

How to pray

We do not know what we should pray for as we ought. Rm 8:26

Introduction

Occasionally I get asked, by someone who has been in the faith several decades, about how to pray; to whom should we pray, who should we worship? The fact that this question is asked at all is evidence that the churches are corrupt, useless and not serving the Lord's people. Understanding how to pray is discipleship 1.01. Converts should have this explained to them immediately.

Yet there are multiple cases, modelled by famous preachers and organisations, of wrongful prayer. No wonder people get confused.

This is a simple, concise paper explaining the basics of prayer and worship.

Summary

We pray to Our Father in heaven.

We cannot pray to the Holy Spirit.

We worship Jesus because he is worthy.

Problems

There are many egregious teachings.

I have come across the following:

- You must pray to the Holy Spirit.
- You must not worship Jesus Christ.
- You must always address prayer to the Lord Jesus and no one else.
- Before praying at all you must rid the room of demons or 'bind the spirits'.
- Before worship or successful prayer you must invite the Spirit to come amongst the people.
- Before congregational worship there should be congregational confession of sins.
- Before prayer there should be a claiming of the blood; leaders will shout, 'Are you washed in the blood?'.
- It is more powerful for everybody to shout prayers all at once in a cacophony of noise.
- You cannot pray openly in a meeting until the power of the Spirit comes upon you physically (recognised by shaking or trembling).
- It is acceptable to sermonise or exhort in prayer.

There are other rubbish claims.

Example: Wimber and inviting the Spirit

For example: for many years in the mid-80s John Wimber and Vineyard ministries had enormous influence on the British churches. This kick-started the Signs and Wonders movement with its many heresies and aberrant practices. Indeed Wimber himself was hopelessly confused, being wedded to eastern mystical practices and doctrines, occult ideas, bad influences (such as Morton Kelsey) and a deep affiliation with the Roman Church. He was also affected by his Quaker background and his movement began with a strong influence from Lonnie Frisbee, who was a homosexual, a mystic and a witch, returning to witchcraft after many years as a famous Charismatic youth leader. Frisbee was where the ability to make people fall over originated in Vineyard churches.¹

But apart from the mysticism and the supposed healing paradigm Wimber also brought a new emphasis to worship music using a folk-rock band and modern idiomatic pop songs. As part of teaching on worship Wimber's people advocated calling upon the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the worship meeting in order to get a successful mystical outcome. Thus people were encouraged to pray, '*Come Holy Spirit*'. There was even a popular worship song with this title.

This was where the practice of blending songs together in a thematic string was developed with a view to leading members up a ladder of mystical ascent, getting more emotional with each added song with no break. As passivity developed in the congregation with repetitive singing, so rose the emotionalism until singing in tongues broke out which led to more intense mysticism and phenomena. This was considered to be the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the audience, but in fact it was merely passivity engendering mysticism.

The error

Now a simple theological analysis of this asking for the Holy Spirit to come before anything useful can commence would show that it is not only wrong it is blasphemous.

We do not need to ask for the Holy Spirit to come to us. The Spirit has been given to us, indwelling us, from regeneration.

The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. Jn 14:17

If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Rm 8:11

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 Cor 3:16

The Holy Spirit who dwells in us. 2 Tim 1:14

We are in Christ, part of the body of Christ, and this is maintained by the Holy Spirit.

For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 1 Cor 12:13

¹ See my paper, 'Lonnie Frisbee: The problem of Charismatic hypocrisy'.

At the very least, asking for God to give us the Holy Spirit to come amongst us, when he is already in us, is a lack of faith in what God has said. This is sin; 'whatever is not from faith is sin' (Rm 14:23). So asking for the Holy Spirit to come is sin.

But it is also blasphemy because it dishonours God. It denies the work of God in salvation of which the giving of the Spirit to indwell us is a crucial aspect (Jn 14:26). It is disrespect of Our Father. It is a denial of God's word; it is rebellion. Since Jesus sends the Spirit to us, it is also a denial of Jesus' word of promise, 'when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me' (Jn 15:26).

