

The Heart of Prayer

*Matthew 6:5-15 – Part 1 - NCBC,
October 20, 2019*

Main Point: **When God is your Father, you pray differently.**

- Not for man's approval (5-6)
 - Hypocrisy seeks to be seen by others
 - Hypocrisy loves to glorify self
 - Hypocrisy prays to earthly audience
 - Hypocrisy forgets our good Father sees everything
- Not for God's acceptance (7-8)
 - Unbelief seeks to be heard through manipulation
 - Unbelief pursues security in achievement
 - Unbelief prays to make deals with God
 - Unbelief forgets our good Father knows everything

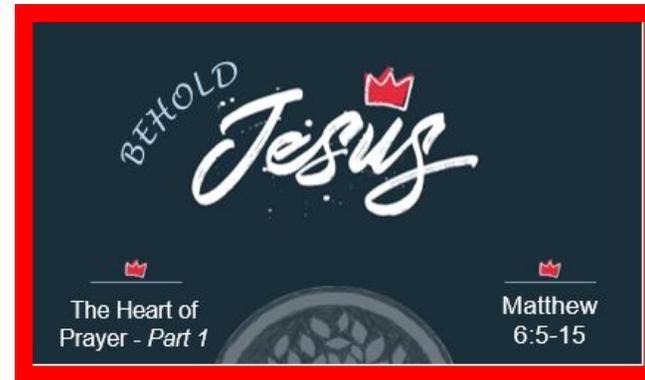
Application: **So when you pray, commune with God! (6,8)**

- Remember your Heavenly Father is your audience
- Remove distractions and purify your motives
- Rest in your relationship as God's child
- Receive your Heavenly Father's reward

Opening Announcements:

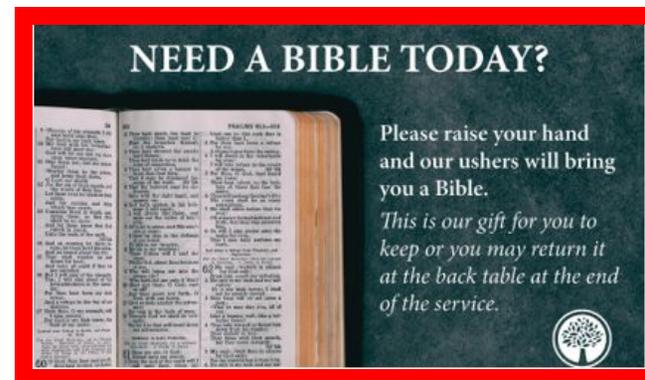
Operation Shoebox Begins this Sunday. Take home a box to fill and help us reach farther for the glory of Christ this Christmas!

<<Show Us Christ>>



Where else could we go church? Our Lord has words of eternal life!! The Holy Scriptures we hold in our hands today are the inspired words of the Living God – words that cause dead hearts to come awake in the power of Christ's resurrection!

Our last song gave me clear marching orders – so please pray with me that the glories of Christ would be on full display this morning as we open our Bibles to **Matthew chapter 6, verses 5-15.**



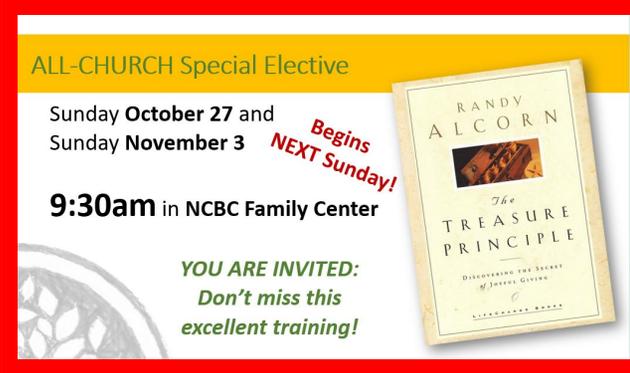
If you do not have a Bible with you this morning, simply raise your hand so we can give you a Bible. Today we focus on the heart of prayer from **Matthew chapter 6, verses 5-15**.

Last week Matt Miller preached on *The Heart of Giving* from the first 4 verses of **chapter 6**. It's never easy to preach for the first time, and I'm so thankful for Matt's humble courage and faith that allowed him to preach to us. When you see Matt, encourage him. We're thankful for seriousness in which he approached the text, and for the countless hours of preparation he invested in our worship together. I'm already looking forward to the next time Matt is able to preach God's Word to us again!

