

Corporate Prayer

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[0 : 00] The mark of a healthy church is corporate prayer.

And without looking at a calendar, next Sunday night is the Christmas Cantata.! So make sure that you are here for that.! So we will not meet you.

We will not meet in here for this study, but we will meet in here as we enjoy our choir and Dan leading them in the Christmas Cantata.

So I encourage you to be here for that and to invite your friends and family to come and be a part of that as well. Corporate prayer.

This is one of the things that obviously Scripture commands us to do, which is to pray.

[1 : 04] And to pray together that oftentimes, unfortunately, is something that we neglect too often. And so we'll see tonight why that is something that we should not do and why it is such a mark of a healthy church that they do pray and that they do pray together.

I'm going to read the introduction and the Scripture, and then we'll watch the video. Prayer is central to the Christian life, so it is no surprise that it is also central in a healthy church. In this lesson, Dr. Dever illustrates the prayer life of a healthy church while emphasizing the content, context, purpose, and power of prayer.

Romans 12.12 Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer. All right, let's watch the video together. Okay, study questions.

Number one, prayer meetings should be at the same time at all churches. The answer is B, false.

Question two, Christians are to say B, amen, which means this is true.

Question three, Dr. Dever mentioned extended sessions of prayer that lasted hours at a time during the C, Westminster Assembly. Four, public prayers that are prepared beforehand are typically insincere, and the answer is B, false.

[2 : 36] Five, we publicly acknowledge the righteousness of God's disputes with us during prayers of B, confession. Six, the prayer of the disciples in Acts 4 demonstrates the priority of A, praise, even when the purpose of our prayer is to bring a request before God.

So it's 1B, 2B, 3C, 4B, 5B, and 6A. Now our discussion questions and their microphones appear.

Question number one, Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5.17.

How does a Christian's liberty in prayer make this possible? Thank you, Mike. I think we can get around with one okay. We'll see. Okay, question one.

Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing. How does a Christian's liberty in prayer make this possible? Paul?

[3 : 50] I think sometimes the pray without ceasing, sometimes we picture we have to be in a certain place or by ourselves or in some sort of room or some sort of group or that type of thing in order to pray.

And the pray without ceasing I've always thought of as always being aware that God is there with me everywhere I go.

And if something comes up, I can say a quick, Father, help me through this situation or help me respond to this person correctly. That quick realization that God is there and that he's my helper and the Spirit prays with me, is that praying without ceasing?

I believe. Yeah, good. And part of the liberty that we have is that we don't have to make an appointment with God in order to express our prayers towards him.

He's always available and always accessible. Doylene? Just a sort of tailgate on the back of him, but it's nice and it's wonderful that all of a sudden your brain can just go to prayer automatically.

[5 : 07] Every time I hear a siren in town, if I'm driving to work or driving anywhere and I see a siren here, I start praying for the responders and I start praying for the patient to recover.

And that only takes a few seconds, but that tells me I need to lift them up to God immediately because they're right now in that circumstance. And Walmart, you see a mother who looks a little hairy because of her kids crying and screaming.

I mean, I can just close my eyes and pray for her for patience. You know, I like the idea, like you said, we don't have to have an appointment. As soon as we see a situation that God needs to be a part of, why not voice it up to him?

Good. Yeah, so praying without ceasing doesn't mean that we're on our knees, head bowed, eyes closed in prayer for 24 hours.

It's just, you know, as Paul and Doyleen mentioned, it's just consciously being aware that God is with us and always accessible and that we can pray to him at any time for whatever reason.

[6 : 17] We have liberty to do that. I think part of also what it means to have liberty in prayer is that nobody can stop us from it. You know, you think of Richard Wurmbrand.

I know when we watched the video when he was praying for his prison guard. Remember that? And though he was on his knees and he got beaten for it in that instance, even still there's nothing that can stop a person from prayer.

And I think posture in prayer is important, but it's not essential for the prayer to be offered and to be heard. And so nobody can stop us from talking to God.

