



“I Will Pray with the Understanding”

Leading Public Prayer

- Though Jesus condemned praying in public for attention, He often prayed in public.
 - Matt. 6:5-6 - “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”
 - John 6:11 - A prayer of thanksgiving when He fed the multitude.
 - John 11:41-42 - He prayed at the resurrection of Lazarus.
 - John 17:1 - He prayed in the upper room after the Passover and His final instructions to the apostles.

Leading Public Prayer

- From the very beginning, the Lord's Church has practiced collective prayer.
 - Acts 2:42 - "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."
 - Acts 4:31 - "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken..."
 - Acts 20:36 - "And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all."

Leading Public Prayer

- Prayer has always been part of public worship.
 - 1Cor. 14:13-19 - “Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say Amen at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. 18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”
- Prayers that are led in Christian assemblies must meet Biblical standards

Jesus' Instructions For Prayer Apply To Public Prayers

- All prayer must be offered to God with great reverence
 - Matt. 6:9-10 - “In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10
Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as
it is in heaven.”

Jesus' Instructions For Prayer Apply To Public Prayers

- We're told to go to God with boldness, but boldness is not arrogance.
 - Eph. 3:11-12 - "According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him."
 - Heb. 10:19 - "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus"

Jesus' Instructions For Prayer Apply To Public Prayers

- Even Jesus approached God with reverence
 - John 17:11, 25 - “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are... 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.”

Jesus' Instructions For Prayer Apply To Public Prayers

- All prayer is an act of worship and must exalt God
 - Psalm 34:3 - “Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together.”
 - James 4:10 - “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”
 - 1Peter 5:6 - “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time”

Jesus' Instructions For Prayer Apply To Public Prayers

- All prayer, public or private, must be an expression of faith, not a ritual
 - Matt. 21:21 - “So Jesus answered and said to them, Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, it will be done.”
 - James 1:6 - “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”
 - Eph. 3:20-21 - “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Instructions Specific To Public Prayer

- The one who words the prayer leads the congregation. The prayer he leads must represent those being lead.
- The one who leads in public prayer must consider how it affects the hearers.
- Jesus considered how His words affected the hearers
 - John 11:41-42 - “Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.”

Instructions Specific To Public Prayer

- Paul commanded Christians to consider those who hear their prayers
 - 1Cor. 14:15-16 - “What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say Amen at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?”
- Prayer should not just draw men closer to God, but also to each other.

Instructions Specific To Public Prayer

- Common sense: “You are not leading if no one is following.”
- No one can follow if they cannot hear what is being said.
- Face the audience and speak loudly.
- Hold your head up when you pray in order to be heard.
Jesus often looked up when He prayed
 - John 11:41 - “...Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.”
 - John 17:1 - “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You”
 - OT prayers were often offered with lifted eyes - 2Kings 19:22

Instructions Specific To Public Prayer

- Speak clearly using words understood by all. Use Bible words and prayer phrases.
- Do not use disrespectful language, slang, theological language, or memorized phrases. Jesus prohibited repetitious language
 - Matt. 6:7 - “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.”

Instructions Specific To Public Prayer

- Those who ask others to lead prayer must recognize the importance of what they are asking of them.
- Call on them with notice so they can prepare what they will say.
- Help them to make the church a house of prayer
 - Isa 56:7 - “Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

Instructions Specific To Public Prayer

- The audience has a mandated responsibility to pray with the leader.
- The brother is leading us in prayer, not praying as a proxy for us.
- The implied expectation is that hearers say “Amen”
 - 1Cor. 14:16 - “Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say Amen at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?”

Instructions Specific To Public Prayer

- If you know in advance who will be leading the prayer, ask him to include your petitions and intercessions.
- You are to receive edification from the prayer
 - 1Cor. 14:17 - “For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified”

Public Prayer Is Always Addressed To God

- One must never lead a prayer to draw attention to himself
- Even though the audience must be considered, prayer is always directed to God - Matt. 6:5
- Do not use an approach the hearers will find distracting.
- Like a good sermon, do not make the prayer exceptionally long or short.



Public Prayer Is Always Addressed To God

- Every word in the prayer must be addressed from the speaker's heart to God.
- Prayer is not the way to communicate with anyone in the audience.
- Don't preach, admonish, or rebuke in your prayer.
- The repetitious use of memorized phrases is not prayer; it is performance.



Public Prayer Is Appropriate For The Occasion

- It will never be true that one prayer fits all occasions
- Prayers must express the heart of that group for that specific purpose
- The prayer must focus on God's role on the occasion and consider the effect it will have on the respondent and all who hear.

Public Prayer Is Appropriate For The Occasion

- Christians are often asked to lead public prayers outside the assembly.
- Jesus gave thanks for the food before feeding the 5,000; how many were Christians? - Luke 9:16
- When called on in a civic gathering, remember that you are still praying to God and leading the hearers. Pray sincerely, unashamedly, faithfully, and appropriate to the occasion

Public Prayer Is Appropriate For The Occasion

- When praying in an religious gathering outside of the Lord's Church, be faithful to the truth, but avoid being judgmental or condescending
 - Col. 4:5-6 - "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."
 - What is the need of the group? Pray for it.

“I Will Pray with the Understanding”

- When we are called on to lead a prayer, remember it is an honor, privilege, and a grave responsibility
- A public prayer is unlike anything else we do in the assembly. It is often difficult to keep one’s spirit directed toward God, pray from the heart, and consider the audience.
 - We must give our responsibility serious thought.
 - We must bring our hearts as well as those of the audience before God
 - We must prepare ourselves to do well.
 - Frequent private prayer is the best preparation for public prayer. We develop our comfort zone for prayer in the closet on our knees.



“I Will Pray with the Understanding”

- You prepare to lead other Christians in prayer by being a Christian whose life is a light for others to follow.
- “You can speak with spiritual eloquence and a holy appearance when you pray publically, but it is your behavior that will reveal your true character.” *(Steve Maraboli)*