

Matthew 6:5-8: And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Intro: Last Week: This righteousness of the Kingdom that exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees must not be done to be seen by others, but it must be done for God and His glory!

Jesus gives 3 illustrations of how we might be tempted to seek the praise of man: giving, praying, and fasting. And He tells us how to practice these righteous acts in a way that pleases God and therefore are rewarded by God.

1 Corinthians 10:31: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Who we are in secret (private) is who we really are, no more & no less. Knowing God as Father empowers us . . . !

When you enjoy spending time with someone and talking with someone, that time together itself is the reward! You don't need to tell others or show others what you are doing so that others will think highly of you.

Do you enjoy spending time alone with your heavenly Father in private prayer? In public, are you praying to God?

When you pray, do you think God will hear you based on some kind of technique: the length of the prayer, the eloquence or words you use, or a certain prayer formula? Jesus teaches us this is not why He hears. God knows!

1. Jesus Tells You Not To Pray Like The Hypocrites

a. Jesus assumes you will pray: Matthew 6:5: And when you pray

One of the reasons I gave thanks at our church business meeting: prayer. We are doing this. Let's keep growing!

Every weeknight; Wednesday night; Sunday morning; Membership Prayer Directory; Private, Personal prayer; Family at meals and in devotions; Husbands and wives; Roommates and friends; Throughout the day.

Covenant: I will cultivate and deepen my fellowship with God by daily prayer, Bible reading, and meditation.

b. Jesus warns you not to pray like the hypocrites: Matthew 6:5: And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, **that they may be seen by others**. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

1) Hypocrites: One who pretends to be what he is not; one who has the form of godliness without the power, or who assumes an appearance of being religious and virtuous, when he is actually void of true religion at all.

- A person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion.

- A person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.

2) Notice what they love: They love to be seen by others! Do you love the praise of others? **GOSPEL!**

a) It's not wrong for us to pray publicly here. It's not necessarily wrong for us to pray on street corners.

- **John 11:40-42:** "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. & Jesus lifted up his eyes & said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."

- **Acts 3:1:** Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

b) It's not wrong to pray standing up: You can pray standing, sitting, kneeling, walking, with your hands folded or not, with your hands raised or not, with your eyes open or not, in the car, everywhere!

c) It's not wrong to pray silently or loudly: 1 Samuel 1:13-15: Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, & her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. & Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put away your wine from you." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD

Hebrews 5:7: In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears

d) It IS WRONG to pray in public (or anywhere else!) because you love the praise of men: Jesus is again focusing on our motives and what is going on in our hearts and minds when we pray.

D. A. Carson: The person who prays more in public than in private reveals that he is less interested in God's approval than in human praise. Not piety but a reputation for piety is his concern.

Lloyd-Jones: Sin, He shows us here, is something which follows us all the way, even into the very presence of God. Sin is not merely something that tends to assail and afflict us when we are far away from God, in the far country as it were. Sin is something so terrible, according to our Lord's exposure of it, that it will not only follow us to the gates of heaven, but - if it were possible - into heaven itself. Indeed, is not that the Scripture teaching with regard to the origin of sin? Sin is not something which began on earth. Before man fell there had been a previous Fall. Satan was a perfect, bright, angelic being dwelling in the heavenlies; and he had fallen before ever man fell. That is the essence of the teaching of our Lord in these verses. It is a terrible exposure of the horrible nature of sin. Nothing is quite so fallacious as to think of sin only in terms of actions; and as long as we think of sin only in terms of things actually done, we fail to understand it. The essence of the biblical teaching on sin is that it is essentially a disposition. It is a state of heart. I suppose we can sum it up by saying that sin is ultimately self-worship and self-adulation, and our Lord shows (what to me is an alarming and terrifying thing) that this tendency on our part to self-adulation is something that follows us even into the very presence of God. It sometimes produces the result that even when we try to persuade ourselves that we are worshipping God, we are actually worshipping ourselves and doing nothing more.

3) The only reward hypocrites get is the praise of men: Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

2. Jesus Tells You To Pray In Secret

Matthew 6:6: But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

a. True prayer: Love for God; Love for God's presence; Love to see God act; Delight in God; A.C.T.S.

