

prayers” (Matt. 23:14). The word “pretence” pictures a “coat” that covers-up. Some like to cover up their wrong through rapping themselves in a pretence of prayer.

Beware of “prolonged praying.” The “Lord’s Prayer” is remarkable for its brevity containing only 66 words. Jesus points out that the hypocrites for a pretence made “long prayers” (Matt. 23:14).

“Most people would probably agree that prayer is not usually the most exciting part of a worship service” (Reimers, *The Glory Due His Name*, p. 27). “Worship and prayer are inseparable” (MacArthur, *Worship*, p. 181). Phonies can frustrate the prayers of the faithful but they should never eliminate them! “No argument is needed to indicate that corporate prayer is a legitimate part of public worship” (Frame, *Worship in Spirit and in Truth*, p. 57).

MOTIVATIONS FOR CORPORATE PRAYER

Jesus promised that special power is available when His servants join together to pray. Matthew 18:19-20 says, “I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” There is much here to motivate us to pray.

Jesus guarantees the value of collective prayer. “Any thing that they ask, it shall be done!” When a husband prays with his wife, two friends join their hearts, or a congregation of thousands prays as led by their leader, Jesus promises that it will “be done.”

There are, however, conditions offered in Matthew 18:19-20. This is not a passage promising that corporate prayer will give the congregation “anything it wants.” There are at least two conditions to remember as we gather to pray:

The first condition: Those who gather to pray must “agree.” This word calls for harmony or mutual consent. Those who bow together to pray will never “agree” if they do not first pay attention.

The second condition: Those who gather to pray must gather in Jesus’ name. While this obviously rules out ecumenical prayer, it also means that corporate prayer is answered when those involved recognize the sovereignty of Jesus and submit to His will.

Before the Father’s throne,
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

John Fawcett, 1782



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PASTOR PHELPS

CORPORATE PRAYER

Worthless worship is always rejected by God (Mal. 1:6-11). Whether God is worshipped in the splendor of Shiloh’s Tabernacle or Jerusalem’s Temple He will not accept unworthy worship (Jer. 7:7-14). New Testament saints may gather in the sweet simplicity of a home to present an offering during a service led by a uniquely able minister of the gospel and still be personally punished because God judges their worship to be worthless (Acts 5:1-5). God’s work must be done God’s way in order to enjoy God’s blessings.

On the 9th of May in 1980, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones brought a message to the Scottish Evangelistic Council in celebration of the Council’s Jubilee. By his own testimony, Jones was “not a well man.” Jones, in his 81st year, would live nine more months. Mustering all of his strength, Jones asked, “Do you still believe in the wrath of God? There are people in England – evangelicals – who think modern man needs entertainment. There is a mania for singing, for drama, for mime. ‘People cannot take preaching,’ it is said. ‘Give them singing. Teach them how to dance’. . . . In the name of God I say that is to do violence to Scripture. The church is not here to entertain. It is here to call people to be wise, to be instructed, to be taught. People are dying through lack of knowledge. We are not here to be popular but to tell the naked truth: ‘Serve the Lord and rejoice with trembling’ (Ps. 2:11).

Man’s highest calling is to worship God. New Testament believers are gathered on “The Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2) in order “to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 2:5). Every part of the worship service should be purposefully considered and Scripturally directed for New Testament believers are to worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The elements of Scripturally

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directed worship include: 1.) Scripture-Saturated preaching, 2.) Soul-stirring singing, 3.) Supplication before the Throne of Grace, 4.) Sacrificial giving, and 5.) Sharing communion.

In a time in which the first priority of many contemporary worshippers is personal taste, corporate prayer, as an element of worship, deserves our careful consideration. “Supplication before the throne of grace” is an essential part of Colonial’s Core. It is part of Colonial’s DNA (Distinctively Non-negotiable Attributes) and it must not be compromised in order to appease a crowd.

DESCRIPTIONS OF CORPORATE PRAYER

During our Savior’s ministry, He referred to the Temple as “A house of prayer” (Matt. 21:13). “He taught by this term that the chief part of His worship lies in the office of prayer, and that the Temple was set up like a banner for believers so that they might, with one consent, participate in it The chief use of the tongue is in public prayers, which are offered in the assembly of believers, by which it comes about that with one common voice, as it were, with the same mouth, we all glorify God together, worshipping Him with one spirit and same faith” (Calvin’s *Institutes III*, p. 29-31).