So the Wimber movement, which changed the British church scene, was based upon a prayer practice that was sin and blasphemy. This is a small example of how UK churches have been gradually corrupted with one thing after another.

Lesson

We do not pray to ask the Holy Spirit to come amongst us at the start of a meeting. We believe that he is in us and act accordingly.

Who do we pray to?

Pray: Our Father. Matt 6:9

This is very simple; we pray to Our Heavenly Father.

Jesus taught us this in a model prayer that even the world knows by heart.

When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Matt 6:6

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Matt 6:9

This was the practice of Paul:

You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. Rm 8:15

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Cor 1:3

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 1:3

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph 3:14

Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 5:20

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Col 1:3

Giving thanks to the Father. Col 1:12

Giving thanks to God the Father. Col 3:17

It was the practice of Peter:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Pt 1:3

You call on the Father. 1 Pt 1:17

It was the practice of James:

We bless our God and Father. Jm 4:9

Lesson

We address prayer to Our Father in heaven.

We do not address prayer to the Holy Spirit

There is no example of an apostle praying to the Holy Spirit in the NT.

Why?

It is because the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Spirit does not initiate salvation but applies what was planned by the Father and accomplished by the Son.

The Father sends the Spirit to us:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever. Jn 14:16

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name. Jn 14:26

The Son sends the Spirit to us:

When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. Jn 15:26

The Spirit brings the things of Christ to us:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Jn 14:26

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. Jn 16:13-14

So the Spirit does not glorify himself but glorifies Jesus. He does not speak on his own, but glorifies Jesus.

This is why the apostles did not pray to the Holy Spirit. They prayed to God through the Spirit, 'the communion of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor 13:14). 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit' (Eph 6:18).

Lesson

We do not address prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Worship**We worship God the Father**

We worship God the Father because he is Lord; the Almighty, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord Most High.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Eph 3:20-21

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. 1 Tim 1:17

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*. To Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Pt 5:10-11

The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!' Whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.' Rev 4:8-11

All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honour and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.' Rev 7:11-12

We worship God the Son

We worship the Lord Jesus Christ because He is worthy and He is Lord of the Universe. He is God, 'I and My Father are one' (Jn 10:30).

The One that accomplished the great work of salvation according to the will of God the Father, deserves all our worship. This is modelled very clearly in the NT.

And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation'. Rev 5:9

'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the

sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!' Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever. Rev 5:12-14

The 24 elders represent the universal church.

12 is the number of divine governance, the covenant. 12 x 2 is the covenant in testimony, witness i.e. the church. The church worships Jesus.

There is also doctrinal teaching that we should worship Jesus:

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:9-11

This is because Jesus is Lord:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'. Matt 20:18

The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. Jn 3:35

You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. Jn 17:2-4

He is the fulness of God and is therefore pre-eminent:

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell. Col 1:18-19

Lesson

We worship both the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Intercession

Pray for one another. Jm 5:16

Intercession is prayer for others. This should be led by the Holy Spirit as we cannot pray for every need we come across. The chief focus of intercession is the needs of the saints.

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the

hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Rm 8:26-27

The focus of prayer for non-believers is that they be saved. No other prayer for unbelievers is valid; they cannot receive blessing, healing or help because they are ungodly sinners outside of God's grace. Praying for their blessing would be wrong. The prayer of sinners is not heard by God – with the exception of calling upon Him for salvation in the name of Jesus (which is the result of regeneration).

Until they are under grace, having been converted, they are under God's curse. The doctrine of Total Depravity means that all unbelievers are classed as wicked; everything they do is considered by God as wicked.

