 11:1)

- ▣ In Luke the answer Jesus gave was a prayer to pray.
- ▣ “When you pray, say...” Luke 11:2
- ▣ The more familiar version of the Lord’s prayer is found in Matthew.
- ▣ In Matthew 6 Jesus is teaching about prayer.
- ▣ First do not pray like the hypocrites do.
- ▣ Do not pray like the Gentiles do
- ▣ “Pray then in this way...” Matthew 6:9

In Luke we have a prayer to pray.

In Matthew we have a way or model of prayer to pray.

The prayer Jesus gave is a good place for us to start in learning how to pray as we should.

As a model prayer, the Lord's prayer gives us an idea of the content and form to prayer.

As a prayer to pray the Lord's prayer gives what we can say.

If we have no words of our own we can pray this prayer.

Prayer that is intentionally structured in style and content like the Lord's prayer will not go wrong.

So what we say about praying will have the words of Jesus as our background and beginning place.

It of course does not tell us everything we need to know about public and private prayer.

But it does tell us the most important things.

What we learn about prayer when we look to the prayer Jesus gave us to pray:

1. How to begin a prayer.

Prayer is addressed to God

2. What first to say to God.

Praise and thanksgiving

3. What to ask God.

Petitions for the world

Petitions about personal daily needs

Petitions for forgiveness

Petitions about dangers and trials

In a general sense this is our guide for praying.

Now everything we need to know about praying is contained in the Lord's prayer. It is not a prayer that takes into consideration the personal circumstances of our individual lives.

The prayer does not have a formal ending. The prayer does not make a distinction between public prayer and private prayer. It does not speak to the posture of praying. It does not speak to the need of praying. It assumes we pray and want to pray. But of course that may not be the case.

Prayer is commanded

“Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances” 1 Thess. 5:17-18

Prayer is encouraged

“I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands...” 1 Tim. 2:8

Prayer is to be with both mind and spirit

“I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also.” 1 Cor. 14:15

Prayer is to be constant

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.” Lk. 18:1

Prayer is addressed to real needs

“Are any among you suffering? They should pray.” James 5:13

Prayer is a ministry of the church

“Are any among you sick” They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them.” James 5:14

Prayer is what we do for one another

“Pray for one another...” James 5:16

Prayer is a matter of faith

“But ask in faith, never doubting...” James 1:6

Prayer as a part of public worship

Public Prayer is different from private prayer

When we pray in worship we pray on behalf of the whole congregation.

The words and thoughts are to express the words and thoughts of the people.

Now, of course, they are our words – we say them.

But we say them with the congregation in mind.

Therefore, only plural pronouns should be used – “We” “Our” “Us” and not “I” or “me”.

Prayer in worship or public prayer assumes we are aware of a number of things.

1. The appropriateness of the prayer to what is going on. (offering, Lord's Supper, benediction, committee meeting, etc.)

2. A general understanding of the needs of the congregation.

3. The need of the people to say "Amen"

Writing a prayer to be used in worship

It is perfectly OK to write out a prayer ahead of time to pray.

It may in fact show greater devotion to do so.

Private or personal prayer.

The most important thing is to pray and pray often.

How frequent and how long in prayer is a matter for each of us to decide.

It is not a matter of obligation but of need—our need of a relationship with God.

Of course what we say and how we say it is important.

We do not come into God's presence as those who are entitled.

We come as those in need of God's blessing. Honesty and openness are required.

Prayer is always a conversation with God.
We do not have to be afraid to say to God
what is truly on our hearts.

Our fears and doubts

Our frustrations and failures

Our gratitude and thanks

Our needs and hopes

Whatever we want to talk with God about,
God invites us to share it in our prayers.
The most important thing is that we are
faithful to pray.

God values and blesses our faithfulness in prayer.

Sometimes it is as Jesus said, “We have not because we ask not.”

Prayer is a major way we seek to discern the will of God for our lives.

When we pray about what is important we are seeking to know God’s will.

It is a conversation in which we have to be open for God’s answer.

This is why prayer is such an important part of our Triad meetings.

The Triads are approaching this in different ways.

Some use a “sentence prayer”.

Others may use one person leading in prayer

But what we are searching for together is the will of God for our lives and our Church.

We want God to work through the process so that God’s will will be done in our lives and in our Church.

This leads us to the final thing to say about prayer.

It is always about God's will and purpose.

As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, so we pray.

“Not my will, but your will be done.”