Nobody can stop us from praying. Because, you know, prayer doesn't have to be spoken. And a lot of time, those personal prayers aren't. But the most important thing is to remember that God hears them.

And that's what's most important, is that he's the one who hears them. Question two, what elements should be present in our personal and corporate prayers?

[7 : 21] Is there a particular element you would like to focus on improving in your own prayer life? So what are the things that should be a part of our prayers?

What are the important things? And what is maybe one of those things that you struggle with? If you're willing to. Admit it. Where do you want to start?

Confession, thanksgiving. You know, and I always like being able to pray for a brother or a sister that I know is struggling with something.

And that's not something that you can always do publicly, because that could be something that's in confidence. But that's the part, you know, going back to question one, we always have that freedom to be able to do that at any time.

But I think confession is a big one. You know, if we have sin in our lives that would break our fellowship with the Lord, I wonder what good is my prayer doing?

[8 : 28] I want to clean that up first. And then we'll move on from there. Good. Go ahead, Teresa.

I see that hand halfway up. We'll get you a microphone. Praising Him prepares us for the rest of the prayer, reminding us who He is, who we're talking to, and who we have a relationship with.

So, for me, starting with that, reminding myself of who He is, and what He has already done for me, and what He's promised He will do, then everything else kind of follows in step.

That's probably the one we forget the most, because we want to get to the, sometimes we're in a hurry. I know with praising with my, praying with my three-year-old, you want to get to the point that she will understand, and you don't get this first part.

But that's the important, reminding you, preparing you mentally, and your heart ready to speak with Him. Yeah, good.

[9 : 43] That prayer has a way of changing us, and we can go to God with, you know, a problem that seems big, but as we are focusing on praising Him, and as we're focusing on praising Him, we're focusing on who He is, and how big He is, and how wonderful He is, and that problem just starts to shrink as we do that.

And an important part of prayer, and an important part of prayer, that oftentimes I agree, sometimes we're quick to get to the requests that we have, and we don't spend enough time in praising Him. And then we go back to, you know, the Lord's Prayer, as a prayer that He offered His disciples as an example. I asked Him, Lord, teach us how to pray, and He went through, you know, what element should be a part of every prayer.

And that wasn't a, this is the only way to pray, because we see other instances where Jesus prays, and He doesn't follow that word for word, but it's the format of the prayer.

And so, obviously, following in our Lord's example of praying, and to begin in an attitude of praise, I think one of the things that I'm sure that we all struggle with at time to time is praying for other people.

[11:03] And also, some people struggle with praying for themselves. Some people are so focused on others that they forget to pray for themselves. And then other times, people are so focused on themselves that they forget to pray for others.

Anybody else want to answer that question? What element should be present in our personal and corporate prayers? Is there a particular element that you would like to focus on improving in your own prayer life? Confession?

Confession? Confession? Confession? Confession? One, you can't be specific in your confession, and usually you haven't written it down as a day of the long.

You know, you only can remember that big one that embarrassed you or something like that. And that's all you can remember.

And you know that during that day, there have been many things that you needed to ask for forgiveness. I guess that's why it should be continuous as soon as it comes to your mind.

[12:15] Not waiting for this big prayer time that you usually do, but that confession should be immediate as soon as he brings it to your mind during the day.

Yeah. Yeah. So, praying in the moment and not waiting, that's good. And I think, you know, sometimes we've got to, I think people can do one or the other.

They can do kind of like what Martin Luther did back when he was a monk. You know, when he talked about Monday night, if you know the story of Martin Luther, he would drive the other priests crazy because he would be confessing for hours and hours and hours.

And he'd leave the confessional booth and remember a sin that he had forgot to confess. So that's going too far because then we're forgetting about God's grace. But then I think people can go the other way around where they just kind of throw out like a blanket.

Lord, just forgive me of my sins. I think that if you're truly repentant, then there's got to be some more detail to that. I mean, if you're really seeking forgiveness, if you're truly repentant, then, you know, you get into specifics.

[13:26] And with that, a request for forgiveness, but also for help, you know, to change. And that obviously is what repentance is, you know, a desire to change, to turn.

