**A NEW FOCUS on PRAYER**

***PRAYER: DO WE NEED A NEW FOCUS?*** *PUBLICLY - PRIVATELY?*

Notes on lecture use:

*Attached below is a questionnaire for participants.*

*Distribute questionnaire – have participants fill it out.*

*Following that match two or more participants to share their answers and pray together.*

*Close by writing a consensus of their responses on a white board.*

*Then elicit public prayers for the whole group.*

**THE INTRODUCTION**

Our strength is our weakness.

For America as a nation it is the great gift of entrepreneurialism.

It was the gift that brought our forefathers here.

Under God it is a holy endeavor to be the best one can be.

Without God this gift has turned into Self centeredness causing:

 divorce, employment problems, short term pastoral tenures, and a prayer focus centered around me. - (overhead) me + God

**THE CHURCH’ PUBLIC PRAYER IMAGE**

It doesn't seem to fit in with modern worship.

It is something were are ashamed of.

It is a requirement, so we ad a short prayer here and there,

or at least a tradition so we try to fleetingly fit in - somewhere at least.

After all, can you imagine a service without it?

It has come to me that in modern worship services the sermon has become the

central part. The sermon has replaced God. In some churches it is the music that we come for, - to clap after each special number.

It is my concern that many believers seem to habitually attend for two things: The music and the sermon.

For all practical purposes God seems to play no role in the worship service.

It is an activity that we do on his behalf; rather than just coming to adore Jesus, to fall in love with Jesus all over again each Sunday.

I believe a worship service that we offer on behalf of God is a great disservice to the community. People all over are longing for God, they come seeking for God, they want to worship him, they want to pray, but don't know how, they count on your public prayers to draw them into the bosom of Jesus.

**WORSHIP SERVICE PUBLIC PRAYER SHOULD WE CHANGE IT?**

Is there value in an official formal Invocation or benediction?

Should we ad it?

What would it do?

How should we do it?

What is the doctrinal significance of the invocation and benediction for the pastor and the calling upon his life by which he as a specially set aside spiritual empowered person who can - has - must - exercise special spiritual power, anointing, and blessing to those entrusted to him?

I believe the significance is awesome.

One church we know provides a family with the weekly prayer needs ahead of time,

including, government, missions, etc. and then the whole family comes to the

platform to lead the congregation in prayer during worship.

I am personally convinced more church leaders should weekly and actively

participate in public prayer during the services.

Some of the public prayers have begun to sound pathetically routine, mundane, and private to me. Where is the true man of God leading the masses to express their heartfelt desire, and vocally expressing for them their adoration and worship of the holy, beautiful God majestically upon his throne.

Written prayers could transform our public worship. Yes written prayers!

We trust the Holy Spirit for SS lessons. We believe the Holy Spirit guides writers of Christian books. We demand Pastor George prepares his sermon ahead of time. Is there any reason the Holy Spirit can not inspire an elder to formulate a beautiful, dramatic public prayer that expresses the needs of the congregation? That would lead them to adore their creator.

I question! Is it really God honoring to stand on this platform and mumble around about praise, blessing, and needs, when in reality there is hardly a hair on head that is focused on it? Ask the brother right after the service if he can remember what he prayed for. You tape your services - let small group of spiritual people analyze the prayers from last month.

Is there room for kneeling or other expressions in prayer rather than playing with your car keys? Could it be helpful to bring back into our services some of these historic elements of worship. I belief so! And I believe that they would attract sinners.

Possibly the elders could walk up and down the isles a few minutes and pray for each pew, or pray for requests while the choir sings softly, or there is background music or the offering is taken up.

Possibly the song service could be totally overhauled. Giving an invitation to praise God at the altar while a song of praise is song; to come and pray for mercy while a penitent chorus is sung by the choir; to stand up and have more one sentence spontaneous prayers with background music.

To use responsive prayer through use of an overhead.

**AS CHURCH LEADERS: WHAT'S YOUR PRAYER JOB?**

Do you have one? Could you name it?

How much time/effort does it require of you?

The elders - church leaders - Spiritual life committee - What is their role?

Is it to manage?

Is it to count money?

Is it to say yes to the pastor?

Does it include prayer?

How much prayer is required as part of this job description?

Does each church leader have a specific prayer task for a certain aspect of church life? The office + staff? The Pastor? The leadership? The S.S. ? Awana?

Home Bible Studies? etc. Are their roles publicly known? Do they visit these departments for which they are responsible? Are they in regular contact with the workers there? Do they phone other leaders regularly and ask for prayer assistance?

What about dividing your city of by sections and assigning one section to each church leader for prayer?

What about each leader at least once a week coming to this building at his own

leisure and walking around praying for various aspects?

What about setting some standards in terms of time and prayer effort for elders and overseers and other leaders?

**TAKING PRAYER INTO THE COMMUNITY**

Who and how as a church leader has a regular assignment of prayer for:

The local government, major, councilmen, others by name,

The state leadership by name. The courts, judges, etc.

