

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/21/93 PM
I Timothy 2:8 "The Necessity of Public Prayer"

Introduction of Service: The message of the church never changes. But methods do. Tonight, we're going to try a new format for this service.

Our Aim: To implement the importance of corporate prayer in our church

Once a month on Sunday evenings, for the next 3 months, we're going to try a new format with our Sunday evening service. In a sense, we're moving our "Prayer Meeting" to Sunday evening. We'll start the service with a brief devotional from God's Word on the subject of prayer. After that, we'll sing some hymns about prayer. Then we're going to pray! Here's how we'll do it.

There are 6 "prayer rooms" located in various places in the church building. For our prayer time, we'll gather as families, and meet with others in our deacon care groups. If you are a visitor, feel free to go with a friend to any group you desire.

We'll be giving more specific instruction on this later in the service.

Intro (of devotional): Prayer. Most people view prayer as a very private matter. And it certainly is that. Our Lord instructed us with the importance of the prayer closet. We need to spend much time in secret with God.

But listen. God also designed prayer to be a public matter. Granted, Jesus warned in Matthew 6 about the abuses of public prayer. He chastened those who prayer in public merely to impress other people with their piety. But He didn't forbid public prayer, merely VAIN public prayer.

As a church, we need to get a handle on the necessity of public prayer.

Last week I shared with you some powerful observations about prayer from Jim Cymbala. Jim is the pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, an inner-city church in New York City. It's a church that knows all about the importance of public, corporate prayer. Every Tuesday evening, over 1000 people come out to pray and wait on God.

Illust: Listen as Jim shares an example of the power of prayer (Leadership Journal, Fall/93, p. 74). "At the end of one church service..."

Q: What does it take to have powerful, meaningful public prayer?

Paul answers that question in I Timothy 2. Last week we looked at I Timothy 2:1-2. We learned about the importance of public prayer (v 1 "first of all"). We learned about the intent of public prayer (2-7). Then we quickly mentioned the ingredients of public prayer, in v 8. Tonight, let's briefly develop those ingredients.

Proposition: In I Timothy 2:8, Paul identifies 2 ingredients that must accompany Public Prayer.

Remember, I Timothy is like a "how to" church manual. Paul's telling Timothy how to help local churches be successful. In ch 1, we learn that successful churches are teaching churches (3). In ch 2, we learn that successful churches are praying churches.

V 8 "I will that men pray everywhere..."

The word "men" is not the typical, generic word we often find. It lit. means "males." Paul says, "Timothy, when the church gathers, it's the men who are to lead in prayer."

Paul wanted everyone to pray (1). Yet in the public assembly of the church, he specified that "males" were to lead the congregation in prayer.

What were the women to do? He answers that in the next section:

V 9 "Women adorn themselves in modest apparel."

V 11 "Let the women learn in silence."

It's not our focus tonight to debate the roles of men and women in the church. But what I want you to see is this. Men, it's our God-given responsibility to be spiritual leaders, in the home, and in the church. And when it comes to prayer, we ought to lead the way. Show men a church filled with praying men, and I'll show you a church that's on fire for God!

I thank God for the godly deacons the Lord has raised up here. We're going to seek to implement the principle of I Tim 2:8 tonight, by praying as Deacon Care groups.

There are 2 key ingredients that must accompany public prayer.

I. Proper Relationship with God

V 8 "lifting up holy hands"

Sometimes you'll hear the statement, "Posture doesn't matter when you pray. God looks at your heart." That's true, to a point.

Posture in prayer is important. It's not the only factor, but it is vital. Paul said to "lift up holy hands."

The common way for a Jew to pray was to pray standing, with hands outstretched, and palms upward. In the Bible you'll find a variety of postures described in prayer: Standing, hands spread out, bowing the head, the lifting of the eyes heavenward, kneeling, falling down on one's face.

Note: The posture we use (folding our hands and closing our eyes) really has little (if any?) biblical support.

Q: What posture should we use when we pray?

The real emphasis in v 8 is not on the posture of the body, but the posture of the what? The heart. Notice the word HOLY--"holy hands." When we pray, we need to have clean hands. A person with clean hands is a person who has a blameless life (Ps 24:4).

If we want to experience power in our prayers, we need to be right with God. We need to be holy.

Ps 66:18 "If I regard iniquity...the Lord will not hear me."

James 5:16 "The effectual, fervent prayer of a RIGHTEOUS man availeth much."

Illust:

II. Proper Relationships with Others

V 8 "without wrath and doubting"

We are to make sure that when we pray, two things are absent from our lives. We are to be "without wrath" (=anger). And "doubting" (=disputing). What's he talking about? He's talking about our relationships with one another.

Listen. If I'm in open dispute with my brother, my prayers will be short-circuited. This is serious business.

Making things right is so vital, here's what Jesus said to do, in Mt 5:23, "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar (perform an act of worship), and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go your way; first, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

Illust:

Those are the ingredients God requires of us before we pray. First, I must be right with Him. And second, I must be right with you.

Self-examination: (have people bow their heads; have time of personal prayer)
Let's take some time for self-examination. Ask yourself these 2 questions:

1. Is my relationship with God what it ought to be? Do I have any known, unconfessed sin in my life? If not, I need to confess this sin to God right now.

2. Do I have any relationships with people that are not what they ought to be? Am I bitter towards anyone? Am I angry towards anyone? Am I at odds with anyone? If so, I need to ask God for forgiveness. I also need to resolve to God right now that by His help, I'm going to make this relationship right.

Singing Time: Let's sing some hymns about prayer, to further prepare our hearts.

Instructions for Prayer Time:

There are 6 "prayer rooms" located in various places in the church building. We're going to divide into prayer groups, according to deacon care groups. If you do not remember who your deacon is, the lists are posted by the doorways. If you are a visitor, or a regular-attending non-member, feel free to go to any group you desire.

Greeters will be standing at the doors to help you find your way.

Location of Prayer Rooms (arranged according to Deacon Caring Groups):

Bill Baldwin--Auditorium (near piano)

Don Boggs--Jr. High room (downstairs in Educational wing; former office area)

Jack Branon--Sr. High room (in the basement of the new facility)

Don Cole--Gym

Dave Purrington--Upstairs room in Gym (room above Awana store)

Gary Storm--College & Career Sunday School room (next to Choir room)

General Instructions about Prayer Time:

1. You have 3 minutes to find and go to your prayer room. Each group will spend about 5 minutes sharing requests, and then 10 minutes praying.
2. No one has to pray out-loud who does not want to pray. We don't want to embarrass anyone.
3. The deacon will act as the leader of the group. He will ask for prayer requests. Then he, along with 3 or 4 others, will lead the group in prayer.
4. When your group is finished, you may stay for a time of fellowship, or you may leave. We will NOT reassemble in the auditorium after the prayer groups are over.

Specific Instructions for Deacons:

1. Please set up your "prayer room" before the evening service. Make sure you have plenty of chairs (20-25).
2. Arrange the chairs in a way that makes it easy for people to share requests (such as in a circle, or semi-circle). Arranging the chairs in a series of "rows" doesn't work well for a prayer group because it's hard to share requests when people are looking at the back of someone else's head.
3. Try to keep things "moving." Allow about 5 minutes for sharing requests, and then about 10 minutes for actual prayer time.
4. Ask 2 or 3 others to join you in leading the group in prayer. Be careful not to ask someone to pray who feels uncomfortable praying outloud in a group (you may want to find and ask the individuals ahead of time).
5. To God be the glory for how He uses this time, for His honor, and our good!