Anybody else want to answer that question? Okay, question three. How would you convince someone that Christians, though forgiven, should confess their sins before God?

Why is confession such a blessing for Christians? So we know, right, that when you're a believer, that you've been saved of your sins, past, present, and future.

But why is it still important that that being the case, that we still confess our sins to God in prayer? Somebody asked you that.

That would be a good question that one of our, maybe one of your kids or grandkids have asked you. Maybe somebody older than that. You know, if we're forgiven from our sins, then why do we still need to pray and ask for forgiveness?

[14:38] How would you answer? I'm going to go around the Sunday school classes next week and be like, hey, I got a question I want you to ask all the people in our church.

But seriously, how would you try to respond? That's a good question. Paul? Paul? I typically try to respond to that in terms of relationship and fellowship.

And the easiest example for me to use is a child-parent relationship. My child is born into my family. He or she never ceases to be my child. But if we don't see eye to eye on something, if we disagree on something, our fellowship can be hindered. And we may not communicate well.

We may be angry with one another. And if we don't settle that, then the fellowship becomes strained.

[15:53] They never cease to be my child. But we may have trouble communicating. We may have trouble functioning healthfully as a family.

That type of thing. And I think that's the same way with God. If we don't, once we're born into his family, we're there. But boy, that unconfessed sin can affect our fellowship with him and even with other Christians as well.

Because we'll tend to draw back if we're holding on to something that unconfessed. Yeah. Good. Good answer. Doylene? I just remembered the Psalm 66, 18.

If I cherish iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened as I'm praying to him. And like you said, it does hinder your prayer life and your growth in the Lord if you keep a part of yourself away from him.

Good. Yeah. I agree. Anybody else want to answer that question? Those are good answers. And I think we know it whenever we've sinned.

[17:00] And we haven't confessed it, though we know that we're forgiven and though we know that we haven't lost our salvation, it does affect our relationship with God.

Tom? And that second part there, and I can't hear very well, so it may have already been answered adequately. But that word confession is *homogeo* in Greek meaning to say the same thing or to agree.

So it's a blessing because we're agreeing with God that our sin is what it is. We're naming that sin to him. We're naming that sin to him. And we're just marching with him whenever we're in confession.

I don't know that we're in confession. I don't know that we're any closer to him than when we're actually confessing our sins to him, either on our faces or on our knees or sitting in a chair in the darkness of a room.

But I think Paul mentioned fellowship. We're in beautiful fellowship with him when we see our sins the way he sees our sins. Good.

[18:08] Prayer has a way of changing us. Confession has a way of changing us, as mentioned. A way of strengthening that relationship by being in agreement with what God and what he says is good and what he says is evil or wrong, sinful.

Good. I have a nephew. This goes along with this. His issue is a little bit different. He is seven and did something bad.

He didn't know it was bad until somebody told him it was bad. I don't want to get into specifics. It was bad. But he didn't know until somebody told him. That was bad. You shouldn't have done that. God's mad at you. But he can't let that go. I guess it's causing him to have a lot of anxiety. My sister told me about it when we were on up there.

And even earlier this week, she texted me and asked if I'd be praying for him because he just thinks that God is really angry at him and mad at him.

[19:21] And so, you know, trying to answer his question but help him to see, well, that's why God is so amazing because he's so gracious to forgive us our sins even when we've done something really bad.

And I want to tell him, you know, I appreciate that you are so concerned that you have done something to offend God. That's a good starting place. But you've got to understand, too, that God is a loving God and a gracious God, and he forgives us.

You know, 1 John 1, 9, he forgives us of all our trespasses. He separates our sin from us as far as the east is from the west. I like what Adrian Rogers said that he separates it and he puts it at the bottom of the ocean and puts up a sign that says no fishing.

Have you heard him say that one? So sometimes, instead of confession, we're having a problem with that.

We have a problem understanding that with confession comes a feeling of God's grace, right? A reminder of God's graciousness and goodness towards us in forgiving our sin.

[20:40] Any other comments for that question? How could you convince someone that Christians, though forgiven, should confess their sins before God?