I'm so thankful to be part of a church family that believes in growing and developing spiritual leaders. The Holy Spirit makes elders,¹ but the local church is His school. The local church is God's greenhouse for raising up future spiritual elders and deacons. So by God's grace, we look forward to being able to invite other elders-in-development into our pulpit at appropriate times, for their continued training and our continued joy. God's people are never loyal to any one particular personality or style for our preaching. Our allegiance is to God's Word – no matter who is preaching. What a privilege to be part of a local body of Christ!!

Last week's sermon on giving was timely as we desire to finish this year with a renewed focus on our 2019 theme of Stewardship.

¹ Acts 20:28



ALL-CHURCH Special Elective

Sunday **October 27** and
Sunday **November 3** *Begins
NEXT Sunday!*

9:30am in NCBC Family Center

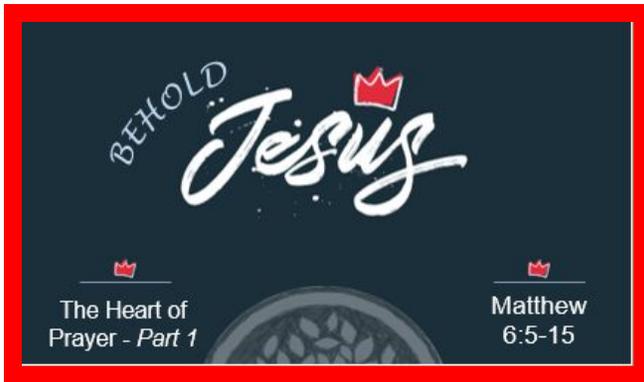
YOU ARE INVITED:
*Don't miss this
excellent training!*

RANDY
ALCORN
The
TREASURE
PRINCIPLE
Discovering the Secret
of Jesus' Giving

In fact, **next Sunday**, all of our adult Electives will meet together for a special 2-week emphasis on Stewardship Training. We desire for every adult in our church to benefit from these 2 hours of instruction. Our normal Adult Elective classes will simply pause, and for **Sunday October 27th and Sunday November 3rd** all adults will stay together in this room during the 9:30am hour.

Biblical stewardship is not about the preservation of assets.² Biblical stewardship means sacrificial generosity. Therefore, stewardship is a matter of the heart – a treasure principle! So please plan to attend this all-church training next Sunday morning at 9:30am.

² C.f. Luke 12:16-21



Now today **Matthew 6, verses 5-15** teach the heart of prayer. There's so much for us to learn in this section that I've decided to split this message into two parts. So don't be thrown off by your printed notes page. Today, we will focus on **verses 5-8**, and then next Sunday we will teach **verses 9-15**. I'll read the entire section this morning, as we consider how a righteousness heart prays differently from religious hypocrites and unbelievers.

Please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. From the English Standard Translation, I'll begin reading in **Matthew 6:5**:

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. ⁶But 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. ⁸Do not be like them, for your*

Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

- "Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This is God's Word. Please be seated.

Let's Pray.

When you understand Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, you know there's no possible way to work your way into God's kingdom. God's kingdom citizens are poor in spirit – they are fully aware of their own neediness.³ Jesus' sermon destroys religious legalism at its root – because it defines sin as something that is first internal before it is ever external.

³ Matthew 5:3, 6

In **chapter 5** Jesus used 6 different illustrations to prove how God's true righteousness is a matter of the heart – not just a matter of action or behavior.⁴ Religious legalists can follow rules. But only those who are perfect – those who truly love their enemies in their hearts⁵ – are righteous from God's perspective.

Now in **chapter 6**, Jesus picks on the three most common religious practices of the Jews – Giving, Prayer, and Fasting. The subheading for this section is found in **verse 1**,

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Jesus wants us to understand sin is so sinister that it even has the power to contaminate religious activities of worship. Since sin is a matter of our hearts, sin goes to church with us! Sin follows us right into the very presence of God and has the ability to twist our giving, and praying, and fasting into self-serving expressions of self-worship!⁶ O how our hearts need to be born again! O how Jesus' teaching reveals our need to be united with Christ's perfect righteousness by believing on Jesus' finished work alone!!

