

1 TIMOTHY 2:8

WHAT'S A MAN TO DO?

“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.”¹

Males receive a lot of bad press today. Social engineers, many thoroughly indoctrinated in feminist philosophies, appear determined to ensure that little boys will be feminised while little girls are trained to believe that they can act like men. It is as though contemporary culture is being wussified. To ensure that boys are docile and compliant to the demands of primarily female educators, we diagnose them as suffering from a bevy of strange new alphabetical maladies—ADHD, ADD and DCD, all of which are NUTS. Having saddled our sons with a chronic condition identified by a scary sounding name—an affliction that has only recently been invented—we medicate our sons into hebetude. Then, we cluck our tongues because as result of their drug-induced stupor they aren't able to think as clearly or respond as quickly as the unmedicated girls we compel them to compete against. Then, after the boys grow to be young adults, the young women mourn that there are no men able to match their abilities. All the while, politicians create new ministries to promote women while doing all within their power to ensure that men continue to be complacent and compliant.

If that isn't confusing enough, confused little boys who think they are little girls, and equally confused little girls that wish they were little boys, are enabled through politics to be whatever they decide they are. We see news reports on an increasingly regular basis informing us that six-year-old girls identify as boys, receiving government mandated support to use boys' wash rooms; and fourteen-year-old boys identify as girls, demanding and receiving governmental support to play on female sports teams. Somehow, I don't think this was what Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan had in mind in the early days of feminism. Are you sufficiently confused yet?

Our neighbours to the south are redefining combat roles so that G.I. Jane need no longer be merely the title of a B-rated movie—she can actually join the combat team! Even my beloved Marine Corps is being compelled to reassess combat roles so women can now be traumatised and suffer with PTSD. I'm no prophet, but I am prepared to state without equivocation that the outcome of this particular social experiment will be a blast of cold water to feminist thought, leading to disastrous consequences. Soon, the nation will discover what the Israelis and Russians discovered years ago, compelling them to withdraw women from front-line combat roles.

Unfortunately, the egalitarian emphasis has infiltrated most of the churches of the Master. For the most part, the concept of complementarity is foreign in contemporary church life. Contemporary church goers have embraced a lifestyle that assigns greatness to power and transforms positions of service into platforms for personal advancement as power brokers. Thus, women's demand for a place at the table has taken on a strange, new meaning within the evangelical Zion. Today, women demand increasingly prominent roles directing the affairs of the churches. What should be especially disturbing about this transition is that as women assert themselves as leaders in the roles assigned by the Master among the churches, men retreat from participation in the services of the assemblies. As has been said on several prior occasions, as women usurp authority among the churches, men attend the services disguised as empty pews.

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Men are to be leaders, both in their families and within the congregations of our Lord. The leadership men are to exercise within the churches is not as some might imagine; men are not to attempt to control matters as though they had power—men are to provide spiritual leadership, especially through leading in prayer. If prayer is lacking among the people of God, no leadership will be exercised. Everything else being equal, the power of a congregation will be determined by the vitality of the prayer life of the assembly; and the vigor of the prayer life of the assembly will be determined by the involvement of the men in this essential activity.

The text for our study today is one verse—a verse easily overlooked in the rush to address the more extended, and more controversial statement concerning the role of women among the churches. However, we dishonour God and the Word that He has given if we fail to consider what He has said concerning the ministry of men within the assembly. Paul answers the question that is seldom asked, “What’s a man to do?”

A UNIVERSAL EXPECTATION — “I desire then that in every place the men should pray.” The Apostle expresses his personal desire, but the word chosen speaks more strongly than merely expressing his preference. Paul chooses a word that conveys an authoritative apostolic command based upon a strong theological basis; he is pointing back to what has already been written previously. Unfortunately, because preachers can only deal with a small portion of what is said at any given time, and because we tend to forget what has gone before, it is common that the messages can appear disjointed, unconnected and even uncohesive.

Therefore, in order to understand the urgency imposed by Paul’s imperative, recall that in the previous messages in this series we saw that the “supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings” that are to be offered up for all people were in the context of evangelism. Christ Jesus presented His life as a sacrifice because of mankind’s desperate need to be redeemed.² He “gave His life as a ransom for all”; and the Apostle was “appointed a preacher and an apostle” and also “a teacher of the Gentiles” [see **1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7**]. There is no break in the Apostle’s thought pattern. The postpositive conjunction that is translated in our text by “then,” indicates that the Apostle is continuing with the argument commenced earlier. Here is the principle that must be emphasised: **EVERY MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION IS TO BE ENGAGED IN EVANGELISM**. The corollary is that **MEN ARE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN EVANGELISTIC PRAYER**.