The New Testament describes a church much involved in the practice of corporate prayer. Before the Day of Pentecost the church in prospect, “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). As the Spirit of God filled the believers and sealed the church “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). When persecution came, the church prayed together (Acts 12:5). Before major decisions were made, the church prayed together (Acts 13:2). Those needing healing were encouraged to call for others to pray with them (James 5:16). There can be no doubt that prayer is an expected part of the worship of church! “Worship and prayer are inseparable!” (John MacArthur, *Worship*, p. 181)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CORPORATE PRAYER

All who would seek to please the Lord when the congregation assembles to pray will find ample instruction from God as to how prayer is to be offered. Unlike the presentation of musical offerings which require rehearsal, prayer may be offered spontaneously to the Lord. Allowing God’s Word to answer many questions about public prayer, we discover that . . .

The clearest instruction on the matter of prayer is found in what has commonly been called, “The Lord’s Prayer.” Jesus sets an example for all who would instruct on the matter of prayer by allowing Himself to be a guide and His prayer to be a model. The prototypical prayer found in Matthew 6:9-15 and Luke 11:1-4 contains six petitions. The first three requests focus on God and His glory while the final three requests focus on man and his needs. Those who follow the “Lord’s Prayer” will be concerned that: 1.) God’s Person be respected (Matt. 6:9), 2.) God’s Program be expected (Matt. 6:10a), and 3.) God’s Purpose be accepted (Matt. 6:10b). As hearts are joined together to

pray to “our” Father, personal needs are mentioned. We are to pray together for: 4.) Provision (Matt. 6:11), 5.) Pardon (Matt. 6:12), and 6.) Protection (Matt. 6:13). With three petitions we declare our devotion to God (v. 9-10) and with three petitions we declare our dependence on God (v. 11-13). When believers are not allowed to bring their petitions in the name of Christ (John 14:13), they violate the spirit and the truth revealed in the Lord’s Prayer and do not offer acceptable worship to God! Balanced congregational prayer recognizes the greatness of God and the needs of men.

In I Corinthians 11, further instruction on the matter of prayer is offered. Women must demonstrate a spirit of meekness when participating in prayer.

I Corinthians 11:5 explains that “Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head.” The covering of the head was an outward demonstration of submission (I Cor. 11:8-9). Some will not allow women to express themselves in prayer meetings when men are in attendance citing I Corinthians 14:34, “Let your women keep silence in the churches.” The context of I Corinthians 14 speaks to the issue of “prophecy” not prayer. Submissive women with a spirit of godly meekness ought to be invited to participate in public prayer.

The Spirit of God provides specific instruction concerning corporate prayer in I Timothy 2:1-7. Here we learn that prayer takes various forms (v. 1). Civil leaders are to be mentioned specifically in prayer so that believers may live quiet and peace-filled lives (v. 2). Prayer for souls to be saved should be a priority in public prayer (v. 4). While those who pray are often listening to the voice of one man, there is only “one mediator between God and men” (v. 5). Without Jesus there can be no real prayer meeting and there will be no power!

G. Campbell Morgan wisely notes, that, “It is objected that this kind of prayer meeting would not be popular! Yet, surely it has not come to this – that any Christian should imagine popularity to be the standard of the Church of God!” (*The Practice of Prayer*, p. 116)

CAUTIONS FOR CORPORATE PRAYER

The “spirit” is often threatened when prayer meetings fail to be governed by the “truths” of the Bible (Jn. 17:17). Honest Christians often express frustration and even agitation after having participated in public prayers. God provides cautions for those who would know blessings through corporate prayer.

Beware of “prominent praying.” Some will pray in public who have no appetite for prayer in private. Jesus warns, “When thou prayest, be not as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they might be seen of men” (Matt. 6:5). High-church vocabulary and pietistic tones may be symptoms of “prominent prayer disease.”

Beware of “pretentious praying.” Hypocrites “for a pretence make long