⁴ Matthew 5:21-48: anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and love

⁵ Matthew 5:44-48

⁶ After all, Satan's most trying temptations for Jesus occurred during his 40-days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), and during his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before the cross (Matthew 26:38-45; Mark 14:32-39; Luke 22:39-44)

Now, notice how Jesus ends His treatment of each religious practice exactly the same way in **verses 4, 6, and 18**:



Look at verse 4: *So that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

Verse 6, *...pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

Verse 18, *... that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

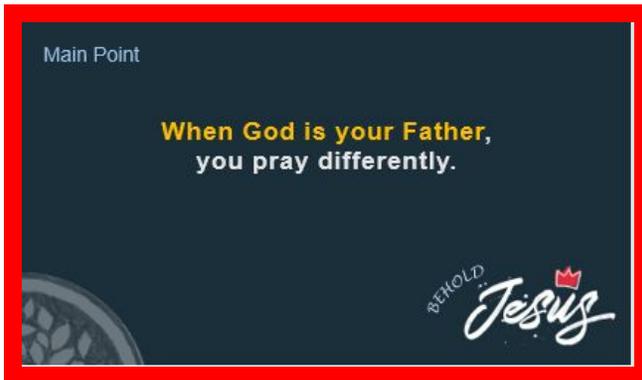
Jesus is a master teacher, and He uses repetition to emphasize a very important truth that motivates all pure and righteous religion:⁷

The rewarder of all religious sacrifice is my Heavenly Father who sees the secret motives of my heart.

⁷ James 1:27

God is our Father. He's a gracious Father. A Father who loves to reward and bless His children. So don't practice your righteousness to show-off. Because your Heavenly Father sees everything – even the secret motives of your heart!

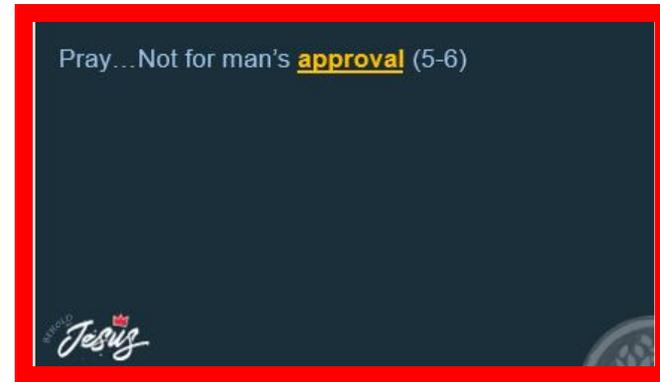
In **verses 5-15** Jesus wants His disciples to clearly understand:



When God is your Father, you pray differently.

When you know God as your all-seeing Heavenly Father, you will pray differently than the scribes and Pharisees. Righteous prayer is motivated by love for God, not love for self.

Jesus assumes that we all pray. Notice the repeated phrase that starts **verses 5, 6, and 7**: *When you pray*. Jesus knows you pray. But *when you pray...* you must remember that God is your Father... for according to **verse 5**,



When God is your Father, you pray differently than the hypocrites who seek man's approval (5-6). When you pray you must not pray for man's approval.

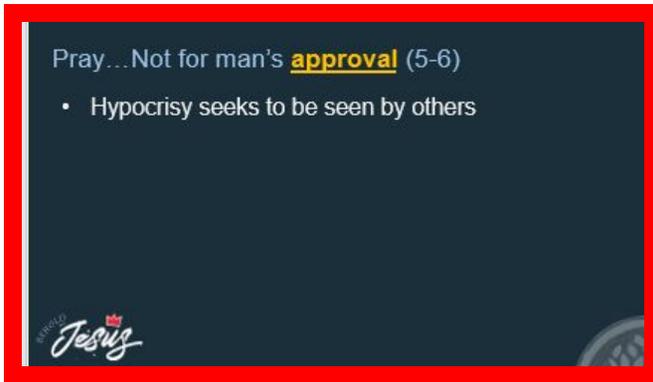
Look at **verse 5**,

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, ...

And then underline this next phrase:

that they may be seen by others.

You see,



Hypocrisy seeks to be seen by others.

Hypocrisy pretends to pray to God while actually praying to others. Jesus says, when you pray, don't do it for the applause of others. Don't attract attention to yourself.

