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How to Pray Rightly; Matt 6:5-15  
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Introduction – In this Model Prayer Jesus teaches us how to properly, rightly pray.

This lesson on prayer is in the larger context of 6:1-18 where Jesus is exposing the error of hypocritical worship, that is pretending to worship God while really seeking the praise of men. 6:1 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.” It not only matters that we worship, it is also of supreme importance why we worship!.

In our day of social media, we might apply Jesus’ warning this way: Beware of posting your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them. Again, nothing wrong with sharing verses and praises and testimonies on social media. In fact, that’s one of the ways we can redeem social media. However, if we’re looking to get praise from men rather than sharing our praise to God in order to encourage one another, our social media needs a heart check.

After issuing His warning in 6:1, Jesus provides 3 examples of worship activities to help us discern whether or not we are worshipping in the right way. He addresses our giving, praying, and fasting. Last week we looked at all of these together under the headings of (1) worshipping wrongly, (2) true worship is radically God-centered, and (3) true worship is thoroughly grounded in faith. We return today to the worship of prayer because Jesus expands on this particular activity, probably because prayer is a more common experience for believers. We give regularly, we should be fasting regularly, but we pray constantly.

Let’s look at the model prayer under the same headings: Praying wrongly, true praying is radically God-centered, and true praying is thoroughly grounded in faith.

- I. How to Pray Wrongly (vv5-8)
  - a. Jesus addresses two separate groups of people in these verses who are engaging in the activity of prayer but are not truly praying.
    - i. The first group is the hypocrites of v5. These are the scribes and Pharisees who profess to know God.

1. The problem with their prayers is their motivation. They are not praying to be heard by God; they are praying to be heard by men. They are not praying because of their deep awareness of how much they need God; they are praying to get recognition from men. They are not humbly seeking to be upheld by God; they are proudly seeking to be upheld in the eyes of men.
  2. In all their praying, with all their spiritual, pious speech, they are not truly praying! Their words do not enter the throne of heaven, they simply enter the ears of men.
  3. While their listeners may think much of them, God in heaven does not know them or hear them.
- ii. The second group is the Gentiles of v7. This refers to those of other faiths who are praying to other gods, or false gods.
1. The problem with their prayers is their gods. Their gods appear to be so inattentive and unaware and apathetic to their plight that they resort to repeating spiritual pleas over and over and over in the desperate, vain attempt to attract the attention of a god who doesn't even exist.
  2. For all their sincere, desperate, pleading prayer, they are not truly praying.
  3. Jesus says "You don't have to pray that way because your Father is very attentive. He knows!"
- b. True prayer can only be true prayer if it's directed to the true God. And true prayer communicates a dependent trust in the true God who through Christ is our Father.
- c. It's interesting to observe that those who do not know Christ as Savior and Lord do often pray. In times of crisis or emergency or tragedy, they will cry out to God. Yet for them, God is just some higher being up there somewhere who may and should do something. But they don't know Him.
- d. But when a child of God calls out to God, he calls Him "Father" because he knows Him and he knows that God is aware and that God cares and that He is able, sufficient, and sovereign.

## II. True Praying is Radically God-centered (vv9-10)

- a. Prayer doesn't begin with man, it begins with God.
- b. "Our Father in heaven"
  - i. "Father in heaven" brings together the two great truths about the God that you won't find in any other religion.
    - 1. He is holy, majestic, mighty, and sovereign! He is in heaven. God is transcendent. He is high above. He is over all. He is in heaven.
    - 2. And yet He is immanent. He is all-knowing, loving, caring, kind, gracious, good, merciful, near. He is Father.
    - 3. And He is ours. Maybe the most overlooked and under-practiced part of the Model Prayer. In Christ, we not only have God as Father, but we are also placed in a forever family. We have one another. Even when we pray privately and individually, we pray together and we pray for one another. Christ unites us all into a heavenly family and reconciles us all to our heavenly Father.
- c. "hallowed be Your name" – the first request in the model prayer is radically God-centered. It demonstrates that man is not the center of the universe, God is. The foremost plea has nothing to do with our temporary needs and everything to do with God's eternal glory.
  - i. Hallowed be Your name is a plea for God's name and His glory to be reckoned as holy throughout the earth. That men, women, boys, and girls around the world would know and love and worship and follow the one true God. It is the first plea because it's the greatest plea. It represents the chief end of creation and history – that God would be glorified. And it contains man's greatest need – to glorify God.
  - ii. The Model Prayer is a missionary prayer!
- d. "Your kingdom come" – the kingdoms of this world and the kingdoms of men and our little empires that will construct around us will never suffice. They will inevitably, miserably, ultimately fail to bring life, satisfaction, justice, peace, and salvation. But when the kingdom of God comes in its fullness, all things will be made new and all things will be made right!
- e. "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" – kingdom has a global sphere, will has a personal sphere. This plea expresses the humble truth that my will, my plan, my desire is not chief. We don't pray to

manipulate God into doing things our way. We pray to incline our hearts and our lives and our future to God's way. Ex. Jesus in the Garden

III. True Praying is Thoroughly Grounded in Faith (vv11-13)

- a. V11 – We pray for material and spiritual provision relying on the faithfulness of God to provide for His children.
  - i. Now if my pantry and refrigerator and freezer are packed with food and I have the money to eat out several times a week, why would I pray for daily bread? Who makes seedtime and harvest? Any farmer will tell you all they can do is plant.
  - ii. But we know bread also refers to spiritual sustenance. Jesus said I am the Bread of Life. We need God's daily provision for both our physical and spiritual needs.
- b. V12 – We pray for the grace of forgiveness and for the grace to forgive. We need to be forgiven each and every day. And when it comes to forgiving others, it's only by the grace that God forgives us are we able to graciously forgive others.
- c. V13 – There's a connection here to 4:1. In other words, we don't have to be led into temptation or face the evil one because Jesus has already done that on our behalf.
- d. God provides, God forgives, and God delivers.

IV. An Explanatory Note on Forgiveness (vv14-15)

- a. Just a cursory reading of these verses may lead us to think that we earn God's forgiveness by being forgiving to others. We know though that's not in line with the rest of Scripture. Grace is not dependent on our performance or it wouldn't be grace.
- b. No – remember the purpose of the whole sermon is to distinguish false faith from true faith – Those who know God as Father extend forgiveness to others because they know they are in need of daily forgiveness. It's because God is so gracious to forgive us, that we learn to graciously forgive others.
- c. However, those who absolutely refuse to forgive others indicates that have never known the forgiveness of God. Forgiving people know what it means to be forgiven. Unforgiven people know not the forgiveness of God.

Conclusion – How do we pray? Do we pray? How we pray clearly shows whether or not we know God, trust God, and love God. When we pray, if we pray, do we pray to the guy upstairs – or do we pray to our Father in heaven?