By way of review, let me iterate what has gone before in previous messages. Congregations are commanded to be marked by prayer offered for all people—and especially for those who govern in the nation, in the provinces and in the communities. The reason for such prayer is because we want all people to be saved. Therefore, we seek peaceful conditions in our land that will permit us to evangelise.

Let’s admit a worrisome truth: if we are not evangelising, we are disobedient to the will of the Master. If, as a congregation, we are not telling our communities of the love of God in Christ the Lord, we are disobedient to the call of the Master. Make this command still more personal. If as an individual I am not telling my neighbours, my colleagues, my friends and my family of the salvation offered in Christ the Lord, I am disobedient to Him. Therefore, we pray for those who lead so that we will have opportunity to evangelise without interdiction.

² Michael Stark, “Prayer for Those Who Govern,” <http://newbeginningsbaptist.ca/clientimages/42652/sermonarchive/1%20timothy%202.01-06%20prayer%20for%20those%20who%20govern.pdf>; Michael Stark, “One Mediator,” <http://newbeginningsbaptist.ca/clientimages/42652/sermonarchive/1%20timothy%202.01-07%20one%20mediator.pdf>

By implication, having redeemed us, Christ left us here for a purpose. To be certain, we are to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour” [TITUS 2:10]. Because we are in the earth, we have been left “to the praise of His glory” [EPHESIANS 1:12-14; PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11]. We live in anticipation of His return, knowing that He will be glorified as His salvation is revealed in us. However, what is too often ignored among the churches of this day is that we are to tell others of His salvation. We are convinced that “God our Saviour ... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” [1 TIMOTHY 2:3b, 4]. The evidence that this is the desire of our Master is witnessed in this truth, to which all professing Christians give assent. “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time” [1 TIMOTHY 2:5, 6].

Reviewing recent statistics that have been generated about evangelism by churches across North America, I grow deeply concerned. When it requires over forty-nine professing Christians to see one person saved, something is dreadfully wrong. Individuals who are saved are commanded to be baptised after coming to faith in the Son of God. Thus, if we allow that each baptism among baptistic churches represents one person saved, we can estimate how effective the churches are in fulfilling the Great Commission. Almost all denominations in North America are registering declining memberships. Worse still is the fact that even though membership is declining, baptisms are declining even faster.³ What this indicates is that we are becoming practical atheists—we neither believe the Word when it tells us that Jesus is God, nor are we pastors training our people either to pray for the lost or to witness of Christ’s great salvation. Statistics for other groups may be more dismal than these, with some indicating that it requires more than one hundred professing Christians to see one addition to a congregation!

Think of the universal nature of this apostolic injunction. When the Apostle says, “I desire that in every place the men should pray,” it is apparent that wherever the Gospel is preached, prayer is expected. Moreover, the men are expected to take the lead in this praying. The statement as presented seemingly recalls something that is recorded in Malachi’s prophecy. “From the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts” [MALACHI 1:11].

This universal concept of prayer marking the life of the churches is witnessed in many of Paul’s writings. In the first Corinthian letter, he wrote, “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who *in every place* call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” [1 CORINTHIANS 1:2].

Clearly, the Apostle expected that wherever saints are gathered, they will call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Combine that thought with the knowledge that wherever we who believe are found, we will spread the knowledge of His salvation. “Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him *everywhere*” [2 CORINTHIANS 2:14].

Worshipping and walking with the Master, Christians will either draw others to Christ or repel them. We Christians do impact those to whom we witness. “We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things” [2 CORINTHIANS 2:15, 16]? Who, indeed, is sufficient for these things?

³ E.g. Russ Rankin, “Southern Baptists decline in baptisms, membership, attendance,” June 09, 2011, <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Southern-baptists-decline-in-baptisms-membership-attendance>, accessed July 20 2013

Consider one final passage in thinking of the universal requirement for prayer wherever Christ is worshipped. “Not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God *has gone forth everywhere*, so that we need not say anything” [1 THESSALONIANS 1:8]. The church gathered seeks the face of God and He answers by sending them out into the world to fulfil His holy will.

Truthfully, the greatest example of evangelistic praying must be that of Christ Himself. Isaiah writes of Messiah’s praying:

“I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.”

[ISAIAH 53:12]

According to Isaiah, Messiah “makes intercession for the transgressors.” On the Cross, the Master prayed for those tormenting Him, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” [LUKE 23:34]. Surely, you and I are included in these prayers. If we are redeemed, then we know the efficacy of His prayers. Armed with this example of evangelistic prayer, each Christian should be identified as a pray-er—one who pleads for the lost, not neglecting those who are considered great.

