

Praying Audibly Together (Mat. 6.9-13):

One-anothering (audible) Prayer

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Introduction

For the last message on the Lord's Prayer, I want us to look again at the family aspect of prayer that suggests that we call this classic prayer pattern *The Lord's Family Prayer*. My title indicates the focus. The title is "Praying Audibly Together (Mat. 6.9-13): One-anothering (audible) Prayer." Accordingly, I am speaking about praying with others in various contexts, especially at home and at church. These two places intertwine because the church is a family of brothers and sisters in Christ.

This of course means that matters of the heart have outward, audible, manifestations. When we consider matters of the heart, we come to the fundamental root of true piety. In this connection, it is definitely true that the Christian heart *is* a praying heart.

Some questions come up in this regard. I do not propose to answer them one by one but I do propose to give principles that will help you answer them; many of them *you* have to answer anyway (I cannot answer them for you). Thus, these thought questions need answers, but some of them demand meditation and self-examination at home.

Do you pray audibly with one another at home?

Do you do so on a regular basis?

Do you pray audibly at meals (at home) and do you alternate or pray around the table?

Do you not only pray *together* at meals but also at other times, especially on the Lord's Day in honor to our Sabbath king?

Do you think of prayer as a means of grace? What does it mean to speak of prayer as a means of grace?

Wives, do you hear your husbands pray and join with them thankfully?

Husbands, do you hear your wives pray and join with them thankfully?

My outline for this message today seeks to unpack the following questions. Why should believers pray aloud with the saints? Why do believers hesitate to do so? What are some things that help us learn how to pray audibly?

1A. Why should we pray aloud with the saints?

A number of things show the importance of praying audibly together.

1. The Lord's command

Jesus says, "pray then like this" (6.9a) and the third person plural pronouns throughout the prayer indicate that prayer in its fullness includes praying aloud (cf. vs. 9, 11, 12 & 13; *our* Father, give *us* this day *our* daily bread, forgive *us* as *we* forgive *our* debtors, lead *us* not into temptation but deliver *us*). I have these pronouns marked in yellow in my Bible; it is striking to see them in every verse but one (and it is implied there: your will be done *by us*, v. 10).

Can we fulfill this if we never pray aloud with the saints? Can we fulfill this by our private prayers? How private is Christianity? It is not a "private" religion. It is not individualistic but communal; Christian faith is oriented to the spiritual family.

Thus, the Lord's Prayer is such that it promotes family one-anothering prayer.

Consider some alternatives and a middle road.

a) One could pray audibly in private and alone. This, of course, is not family prayer (though one might pray extensively in this way for the family; I pray in this way as often as I can because it helps my concentration). b) A family could pray, say, at dinner in a public place and each member could pray in silence. This would approximate family prayer but there would be no mutual fellowship; it would not be one-anothering prayer. What if each person at the table prayed for the others, would we call that family prayer that involves a principle of mutuality?

Yes, if that is what is going on, then it is surely a form of family prayer; it meets the minimal standard of family prayer.

However, what is lacking is fellowship, the kind described as “you...with us...with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn. 1.3). Thus, there can be audible prayer that is not family prayer and there can be family prayer that is not audible prayer. Therefore, it seems to me that neither type of prayer is one-anothering prayer because that requires both family prayer *and* audible prayer. In a word, one anothering prayer requires mutual fellowship in prayer (you...with us...with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, cf. **2 Cor. 13.14**, “**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all**”).

Therefore, if we ask, “should Christians learn to pray together audibly?” the answer has to be yes in order to fellowship in a mutual sharing of heart and soul in the presence of the triune God (consider what is lacking when there is a call for a “moment of silence”).

#### 2. The Lord’s example

It is clear that the Lord prayed aloud. We have examples recorded like John 17. If we follow in His steps in our praying, then, coupled with the “our/us” dimensions of the Lord’s family prayer, we have encouragement to pray aloud by example as well as by commandment.

Just think of what we would *not* have if Jesus had not prayed in a one-anothering way (we would not have John 17!).

#### 3. It is edifying and edification is primary

The fact is we learn from hearing others pray and knowing the content of their prayers. This is evident in the Holy Spirit’s recording of prayers (cf. the prayer of Daniel and our Lord’s high priestly prayer).

#### 4. Our need

We need to follow His example for that will make our path straight.

We need edification by the various means the Lord has provided.

We need to share our hearts with the Christian family.

#### 5. Our spiritual opportunity and experience

One anothering family prayer furnishes us with a foretaste of heaven. That was my experience last Sunday as I drove home. I had this thought going through my head, “what a joy to my heart to be with the saints, to pray with the saints, to hear the Lord’s people pray, to hear you pray in the context of my work on your behalf, to hear you pour out your souls to our risen Lord.”

What He commands and exemplifies is something for our good that we need in order to advance our good (our own well-being and the well-being of our brothers and sisters). Need and opportunity point the way to sharing, to sharing prayers with each other, to sharing in prayer.

### 2A. Why do believers hesitate to pray aloud with one another?

Note that the question has a “one anothering” quality built right into it.

Here are some struggles, objections, concerns, and difficulties that cause or may lead to hesitation. I want to comment on them and offer some responses in the direction of encouraging more audible praying among us.

#### 1. Women, silence, and audible prayers

Some might think that the “silence of women” passages (1 Cor. 14.34-35; 1 Tim. 2.8-15) teach that women should not pray publicly and that may lead some women (or men) to not pray. The short answer is that this is mistaken because a) Paul indicates that women did pray in public (1 Cor. 11.5) and b) the silence does not pertain to prayer nor is it a universal; it pertains to the teaching authority of elders (1 Tim. 2.12; many details need filling out another time).

