

Praying Aloud

"I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill" (Psalm 3:4).

"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD . . ." (Psalm 5:3).

There are times in a Christian's life when Bible reading and prayer become routine; some have even used the word "boring." This is a dangerous time, for one could easily become spiritually weak if he or she is not careful. How can this be overcome? Is there a way to strengthen one's Bible reading and prayer life?

I had a praying mother. That is a blessing many people know nothing about. My mother had regular times of prayer, and all of her children knew what she was doing. It would not be unusual to hear her praying aloud in her bedroom. When she babysat grandchildren, they would kneel or lay down beside her while she was praying. What a beautiful heritage she was creating for those children!

My own prayer life was less noticeable. Perhaps my children did not know when I was praying, for I prayed very quietly. In time, the majority of my daily, personal prayers became silent prayers (in my mind). I did not seem to notice it at the time, but my prayer time was losing fervor.

On three separate occasions, before beginning my personal prayer, I seemed to hear a voice that said, "Pray out loud." I did not think it was God, for surely He hears all prayers, whether they are prayed out loud or silently. However, that thought would not leave me, and it prompted to me to see what the Bible said about praying aloud. I began a Bible study with questions, such as: "Is there a place and time for 'out loud' prayers? Can 'out loud' prayers be more effective than silent prayers?"

This lesson in no way diminishes the need for praying silently. There are times when we cannot put into words what we feel. We are too upset or heavily burdened to pray "out loud." That is when "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:26). There are other times when silent prayer is perhaps more appropriate, such as: praying over your lunch at school or asking God for help during a test. Silent prayer should be a part of daily meditation, and it can happen anywhere (on the school bus, while walking down the halls, while at work, etc.). There is a definite place for silent prayers.

Likewise, there is a definite place for prayers prayed aloud. It could cause confusion if a church service is begun with silent prayer. How could you agree in prayer if one is praying silently? Would a silent prayer with one who is in need be as encouraging as a prayer prayed aloud? When having family devotions, children need to hear their parents pray aloud. This is a wonderful way to teach the children how to pray.

A Comparison

Because the Christian needs to have times of silent prayer and other times of prayers that are prayed aloud, how does one know which way to pray during that daily, personal conversation with God? Let us do a comparison between silent prayers and aloud prayers to help you make a decision.

When praying this way, how long is it before you find yourself thinking about what you need to do later or something that someone said about you? Have you ever prayed a silent prayer and your mind DID NOT wander? Have you ever fallen asleep while praying silently? For too many, prayer time becomes nap time. Praying out loud keeps you focused on what you are saying and keeps you awake.

How intense or fervent are your prayers when you pray silently? James 5:16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The word *fervent* means "to put forth power, to be at work, to be active." Does this definition fit silent prayer?

It is true that God knows our thoughts and He can hear silent prayers, but we are not wired to communicate this way. My husband and I have been married for a long time, and sometimes we can guess what the other is thinking, but this is not an effective method of communication. To truly express our feelings and to be understood, we have to talk to each other.

Praying out loud forces you to concentrate, to speak in complete sentences or thoughts, to be more specific. Have you ever needed to tell God you are sorry for something you have done? Some of the hardest words for people to say are "I'm sorry" and "I was wrong." Hearing yourself say these words to God, aloud, gives emphasis to what

you are saying. You must verbalize the fact that you have failed God and you need His help. This can be much more powerful, more humbling, and more meaningful than a silent prayer.

The Power of the Spoken Word

During Creation, did God think things into existence or did He speak? "And God said" (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 24). Why couldn't God just think and it happened? Was it necessary for Him to speak? Proverbs 18:21 lets us know that there is power in the spoken word: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Is it possible that praying aloud could be a more powerful prayer than one prayed silently?

Does hearing spoken words (words of faith and hope, words of thanksgiving to God) increase your faith? Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Hearing yourself speak the promises of God's Word while praying (aloud) can strengthen your faith. For example, your prayer might be: "God, I'm thankful to know that all things work together for good" or "God, thank You for promising to supply all my needs" or "God, I'm trusting in Your promise that says they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

If your daily, personal prayers are all silent prayers, this is not to criticize or condemn you. Just as this was a personal challenge to me, I am making a challenge to you. For the next week, try praying out loud during your daily, personal prayer time. Then ask yourself these questions: "Were my prayers more fervent? Did it feel different to pray this way? Did I stay on track with my prayer? Did my mind wander? Did I fall asleep while praying? Did praying out loud make a difference in my prayer life?"

One additional question I ask you to consider: "Could praying aloud during times of personal, private prayer make it easier to pray aloud in public prayer services?" We need more prayer warriors in our homes and in our church services. Do you have a weak prayer life? If so, consider taking this challenge and see if it strengthens your prayer life.

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