

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Lead Us In Prayer

By Ken Weliever

Today, all around the world, Christians will collectively meet to worship God. I wonder how many public prayers will be offered today?

I don't know the answer. But it's not hard to conceive it will be tens of thousands.

A disciple once asked Jesus, *“Teach us to pray.”* In that spirit, we offer ten suggestions and guidelines to help us more effectively lead other worshipers in prayer.

#1 Pray to God, not the audience.

Prayer is a petition from man to God; not a sermon to be preached, or an occasion to rebuke others, or proclaim some pet peeve.

#2 Speak so you can be heard by everyone.

In a large auditorium that probably means using the microphone. If in a smaller building, position yourself to be heard. Speak up. How can we be led in prayer, if we can't hear the prayer?

#3 Make your prayer relevant to the occasion.

Giving thanks at the communion service is different than an opening prayer. Or praying for someone who's confessed sin. Or a supplication during a church problem, or national crisis.

#4 Use the first person plural in your prayers.

This is not a personal, private prayer, but a public one. Include the congregation using “we,” “us”, and “our.” Jesus' model prayer taught us to say, *“Our Father...give us...forgive us...lead us.”*

#5 Avoid long, rambling prayers.

Jesus affirms that God does not hear us because of our “many words.” Shun “vain repetitions,” hackneyed phrases, and worn-out cliches. Be concise. Remember, brief is usually better.

#6 If possible, think about your prayer in advance.

Obviously, sometimes we're asked to lead on “the spur of the moment.” But, if you're scheduled ahead of time, consider what you want to pray about. We expect the preacher and song leader to be prepared, why not the prayer leader?

#7 Honor announced prayer requests.

Often announcements are made at the beginning of service about those who've experienced a death in the family, or who are sick, shut-in, or asked for prayer. Take note of those requests, and specifically pray for those individuals.

#8 Consider the proper elements of prayer.

Again depending on the occasion, observe the scriptural components of prayer. Praise. Thanksgiving. Intercession. Confession. Requests. And supplication.

#9 Be sure your prayer is scripturally accurate.

Address God. Pray in Jesus' name. Ask in faith. Have a forgiving heart. Be sincere, humble, and fervent. Al-

ways pray with the spirit that God's will be done.

#10 Dismiss us.

Generally speaking, a closing prayer ought to be brief. Considering people's attention span, the length of the service, and parents wrestling with little children, there's no need to repeat everything in previous prayers. Appropriately dismiss us with God's blessing.

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (Jas. 5:16). ■

Stay Focused On The Important Work Of The Church

By Greg Gwin

More than 70 years ago B. C. Goodpasture wrote this:

"For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church. The church, like Nehemiah, has a great work to do; and it should not come down on the plains of Ono to amuse and entertain. As the church turns its attention to amusement and recreation, it will be shorn of its power as Samson was when his hair was cut. Only as the church becomes worldly; as it pillows its head on the lap of Delilah; will it want to turn from its wanted course to relatively unimportant matters. Imagine Paul selecting and training a group of brethren to compete in the Isthmian games! Of his work at Corinth, he said: *"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* – (*Gospel Advocate*, May 20, 1948).

It is obvious that the things that Goodpasture warned about have come to pass. We see churches of Christ fully engaged in all manner of 'fun and games.' The principle work of the church is to spread the gospel (1 Tim. 3:15). Let us never attempt to divert the church from this work – the most important work in all the world. ■

JESUS, NOT RELIGION?

By Terry Wane Benton

People have thrown out the baby with the bathwater on this. They have been misled to think that *"religion"* is bad. No! "impure religion" is bad, *"pure religion"* (Jas. 1:27) is what God demands and expects of you. Claiming Jesus without religion is a false dichotomy. If you have Jesus AT ALL it will be your religion. You cannot escape religion. Your religion will simply be either pure or impure. The Bible does not make such a distinction. That was invented in recent years. Biblically, you practice religion purely or impurely, but there is no such thing as loving Jesus without practicing religion. Religion is showing respect for a divine being. How can you claim to know and love Jesus without showing respect to Him as the Divine being? Loving Jesus IS religion. You either love Him with a pure heart, or with an impure, tainted mixture of false ideas and motives, but either way that is the nature of your religion. A red flag should come up in your mind when someone claims to love Jesus but not His religion. Jesus practiced *pure* religion. You cannot accept Him without His religion. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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