If we follow the Master’s example, we will pray for the lost. One need but think of those whom we call great in the pantheon of Christian stalwarts. John Knox cried out to the Lord God, “Give me Scotland or I die!” And God did give him Scotland. What would it be were there to be found among us today even one who would cry out unceasingly, “Give me Canada or I die?”

Martin Luther, on the night before the Diet of Worms, pleaded before the Living God, “Do Thou, my God, do Thou, God, stand by me against all the world’s wisdom and reason. Oh, do it! Thou must do it. Stand by me, Thou true, eternal God!” And God did stand by him, employing him to confound the learned papists and delivering Europe from the dark night of the soul imposed by the idolatry of the Vatican.

We hear the plea of George Whitfield, “O Lord, give me souls or take my soul,” and we wonder whether such prayers will ever be heard within this day. Henry Martyn rushing out of a pagan temple pleaded with God, “I cannot endure existence if Jesus is to be so dishonored!” Before this, he had knelt on India’s coral beaches and cried out, “Here let me burn out for God.” What power there would be in such a prayer in this day!

I know that the churches of this day recite prayers, but I wonder whether the churches of this day pray. I know that many of you pray, and I rejoice in that knowledge. However, I am deeply concerned that I witness such poor attendance at prayer meetings among the saints in this day. For a brief period I held membership in a great, mega-church. Each Sunday, over eleven thousand people gathered for worship in three services of that great edifice. However, when Wednesday evening came and the church doors were opened for the congregational prayer service, there would be at times as few as forty people gathered for prayer. Never, out of that massive membership of more than twenty-four thousand professing saints, did more than two hundred attend such prayer services—not even one percent of those claiming membership in the congregation routinely attended such prayer services. Can we claim to be better than that?

God honours evangelistic prayer. Let me give but one example before I move to the next point. When Stephen, the first martyr, was being stoned, there stood among the mob a young rabbi named Saul who was from the city of Tarsus. When Doctor Luke recorded the account of the early church, his primary source for information was Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles. Listen to the account of Stephen's final moments on this earth as recorded by Doctor Luke, likely drawing from the memories of Saul of Tarsus, now known as Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles.

"Now when [the mob] heard [Stephen's defence and the charges levelled against them] they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

"And Saul approved of his execution" [ACTS 7:54-8:1a].

Near the end of his service, Paul recalled that day. I can believe that he was never quite able to escape the prayers of that godly man. On one occasion when he himself was threatened by Jewish religious fanatics, the Apostle testified of his own participation in Stephen's death, "When the blood of Stephen [Christ's] witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him" [ACTS 22:20].

In his defence before Agrippa, the Apostle testified of his former life before Christ's grace was extended to him, "I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them" [ACTS 26:10]. Stephen had faced a gruesome, brutal death with equanimity, courage and grace. He prayed for those who were determined to take his life, and, the Lord God graciously answered the prayer of that dying man to convict Saul, bringing him to repentance and faith.

Take this lesson home, applying it in each life: What is taught in this portion of the letter is universal. Paul was teaching the Ephesians, and all Christians who read what was written, to learn "how one ought to behave in the household of God" [1 TIMOTHY 3:15]. Each believer is responsible to evangelise, beginning with their own family and circle of friends. All Christians are to engage in evangelistic prayer; and the men are to provide leadership in such praying!

THE MEN SHOULD PRAY — "I desire then that in every place the men should pray." To a breath-taking degree the United States and Canada are witnessing transformation of national character so dramatic that it is difficult to imagine that any such change has ever been witnessed in history. Conscientious Christians may bemoan the fact, but the reality is that Christians are increasingly marginalised, excluded from the public square and isolated into religious enclaves. Christian doctrine is increasingly censured and on occasion even criminalised in this brave new world created by governmental fiat.

During the past several decades, governments have increasingly asserted the right to usurp the place of God in the life of citizens. Increasingly, display of religious thought must meet governmental approval, religious sermons must not make anyone uncomfortable, religious leaders must retreat from the public square while government control over churches is exalted. In effect, churches in our nation have become libertarian in their interactions with culture, though culture does not agree to the same libertarian rule when pressing the churches.

