

# THE EXAMINER

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## Prayer and Its Use in Worship by Robert Davidson Cookeville, Tennessee

The Bible commands us to pray without ceasing (**Ephesians 6:18**). Anybody, who can speak, can talk to God. We cannot believe the Bible and deny the effectiveness of prayer. Prayer is powerful! It is motivating the hand of God to do things for us that He would not have done if we had not asked. Therefore prayer is powerful because it is self-willed from the heart, a tender petition to God to render unto you a blessing which you cannot render alone. It is a means of drawing upon the riches of Glory. Brother Harris J. Dark illustrates prayer in this manner, "What a wonderful thing it is to be able to write a check on the bank of heaven with the assurance that it will be honored. That's exactly what prayer is. Through prayer you can draw a check upon a bank whose resources are inexhaustible, with the full assurance that the Teller will honor the draft or check. Prayer changes things. God will do things for you after you have prayed that He would not have done if you had not prayed."

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be ~opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (**Matthew 7:7, 8**).

The following excerpts from an article written by Terrence E. Johnson of the Valley Forge church of Christ are printed to reveal the error being taught and believed by some in the church today.

Brother Johnson states, "More churches of Christ are using the Lord's Prayer today in public services or Worship."

"One of our deacons suggested its use in a morning service sometime back, emphasizing that this would give all in the gathered congregation - adults and children - an opportunity to participate locally in prayer."

It is an ecumenical symbol. The inclusion of the Lord's Prayer - familiar to A - was a symbol of under-lying unity and dependence upon God, as the congregation said, "Our Father ---."

"When people are kind enough to visit our services - which in the past have often scraped raw all aesthetic and religious sensitivities, there should be something familiar (if they are from another Christian church) that speaks of some aspect of unity in the church."

"When people convert to us from other communions, it cannot be our purpose to take away from them every worthwhile experience they have known just because it may not coincide with our tradition."

"It is an act of corporate worship. Our worship has often been characterized by passive pew-sitting, with only congregational activity at the time of the hymns. Worship must become more and more a united act of adoration: Active corporate worship. This is a primary reason for the use of responsive and unison scripture reading congregational participation. The use of the Lord's Prayer allows a vocal union of worshipers in participating in worship."

"That the Lord's Prayer was used in congregational fashion by the early church is strongly suggested by its inclusion in the Gospel of Matthew."

"The petition 'Thy Kingdom come' has most often been the point of controversy among members of the church of Christ. Do some of our people actually believe that the Kingdom of God has fully come?

Do some feel that there is no need for prayer for the kingdom to come more fully into their individual lives? Such a man as Dr. Batsell Barrett Baxter of the Herald of Truth broadcasts has written "it is still appropriate for Christians to pray Thy Kingdom come."

In answering an article of this nature one hardly knows where to start, since every paragraph contains so much false doctrine. In view of this teaching we have tried to arrange each paragraph to coincide with Brother Johnson's article.

### More Churches of Christ are Using the Lord's Prayer

The fact that many churches are practicing an element of worship does not necessarily mean it to be scripturally sound. A doctrine is not necessarily true just because it is generally believed. In fact, some of the most erroneous doctrines are taught by religious leaders in many of the denominational churches throughout the world. These doctrines are believed by millions of people, yet a close study of the Word of God proves them be incorrect.

Because this is true, we should not accept a theory as truth, because this or that teacher claims that it is taught in the Bible. On such questions involving the Word of God do not take any man's theory. Examine all teachings with an open Bible, and do not accept any

doctrine, until you are sure that it is supported by the word of God. "Teaching as their doctrine the commandment (precepts - ASV) of men" (**Matthew 15:9**). The implication of this paragraph by Brother Johnson appears to be "if many churches practice a thing it is scriptural" however, there are a lot of practices of "many" churches which are not found in the Bible.