The 3 branches of federal government, by name: The president – The Duma / High Council – Supreme Court.

The public ministries, armed services, police.

You as a body in this very building are the visible and physical local body of Jesus Christ, and as such his representative.

Are you informing these government officials of your prayers? Do they even know there is such a thing as a Baptist church in the city? As you rotate: let's say each quarter or so. You could send a beautiful card to an alderman saying : " On behalf of our church I want to share my love and concern for you and your dear wife “*Nancy*”. As one of the leaders of our church I have been praying for you, your family, and your ministry to our community.

I thank you for your commitment and service. ---- possibly add a good point or a concern with which you disagree. Then add a Bible verse or include a tract.

A note to come and get acquainted with the pastor and leaders of the church.

**MOBILIZING THE MEMBERS.**

You want to be a member here at our church? Here is your prayer assignment!

Some churches are sending their members out street by street and praying for each home or person they meet as they walk along the street.

Excellent Idea!!!!

And guess what? The universe is full of even much better ideas.

Perhaps a SS class on prayer.

Special prayer groups.

Home Prayer groups.

Prayer chains.

Daily early morning prayer times at the church at 5:30.

Only heaven knows what the SPIRITUAL LIFE COMMITTEE could do if a vision in this

area was developed.

**YOUR PRIVATE PRAYER LIFE**

Together; you and your family:

Do you as husband and wife spend some time in prayer each morning before you

go your separate ways? Is God important enough to you to do that?

Are you willing to organize yourselves the evening before so you actually can have that prayer time together in the morning?

Are you willing to make adjustments in your early morning hectic times so there will be time for a quiet kneeling together for just the 3 of you? You, your spouse and Jesus.

You; all alone, by yourself:

Are you maybe afraid of yourself? Are you afraid of the silence of the Holy Spirit?

Are you embarrassed to just be with Jesus?

Would it be awkward to have some prolonged time for prayer and meditation?

What would you do with it?

What should it include?

Does it mean you will talk all the time?

Does it include listening? How? - to your conscience - through the Bible?

Take a Psalm and try praying after each verse -

Here are some Ps. 19, 23, 37, 51, 92, 93, 94, 100, 101, 103, 139, and others.

Take 10 verses from the book of Proverbs and pray through each one of them.

Maybe you will include humming a song - having background music?

How much time can you allot for such a regular activity? 30 minutes a week?

Fifteen minutes daily? An hour or more weekly? Do you need to schedule it in?

King David did not have the time for it so he started doing it in the middle of the night. One of the most special delights God has given me is the desire and possibility to imitate king David. I started by setting the alarm for 1:30 AM to spend some time in meditation and prayer. Now it has become a delight to do so several times weekly. I praise the Lord for it. These times have become the basis for my life. Let us practice meditation and prayer on just one subject:

**THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Law makers

Court rulings

Politics

School Boards

Principals

Staff

Teachers

Students

Parents

Trouble makers

Buildings

Busses

Drivers

Programs

Curriculum

Sports

Books

Writers

Extra curriculum activities

Morals - sex

False agendas

Manipulation

Quality

Truth

Prayer

Values

Bible studies

Relationships

Godliness

Suddenly at the end of such a list I feel overwhelmed, I feel insignificant.

I call upon God, I cry for mercy.

All I can do is trust Him, believe Him. He is almighty. He holds the answer.

Only God the Father Almighty through the mercy Of Jesus Christ Our Lord can by the working of the Holy Spirit do what must be done.

I sink back in awe and worship and praise and meditation.

Yet at the same time I believe that simple fervent prayer from this group of church leaders can prevent any other school shootings.

You my dear friends can redeem the land.

**PRAYER: DO WE NEED A NEW FOCUS?**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

In a very general way; how would you express your experience with public prayer?

Please use a larger frame of reference rather than just your local church.

Include attending during vacation time and other visits to churches,

Please circle one of the two options for each question.

1. How often have you been impressed by their public form of inspiring prayer?

 FREQUENTLY / SELDOM

2. When was the last time you were awe struck by the role public prayer played in a "worship" service? THIS MONTH / LAST QUARTER / LAST YEAR / CAN'T REMEMBER.

3. Are you frequently feeling yourself swepped up into the audible prayer of the leader and feeling yourself as it were involuntarily joining and participating emotionally as your deepest feelings poor from your heart with a "yes Lord, yes Lord"? USUALLY / RARELY

4. In public prayer do you regularly find yourself in ecstasy before the majestic throne of Him who is holy, holy, holy, the Lord God almighty - who is worthy to receive glory and honor and power and you sense I am one of a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, and you just wish the amen would never come and you could stay there for ever and ever?

 QUITE OFTEN / NOT USUALLY

5. Are you often looking forward to attending church in order to worship through prayer? YES / NO

6. Is prayer one of the highlights of the worship service that you look forward to? YES / NO