

**Pray in public...you'll become a leader**  
**1 Kings 8:22-24, 50-58, Acts 4:23-31**

So last week we talked briefly about how we can get past some of our fears, and objections to prayer becoming a part of the group life of a church.

And we looked at how praying together with other Christians can bring us closer together as a group and can help us overcome division that can result from lack of communication, or false teachings.

And we challenged ourselves to put this into action instead of just listening to a message on praying together – we actually prayed together afterwards, using Korean Style pray – having all of us bring our prayers to Christ at the same time praying out loud- together...

So I hope this has helped you to start to feel more comfortable praying with other Christians and that you will

continue to take opportunities to do this, we'll certainly continue to provide them.

So today we continue to explore how prayer is a part of our group life as a congregation, a church and specifically we're looking at how we will begin to grow into spiritual leaders as we pray with each other, and especially as we pray in public.

So we're moving up the next level as it were - from just praying together – where a small group of us might each take a turn praying for each other's request and things that we've shared – and we're moving up to taking on the responsibility to lead a group of people – to lead them in prayer.

Now if you are going to lead in prayer for a group of people, it's important to remember it's not just your own requests and things you are bringing to God but you are there taking initiative to help an entire group of people do this.

Now, you might be thinking "Wait a minute Grant – I'm just getting used to the idea that we should be sharing our

requests with each other, and praying out loud with other people – that’s really challenged me ... and now I’m supposed to start leading a whole group of people in prayer?!” I’m don’t know if I can do that, If I’m ready for that??

Friends, I understand this may sound like a daunting task, especially if you don’t consider yourself to be a leader.

But if you think about all of us are leaders in some context, and leadership potential in others – some of us are parents leading our families.

Some of us are employers at work, managers, and supervisors or professionals leading our clients or employees.

We are coaches and assistants, we are teachers, volunteers, or even the trend setters of our social groups – we have influence and sway over our peers, even having younger kids look up to us is a kind of leadership.

And in all these settings we are Christians - people who have the privilege of being in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and having the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

Friends... not everyone has been given this privilege, and not everyone knows what you now know about praying to God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, to quote Uncle Ben from Spiderman – “with great power comes great responsibility...”

With our privilege of prayer comes a responsibility to step up and take leadership in prayer when it is needed and believe it or not there will be times when you are called upon to do just that.

So when that time comes... not an “if” but “when” - will you be ready to lead in prayer?

The good news friends is that the scriptures can teach us about what it means to lead a group of people in prayer, to

pray for a group of people as a leader, so that you can be prepared when God brings that opportunity into your life.

Let's say you are with a group of people when they receive the shocking news that someone has died, or some other catastrophe has occurred that leaves everyone else too overcome by their feelings to do anything.

And while you are shocked too – because of the Holy Spirit's power working in you - You can lead them in prayer.

Or let's say that you are with a group of people who have been talking about "spiritual" things and they are open to knowing more about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and you've explained it – but something more is needed to bring the reality of a relationship with God home - You can lead them in prayer.

Or maybe you are leading a class of children who are just beginning to grow in their faith and they need to know how to

respond to Jesus in prayer. You can lead them in prayer and teach them by example.

Friends these are just a few examples of how situations can arise where you may be called on to lead in prayer.

And when – not if... when they happen, you will be ready because this morning we're going to equip you through studying what leaders in the scriptures did when they lead people in prayer.

Now, when I prepared this message I looked at all these kinds of prayers through-out the scriptures in order to see what the common themes were in these prayers.

And I found that a few common characteristics or elements which repeatedly showed up.

So when you have to lead a group in prayer in public you will do well if you include these three elements in your prayer; Remind, Repent, and Request.

So let's learn a bit more about how this works out into leading prayer in public.

The element of "Reminding" means that whoever is leading prayer includes factual statements about who God is, who He has revealed himself to be in the scriptures, the great things He has done in the past, the promises that He has made for our lives and what He has promised He will do in the future.