Jude 1:20: But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit

1) The Spirit dwells in you; 2) Admit helplessness; 3) According to God's will; 4) With holy love & delight in God

b. God will reward you: Matthew 25:21: His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

3. Jesus Tells You Not To Pray With Numerous Empty Words

Matthew 6:7-8: And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

a. Don't heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles: God doesn't hear you just because your prayer is long!

Pagans say the same things over and over again. Their words are empty. They don't think about what they say! They try to manipulate God to get what they want: **1 Kings 18:28-29:** And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

Their prayer is lifeless, not in the Spirit, and it doesn't flow out of a true and vital relationship with the living and eternal God Who is Father. Roman Catholic: 5 Our Father's, 3 Hail Mary's, Prayer to saints/Us: Lord's Prayer?

b. There are reasons God doesn't hear prayers: Wayne Stiles: 1) It could be you're not a child of God:

Isaiah 59:1-2: Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; ² but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

2) It could be your motives or actions are sinful: James 4:2-3: You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

James 1:6-7: But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord

Psalms 66:18-19: If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. ¹⁹ But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

1 Peter 3:7: Likewise, 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.

3) It could be your misunderstanding of God's priorities: 1 John 5:14-15: And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

4) It could be that it's just not time yet: Luke 18:1: And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

5) It could be God wants to give you more than you're asking for: Ephesians 3:20: Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us

c. What is Jesus saying?: D. A. Carson: Jesus is not condemning prayer any more than he is condemning almsgiving or fasting. Nor is he forbidding all long prayers or all repetition. He himself prayed at length (Lk 6:12), repeated himself in prayer (Mt 26:44), and told a parable to show his disciples that "they should always pray and not give up" (Lk 18:1). His point is that his disciples should avoid meaningless, repetitive prayers offered under the misconception that mere length will make prayers efficacious. Such thoughtless babble can occur in liturgical and extemporaneous prayers alike. Essentially it is thoroughly pagan, for pagan gods allegedly thrive on incantation and repetition. But the personal Father God to whom believers pray does not require information about our needs.

WLC 178: What is prayer? A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit; with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

Prayer is not manipulating God. It's not working yourself up with repetitive words.

d. God our Father's knowledge of all of our needs motivates us to pray: Ligon Duncan: Now you may stop and you may say, "Well, if He already knows everything that I need, why should I go to Him in prayer?"

That is the way we normally ask that question, in the words of a book of a friend of ours, *If God Already Knows, Why Pray?* And that is the question that we normally ask. Biblical logic is otherwise however. Biblical logic says, "Because God already knows, therefore, I am moved, I am motivated, I am given all the more reason to pray." Why? Because God's knowledge reminds me of His care, about the most minute problems of my life, and it encourages me to go to Him because I am not going to go the sovereign of the universe and meet the response. That is too insignificant for me. He already knows everything we need. He cares about that and so we are motivated to go to Him. It is God's omniscience, and for the boys and girls here today, that is just a big word that means God knows everything. God's omniscience motivates us to go to Him in prayer. His gospel omniscience reminds us that He knows everything that His children needs. Our Father sees in secret, He knows our needs and this motivates us to go to Him.

Lloyd-Jones: It means that when I pray I know that God is my Father, and that He delights to bless me, and that He is much more ready to give than I am to receive and that He is always concerned about my welfare. I must get rid of this thought that God is standing between me and my desires and that which is best for me. I must see God as my Father who has purchased my ultimate good in Christ, and is waiting to bless me with His own fullness in Christ Jesus.

e. Jesus' Prayer Life: Matthew 14:23: And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

Mark 1:35: And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

Luke 5:16: But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Luke 6:12: In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

Matthew 26:36: Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."

Christ Hid Away And Prayed All Night
His Father's Presence His Delight
Often With Father Out Of Sight
Each Praying Word Of His Was Right
Even On That Night Of Fright
Before He Bore God's Wrathful Smite
And Died To Save From Hellish Plight
Still Praying There, Forsaken's Height
But Rose New Life To Give In Light
And Now By Faith We Pray With Might
Each Word For God, His Glory Bright
He Knows Your Needs Before The Fight
He's Your Reward, Your Chief Delight!