A “tack on” concern here goes like this: “Let’s say it is okay for all to pray audibly, but couldn’t some women use prayer as a way of teaching and thus of usurping teaching authority in the church?” The answer to this “tack on” is “Yes, some could do this but this is no more an objection to women praying than the fact that men may use prayer to teach and usurp authority is

an objection to men praying. We should note that the problem here is using prayer for teaching in the wrong way, not who prays.” The problem here is abuse of prayer.

#### 2. Privacy (shyness, introversion)

It seems that prayerful openness leads to or may too easily lead to a loss of personal privacy. We can say more in reply to this concern, but for now one response emphasizes the core of prayer. It is this. Mutuality does not mean that you share *all* your deepest and most personal thoughts, desires, problems, and concerns. Then prayer would be a window for others to see into your private life and you would obviously lose your privacy in this way. Indeed, fellowship in prayer does reveal something very personal, but not personal private details. Instead, the personal element that fellowship reveals is *your heart for God*. That seems to say it best in a general way. That is what warms my heart when I hear you pray, and it is always the case. There has not been a single occasion where I have heard one of you pray and I have not been encouraged.

3. Spiritual laziness (reply, prayer takes concentration, effort, and hard work and hence we may back off; instead of backing off, we need to work through the negative inertia presented by hard work).

#### 4. Confusion regarding the trinity (to whom do I pray?)

There is a variety of ways to address God in prayer. Here are some examples.

Lord, help us to get our minds right and to think clearly about the consequence to which sin leads (eternal death; again, this is what every sin deserves).

Help us, Father, to identify our enemies (the sins of the flesh).

Holy Spirit, give us the grace to do good, to do good to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith.

Lord God, give us insight into your law that it may be our delight for meditation and living.

O, how I love your law!

Father, Son and Holy Spirit lead us not into temptation but if you do give us the strength to fight the battle against sin and for righteousness to your honor and glory. Amen.

Of course, the simplest way is to begin the way Jesus instructs us in the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father). Then moving to our place in redemptive history after the completed work of Christ, we pray in His name as our great high priest (this is another mustard seed to full plant application).

#### 5. Fear of judgment and scrutiny by the pastor (or other members)

Is the pastor going to get out his theological red pen, take notes, and put red marks over how I express myself in prayer? You know my thoughts last week regarding your public prayers and that should calm this kind of fear if it were there.

On the idea of scrutiny, could it be that one has a judgmental attitude toward what he or she hears and this causes hesitation (I do not want others to do to me what I do to them!)

Reply: given our Lord’s command, by inference (by connecting the dots that give the picture of this duty), we ought to be very charitable showing brotherly and sisterly love (cf. the compound accent on love for one another in Rom. 12.10). We should contemplate on how important it is that we hear others pray and that they hear us, both in the right way of hearing (notably, there is a right way of hearing others). We need the fellowship of the saints that takes place when we share our hearts with one another in the most intimate matter of piety, our prayers. It is our responsibility to “get out of ourselves” and think about others, even if we are introverted and even if we have old baggage we need to dispense with.

Are we afraid of what others may think? Am I afraid of what others may think? [Reply: Are we concerned about what the *Lord* thinks and requires of us for *our* good?]

#### 6. I am uncomfortable

Of course, we need to go deeper and consider why the discomfort is there. Is it one of things above? Further, lack of comfort is not really a good reason for neglecting something that is important and needed.

#### 7. The duty is overwhelming

There are so many things to think about and to pray for, so where do I begin?

You begin right where you are, right where your struggles take you. Again, the many aspects are flexible guidelines that we engage *ad hoc* per our own trials, concerns, aspirations, present reading of Scripture, books in process, and needs.

8. I cannot pray as the pastor prays or like so and so prays

This is not necessary; each one has his own gifts and calling; each member of the body has its function that is valuable, needed, and important.

9. No one cares if I pray or not (who would want to hear me?)

As your pastor, I very much want to hear you all pray; it is always an encouragement to me to hear you pour out your own thoughts before the Lord. Others do want to hear you pray, each of us should be clear on that point. Even if others did not want to hear you, according to our Lord, it is important that they do! Others are in our peripheral vision, so to speak, while our focus is on the Lord.

3A. What are some things that help us learn how to pray audibly?

A major guiding principle is to pray the Scripture read or preached.

Also, focus on the attributes of God in praise.

A resource is example prayers in Scripture (Daniel, Paul, and our Lord).

Think through the Lord's family prayer in various ways. There is no rule that all six petitions must be part of your pray every time you pray (none need to be cited directly).

A key is to focus on the Lord (others are in our peripheral vision and should be).

We are to value prayer with the saints (it is good that others hear us and that we hear them). It is part of intimate fellowship with one another and with the Lord.

Here are some suggestions going forward.

Perhaps, pray at the *end* of the meal (then there is no hurry with food getting cold).

First, read a text then pray. Vary the reader. Sometimes have only one person pray; other times pray around the table. Avail yourselves of opportunities for one-anothering prayer. Begin at home or with a close friend. Carry it through at church as part of the Christian family in Christ. As a side note, a Christian should not marry someone that he or she never prayed audibly with while dating.

Conclusion

Therefore, brothers and sisters, because of Christ our elder brother I exhort you to pray and to live according to the pattern of the Lord's Family Prayer. This is a wonderful opportunity to fellowship with one another, and with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.