

Prayer: Understanding

Paul wrote that prayer should be offered with the spirit and the understanding (1 Cor. 14:15). This involves the proper attitude and understanding what are saying or asking. Many times, as I listen to prayers, I perceive what has been termed biblically as “vain repetitions” (Matt. 6:7). Repetition is not wrong; rather, it is VAIN repetitions that are to be avoided (simply repeating what we have heard in prayers without considering what is being said).

All my life I have heard a phrase used in our prayers that falls under the purview of this discussion. How many times have we heard someone say, “...and please give the preacher a ready recollection...” Do we understand what we are asking? What if the preacher has not studied? Are we asking God to put thoughts in the preacher’s mind supernaturally? Do we believe that Divine intervention continues today?

As we pray, let us pray with the understanding. I appreciate that people desire that the preacher has prepared well and that a lesson will be presented in such a way as to best aid the congregation. Such a concern could be worded like this and still be “proper”: “Lord, it is our desire that the preacher has prepared well and that we can learn from that which You have provided us in your word.” Wording a prayer in this fashion still expresses our desire, but also refrains from asking God to operate in a fashion contrary to His will and nature. May we be those who think about the words we express in our prayers and that we pray with the understanding.

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