The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just. Prov 3:33

Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked. The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot. Prov 10:6-7

The mouth of the righteous *is* a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked. Prov 10:11

The labour of the righteous *leads* to life, the wages of the wicked to sin. Prov 10:16

The tongue of the righteous *is* choice silver; the heart of the wicked *is worth* little. Prov 10:20

The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked *what is* perverse. Prov 10:32

The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright *is* His delight. Prov 15:8

The LORD *is* far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous. Prov 15:29

The ploughing of the wicked *are* sin. Prov 21:4

An unjust man *is* an abomination to the righteous, and *he who is* upright in the way *is* an abomination to the wicked. Prov 29:27

To clarify:

- The home of the wicked is cursed.
- Violence covers the mouth of the wicked.
- The name of the wicked will rot.
- The labour and the wages of the wicked lead to sin.
- The heart of the wicked is worth little.
- The mouth of the wicked only knows what is perverse.
- The sacrifice (i.e. religious work) of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD.
- The LORD *is* far from the wicked and does not hear their prayers.
- The ploughing (i.e. secular works) of the wicked are sin.

This means, for example, that we cannot pray for the healing of the wicked; we pray for their salvation alone.

This destroys another key ingredient of the Signs and Wonders teaching of John Wimber et. al. His premise was that in order to get the confidence of sinners to listen to the Gospel, the church should actively go out and pray for the healing of sick sinners. Upon healing they will listen better. The teaching of Scripture is that this is wrong. God's grace is not wasted upon sinners lost in sin; God's grace is to the elect to bring them to Christ.

In fact, Wimber's teaching led to embarrassing and shocking results in society. Friends tried this out in towns and it just led to them being considered as mentally disturbed. No one was healed.

Lesson

We must pray for the saints and also for the salvation of the unbelievers God gives us.

I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me. Jn 17:9

The times of prayer

This is a matter of freedom of choice according to your own conscience: 'Let each be fully convinced in his own mind' (Rm 14:5).

In the history of the saints there have been certain common practices:

Praying three times a day

Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. Ps 55:17

He knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. Dan 6:10

Praying in the morning

My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct *it* to You. Ps 5:3

Praying in the morning and the evening

These were the times of Israel's daily offerings:

One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. Exod 29:39

The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil. It is a regular burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. And its drink offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in a holy place you shall pour out the drink to the LORD as an

offering. The other lamb you shall offer in the evening; as the morning grain offering and its drink offering, you shall offer it as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. Num 28:4-8

Offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening. 1 Chron 16:40

Praying at midnight

At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You. Ps 119:62

Praying before dawn

I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word. Ps 119:147

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. Mk 1:35

Prayer at noon

Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Acts 10:9

Praying at 3pm

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. Acts 3:1

This was the time of the Israelite evening sacrifice.

So, if we add these together they form prayer at these times:

- Midnight.
- Before dawn (say 4am).
- Morning (say 8-10am).
- Noon.
- 3pm.
- Evening (say 6pm).

There is no commandment that we pray at all these times. Indeed, the NT command is that we pray constantly.

Constant prayer was offered to God Acts 12:5

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving. Col 4:2

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thess 5:17

In this matter I can only give my advice, which you may take or ignore, as you will.

I advise prayer in the morning after you have risen. The time of this will vary according to your circumstances and obligations (such as sorting out children). I advise reading

Scripture first and then praying according to the plan (not a recital) given by the Lord Jesus (the Lord's Prayer).² Always with thanks.

If you are able, I advise also praying in the evening or at bedtime, giving thanks for the day. I always begin the day by giving thanks that the Lord got me through the night, and at bedtime I thank God that he got me through the day.

Needless to say, as you are able, I advise praying as necessary and as opportunity arises, throughout the day. Always pray when you need grace. Develop the habit of praying whenever there is a free opportunity. Waiting for a bus – pray. Lying in a hospital bed – pray. Travelling on a train – pray. Walking in a park – pray.

For very busy people who struggle for time with many demands upon them, I am not going to demand legalistically that you find time for extended prayer in the morning. Spend even a few minutes in prayer, even two minutes, asking for God's help and blessing and thanking him for salvation and grace. When you get more time in the evening and are more relaxed and less stressed, spend longer in prayer and the word as you are able; at least at bedtime.

