

Leading Prayers in Church: Some Practical Instructions

The corporate nature and edifying function of church (see *Church: Biblical Theory & Practice*) necessitates that leading prayers in church involves a very different dynamic to private or small group prayers.

In general...

- Church prayers must, therefore, be edifying for others. They must, therefore, be intelligible and orderly. Whereas private prayers may be unclear and rambling and still helpful, public prayer needs to be clear and ordered to helpfully take others along.
- They must also be appropriate to the public setting. Some personal matters and/or details are not appropriate or are unnecessary for public dissemination.
- The focus should be on common or corporate concerns and responsibilities more than personal or private concerns.
- They should also reflect and express a full breadth of common concerns and responsibilities: 1. world rulers, peoples and missions, 2. local community and churches, 3. own church community and 4. more personal and individual.
- Following the gospel pattern of God's initiative and human response, prayers should generally follow the Word and reflect matters raised in the teaching.
- Recognising the above, church prayer is still prayer, the privilege of humble access to the heavenly Father, not some professional performance.

More specifically...

- Prepare thoroughly. At a minimum plan points and sub-pts in some detail.
- Be clear. Structure prayers, perhaps with breaks for sub-headings and/or introductions and/or opportunities for people to verbally join in, e.g. 'Amen'.
- Use the roster of prayer points so that over time the full breadth of concerns and responsibilities are covered.
- Include specific matters raised in the Bible reading and teaching.
- Remember that you're praying, speaking to God and taking people with you, not speaking to people. Pray, don't just read, prayers.

- Also with this, pray, don't make announcements or seek to provide information. People don't need to know lots of details to join in a prayer.
- Don't include some and exclude others from the newsheet prayer list. Generally deal with these as a group, not individual by individual.
- Use 'we' not 'I'.
- Beware pushing some personal or private agenda.
- Be conscious of time pressures, such as people's attention spans, time needed for other activities and children returning. Be succinct.
- Be intelligible. Avoid jargon.