The leaders in the bible included these reminders in their prayers because we have a tendency to forget who God is and what He has done and what He will do.... So it's always good to be reminded of it.

Including "Reminders" in your public prayer is a way of helping people to know and understand correctly who and which God we are praying to.

We are not talking to the universe... to the divine, or to the spirit of nature... we are talking to God, the God who created the heavens and the earth, the God who created us, the God

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... we're praying to a specific God who is identified and known by his actions.

So, do you know what God has done? Are you familiar with his statistics, His track record? If you are going to "Remind" in prayer you need to be familiar with these things, and it's very easy to do that - friends all the "acts of God" are in your bible!

So let's look at some examples of how the leaders in scripture included factual statements in their prayers about who God is: Hannah the mother of Samuel prayed...

<sup>2</sup> *"There is no one **holy** like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no **Rock** like our God. (1 Sam 2:2)*

Holy means that God is set apart, He is distinct and separate from the creation which he created. So what? Well this is good news because only a God who is distinct and separate from his creation is able to intervene in it and save it.

And isn't this why we are praying – to ask God to intervene???

And God is unique in this ability - there is no other god like Him.

King David prayed... *"How great you are, **Sovereign LORD!** There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. (2 Sam 10:22)*

And King Hezekiah prayed... *"Yahweh, **the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.** (2 Kings 19:15)*

Let's look at some of these reminder phrases about who God is.

Sovereign means that God is self governing, He answers only to himself because He is the Supreme Being. What this means is that He is ruler over all that exists.

Again, this is good news because in prayer we can appeal injustice to Him – if other authorities are corrupt, or wicked

we can take it up with the highest authority, the God who holds all kingdoms, rulers, and leaders accountable.

There is not one square inch of this planet; its cultures, its peoples; its gov'ts and leaders that do not rightfully fall under God's jurisdiction – even the Party Quebecios and the Quebec Gov't!

Now as you move from prayers in the Old Testament into the prayers of the New Testament – they shift in what they say about God. None of it contradicts how God is spoken of in the O.T. but in the N.T. God is always addressed in prayer as "our Father."

This is how Jesus instructed us to pray... *"This, then, is how you should pray: " '**Our Father** in heaven, hallowed be your name, (Matt 6:9)*

And the apostle Paul is always writing the introductions in his letters in this way *"Grace and peace to you from God our **Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and **Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** " (Eph 1:2-3)*

And the New Testament refers to God in this way not because it's chauvinistic or God is masculine in some way... but because it reflects God's greatest action in his plan to save our world and it's what He wants to ultimately be known for.

He sent his Son to become one of us; conceived by the Holy Spirit born of the Virgin Mary – the Word of God become flesh, to unite divine and human natures in an unbreakable covenant partnership.

And if we understand and believe that Jesus is also fully God, it means that God himself became Human and can completely understand and relate to us.

But here you can see that very quickly we start moving into talking about who God is through what God has done.

In fact it's hard to really know somebody without speaking of their actions, and accomplishments right? If someone has a reputation of being nasty, there are actions and incidents which contribute to that reputation.

Conversely if someone is known as a kind and caring person, again there are actions which form that reputation.

This is another reason why it's important to remind people in prayer of what God has done because it begins to reveal who God is to them and they are introduced to the Trinity.

Now when you pray in public and you remind people about what God has done, you'll have to pick and choose what you include because God has done so many things, so many awesome things that to try to include them all will have you praying all day long...

So what you need to do is assess the situation and decide which acts of God the people you are leading in prayer need to be reminded of.

The leaders in the bible were aware of this – sometimes the Israelites leaders felt it was necessary to remind Israel of their entire history in a prayer.

Reminding them of God's promises to Abraham, of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, of how they were lead through the Red Sea, the desert, to the Promised Land etc...

This served to remind them that their relationship with God was built on grace and mercy, because that formed their identity - they needed to be reminded of who they belonged to and who they were and this is what King Solomon was doing when he lead Israel in prayer at the dedication of the temple.