Lesson

Pray at the times that you feel God is calling you to. This should include a time of formal devotions (with Bible reading) and constant prayer through the day.

Posture

There is no command for a specific posture in prayer, but there are various examples of different methods, some escalating in intensity.

Lifting up hands

Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary, and bless the LORD. Ps 134:2

Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Ps 141:2

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 1 Tim 2:8

Lifting eyes to heaven

And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me'. Jn 11:41

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You'. Jn 17:1

Bowing the head

Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD. Gen 24:26

And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth. Gen 24:52

² See my paper on this, 'Vital ingredients of daily prayer'.

So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Exod 12:27

Bowing the whole body

Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God. Ezra 10:1

Kneeling

[Solomon] knelt down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven). 2 Chron 6:13

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. Ps 95:6

I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God. Ezra 9:5

Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. Acts 9:40

We knelt down on the shore and prayed. Acts 21:5

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 3:14

Prostration

I prostrated myself before the LORD. Deut 9:25

Then David said to all the assembly, 'Now bless the LORD your God'. So all the assembly blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD and the king. 1 Chron 29:20

Note: I can find no text telling us to close our eyes during prayer. However, the practice arose to shut out extraneous matters to aid concentration.

The point is that there should be reverence exhibited in the body during prayer. This may merely be bowing the head while sitting down, but it should be reverential.

Therefore any irreverent behaviour while praying is anathema. This includes boisterous walking about shouting prayer from a platform; prayer expressed in anger; staring at people while praying and so forth.

The place of prayer

In short, everywhere and anywhere.

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD. Ps 130:1

I called on Your name, O LORD, from the lowest pit. Lam 3:55

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. Jonah 2:1

In every place incense *shall be* offered to My name. Mal 1:11

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere. 1 Tim 2:8

The typology of prayer

The primary type of prayer in Scripture is burning incense. This is a sweet aroma that rises upwards to God.

Let my prayer be set before You as incense. Ps 141:2

Golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Rev 5:8

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Rev 8:3-4

Thanksgiving for food

For centuries this was accepted normal practice even by non-Christians. It may have been formalised but at least it was done. There was consideration that food came from God who was to be thanked.

Today, this has been entirely dismissed by modern churchgoers who see it as legalistic and formal. They are too free to bother with this at all. Shame on them!

Foods, like other necessities of life, are to be thanked for. Christians should be filled with thanksgiving and happy to give thanks to God for all meals.

He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. Matt 15:36

He took bread, gave thanks and broke it. Lk 22:19

And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish. Jn 6:11

They ate bread after the Lord had given thanks. Jn 6:23

He took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Acts 27:35

The food over which I give thanks? 1 Cor 10:30

He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. Rm 14:6

In everything give thanks. 1 Thess 5:18

Foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 1 Tim 4:3

Nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ. 1 Tim 4:4-6

We could multiply such texts. There is no doubt; God should be thanked for the food we eat.

Lesson

Give prayerful thanks for food always.

It is acceptable to pray for healing

While I deny the Charismatic practice of professional healers, who actually fail to heal anybody, I encourage people to pray for healing - especially as Western health services are corrupt and collapsing.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Jm 5:14-16

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 Jn 1:2

And these signs will follow those who believe ... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. Mk 16:17-18³

Healing is not a part of a big, exploitative, celebratory meeting; it is an aspect of fellowship where we do each other good and serve one another. It is a church matter, involving elders.

Pray for church workers

That is, elders, deacons and those ministering in various ways such as evangelism, hospitality or mission.

Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me. Rm 15:30

Supplication for all the saints -- and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. Eph 6:18-19

³ The list of signs in Mk 16 is not a list that applies to every believer for all time, it is a list of the signs that will follow the resurrection in the church. They all occurred. Some, however, ceased as they were intended to authenticate the early proclamation of the Gospel. So, it is unwise to handle a venomous snake or drink poison.

Praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains. Col 4:3

Brethren, pray for us. 1 Thess 5:25

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you. 2 Thess 3:1

Pray for us. Heb 13:18

Be watchful in prayer

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. Matt 25:13

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matt 26:41

Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. Mk 13:33

And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch! Mk 13:37

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Lk 21:36

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Eph 6:18

But you be watchful in all things. 2 Tim 4:5

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. 1 Pt 4:7

Being watchful implies discernment. We need discernment in order to pray effectively, understanding the times and seasons.

For example, it would have been pointless for Israelites to pray that God returned them from Babylonia before the set time declared of 70 years in exile. That was wasted prayer with no basis of faith in God's word.

The prime matter to watch for is the impending return of the Lord in glory and power. As the days come to a close we must be watchful in prayer and prepared for the Lord's appearance in the clouds.

Refuting erroneous claims

You must always address prayer to the Lord Jesus and no one else

I have shown that Jesus himself teaches us to address prayer to the Father.

Before praying at all you must rid the room of demons or 'bind the spirits'

There is no instruction in the NT to ever do this; no apostle did it.

When people gather in the name of Jesus he is there in the midst.⁴ Demons flee such circumstances.

Note: if there is a presence of demons in a meeting, as expressed in the behaviour of demonised people, such as slithering on the floor like a snake,⁵ then this means that the meeting is not centred in the pre-eminence of Christ; it is not led by the Holy Spirit and it is not centred in God. A meeting focused on God, dedicated to his word and lifting up Jesus will not be troubled by demonic influences.

Before congregational worship there should be congregational confession of sins

There is no NT instruction to do this.

It is taken for granted that every believer should constantly be dealing with his mistakes before even attending a meeting. If a person sins, then he should confess it, say sorry and ask God to apply the blood of Jesus to cleanse his heart immediately.

Before prayer there should be a claiming of the blood; leaders will shout, 'Are you washed in the blood?'

See above. Sins should be dealt with before the meeting.

The blood of Jesus deals with sin. Regarding, 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death' (Rev 12:11), this is not a sacramental fetish to be used as a protocol, like a magic wand to protect the meeting.

The blood cleanses from sin:

These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. Rev 7:14-15

The power of the Devil works through temptation, deceit and sin. Believers that keep short accounts and are not weighed down by sin are very difficult targets for the enemy. Part of the victory is dealing with sin, which hinders the attacks of Satan as he has no ground of accusation.

It is more powerful for everybody to shout prayers all at once in a cacophony of noise

This was originally a practice of unorthodox Chinese groups called, 'The Shouters'. The practice spread amongst parts of South East Asia and was taken up by Western Charismatics for a time (like many other passing fads) in the 1980s.

This is unbiblical for many reasons:

- Church members must be able to hear and understand individual prayers and say 'Amen'; to them: 'how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?' (1 Cor 14:16).

⁴ Matt 18:20, 'where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them'.

⁵ Azusa Street was the classic example of a meeting filled with demonic influences and activities, including witches and mediums practising their rituals.

- Meetings must be conducted decently and in good order: ‘Let all things be done decently and in order’ (1 Cor 14:40); ‘rejoicing to see your good order’ (Col 2:5).
- Everything must be done for edification. There is no edifying involved in an outburst of multiple shouted prayers: ‘Let all things be done for edification’ (1 Cor 14:26).
- Christians must forbear and give way to one another; not override them by shouting over them: ‘be patient with all’ (1 Thess 5:14); ‘bearing with one another’ (Col 3:13); ‘submitting to one another in the fear of God’ (Eph 5:21).

You cannot pray openly in a meeting until the power of the Spirit comes upon you physically (recognised by shaking)

This was particularly observed in the Quakers (so called because they ‘quaked’) before participating in a meeting.

