



Praying in church

Reading the Bible in church

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1. WHY

Why do we pray?

It is the method given to humans to communicate with God. And God has ordained that if Christians pray then their prayers will cause things to happen that wouldn't happen if they hadn't prayed (John Piper). So prayer is incredibly powerful!

- *James 4:2 - "You do not have, because you do not ask God."*
- *Matthew 7:7-11 - "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"*
- *Colossians 4:2 - Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful*

Why should we pray as a church?

Because God is willing and able to answer prayer and therefore prayer causes things to happen, and the church and its community needs prayer

- *Acts 12:5-7 - So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.*
- *Matthew 18:19-20 - "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*

2. Preparation

What is the role of the person praying?

To pray to God on behalf of the whole congregation

Is it therefore an important role to be held with high regard, in which we should prepare well for?

Of course! Your words can cause things to happen!

How should the person praying prepare?

Firstly, decide whether you will write out their prayer word for word, make dot points or pray on the spot. Whatever method you choose, you should know what you are going to say.

Secondly, pray about your prayer.

What should they pray for?

Prayer points can include but are not limited to:

- *Today's church service*
- *What's happening in the life of the church? (see newsletter)*
- *Do specific people in the church need prayer? – Pastor, Elders, leaders, members, missionaries, visitors, the sick, etc (ask elders if you're not sure)*
- *Upcoming events*
- *What's happening in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, and/or the world?*
- *What can we praise God for?*
- *What sins do we need to confess?*

Consider the order of your prayer start with praise and thanksgiving, then ask God for things and end with praise (use the Lord's prayer as a model.

What method to use?

It is totally up to the person praying, however structure can be helpful. 2 methods include:

- *ACTS - Admiration (praise), Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (requests)*
- *Using scripture as an outline – eg. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) or see attached*

3. How

How do you pray on the day?

- 1) *Come up unannounced*
- 2) *Announce what is happening.*
- 3) *Pray (2-5 minutes)*
- 4) *Finish with "Amen"*
- 5) *When you have finished praying, simply sit back down*

Ephesians 6:7-8 – "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does"

Praying for the church using scripture

1Pet 5:6.....Heavenly Father, we humble ourselves under Your mighty hand.
1Jn 1:9.....Forgive us for our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
Heb 10:22.....Let us draw near to You with a true heart in full assurance of faith,
Heb 10:22.....having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,
Heb 10:22.....and our bodies washed with pure water.
Col 3:16.....Let Your Word dwell in us richly.
Col 1:9.....Fill us with the knowledge of Your will,
Col 1:9.....in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,
Col 1:10.....that we may live and conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of You,
Col 1:10.....fully pleasing You, and being fruitful in every good work.
Eph 4:23.....And, by being renewed in the spirit of our minds,
Col 3:12.....that we put on tender mercies, kindness, humility,
Col 3:12.....meekness, longsuffering: bearing with and forgiving one another.
Eph 4:13.....That we dwell together in the unity of the faith,
1Thes 5:12.....recognizing those who labor among us,
1Thes 5:13.....esteeming them highly in love for their work's sake.
1Cor 1:10.....I pray we all speak the same thing, with no divisions among us,
Phil 1:27.....standing fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith.
Heb 13:9.....That we're not carried about with various and strange doctrines,
2Tim 2:15.....But we study, rightly dividing the word of truth.
Jude 1:16.....That we're not murmurers, complainers, walking after our own lusts,
1Tim 6:18.....but are rich in good works, ready to give and willing to share.
Eph 4:16.....I pray that the whole body be knit and joined together,
Eph 4:16.....and that every part does its share causing growth to the body.
1Pet 4:10.....As each one has received a gift, let him minister it,
Phil 2:4.....looking out for the interests of others.
1Pet 1:22.....Let us all fervently love one another with a pure heart,
2Jn 1:8.....so that we do not lose the things we have worked for.
1Pet 4:7.....Let us become serious and watchful in our prayers,
Eph 5:16.....redeeming the time, for the days are evil.
Heb 12:1.....Running with endurance the race that is set before us,
Col 3:2.....setting our minds on things above and not on things on the earth.
Phil 3:14.....But pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God.
Eph 6:11.....Putting on the whole armor of God that we may stand against the devil.
Acts 4:29.....That we will speak forth Your Word with great boldness
Acts 4:30.....and that You will stretch forth Your hand to heal,
Acts 4:30.....that signs and wonders may be done in the name of Your Son Jesus.

See also www.prayingscriptures.com

Reading the Bible in church

1. WHY

Why do we read the Bible in Church?

The Bible is God's 'word'

Hebrews 4:12 - 'For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.'

1 Timothy 4:13 - 'Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.'

Therefore how important is reading God's 'word' in regards to the church service?

The Bible reading is the most important part of the service (even more important than the sermon, the word of God is powerful not the preacher), 'so it's a great privilege and it's a great responsibility'.

So who should read the Bible in church?

Reading the Bible publically in church is a gift! It is not something everyone can do! However for most people the problem is not whether they have the gift or not, it is a lack of effort and preparation. (Need to practice your gift, eg: hospitality, preaching)

2. Preparation

Why should we take time preparing ourselves to read in church?

Westminster Larger Catechism – ‘The holy Scriptures are to be read with a high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.

What is the best way to prepare?

Understanding the reading and practising the reading

We need to understand the passage in order to communicate its meaning effectively. To do this we need to understand:

- *The wider context - eg. What’s the point of the passage? What comes before & after?*
- *The meaning of the words - eg. Raca, Sanhedrin*
- *The flow of the argument or narrative – passage structure*

We need to practise the reading beforehand so that we can read the passage as well as possible in church. Consider:

- *Use NIV translation of the Bible*
- *Use large-print Bible if required (www.biblegateway.com)*
- *Pronunciation (www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/)*
- *Breathing*
- *Phrasing, as it is essential to communicate the meaning – eg. pauses, expression, emotion, stress & emphasis*
- *Emphasis – ‘You need to overact! 98% of people are too monotone’*
- *Pace – not too fast, vary to suit the meaning*
- *Characterisation – change the pitch & pace of each speaker*

Russell Powell (CEO of Anglican Media) says that one of the best ways to prepare is to record your self reading the Bible, and play it back. This will show how monotone you are and how you need to overact the passage! Tell it, don’t read it!

How long should it take to prepare?

The Bible reader should aim to dedicate at least half an hour in preparation, in understanding and practicing reading the text. Do not forget your need to pray for the Holy Spirit's help!

3. How

How do you read the Bible passage on the day?

- 6) *Come up unannounced and adjust the microphone to the level of your face*

- 7) *Announce what passage you will be reading.
For example: the reading today is Romans chapter 3, verses 1-8.
Wait for those looking the passage up in their own Bibles*

- 8) *Say brief prayer before starting to read
For example: Dear Father in heaven, Thank you for the Bible your written Word. Helps us to listen carefully as we read it and hear it preached. May your Holy Spirit grow us in the grace, knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

- 9) *Repeat what you will be reading
"Romans chapter 3, beginning at verse 1"*

- 10) *Read the passage loudly and slowly (don't read headings)*

- 11) *When you have finished reading, simply sit back down
(Remember even the best Bible readers stumble over words or get sentences mixed up. That's life! Try not to get too flustered when this happens. Recovery is simple. Just pause, take a breath, and start the sentence again. Remember, this is not a performance)*

Ephesians 6:7-8 - "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does"