

Public Prayer

The following cautions should be borne in mind by all who lead in public prayer or worship services. These rules are not legalistic but flexible to give proper encouragement and to reduce inhibiting factors. This article is an expounded revision of Peter Masters' "Rules for Public Prayer".

We must mean our prayers, and be wholly engaged on winging our thoughts heavenward. It is a terrible situation when a believer is not himself praying. Some preachers change their personality, temperament and spiritual status during a public prayer. It is always safe to be yourself whenever you lead a public prayer. Any hypocrite can pray creating the impression of faithfulness, goodness and piousness but empty of reality.

We should not pray too hurriedly or too slow. Speak at normal pace, so that others may follow our words seriously and thoughtfully. Pray in the Spirit and pray with your mind. Genuine prayer comes from the souls that communicate with God in a clear understandable language. Concentrate in the presence of God, speak at normal pace, do not hurry but do not let the worshippers wait quite long for your next words.

There is no language barrier with God. The speaking of tongue is not for God but designed for unbelievers to understand the Word of God. Speak clearly and audible enough for others to hear. Pray loud enough to be heard by everyone in the room. Remember that you are not praying alone, but with others who must hear what you are praying. Mumbling is justified in private prayer but never in public prayer.

You are praying with others who are there to agree with their thoughts. Do not deprive them with the privilege of a group prayer by keeping to yourself your prayer.

We should not adopt strange, words or expressions that are known only to you. Be natural and use words that are familiar to others. Remember, that you are praying to God, not trying to impress others with your new vocabulary. Be naturally eloquent from your soul and pray humbly before God.

We should use our modern English. Refrain from using the 16th century language that is quite obsolete. It is not spiritual to use the language of the King James Version, and it is not carnal to use the modern language. Better use your native language.

We should not fly from one idea to another but organize your thought in reflection of biblical example. Do not stagger into roving deviation from one subject into another. Your status and level of maturity will determine your ability to organize your thought. You do not need a rehearsal or a manuscript for prayer. We should not preach, because we are calling or addressing upon God.

Prayer is not be used as a means of making points to the worshippers. Do not use prayer to indirectly give instructions or to rebuke the worshippers. The typical prayer meetings of most churches have become the pulpit of some believers who turned it into a forum, where people are free to express their opinions as they wish. We should be careful not to out pray the reasonable capacity of worshippers to follow our prayer.

Make your prayer brief and short (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Long public prayer cannot edify the church. Do not use prayer to rebuke or to reprimand others. If you have something to say to someone, say it before you pray and never use the public prayer for that.

We should not make announcement to God, informing or reminding Him of various things, under the guise of telling the people what we intend to pray about. If something is entirely unknown to the people, the need should be mentioned before the prayer. Pray for the essence of the matter without the details. God knows everything and there is nothing that He needs to know. You are there to lead others in a group prayer not a secretary of God to remind Him.

In most occasions, it is good to refrain from using people's names during the public prayer. Avoid exalting the names of people because only the name of Christ counts in public prayer. Do not personalize especially anything that can become the subject of gossip and rumor. When leading public prayer, we should focus on big things and not on little things.

Do not be too specific unless the situation is quite serious. In most cases, prayer for the sick must be generalized. A child's bruise should not be literally and specifically mentioned but included generally under the sickness of children.

Apart from the Scriptures, we should avoid quotations from Christian authors or books. Always pray in your own words and never borrow words, phrases or lines from others without truly understanding its meaning. Be yourself in your prayer using your own words.

The cults are fond of mentioning their favorite authors, writers, founders and leaders even in public prayer. Their prayer sounds like a glossary of sacred quotations exalting people rather than God. We should take care that the prayer does not become a systematic theology outline. Avoid extolling too many of the attributes of God at one time. Some are like the Pharisees who used more than ten adjectives every time they mentioned the name of God.

Some theologically learned preachers are arrogantly displaying publicly their knowledge of God through their prayer. Some goes further by using Hebrew or Greek names of God. We must not lose our balance, veering to offering praise, or mainly repentance, or mainly petition. Some failed basically in the area of prayer.

We must not be gloomy returning constantly to our sins and unworthiness and dwelling on the suffering of Christ as if there had been no resurrection. These things have special place in prayer, but so do the blessings purchased by Christ. We should pray as those who have received the free gift of salvation and the fabulous blessings that goes with it.

We should not publicly confess our sins before the congregation. Some worship leader confessed their sins publicly destroying the preparation of the hearts for worship. Be sure to rebound before you lead the prayer, to avoid the devil from pointing to your guilt during the prayer. In the church prayer meeting, praying for the same people (for their salvation or spiritual growth) on several occasions is legitimate. Some emotional believers are easily carried away by the devil's accusation and they suddenly burst into public confession of their own sins.

We must avoid the constant mention of divine pronoun or the name of the Lord. Through nervousness, some people when engaged in public prayer begin every phrase with, "Oh Lord!" and many similar expressions. Sometimes a divine name or pronoun occur every two or three words, making it very hard for others to concentrate.

We should avoid the use of nonsense terms and phrases like, as a matter of fact, but instead be brief and go directly to the important point of your petition or request. Do not use inappropriate terms for pleading. We should also try to avoid the clutches of habits which militate against the true feeling such as beginning every petition with such words as, "we do pray" usually with the stress on do.

We should also steer clear of a sing-song voice. The best antidote to this is real earnestness. Do not use an artificial voice and there is no need to modulate your voice like a radio announcer. Some seminaries and Bible schools are teaching their student to develop what they called "pastoral voice". We should not allow the newspapers write our agenda for prayer, especially the political section.

We pray for the salvation of unbelievers including our politicians not for God to bless, guide, protect and give them wisdom. God is not free to bless the unbeliever. We pray for spiritual growth and advancement of the believers toward maturity not for their financial prosperity or success in the world. We should take care not to be repetitive. This may be legitimate in private prayer but not in public prayer.

Reasons Why Prayer is Not Answered:

- Unconfessed personal sins (Eph. 4:19)
- Without the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18)
- Controlled by the old sinful nature (Eph. 4:27)
- Committing habitual sins (Ps. 51:4)
- Praying without faith-rest function (Mat. 21:22)
- Lack domestic tranquility (1 Pet. 3:7)
- Without grace orientation (Prov. 21:13)
- Disobeying the will of God (1 John 3:22)
- Living with lust type selfishness (James 4:2-4)

General Requirements for Genuine Prayer:

- Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone
- Spirituality filling of the Holy Spirit access by rebound
- Scripture - Bible doctrine resident in the soul

The Basis of God for Answering Our Prayer:

- The resident imputed righteousness of God in every Church Age believer.
- The imputed eternal life of God in the believer.
- The grace provision of God to believers for continuous fellowship through the filling of the Holy Spirit access by rebound. Our non-meritorious faith is not the basis of God for answering our prayer.

[Rebound](#) is the grace provision and function for believers to be restored to fellowship with God after sinning. This is accomplish by simply naming, citing or acknowledging one's known sins to God the Father. The filling of the Holy Spirit is the absolute status of being in fellowship with God providing the believer the opportunity to use the divine power to execute the Christian life.

Public prayer has obviously become the showroom of ignorance of the Word of God, self-righteous arrogance and foolishness. Most prayer aired on TV is from souls without Bible doctrine overflowing with pride making the impression that they have special connection to God and that their pleading cannot be ignored. [Miserable people](#) considered the prayer of those "men and women of God" as panacea or magical potion to cure all problems of life.



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