

Preaching:

AM: Adam Cain

PM: Jerry Deschler

Do You Pray?

The worshiper who would pray in the assembly must do more than bow his head and close his eyes. He must pray. "Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uniformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?" (I Cor. 14:16). This verse suggests four requirements if one is to enter into a prayer.

1. He must listen to the prayer. One cannot legitimately say "Amen" at the conclusion of a prayer if he has not listened to the prayer. "Mind-wandering" is an ever-present problem. We sing, but we don't observe the words of the song. We bow our heads, but we don't listen to the prayer. We sit through the sermon, but our minds wander to things of an earthly nature. Consequently, we attend worship periods, but we don't worship as we ought. If one is to pray, with the congregation, he must listen to the prayer.

2. He must understand the prayer. When a man in the first century led a prayer in an unknown tongue, the worshiper could not say "Amen," for he could not understand the language in which the prayer was spoken. Neither could the worshiper say "Amen" today if the leader has not spoken loudly enough to be heard or if he has used words or phrases which the worshiper does not understand. Those who lead prayers in the assembly should be conscious of the needs of the whole congregation, speaking up where all can hear and us-

ing words which all can understand.

3. He must agree with the prayer. A number of years ago, while sitting beside an older preacher, I observed his saying "Yes" or "Yes, Lord" at the conclusion of each separate phrase of the prayer as it was being led. He spoke the words softly enough that I was probably the only one in the assembly who could hear them, but I was impressed. Obviously, this brother was listening to every phrase, determining whether or not he agreed with the phrase, and was then softly speaking his agreement. He was not just sitting through a prayer; he was praying. Occasionally, we hear sentiments expressed in prayer with which we do not agree. To these sentiments we cannot say "Amen."

4. He must say "Amen." The word "Amen" means "so let it be." We long to hear the strong, resounding "Amen" at the close of prayers which we used to hear. We fear that the move away from this practice is just another step toward cold, lifeless formality in our worship periods. We are not contending, however, that one must say the word "Amen" audibly; but we are suggesting that at least in his mind he should say "Amen," thus making the prayer his own prayer. He has listened to the prayer; he has understood the prayer; he has agreed with the prayer; now he speaks to God his "Amen" or approval of the prayer as his prayer. In this manner, he unites with other worshipers in common prayer unto God. -Bill Hall

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Service Times

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30 AM
Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

Private classes arranged at your convenience.

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Churches -- God-Centered or Man-Centered?

Religion by its very definition would seem to involve God. The word godly means God-centered. However, there are those who practice a religion that is all about man rather than God. To say that such religion is godly is not to say that it is wicked, but simply that it is not centered in God.

Jesus described such people in his day in the words of Isaiah: "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). Paul writes of those who are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" while at the same time "holding a form of godliness" (2 Timothy 3:4-5). Jude describes some who are in the church, but are "ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

Why would ungodly individuals continue to profess religion? Some do so, "supposing that godliness is a way of gain" (1 Timothy 6:5). Others, like Diotrophes (3 John 9), love the pre-eminence that they have attained in the church. Or, like the rulers of (John 12:43), they may love "the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Contrasting Churches

Local churches may be led either by godly or by ungodly men — that is, by men who are most concerned for God and things of the Spirit or by men whose concerns are primarily human and temporal. Such churches can be distinguished by the following:

Goals: Godly leaders have as their goal "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning

craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things unto Him who is the head — Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-15). Men whose thinking is not dominated by God have as their primary goal increasing numbers — a big church. They consider numerical growth proof of God's approval.

Doctrine: Godly leaders are determined to abide in the doctrine of Christ and not to go beyond it (2 John 9). Not godly men, knowing that most of the public "will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4), provide the teachers that will tickle their ears.

Discipline: Godly leaders will insist that, in harmony with God's instructions, the church "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Ungodly leaders advertise: "Come as you are" and boast that they are not judgmental, receiving everyone regardless of lifestyle.

Worship: Godly leaders insist that God be worshipped "acceptable with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28) while ungodly men place great emphasis on "worship" that pleases the public and they seem concerned only that everyone leave "feeling good about themselves" and eager to return. **Preachers:** Godly leaders are not nearly as concerned with excellence of speech or of wisdom as that preachers be "determined not to know anything...save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Ungodly leaders insist that preachers be entertaining and personally popular, even with the world.

Activities: Godly leaders test every proposed action by all the scriptures, determined to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17), while ungodly leaders offer whatever people want — sports, entertainment, education, feasts, travel - with little apparent concern for what God wants.