And why is it a blessing for Christians to be able to confess? All right. Question number four. What is prayer for civil magistrates in the church worldwide?

Why is prayer for civil magistrates in the church worldwide important? What does it demonstrate about the Christian's faith? Why is it important that we pray for our president or for other world leaders?

Why is it important that we pray for presidents that we didn't vote for? Why is it important that we pray for world leaders that are evil?

Do we? Because God commands it. And why do we think God commands it?

[21:55] Why is that important for us to pray for them? Yeah. Well, because of his sovereignty and God's sovereignty, that person is in that place at that time and position for a reason.

Is this something that you think that we neglect to do? Is it something that we think is hard to do?

Yes. Yes. I see some heads nodding. We, obviously, politically, are living in a very divisive time where if you're a Republican, the Democrat is the enemy.

If you're a Democrat, the Republican is the enemy. And I'm just saying that you look at what's happening in Washington, D.C., regardless of who, what party is in the Oval Office, that there is just a lot of fighting, a lot of dirty fighting, a lot of hatred.

And so I think we can play a part of that, unfortunately.

[23 : 23] We can tend to be really divisive with our comments and with the things that we post on social media.

And what message does that send? You know? Now, listen, I'm not saying, and I don't think that the Bible says that we don't have a right or are not called to point out evil for being evil.

When we see something that is wrong, you know, we should speak to that. And I'm not saying that we should avoid that in trying to, you know, avoid some really important issues that we need to draw light and shed light upon.

But it shouldn't prevent us from praying for even people who support or, yeah, support a set of political ideals that we disagree with.

Even leaders of other countries that we know to be evil, that we'd rather not, like, have in power to be praying for them. I mean, how often do we pray for, if we're concerned for their salvation, for their salvation, instead of just, God, remove this person because they're bad?

[24 : 44] Things to think about. Who else wants to answer that question? Why is prayer for civil magistrates in the church worldwide important? How about focusing on why is it important for the church to pray for the church worldwide?

Why is that important? Jerry?

Jerry? I find myself important for me, and more so here lately, that it's easy to forget about the suffering that's going on in the church around the world.

Because I'm not there. I don't see it. But I find myself realizing, you know, the old saying is, the part of a body, and if one part of a body hurts, the whole body hurts.

And I need to understand that in a deeper way. And so I know that I do, but I need to spend more time in praying for the church as a whole.

[25 : 52] And forget about this, you know, woe is me, you know. There's people suffering and hurting out there for Christ.

And I need to feel that pain. And I'm asking God for that to let me, you know, understand more and more of that concern for others.

Good. It helps us maintain a proper and healthy perspective of who and what is the church.

That it's not that God is only the God of the United States of America, but He's the creator of all things. That He is God over all.

And that we have brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. And that we should care for them. And we should care enough to pray for them, especially those who are being persecuted.

[26 : 51] And I think, again, you go back to the partnership that we have with Aganskons Baptist Church on the other side of the world. Well, part of that is because, one, there are brothers and sisters in Christ.

And to maintain that perspective as well is that, you know, we're not just concerned with what God is doing in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, but what God is doing around the world. And we see from Scripture a mandate from Him to be involved in worldwide missions, to go to the ends of the earth. Whether that means we ourselves go at time or, at the very least, we support those who are going, who are in those places, who are sharing the gospel. We support them with our resources. We support them with our prayers. And I agree with Jerry. I think, you know, I'm guilty of so often just focusing on my little corner of the universe that I neglect to pray for others whom I should be praying for.

And when you do that, you know, it reminds you again that, you know, the God whom we serve is great. And it gets us from just only being concerned about our little corner of the universe, but reminds us that, you know, we're just a part of the body.

[28 : 19] And we should feel pain. When we watch some of these videos, like when Jeremy came and shared on the International Day of Persecution, I can't remember the exact name for that.

But you remember those videos that we watched, the guy that's out there cleaning sewage, making bricks, all these different things that they're doing. I mean, our heart should ache when we see

those.