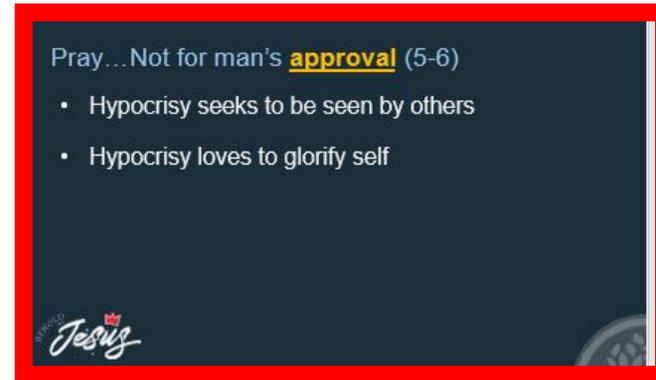
There's actually nothing inherently wrong with standing up while you pray,⁸ or even praying in public. In fact, the plural pronouns in Jesus' model prayer in **verses 9-13** assume we will pray publicly with others.

Jesus is exposing the secret heart motive of all hypocrisy. Hypocrites only pray just to be seen by others. In other words, when **verse 5** uses the word love, it's not that they love to pray... it's that they love to pray wherever they can be best seen by others.

So when you pray, is it most often in public or in private? Are your public prayers different than your private prayers? For what reasons? Who are you praying to, when you pray?

⁸ 1 Samuel 1:26; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13
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You see, **verse 5** is teaching us that religious hypocrites only pray for the purpose of self-promotion. Because,



Hypocrisy loves to glorify self, rather than to glorify God.

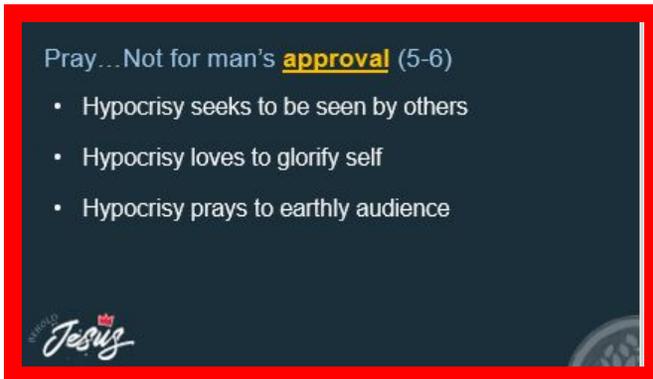
Hypocrisy is blind to pride's deceitfulness. We believe we are sincerely worshipping God, but in reality, we are worshipping ourselves, and creatively seeking ways to exalt ourselves.

Do you remember Jesus' parable in **Luke 18** of the two men who went up to the temple to pray – one a respected Pharisee and the other a despised tax collector?⁹ When the Pharisee prayed, a good translation of **verse 11** says *he prayed to himself*. He used religious words, and even addressed God with thanksgiving. But Jesus said he was just praying to himself.

Hypocrites don't love prayer, nor the God that they claim to pray to – they love themselves. Prayer is simply a means to exalt themselves spiritually above others, or receive commendation and honor and glory from others.

⁹ Luke 18:9-14

Jesus' disciples must not pray like the hypocrites, for pride is the driving motivation for their prayers.



After all, **hypocrisy only prays to an earthly audience.** Either to other people, or to oneself.

Jesus words at the end of **verse 5** are sobering,

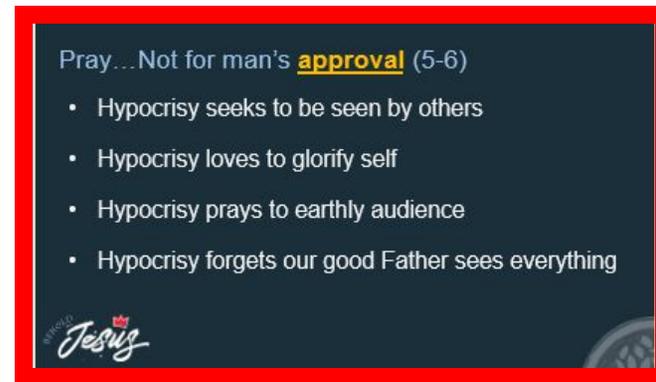
Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. They prayed to get attention, and they got people's attention. That's all the benefit they will ever get from their prayers. They got noticed. They got glory from self or someone else.