This is mere subjectivity and mysticism. It is wrong for these reasons:

- We never see this practised by the apostles and there is no apostolic teaching that affirms this.
- It is far more typical of pagan rituals where idolaters wait until a spirit comes upon them and they then rant. It is common in animism, rudimentary paganism, idolatry, occultism (e.g. Voodoo, witchcraft, spiritualism) and mysticism.
- We live by faith not by feelings. We speak because we believe God is with us encouraging us to pray. We do not have to wait for emotionalism to build up. ‘The just shall live by faith’ (Rm 1:17); ‘And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak’ (2 Cor 4:13).

It is acceptable to sermonise in prayer

This has been very common in the past. It is where a leader prays a long prayer that is full of instruction, direction, and exhortations to the members present. In the worst cases it also involves indirect criticism of certain people present. I have seen / heard this with my own eyes / ears.

This is blasphemy and sin.

Prayer is directed towards God alone; we give our petitions to God. Using prayer for human accusations is blasphemy. It is seeking to have more authority than you have by getting out your predilections in a prayer rather than a direct, honest confrontation.

Practical issues

Do not seek attention

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. Matt 6:5

Isolate yourself

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door. Matt 6:6

Avoid repetition

And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. Matt 6:7-8

Avoid fleshly ostentation

But all their [scribes and the Pharisees] works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues. Matt 23:5-6

You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Lk 16:15

Or a pretence make long prayers. These [scribes] will receive greater condemnation. Lk 20:47

He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory. Jn 7:18

They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Jn 12:43

Give thanks liberally

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Phil 4:6

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Col 1:3

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving. Col 4:2

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess 5:18

We are bound to give thanks to God always. 2 Thess 2:13

We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. Rev 11:17

Continue in prayer

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thess 5:17

In meetings, women must pray with their head covered

For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of authority* on *her* head, because of the angels. 1 Cor 11:10

Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ... But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. 1 Cor 11:13, 16

It is odd that Christians strive to use sophistry to avoid the simple conclusion of Paul. For centuries this was a custom amongst believers; women covered their heads in prayer. It is only in the recent decades of church corruption that this practice has fallen into disrepute.

This is far from being a mere Greek custom not necessary today for these reasons:

- This was a tradition that Paul said should be kept (1 Cor 11:2)
- No head covering for women is termed as 'improper' (1 Cor 11:13).
- Not practising this is termed by Paul as 'contentious' (1 Cor 11:16).
- It was the custom established by Paul and his colleagues (1 Cor 11:16).
- It was the custom of the churches of God (1 Cor 11:16).
- It was a testimony to angels (and thus is universal and for all time; 1 Cor 11:10).

This is merely circumstantial observation that possibly means nothing. However, I have seen churches honour this command and the result was good order and godly practice. The church was filled with grace and blessing. Over time this practice ceased and gradually the church fell into disrepute and a complete loss of testimony. Coincidence?

Men should never pray with their head covered

Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonours his head [Christ; v3]. 1 Cor 11:4

For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, since he is the image and glory of God. 1 Cor 11:7

Use the Bible as a foundation for prayer

Here is an example from Paul. It is founded in the OT and the words of Jesus.

For this reason I bow my knees [Dan 6:10] to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,[Matt 6:6] from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,[Gen 1:27] that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, [Jer 9:24] to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,[Ps 138:3; Isa 40:29, 41:10; Zech 10:12] that Christ may dwell in your hearts [Isa 57:15] through faith;[Gen 15:6] that you, being rooted and grounded in love,[Lev 19:18] may be able to comprehend [Job 37:5; Lk 24:45] with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height -- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.[Ps 16:11] Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,[Jer 32:17, 27] according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.[1 Chron 16:36] Eph 3:14-21

Glorify God

That you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rm 15:6

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Pt 1:3

Conclusion

It is not difficult to discover how to pray properly; the directions are clearly spelled out in Scripture. All that is necessary is a modicum of study. Yet even church leaders appear to have failed to do this and so the people are ill prepared.

If churches were led properly I would not get correspondence from people long in the faith asking me how to pray.

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