Other times the leaders of God's people felt it was only necessary to reference a few things that specifically related to the situation they were leading prayer in.

Acts 4:23-31 is a great example of that.

The early church was in trouble with the Jewish leaders for preaching about Jesus and John and Peter had been threatened to keep silent.

So they gather together to pray and they remind each other of who God is and what He has done with examples that specifically relate to the situation they are in.

Their reminders are pretty specific to their situation; "Sovereign God" reminding them of God's authority over the Jewish leaders.

And they quote a messianic psalm from King David which reminded them of how God protected his servants in the past, when David had been persecuted by King Saul.

So when you have to lead people in prayer remind them about who God is and what God has done in ways that are fitting to the context you're praying in – just as the leaders in scripture did.

Now one thing that God does, which speaks so much about who He is.. is that He always keep his promises! God is faithful and dependable and that is extremely important to remind

people of, because there are several promises which God has made which can bring much comfort to us.

And again we find record of that in the scriptures; God promises Noah in Gen 8:22 *"As long as the earth endures, **seedtime and harvest**, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."*

And to Abraham in Gen 22:18 *"through your seed **all nations** on earth will be **blessed**"*

And through the prophet Jeremiah, in 3:8 *"I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will **forgive** all their sins of rebellion against me."*

And to the disciples through Jesus *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the **forgiveness** of sins. (Matt 26:28)*

And... *"you will receive power when the **Holy Spirit** comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

And to the Apostle John in Revelation 21:5 ***"I am making everything new!"** Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

All these are promises which God has made and has kept, is keeping and will keep... and you can use them when you in leading people in prayer to speak specifically to their situation.

And friends sometimes... in order to help people grab on to these promises we need to include Repentance in our prayers as well.

There will be times when the group of people you are leading needs to have you - express for them, the ways in which we all rebel and sin against God, and confess the guilt we all share in that.

Nehemiah – another one of Israel's leaders – does this in his prayer in Nehemiah 1:6-7 where he says... *"I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have*



*committed against you.<sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.”*

Jesus taught this as well when he taught us to pray *“forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”* (Luke 11:4)

But confessing our sin and repenting of it is only half the picture. We must also ask for forgiveness and this brings us to Requests.

We ask God on behalf of those we are leading for that which they need. To intercede for them and request forgiveness, strength, courage... whatever the situation calls for.

So you are using the knowledge that you can bring anything and everything to God in prayer. Anything which makes you anxious, so He can deal with it.

And you are using the knowledge that you can frame your requests in light of God’s Kingdom - to ask for whatever is

needed to further Christ’s work here on earth and it will be given to you.

When the Apostle Paul writes letters to the congregations he’s overseeing, he always starts his letter with specific prayer requests for that congregation.

Listen to what he requests for the church in Ephesus:

*“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.<sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe”* (Eph 1:17-19)

To the church in Colossae... *“Asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”* (Col 1:9)

And to the church in Philippi... *“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,<sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,<sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:9-11)

What great examples of how to pray for people to grow in their Christian life – what great examples to use when you lead others in prayer.

Finally something that we can ask for other than... “Lord, please be with so and so...” now you can ask that they are filled with the incomparable riches of Christ Jesus, that they grow more and more in the power and depth of God’s love, that the Spirit would bring them into the fullness of the grace and mercy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Friends – nothing happens by chance. God works through all things for the good of those who love him...

So it is not by chance that you are here this morning... it is not by chance that you have heard teaching and encouragement about prayer over this last month... It is not by chance that you are where you are in life, that you know who you know.

Friends, you can bet that in the near future... God is going to give you the opportunity with those unique circumstances where He has placed you – to stand up, to use your knowledge of prayer and your relationship with Him – to lead others in prayer - at home, with your friends, at work, in school, wherever.

God will ask you to lead people, to help them speak to Him... maybe for the first time – and now, you’ve been prepared.

Friends we talk about the Power of Prayer – so I’ll say it again “with great power comes great responsibility” - The responsibility to pray in public.. and be a spiritual leader.