The "gathered congregation" implies the assembly. The participation of women in vocal tones of prayer would be in violation of **I Corinthians 14:35-39**. No command, inference or apostolic example is set forth for women to participate in audible vocal tones in prayer. The fact that a deacon of the Valley Forge church of Christ introduced the usage and participation of women and children in public assemblies of the church does not constitute scripturalness. In fact this trend is nothing new; do not the Catholics, Holiness and many other denominational tendencies lean toward joint audience participation?

#### **Ecumenical Symbol**

"It is an ecumenical symbol - a symbol of underlying unity." Ecumenical (Universal), Corporate Worship, Invocation, and other words used in Brother Johnson's article are words which are associated with the denominational world and should not be in the vocabulary of a child of God. What we do in worship is to be from the

heart, not vain repetitions. "And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard from their much speaking" (**Matthew 6:7**). The few prayers recorded in the Scriptures begin with a solemn address to God. Jesus introduced the use of "Our Father" which denotes unity of the elect with the God of Glory and of praise thru Jesus Christ, as our mediator.

It should be pointed out that as an individual leads the assembly in prayer, each of us should approach the throne of God with him in silent prayer. The petition and praises are addressed to God by His Children to their Father, and are not intended to be recited for the benefit of outsiders.

#### **Something Familiar, Traditional to Other Communions**

"There should be something familiar (if those visiting us from other communions) that speaks of some aspect of unity in the churches." Do we recognize a division in Christ as revealed in the words "other communions"? If this is not the lesson being taught, then what is the point? Read **Ephesians 4:4-6**.

#### **Traditions**

With reference to "Our Traditions" -- I do not know of any traditions in the church as suggested by Brother Johnson by the inclusion of a prayer in the book of Matthew. Christ had not established His church at this time;

therefore I assume the author is referring to the foreshadowing by the Law of Moses in Tabernacle form. Traditions carry over into each age; however should it do so, it should never violate a given law of God, precept or example. For example the Indians used the sign of a full moon to plant the crops and even in the 20th Century some of us still use this tradition. The use of this tradition does not violate any law. Tradition is a practice or custom that is passed and changed from generation to generation. Our acts of worship to God are LAW, not tradition. The Jews wanted to carry over traditions. "Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God because of your traditions?" "Ye have made void the word of God because of your traditions" (**Matthew 15:3, 6**).

Christian worship includes (1) Singing (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**); (2) Praying (**Acts 2:42**); (3) Teaching (**Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:42; 5:21; 9:20; 11:26; 20:7**); (4) Giving (**Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 16:2**); and (5) The Lord's Supper on the first day of every week (**Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 20:7**). Each of these acts of worship suggests audience participation in a manner prescribed by the Scriptures. Should we go so far as these brethren, what would prohibit the women from serving the Lord's Supper! Or Preaching (usurping authority) when qualified men were present?

#### **The Example**

The most beautiful means of expression is given by Christ in this example of prayer. We should realize that this is an example meaning that it is something that is, to be followed, imitated as a pattern.

#### **Thy Kingdom Come**

The church and the kingdom are the same. Realizing that the full value of the word of God may not be visualized until the judgment day, the same is true of the kingdom. We do not profess supernatural power to fully comprehend the true severity of the punishment of God or the beauty of Heaven. The fact is that "Doctor" Batsell Barrett Baxter's quote was incorrectly used seemingly to approve Brother Johnson's theory and teaching. On page 35, Speaking for the Master, Brother Baxter wrote, "In the broader sense it is still appropriate for Christians to pray, 'Thy Kingdom Come'." We know that the kingdom (church) has been fully established. There are areas where spiritual development on the part of the individual is greatly needed and further development in areas where the kingdom has been limited by the lack of desire and love for the church. However, barring all human weaknesses, God gave us a fully developed kingdom. Let our prayer be for the broadening of the borders of the kingdom of God in the world in which we live. - via **TRUTH MAGAZINE XIII: 9, pp. 18-20 June 1969**