Contrary to the words of their mouth, hypocrites never actually pray to the true God. After all in their pride, they believe God is a tight-fisted miser who is against them. The only reason they practice religion is because of how it serves their own self-love. Hypocrites don't pray in faith believing that God will answer them.¹⁰ Hypocrites, like the older brother of the prodigal son in **Luke 15**, view

¹⁰ 1 John 5:14-15
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God as a tyrant slave driver...who although they have slaved for God all their lives He has never given them a reward.¹¹

Listen carefully, Jesus' disciples should pray differently than religious hypocrites since,



Hypocrisy forgets our good Father sees everything

Verse 6 exhorts our hearts this morning – *when you pray... pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

Kingdom citizens don't pray to other citizens. We pray to the King Himself!! And our King is a good Father. Superior in love to every possible earthly father. Our heavenly Father is omnipresent – meaning He is everywhere – even in the most secret and private recesses of your heart. Our Heavenly Father sees and knows the secret thoughts and intentions of your heart.¹²

¹¹ Luke 15:29; c.f. Matthew 23:13, 15

¹² Hebrews 4:12-13; Psalm 33:13-15; 90:8; Proverbs 5:21; Jeremiah 23:24

Christian – let this sink in for a moment. There is no part of your life that is lived outside of God’s presence. None of your heart desires or motives are ever hidden from God’s sight! None! And yet... in Christ, your Heavenly Father desires to reward you, and bless you, and exercise all of His power to give you the greatest satisfaction in Him as He glorifies His own Name through your life!

O when God is your Father – you must pray differently than the religious hypocrites! For the hypocrites get the reward they are seeking, but they seek far too small of a reward! Merely that others see them and given them honor.

But once you know that God is your Father, who delights to give good gifts to His children... then you will pray for far more than the earthly reward of men’s attention. You will pray to worship God and you will receive the reward of knowing God personally! Because you know that your Heavenly Father sees and rewards you.

Now **verse 7** goes on to reveal that,

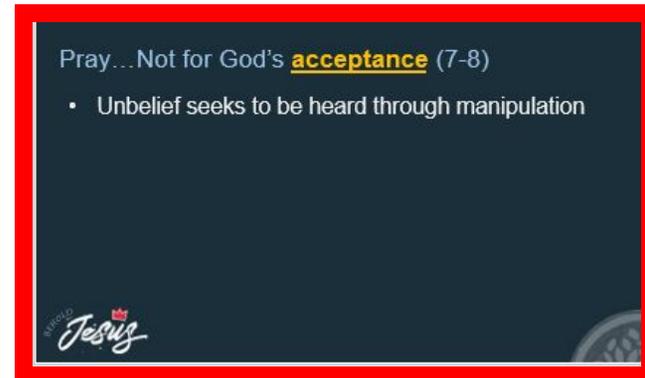


When God is your Father, you pray differently than unbelievers who seek God’s acceptance. When we pray, we must not pray in order to try to earn God’s acceptance.

That’s how unbelievers, or Gentiles, pray. Look at **verse 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.

Notice that in **verse 5** hypocrites pray to be *seen*, but here in **verse 7** unbelievers pray to be *heard*.



Specifically, **unbelief seeks to be heard through manipulation**

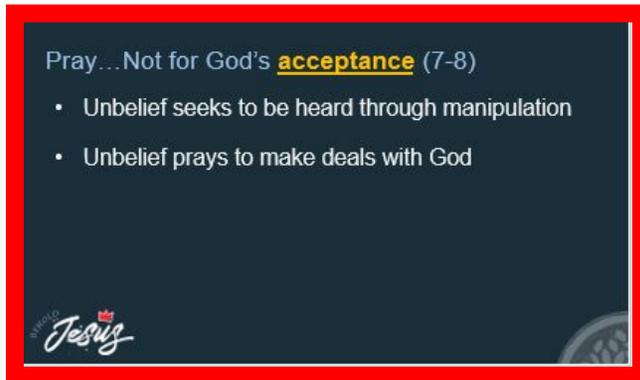
They think they will be heard for their many words.

Now Jesus isn’t condemning long prayers, or even repetition in prayer. There were times Jesus prayed all

night,¹³ and He taught His disciples to always pray and not grow weary.¹⁴ In **Matthew 26**, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus repeated the same prayer three times.¹⁵

Instead Jesus is teaching against thoughtless or mindless repetition. *Heaping up empty phrases* means vain repetitions, or mindless babblings.

You see, every religion besides biblical Christianity uses prayer as a tool to manipulate deities. Like the prophets of Baal in **1 Kings 18** who thought that Baal would finally answer them if they prayed loud enough and long enough,¹⁶ or modern Buddhists who spin wheels containing written prayers, believing that each turn of the wheel sends their prayers up to god, and the more prayers they send, the more likely their god will hear and answer.



