

What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also;

1Corinthians 14:15

Store In My Heart

Matthew 18:35

So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

This statement follows the story of the unforgiving servant. His unwillingness to forgive a fellow servant cost him the freedom he had just been given. His master reinstated his debt and expected him to pay all.

God will not forgive those who will not forgive others. He desires for us to have a forgiving heart. Since He has removed our debt of sin, He wants us to extend the same attitude toward those who might offend us. Forgiveness is based on repentance, but God provided the way to your freedom before you repented.

Do I have a similar attitude toward my fellow man? How I treat those who seek forgiveness will have a bearing upon my own.

Prayer

Dan Henderson

"Good Lord, Bless us in thy care and keeping"

I remember this phrase from my Grandfather's prayers when I was young. I hear his voice when I think about it even today. My Dad's Dad was a large man but carried himself with a gentleness that kept him from being scary to me as a young child. He put his trust in the Lord and it shows in this remembered phrase. I do not know if he used it often or if I just have a memory of the single time he spoke it. I do think it is a good phrase to start an article about prayer.

This is not about the need for prayer. We know prayer should be a constant in our life. The Christian that does not speak to God on a regular basis will not remain a Christian long. The things and individuals that matter most to us are the ones we want near most often. Regular prayer is a necessity for a child of God.

There are many things that need consideration when we pray. In the how and what of prayer we have guidelines and examples that help us offer prayers that are pleasing to God and that give us comfort and peace because we know He will hear. But I am not writing about the mechanics of prayer.

I want to talk about the content of our prayer. What do I say and when is it best said are things we need to consider. There are many topics that we need to cover when we pray to God, but not every topic is needed in every situation in which I may pray. We need to pray for peace in our society and safety for those who are fighting in wars and battles. We need to be thankful for our provisions and blessings. We should pray for understanding, wisdom and the ability to apply what we have learned. Prayer should be offered for those who are sick or infirmed as well as those in sorrow. Prayer for safety as we or others move about our nation or world for work or pleasure is also needed. Christians should especially pray for those who serve our Lord in areas of persecution and hardship. Yet, trying to emphasize each of these areas each time we pray might lead to simple repetition rather than heartfelt expressions to our Father.

If I am to lead prayer for the beginning of a Bible Class or Home Bible Study there are a few things that should be my focus for that situation. This is not to say we cannot include other things in this prayer, but since our prayer is for a study should it not be focused on things that directly relate to study? In a prayer for a class we should seek God's help with understanding and insight. We should ask for help with attention and focus on the study. We should also seek His assistance in making application of what we learn as we study. If it is in someone's home we might want to include thankfulness for the hospitality offered as well as the time and effort required of those involved. We might even include thanksgiving for the fellowship enjoyed in such settings.

When I consider leading a prayer for a meal there are several things that come to mind. First, is this just a common meal with immediate family or a meal among a large group of friends? Is it for a special occasion or event? Is it in a home, a restaurant, or some public venue? Is it among those who are brethren or a gathering among secular friends? Each of these situations will have different



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For Our Information

Joyce Venable is still coughing.

John Jackson has knee surgery Feb. 5.

The LaValla family is still in isolation.

Gloria Hurst is working.

The Simpson and Ragsdale families are out of town.

Ricky Ragsdale is still in the hospital with infections with more testing ahead.

We begin in Judges 20:29 tonight.

Wednesday we will be in 2Corinthians 3.

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

things that might be appropriate or not for such a prayer. There are, however, some things that would be common to all of these. Certainly a prayer for a meal should include thankfulness for the provisions that are before us. We also would want to ask for nourishment to our physical being. In their particular settings prayer for family, friends, or brethren gathered would also be appropriate. Some groups are more amenable to longer prayers. Some situations call for a more "bare bones" approach.

Returning to prayers associated with our service and devotion to God consider a few things that might need to be a focus for particular prayers in our worship. As before, anything appropriate for public prayer might be included in each of these, but since some prayers are for a particular purpose it is good to keep that in mind. A topic that is fine for an opening prayer might not help keep our minds set on the Lord's Supper.

Many congregations have a prayer associated with contribution. Such prayers certainly need to include thankfulness. But maybe general thankfulness is not all we need to consider. Thankfulness for our ability to provide so that we can freely give. God's help with our desire to give would also be something to consider. A request for God's guidance in how we use His blessings should always be a welcome idea.

Prayers offered during the Lord's Supper should consider the example of our Lord at its institution. They need to help us keep our mind on His death that provided our salvation. Including a request for help in setting our minds and that we might be worthy in our participation is also a good practice.

I am not sure why, but often brethren are more willing to lead a closing prayer than a prayer that begins our worship period. Maybe it is just the general nature of the examples we have from our past. Most closing prayers are shorter and focused more on separating and therefore maybe they seem easier. Yet this prayer is quite literally the "last word" in our assembly in most situations. When we consider what might be included in a prayer for this situation there are any number of topics that might be appropriate. A few things should be at the top of the list in my opinion. One is to ask God's assistance in seeing increase in our spiritual life because of this assembly. That might include help in application, boldness in action and speech, and greater focus on Him as we go back into the world. We should also include a desire for safety and for more opportunities to take part in similar assemblies among the saints.

I saved the opening or first prayer for last. Tradition seems to have made it the prayer that includes everything that needs to be said to God. There is certainly a need to pray for many different topics when we assemble before God. Since many congregations generally only have the two prayers in the assembly, it makes sense that we include a lot of things in at least one of them. Yet sometimes, in our desire to cover all the things that need prayer in our lives we forget to consider the assembly in these opening prayers. A prayer at the beginning of an assembly should include thankfulness for the convenience, safety, and even comfort we enjoy in our gatherings. Some do not enjoy any of these three things as they assemble yet they are still thankful for the opportunity. Since we are gathered for worship our prayer should include a plea to God to help our attention and focus so that we can be involved with our heart and mind. We should also be mindful of the fellowship with those gathered and with God. Maybe we should include something about thankfulness and taking advantage of that opportunity. Certainly we want to remember those who are hurting from sickness or sorrow. We might include concern for those in difficult situations also. Public prayer is also an appropriate opportunity to pray for our leaders, whether spiritual or physical, local or distant.

Prayer is important to the Christian. We should give some consideration to how we pray and when we pray. When we consider what is involved in public prayer there are a couple more things to consider. Am I prepared to pray appropriately for any occasion where I might be called upon? Do I give sufficient time for those who are leading prayer to be prepared? Maybe more time is why many prefer the closing prayer.



We seek only to serve God according to His Will!