Morality and ethics are assuredly being redefined in the waning days of the Age of Grace. In such an environment, Christians tend to gravitate to one of two extremes in life; Christians either become silent in the face of radical redefinition of morality or they grow angry, barely stifling their rage as they mutter beneath their breath. The question for each Christian must be, “What should the Christian do as the world rushes to embrace unrighteousness and exalt godlessness?” In this chapter, the Apostle answers precisely that question, first for men and then for women. The focus of the message today is to discover how men are to respond when the world is turned upside down; and we are learning that “the men” (*toûs ándras*) are admonished to pray! Paul specifies males as leaders in prayer congregational. The principle stated is that ***MEN ARE TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN EVANGELISTIC PRAYER.***

Two words are commonly translated “men” in the New Testament. The first of those words is *ánthropos*; we might recognise that this word lies behind our term “anthropology.” This is quite a common word, and while it can speak of a man, it speaks of a human being. We have something like that in the English tongue, or at least we did before social engineers began to tamper with our language to make it gender neutral. We once spoke of mankind; we understood that whenever we made a generalised statement concern man, we were speaking of the human race.

The other word, which Paul uses in our text, is the Greek word *anér*, or the form used here, *andrós*. This word is generally quite specific in referring to a male in contrast to a female. It could be used to speak of an adult man when one wished to exclude boys from consideration. In light of his choice of words, we can be quite certain that Paul means for the men of the congregation to lead in prayer. Were there doubts about this, the fact that he uses the definite article clinches the matter—the men of the congregation are to assume the lead in prayer.

Because considerable confusion reigns concerning the respective roles for men and for women among the churches, it is necessary to note that when the Apostle states that the males are to provide leadership in evangelistic prayer, he is not excluding women from praying in the congregation. Certainly, women can and should pray privately. However, even within the congregation, women are encouraged to pray. Such prayer should be offered up in a decorous manner; but nowhere are women proscribed from prayer within the assembly of the righteous.

Listen to the instruction provided to the Corinthian Christians. “Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head” [1 CORINTHIANS 11:4-6].

Women are not interdicted from praying publicly in a congregation service; however, they are instructed to avoid dishonouring their husbands through assuming leadership over them. Publicly, wives are to show respect for their husbands; and one would hope that such respect is also demonstrated in private. In the particular context of Paul’s missive to the Corinthian saints, wives were not to appear in the fashion adopted by those women who had taken a vow to serve as sacred prostitutes in the Temple of Artemis; Christian women were to wear their hair long rather than cutting it short, revealing a modest demeanor.

The Apostle continues his address to the Corinthian saints by asking a rhetorical question, “Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God” [1 CORINTHIANS 11:13-16].

Isn't it interesting that in the face of rapidly changing morality and ethics Paul instructs men to pray? We might have imagined that the Apostle would instruct men to use their natural aggression or their strength to promote the work of God and to advance the Faith. However, God calls on men to bring their lives into conformity to His will through spending time in prayer. He calls on men to exercise self-control to lead others in looking to God.

PRAYER SHOULD REVEAL SELF-CONTROL — “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.” There are three universal hindrances to prayer—sin, anger and quarrelling. The Apostle manages to address all three of these hindrances in succinct form. Before specifically addressing these hindrances, let's look for an overview of what has been written.

In speaking of lifting the hands, Paul is not giving a command of the posture required for prayer, but focusing on something much more basic. The usual posture in prayer in the early church was standing. This was adopted from the Jewish custom, but it was not a universal demand imposed on those who would pray. Indeed, in the Old Testament we read of some who stood with outstretched hands, such as Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. “Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven” [1 KINGS 8:22].

We know that others fell on their faces when praying. For instance, Moses and Aaron “fell on their faces and said, ‘O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation’” [NUMBERS 16:22]?

Others knelt in prayer, as was true of Daniel. “When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously” [DANIEL 6:10].

In the New Testament, we read that some simply stood where they were. “The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed... But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner’” [LUKE 18:11, 13]!

At other times, those praying lifted their eyes toward heaven, as did Jesus. “When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you’” [JOHN 17:1].

Though many contemporary Christians, especially evangelicals, sit when praying, there is only one instance of someone sitting in prayer to be found in the entirety of the Bible. “King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, ‘Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far’” [1 CHRONICLES 17:16; see also 2 SAMUEL 7:18]?

What is vital is that we don't fall into the trap of prescribing a particular posture without looking on the condition of our heart. This emphasis is easily missed in our focus on secondary matters. We do well to remember the rhetorical query and answer given by the Psalmist.

“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.”

[PSALM 24:3, 4]

On one occasion, a man argued with me that any member of the assembly could direct the service of the congregation or serve to provide leadership. I dissented from his assertion of general suitability for any member to provide leadership for the assembly. He argued that anyone could serve as a deacon or an elder; the argument was his justification for electing people to these positions on an annual basis. As pastor, I could not even agree that everyone was qualified to lead in prayer! We imagine that anyone can lead congregational prayer. However, the emphasis, both in the text and in the remainder of the Word, is upon approaching God in holiness. No mortal can be holy as Christ is holy; some must not be thrust into that situation if they are living sinful lives. We are responsible to present prayer in holiness to the Lord.