In other words, **Unbelief prays to make deals with God.**

¹³ Luke 6:12; Matthew 14:23-25

¹⁴ Luke 18:1; c.f. Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

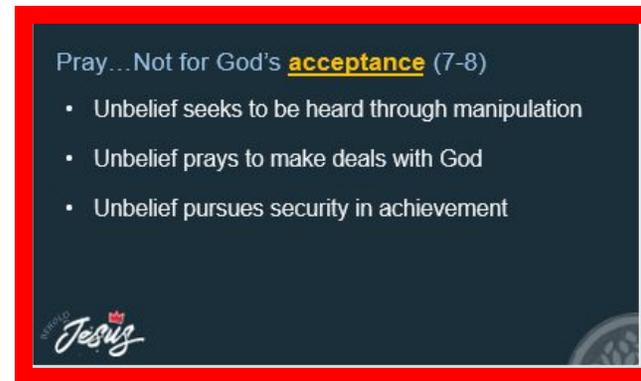
¹⁵ Matthew 26:39-44

¹⁶ 1 Kings 18:26-29

Prayer becomes a means of negotiating with God – ultimately to force Him to give me what I want on some contractual grounds.¹⁷

Unbelief emphasizes certain phrases, or certain prayer forms, or the number or length of prayers to win the favor of the divine. But this is nothing more than the religion of human achievement.

Jesus' disciples should not pray like the unbelieving Gentiles who,



pursue security in their own human achievement.

The most religious efforts of human beings are not able to achieve the righteousness of God. It doesn't matter how many Hail Mary's you pray, or how many times you recite the Lord's prayer.¹⁸

¹⁷ I.e. see Jacob's selfish bargaining with God in prayer in Genesis 28:20-22

¹⁸ Isn't it fascinating to note that the Lord's prayer in verses 9-13 comes immediately after this warning against praying vain and mindless repetitions in a way that we believe will manipulate God to do our bidding? While it is certainly not wrong to recite the Lord's prayer with sincerity out of a heart of true worship, we must reject all meaningless repetition that we

Here's the reality: Whenever you forget that God is your Father, you become insecure. God becomes a force to win, rather than a Father to trust. If God is not your Father, you will pursue security in whatever *you* can do. You will seek security in people's affirmation of you like the hypocrites. You will seek security in your own religious law-keeping, based on your own judgment of your own works.

But listen to Jesus' admonition in **verse 8**,

Do not be like [unbelievers], for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.



Listen, **Unbelief forgets that our good Father knows everything**

Christian – the God you are praying to has already accepted you, and adopted you, and granted you an

believe gets God's attention just because we do it, and somehow puts God in our debt. After all, verse 9 says to pray *like* this. The disciple's prayer is meant to be a pattern or a model, not a script nor a formula.

eternal inheritance with Him forever!! He is a good good Father. You don't pray to win His acceptance or twist His arm in any way.

Your Father knows what you need before you even ask, and He's waiting for you to realize your dependence and come to Him for all that you need! You don't have to persuade God to do good things for you—His very nature is love, and He is eternally committed to what is best for you for His eternal glory!

So when you pray church, don't be like hypocrites or unbelievers. God is your Heavenly Father!



So when you pray, commune with God! (6,8)

Pray simply to talk with God. To commune with God. Pray to know God Himself!!

Verse 6 puts it simply,

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.

When you pray you must,



Remember your Heavenly Father is your audience

Prayer is for the Audience of One! No side-glances are helpful to your soul as you seek to sincerely worship and exalt your Heavenly Father!

Now I believe if we truly believed this – it would radically change our prayer life. Prayer puts you in the presence of an all-seeing and all-knowing God!!

So listen friends – if you have not yet been born again by the Spirit of the living God – then there should be nothing more terrifying to you than the thought of an audience with your Holy Creator! All hypocrites and unbelievers are terrified by this thought. Because the reward of sin is death,¹⁹ and God holds every person accountable²⁰ even for just one single failure to love Him perfectly.²¹

¹⁹ Romans 6:23

²⁰ Romans 3:19; 14:10

²¹ James 2:10

But if you repent and turn from your sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection you will be saved,²² and adopted into God's family!²³

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which paid for our sins Christian – Jesus has made a welcome for you in the very presence of your Holy Father!

Just consider this Church – from any place, from any circumstance, in a moment, prayer transports you into the very throne room of the sovereign King of Ages! Wouldn't our consciousness of this wonderful reality eradicate all meaningless repetition and thoughtless prayer language from our prayers?

