

# Philosophy of the Pastoral Prayer

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At Christ Fellowship Bible Church, when we gather on Sundays for corporate worship, we set aside time for the public reading of Scripture and that is commonly followed by a pastoral prayer. *Why do we do this and what is it for?*

## **1. A man leads in the reading of the Word and in the pastoral prayer.**

We believe the New Testament makes clear that God has appointed the men to lead in the corporate worship gathering of the saints. And so for this reason, we ask men -- usually the pastor or one of the elders -- to read from the Scripture publicly and then to pray a prayer afterward.

## **2. The pastoral prayer functions in a powerful way of bringing the entire congregation into the very presence of God in corporate worship & praise.**

The prayer has as its focus the bringing of the entire congregation before the immediate presence of a thrice-holy God. This prayer serves as a blessing to both bring God to the people and to bring the people to God.

## **3. The pastoral prayer can incorporate language, themes, concepts, truths, attributes of God that all came from the Scripture portion that was just read.**

The minister who leads in the prayer serves as an instructor as well. The pastoral prayer models for the flock how to *pray the Scriptures* as we exalt God and His attributes that came out of the text, as we confess our sins where we've fallen short of God's requirements, as we look to Christ by faith in the glorious gospel presented in the Word, and commit ourselves to obedience and beg for the Spirit's enabling grace to walk in holiness. The prayer should be lengthy enough to seek God earnestly with the congregation and to work through the text that was just read. It should respond to the Word in praise, or petition, or contrition, or desperation.

## **4. The pastoral prayer should utilize the "we"/"us" and not "I"/"me" in the addressing of God in the corporate assembly.**

Because the corporate prayer is the bringing of the congregation into the throneroom of the divine presence, the prayer should not speak as an individual (I/me/my) but it should incorporate the plural pronouns so that the entire congregation prays together with the man leading in the worship and exaltation of God in responding to His self-disclosure in Scripture.

## **5. The pastoral prayer should be clear, biblical, transcendent, serious, and theologically accurate.**

This prayer, which may last from 5-10 minutes, should not be a spontaneous little prayer that the man utters before the flock but it would best be one that he has thought upon, prepared for, perhaps even written out, so as to ensure precision in his thoughts, language, verbiage, and depth. This prayer should begin with the affirmation of who God is and how He has revealed Himself in Scripture (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). It should also be biblical in its language and theologically deep in its content. The prayer should be serious and transcendent like a High Priest of old who would lead the congregation to meet with the living and holy God of the Tabernacle! This is why we place such a high importance upon the reading of the Word and the pastoral prayer that follows. May God be exalted through His self-disclosure to us in the Scripture and through our worship-filled response to Him in prayer, resolve, confession, and petitions.