To attempt to pray with unclean hands is to ensure that our cries will go unheard. Recall this rebuke to an unholy people who thought that mere form would suffice before the LORD God.

“When you spread out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.”

[ISAIAH 1:15]

The words resonate with those that Micah wrote about the same time.

“They will cry to the LORD,
but he will not answer them;
he will hide his face from them at that time,
because they have made their deeds evil.”

[MICAH 3:4]

Evil deeds insure that prayer becomes mere ritual without meaning. We men who lead in prayer must ensure that we have addressed our proclivities toward sin. We must confess our wickedness and seek God's cleansing. Before we lead in prayer, it would be well for us to recall John's teaching, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” [1 JOHN 1:9].

Holiness, approaching God in holiness and living holy lives, is a concept that is woefully absent from much of contemporary church life. Let's remember that elders are to be holy. Instructing Titus as to the qualifications for eldership, Paul states that those who would serve in this capacity must be “hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, *holy*, and disciplined” [TITUS 1:8]. We rightfully expect that those who serve as elders are to be holy; likewise, the men who are to lead in prayer are to be holy. This holiness should not be a “peg leg holiness,” something that is strapped on each day; the holiness of those who lead in prayer is to be integral to their lives. In short, the call for holiness is a call to maturity in the Faith.

Similarly, we must rid ourselves of anger and a quarrelsome attitude, if we will truly pray with power. We must not, as is so common among many of the professed saints, allow ourselves to begin to think ill of fellow Christians, condemning them in our heart and thinking ill of them. Assuredly, those to whom we look to provide leadership in prayer must be marked by holy lives. Anger and quarreling are inconsistent with a holy life that God requires of those who pray publicly. These qualities are also counter to effective praying.

We read in The Didache, an ancient devotional writing highly esteemed among the primitive saints, “Do not let anyone who is having a dispute with a neighbour join until they are reconciled so that your sacrifice may not be impure.”⁴ Bitterness of heart is a barrier that hinders our prayers from ever reaching God.

We are taught throughout the Bible that there are factors that lie within our control that affect the efficacy of our prayers. Moreover, the factors presented throughout the Word are mainly relational. Both our relationship to God and our relationship to others dictate whether our prayers will be received by God. Let me give just a few examples of such relational situations. The Psalmist has written of prayer:

“Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for my soul.
I cried to him with my mouth,
and high praise was on my tongue.
If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.”

[PSALM 66:16-18]

In that same vein, recall Jesus’ instructions to us when we pray, “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” [MATTHEW 5:23, 24].

In this context, I would point you to the stunning words of the Master concerning our attitude toward others. “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” [MATTHEW 6:14, 15]. Related to this teaching is the moral appended to a parable Jesus gave concerning an unforgiving servant. Without reviewing the entire parable, focus on the final summation Jesus provided after the master consigned the servant to debtors’ prison. “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” [MATTHEW 18:35].

Likewise, husbands are responsible to esteem their wives as partners in the service of the Master. “Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” [1 PETER 3:7].

Let’s summarise what we have witnessed in this passage.

1. **EVERY MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION IS TO BE ENGAGED IN EVANGELISM.**
2. **MEN ARE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN EVANGELISTIC PRAYER.**
3. **CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER IS TO BE LED BY MEN WHO ARE HOLY.**
4. **ANGER DISQUALIFIES A MAN FROM LEADING IN PRAYER.**
5. **QUARRELING MUST NOT CHARACTERISE THE PRAYER OF GOD’S PEOPLE.**

Applying these criteria to the prayer life of our congregation, we can discover the spiritual health of the assembly. By these criteria, can we say that we are spiritually healthy?

⁴ Thomas O’Loughlin, **The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians**, 14.2 (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London 2010) 170

Permit me to recommend steps toward a healthier congregation.

1. ***EACH MAN MUST ACCEPT HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO STRIVE FOR HOLINESS.***
2. ***EACH MAN MUST ASPIRE TO BE A PRAYER WARRIOR.***
3. ***EACH MAN MUST SEEK OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD IN CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER.***
4. ***EACH CONGREGANT MUST VALUE EVANGELISTIC PRAYER.***
5. ***THE CONGREGATION MUST MAKE PRAYER CENTRAL TO ALL WORSHIP.***

When these steps are taken, we will begin to move toward fulfilling the ministry the Apostle envisioned in the text. May God encourage us to follow His will. Amen.