

Prayer Can Be The Biggest Waste Of Time!

Text: Luke 11:1

Introduction: Those who are doing something positive with their life recognize that we are only allotted so many days, weeks, months and years in this life, and we can not afford to waste the precious time that is given to us.

PRAYER CAN BE NO MORE THAN A WASTE OF TIME. When?

1. Praying With Your Back Toward God

2. Public Prayer Without Private Prayer

3. Praying As A Substitute For Obedience

4. Praying Selfish Prayers

All of us need to be TIME CONSCIOUS! There are many ways we can waste our time, but one of the biggest ways we can waste time is to pray an *"Unacceptable prayer."* You see, prayer is like many things in our life, there are GOOD PRAYERS and BAD PRAYERS.

- Prayer, in and of itself, is not necessarily good
- Wrong praying is just as bad as not praying at all. Some prayers are no more than a waste of time

Let's examine some types of prayers that fall into the category of wasted time.

1. PRAYING WITH YOUR BACK TOWARD GOD

We see an example of this in Ezekiel 8:16, "Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, WITH **THEIR BACKS TOWARD THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD, AND THEIR FACES TOWARD THE EAST; AND THEY WORSHIPED THE SUN TOWARD THE EAST."**

WHAT DOES THIS VERSE MEAN? Notice, there were about 25 men at the

inner court of the temple, with their backs turned away from God. You could say they were "Thumbing their noses" at God, by turning their backs toward God and facing toward their sun god.

Illus: On the national news, a young girl who played in the high school band objected to the war against Iraq. When the band stood on a field, pledging allegiance to the flag, as an act of protest against the war in Iraq, she turned her back toward the flag.

That is what these twenty-five men did at the temple. They were at the RIGHT PLACE, but they were FACING THE WRONG DIRECTION. They were at the temple, but they were showing their hearts were toward the sun god that they worshipped.

Illus: This would be like a man spending time with his wife, (he is at the right place) but if you could get into his mind, you would find he is thinking of another woman.

Jeremiah addresses this problem, we read in Jer. 2:27, "...FOR THEY HAVE TURNED THEIR BACK UNTO ME, AND NOT THEIR FACE: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us."

- People have always done God this way. They turn their backs on God and when they are in trouble they turn to God
- But then they are surprised when God turns his back on them

There are many Christians that are praying WASTED PRAYERS. They wonder why God never hears and answers their prayers, and it is because they have turned their backs on God. Many are like the twenty five men at the temple, they are in the right place, but their hearts are somewhere else.

The Lord said in Matthew 15:8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

2. PUBLIC PRAYER WITHOUT PRIVATE PRAYER

Matt. 6:5-6, "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for THEY LOVE TO PRAY STANDING IN THE SYNAGOGUES AND IN THE CORNERS OF THE STREETS, THAT THEY MAY BE SEEN OF MEN. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Notice, these disciples wanted to know how to pray, and the Lord taught them that they must NOT PRAY AS THE HYPOCRITES PRAY!

HOW DID THE HYPOCRITES PRAY? The Word of God teaches that the only time they prayed was in public, and the only reason they prayed was to be seen of men. In other words, they were not using prayer as a means to communicate with God, but as a tool to be seen by men.

People will do all kinds of things to be SEEN OF MEN. And one of the things that man has always done, is use PRAYER AS A TOOL to get attention. But I can tell you, on the basis of God's Word, their prayers are no more than a waste of time.

God is displeased when we take the sacredness of prayer and use it as a tool to accomplish something self-centered.

3. PRAYING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE

There are times when prayer is used as an excuse. Prayer is never a substitute for obedience. Joshua and the elders of Israel were complaining before God after the Israelites were defeated at Ai. They were putting on quite a show, tearing their sackcloth, throwing dust in the air, and complaining to God.

God broke in on this little prayer meeting. Look at Josh. 7:10-11a, we read, "And the LORD said unto Joshua, GET THEE UP; WHEREFORE LIEST THOU THUS UPON THY FACE? Israel hath sinned,...."

God's people were defeated because Achan had partaken of the accursed (forbidden) thing. Disobedience in the camp had brought about this defeat, and they prayed, but PRAYER WAS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE.

Disobedience in the church and disobedience in the heart hinder the blessing of God.

In Joshua's time, it was not MORE TIME SPENT IN PRAYER THAT WAS NEEDED, what was needed was the removal of the sin in the camp!

There are folks who know they have sin in their life, and they wonder why God does not answer their prayers. Listen to me:

- He never has
- He never will

Until the sin problem in their life is dealt with.

We read in Ps. 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Their prayers are no more than a waste of time.

4. SELFISH PRAYING

True prayer...

- HONORS GOD'S NAME
- ADVANCES GOD'S KINGDOM
- IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S WILL

To put it another way, prayer is meant to be God-centered, not self-centered.

Now listen, this judge used a good friend for the wrong purpose. And many folks will use prayer for the wrong purpose.

But we read in James 4:3, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*"

5. PRAYING TO ONE'S SELF

Luke 18:11a, "*The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.....*" *This man is not really praying to God. He is praying. . . with himself.*

HOW DOES HE DO THIS? He is using prayer as a means to PROMOTE HIMSELF! Some will spend hours before God, trying to convince Him that they are special.

Listen, you do not need to brag and tell God how special you are, HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU. If you are going this route, you might want to find someone that DOES NOT KNOW YOU!

Listen, this crowd that is always bragging before man and God, can't be taken seriously. Why? Because everything that comes out of their mouths is spoken to make them look good. That is all they are concerned about.

Conclusion: I want to remind you again, PRAYER CAN BE NO MORE THAN A WASTE OF TIME. When?

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2. Public Prayer Without Private Prayer
3. Praying As A Substitute For Obedience
4. Praying Selfish Prayers
5. Praying To One's Self