We should not feel indifferent when we see it and think, oh, that's too bad. Or even the video that we watched this morning in Lottie Moon and those, the people out there, down there in Mexico and what they're experiencing and these believers and the hardships that they're going through.

I mean, there should be a part of us that really feels for them. Because even though we don't know their names and we've never spoken with them before, we understand that they're a part of the body of Christ.

That one day when we are in heaven together, that we will be worshiping him together. And so I think the more that we can demonstrate that now, that's a powerful message to the world.

[29 : 24] That we care deeply for these people, though they live across the world from us, speak another language. We've never had any physical interaction with them.

But we care about them a lot because we have a deeper bond than any of those things. And that's the gospel and that's Jesus Christ and what he's done to save us from our sins. Anybody else have any other answers?

Okay. I will say that before coming here, I met with Barbara Helmer's family. Just again, a reminder that the service will be here tomorrow at 10.

And so, you know, just talking with the family about their memories of her. And one of the things that they mentioned was how much she prayed. And showed me the prayer list that she would get that we would hand out on Wednesday night.

And all the notes that she would take on them. Vaughn mentioned a friend of his that had had some issues. And she prayed for him every day for like 20 something years.

[30 : 39] And I remember I shared with them that a few times she would catch me after service. And she'd say, Pastor, I pray for you every day.

And I know that people pray for me and I certainly appreciate the prayers. But I'll tell you that sometimes people will say that. And I'll confess that sometimes I say it and I don't pray as often as I would like to for a person when I say I'm praying for you.

It doesn't mean that I haven't. But, you know, I'm not praying as often as I would like to be. But when Barbara would say that she prayed for me every day, I knew that she truly was praying for me every day.

And those people are special and those people are sweet. But, you know, unfortunately they shouldn't be so unique in the church. And so hard to find. We should all be praying daily.

And be praying daily for one another. And unfortunately I think prayer is something that we neglect. And we don't participate in enough.

[31 : 49] And maybe not enough as a church either. I like what Dr. Dever talked about having a Sunday night prayer meeting. And maybe that's something we need to consider too. Is how to incorporate even more prayer into our times of gathering.

And I know that we do. Every time we gather we pray. We open and we close in prayer. But maybe there needs to be more. Something to think about. And to pray about. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for this time to be together. As we've discussed about the importance of prayer. And how important your word stresses to us.

That we be people who pray. That we be people who pray constantly. That we be people who confess our sins. Who lift others up.

And Lord, who pray in giving thanksgiving. In offering our praises to you. Prayer has a way of changing us. Prayer has a way of helping us to have a proper perspective.

[33 : 00] And Lord, we confess that oftentimes we don't pray nearly as much as we should.

And God, I pray that you would forgive us for that. But I hope that through this lesson that we've had. And through the conversation that we've had. That we will leave this place with a greater desire to pray.

To pray on a consistent basis. To lift others up. To be people who, when we say that we're praying for someone, that we truly mean it.

That we truly are praying for them. That we would see why that's so important. That we would see why that's so important. And that we pray for our political leaders.

Not just in our country, but around the world. Whether we agree with their political philosophies or not. Despite what they're doing, Lord. That we are to pray for them because you've called us to do that, Lord.

[34 : 04] Ultimately, because, as Tom mentioned, you are sovereign. And in your sovereign plan, that was your choice. And so, Lord, I pray that we would see why that is so important. And God, also that we would be more aware of the church.

And those who are suffering in places where being a Christian. Could mean that you are going to be thrown in jail for a long time. And possibly, potentially even lose your life.

And so, God, I pray that we would be more concerned for them. That we wouldn't see that as being their problem over there. But that they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. And so, at the very least, Lord.

That we would lift them up in prayer on a regular basis. And do what you've called us to do. To love and support them in whatever ways that we can. God, we pray that as we leave from this place.

That you would help us to be mindful. Lord, that we would know that we have more than any other group in this world of people.

[35 : 20] We have more reason than any to celebrate Christmas. And so, Lord, help us to celebrate it. In a way that brings honor and glory to your name. And we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.