

Praying Silently or Out Loud?

I believe there are many good reasons why we should pray out loud.

"Satan cannot read our thoughts, but he can see our actions, hear our words; and from his long knowledge of the human family, he can shape his temptations to take advantage of our weak points of character. And how often do we let him into the secret of how he may obtain the victory over us. Oh, that we might control our words and actions!" {Messages to Young People p.328}

"The adversary of souls is not permitted to read the thoughts of men; but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words and actions, and skillfully adapts his temptations accordingly." {Selected Messages Book 1 p.122}

"Jesus then gave them most striking evidence of his divine character by showing that he read the thoughts of their hearts as an open book. "Wherefore," said he, "think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." The sufferer arose and departed to his house." {RH, October 16, 1883}

Satan is constantly accusing God of partiality, injustice and playing favorites, of doing special things for those who profess to be His followers. The story of Job is a case in point. Satan hates it when God does anything extra for His followers. He is known to call out unfair and fowl. As Satan cannot read our thoughts, he can't know what we are saying when we are praying silently. When we ask God for things silently, Satan has no idea what we have asked for. Then, as God proceeds to answer our prayers, Satan can easily accuse God of being unfair, playing favorites, or giving us things we haven't asked for. For this reason, we can really tie God's hands when it comes to answering those prayers that we pray silently. Of course, God is all-powerful and He can do anything, but He also gave mankind free choice and He refuses to step across that line. It follows then that, in praying silently, Satan is kept unaware of our pray requests and can then accuse God of doing things and giving us things we haven't asked for, as far as Satan is concerned.

"Satan seeks to counterwork the work of God, and he is constantly urging men to accept his principles. He represents the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power is employed against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles." {Christ's Object Lessons p. 296}

For this reason, if for no other reason, we need to bring our petitions to God out loud.

I believe praying out loud does something good in us, too. When we hear ourselves pray out loud, I believe it makes a bigger impression on us. Suppose we are having a real battle with a particular sin. If we ask God out loud to give us the victory over that sin, putting our whole heart and soul into our request, Satan now knows that we asked for the victory and He can't stop God from working to give us the victory. Satan also knows that we mean business. We hear ourselves say it, which increases the resolve in our own minds, and helps us determine to stick with it. Then too, there's a feeling of accountability to God – not wanting to disappoint Him and cause Him to look bad. If we simply pray silently for victory over sin, we have a harder time feeling as much accountability. We didn't hear ourselves praying earnestly about it and we tend to be less determined to achieve the victory, through surrender to Christ. As failure comes, we know Satan laughs at us and accuses us of not being serious about victory anyway and taunts God as being impotent and weak. So, praying out loud greatly strengthens our resolve to depend on God and increases our determination not to disappoint Him or give Satan any room to ridicule Him and us.

From what we are told in scripture, Jesus prayed out loud. The disciples witnessed a number of His prayers and recognized He had power in prayer. They asked Him to teach them how to pray as He did.

Are there any reasons to pray silently? To be honest, I don't know of any except maybe this very weak one. If by chance, we have a weakness that Satan is unaware of (unlikely), and we want to keep it that way, then we should pray about that weakness silently in order to keep Satan in ignorance of it. But if Satan is aware of it, why not free God to act for us in a decisive way and pray about it out loud? I personally don't want to take any chances. I want to deal with things decisively. I also want Satan to know that I have given God permission to deliver me from sin and all the temptation he (Satan) brings against me.

This is the reason why, in the 1990's, I prayed out loud and told Satan to listen while I gave God permission to do whatever it took to save me. Lately I've added to that daily prayer, asking God to do whatever it takes to work out His character in my life, and my life has not been the same since.