If you're like me, it's so easy for my prayers at mealtime or bedtime to be repetitious or mindless. We use certain phrases like, "in Jesus' name" as formulas or formalities which make our prayers acceptable to God.

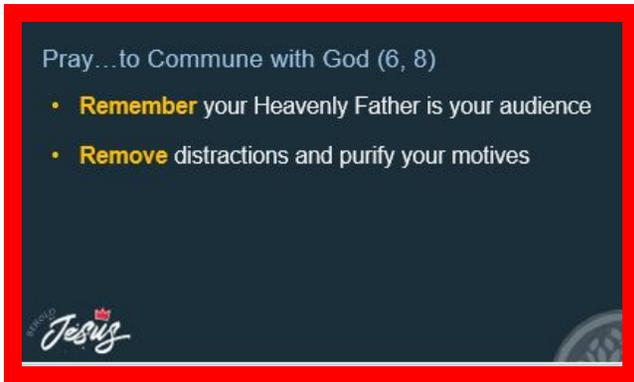
But all wrong motivations for our prayers will melt away if we only remember that our Heavenly Father is our only audience for every one of our prayers!

And that's why Jesus urges His followers to,

Go into your room, and shut the door, and pray ...

²² Romans 10:10-13

²³ Romans 8:14-17



He's urging us to **Remove distractions and purify our motives.**

Again, Jesus isn't saying that there's no place for public prayer...but His emphasis on secrecy and privacy is to help us purify our motives for praying. When we pursue privacy, we shut out other people but we can never shut out the God who is always present!

So when you pray, get your attention off yourself and others by pursuing communion with your Heavenly Father Himself! After all, like we will learn more next week, kingdom prayer is always more about seeking more of God Himself, than getting something from Him.

When God is your Father, you pray differently than everyone else because,



You rest in your relationship as God's child

Regardless of whether your earthly father is a saint or a scoundrel... no earthly father compares to our Heavenly Father! His very nature is love and truth! In Christ, and by His Spirit, He has given us richly of Himself!

He sees and knows all of your needs, and He wants you to come and express your dependence upon Him. We have not because we ask not, **James 4** teaches.²⁴

Our Heavenly Father doesn't need our prayers to remind or inform Him of what we need...but our forgetful hearts need to pray to remind us of our dependence on His all-sufficient supply! He knows we need to pray to express our faith in worship to Him. Our prayers give our Father the opportunity to manifest His power, His love, and His glory in and through our lives.²⁵

²⁴ James 4:2

²⁵ John 14:13-14

Here's the stunning truth – your Heavenly Father desires to bless you more than you desire to be blessed!²⁶ He is more ready to answer us than we are to pray to Him. Such is the nature of our Heavenly Father who is for us, and has eternally and sovereignly purchased our ultimate good in Christ!²⁷

So when you pray, pray to commune with God. To know Him. To rest in your miraculous relationship with Him and,



To Receive your Heavenly Father's reward

I thought a lot about the end of **verse 6** this week.

And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

We know the hypocrites' reward in **verse 5** was that they were seen and honored by others. But what is God's reward for the praying Christian in **verse 6**? Jesus never explicitly says...

Is it the forgiveness of sin that Jesus emphasizes in **verses 14-15**? Certainly **verse 19** of **chapter 6** indicates that our Father's reward is not limited to earthly treasure.

In the entire context of the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps we could say the reward is the righteousness of God? After all **Matthew 6:33** says that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness it will be added to you. Certainly the reward of God will include the final accomplishment of justice at the end of time, and all things being made right according to God's eternal plan.

But the more I thought about this, I concluded that the reward of God is simply God Himself! All of the kingdom blessings in the beatitudes found in **verses 3-12 of Matthew 5** relate to knowing God Himself, and being identified with God intimately and personally.

Luke 11:13 sums it up perfectly,

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

Can you think of any greater gift or reward than personal, intimate, living relationship with God Himself?

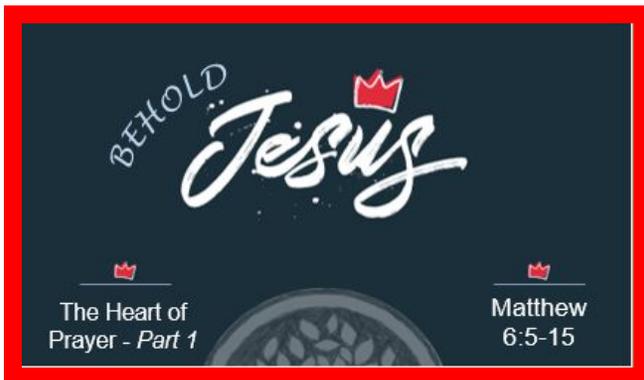
²⁶ Ephesians 3:20-21

²⁷ Romans 8:28-38



When God is your Father, you pray differently.

You don't pray to impress others. You don't pray to impress God. You pray to know God. To commune with God. To deepen your relationship with God. For you know that the all-seeing, all-knowing God is your Father, and He loves you and is eternally committed to your forever joy. And He delights to give you more of Himself.



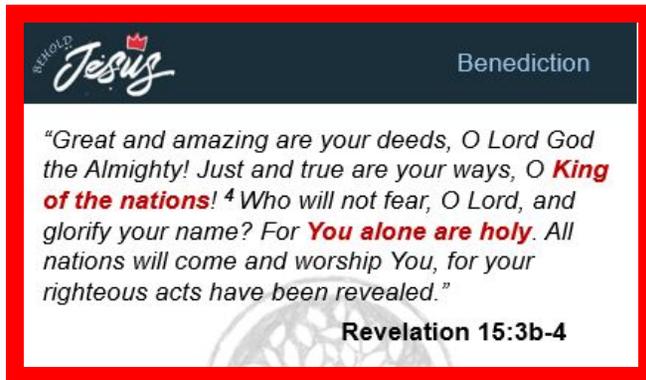
Next week we'll pick up this study in **verse 9**, in order to learn more how our love for our Heavenly Father causes

us to pray differently for our Father's glory on earth and our Father's glory in us.

Will you pray with me now?

<<All to Us>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



REHOLD
Jesus

Benediction

*"Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O **King of the nations!** ⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For **You alone are holy.** All nations will come and worship You, for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

Revelation 15:3b-4

Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! ⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Revelation 15:3b-4



**Many Hands
Make Light Work.**

*Thank You
New Castle!*

Please share a few minutes to stack chairs & ready the Family Center for weekly activities.

Recommended Resources on The Heart of Prayer:

- Psalm 38:15; 66:18
- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Matthew 6:5-18; 18:19-20
- Mark 11:24-25
- Luke 5:16; 6:12; 11:1-13
- John 14:13-14; 15:7; 16:23-24
- Acts 6:4
- Romans 8:26-27
- Ephesians 6:18
- Philippians 4:6
- Colossians 4:2
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18
- 1 Timothy 2:5
- Hebrews 4:15-16; 10:19-23
- James 1:5-8; 4:3; 5:13-16
- 1 Peter 3:7, 12; 5:7
- 1 John 3:21-22; 5:14-15
- Jude 20

- *Prayer & Fasting* sermon preached at NCBC on 1-14-18
- *Why Pray?* sermon preached at NCBC on 2-5-17

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/your-kingdom-come>
- <http://www.desiringgod.org/topics/prayer>

- *A Praying Life*, Paul Miller
- *Old Paths New Power*, Daniel Henderson
- *Prayer*, Timothy Keller
- *Let Us Pray*, ed. Kistler

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Matthew 6:6 and Colossians 4:2. How can we guard against complacency, routine, or distraction in our worship of prayer?
2. Compare Luke 11:13 and James 4:3. What do you pray for when you pray? How does God want your beliefs/actions to change in this area of your worship? How can you accomplish this change? What is the first step toward bringing about this change?
3. Have you ever prayed Scripture back to God? Discuss how you seek to pray Scripture-led prayers to assure that you are praying “in Jesus Name,” or according to His will. (1 Jn. 5:14-15)
4. There are at least four primary obstructions to prayer: the personal sin in our hearts (Ps. 66:18; 1 Pet. 3:7); the ignorance of our minds (Jer. 17:9-10; 1 Cor. 2:14); the infirmities of our bodies (Matt. 26:41); and the opposition of Satan (Eph. 6:12). In light of Romans 8:26-27, how can we achieve mastery over these oppositions to our worship as prayer?
5. Note the repeated phrase in Matthew 6:4, 6, and 18. What is the reward that the Heavenly Father gives? (c.f. Matthew 6:19, 33; 5:3-12; 7:11; Luke 11:13) How does this understanding affect the motivation of your praying?