

# Matthew 6:5-15: Pray <sup>1</sup>

Worshippers recite verse To pray is God's BIG work for you and me. Please, open a Bible to *Matthew* chapter 6. Our Lord Jesus teaches us verse 5 not *if*, but: **When you pray**, let's pause right there. Are you willing to be a praying person? Really? If so, then from Him let's unlearn wicked praying, AND deeper learn godly praying.

God welcomes group praying. The Bible records capitol city Christians <sup>Ac:1:14</sup> **all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer**. Later, a group of capitol city Christians <sup>4:24</sup> **lifted their voices to God with one accord**. Yet, praying with others holds a toxic temptation for me. I'm reminded of it by a theatrical play <sup>Across from the Garden of Allah</sup> in which a wife looks in a mirror and says: *I hate my life — for not being a movie!* Jesus goes on to say in verse 5 **you are not to be like the hypocrites; (How so?) for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners (Why?) so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.** This verse was originally written in the Greek language. The Greek word for *actor* is pronounced *hypocrite* ☺ Meetings and street corners were their tempting media channels. When **being seen praying by** people is the aim, it's the 1 **reward** gotten.

Godly praying has for FAR greater **reward** than *show biz!* Verse 6 **But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to (Who?) your Father who is in (Even what?) secret, (So what?) and your Father who sees what is done in secret will (What?) reward you.**

What is your **inner room** to not **be seen praying by men** so that your thoughts and feelings are less scattered? Is it under a blanket, in a closet, in a yard or on a hillside? Will **your door** to **close** be lights, eyelids, car doors or bushes? There your

thoughts and feelings can focus on the hallowed, good, Father's profound, almighty, cosmic presence!

What other wicked praying would Jesus have us *unlearn*? Verse 7 **And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose they will be heard for their (What?) many words. Praying** isn't pennies dropped in a cosmic candy machine. Our **Heavenly Father** isn't mindless dirt to wear down by rivers of repeated words, endless fingering of prayer beads, spinning wheels, mass-messages or fluttering strips of paper. He created meaningful language skill.

Of people who pray meaningless repetition, Jesus commands verse 8 **So do not be like them; (Why?) for your Father knows what you need (When?) before you ask Him.** Since He knows, why must we ask? He has designed humans to only function best by willing dependence on Him. He waits for me to agree to what He knows are my real needs and not my self-centered and destructive wants builds my good dependence on Him both in me and for people who hear of it.

What godly praying is now to be learned? Jesus teaches verse 9 **Pray, then in this way** or template. Words of similar meaning can do. It is a map of praying, not the actual trip. No praying recorded in the Bible is this precise wording. Sadly, many people to know the template.

Christians have long called this way: *The Lord's Prayer*. It is the words of Jesus most memorized by people yet so slowly learned that 250+ books have been written about it. Despite Jesus just warning that **repetition** with our hearts and minds off somewhere else is worse than worthless, yet we sadly tend to treat His way such. Take care that each prayed word is your mind's and your heart's true focus.

Let's learn Jesus' **way** word by word. 1<sup>st</sup>, to whom is our praying to go? Read: **Our Father who is in heaven**, the Old Testament does not record any godly person addressing God as Father. No large religion

now addresses its imagined gods as Father. Jesus always speaks of God as *Father* and of those entrusting themselves to Him as His children. That was absolutely shocking to Jesus' first listeners in a welcoming way. He is called **Father** some 218 times in the New Testament, and He is **ours**, IF you are born again from above in Jesus through the water and the Spirit. I can't hog Him. You can't either. He is **our Father** to share with, to confide in, to seek counsel from and to supply us. We most need Him when we most fail. Leave anger, fear, grief, loneliness, prejudice and arrogance with Him.

He's the 1, living, Creator. He **fathers** humans in His likeness, from whom we are never hidden and who has cared for us from the moment we were conceived until now so that we may pray to Him and comprehend His word, and get His **reward**.

I got a letter from a brother in Idaho's maximum security prison that had this in it: *The children of Israel forgot the Lord their God. ... 5 years ago I really met Jesus and now I can't shut up about him. ... With Love in Christ Jesus, Greg Seamons a wretched sinner saved by the grace of God. Never take praying away from the Father to give to any imagined Allah, Mother Earth, Krishna, Thor, Goddess of Mercy, ancestor or saint.*

**Our Father is in heaven** unreached by childish wars. He is **in secret** yet **sees**. So, heaven isn't far off. It's a powerfully close dimension too sacred for our flesh to sense. He can really influence results.

2<sup>nd</sup>, rather than despise Him or joke of Him, pray this command: **Hallowed** (or **sacred** <sup>Lu:6:1-3; Ezk:36:23</sup>) **be Your name**. His name in Hebrew is 4 silent consonants, no vowels: YHWH. It expresses His character as the *Ever-Present One*. Scholars have come to realize that the best known pronunciation of it is *Yahweh*. The name *Jesus* means *Yahweh saves*. He is no mere ornament to polish once a week or on special occasions. Nothing natural in us deserves His attention.

Reverencing and protecting the sacredness of His name is the prime expression of worshiping God and obeying Him. To be

conscious of His sacred awesomeness and to want every person to be as conscious of it is our great need. Millions of people haven't yet even heard the word *Jesus* in their language, much less appreciate Him! Some people's leaders upon hearing of Him have said: *Had we known, we would have been worshiping Him*. Part of praying *hallowed be Your name* is helping other people do it.

As His boys and girls, deeply admiring our Father, pray to bring 7 others to see how wonderful He is. So it follows that our next greatest need to be praying Him for is verse <sup>10</sup> **Your kingdom come** despite all human selfishness and evils. The subject Jesus speaks most about is God's kingdom. The Heavenly Father governs forever glorious. Life is so much better wherever people are giving themselves to Him as Almighty God. This praying is a seeking for Him to use you in relationships, resources and what you pray about to *disciple people to Jesus*.

**Faith comes by hearing**. Each one must choose to be His citizen and enjoy Him or reject Him and miss out. To sincerely pray for that is to sincerely give our resources to advancing His **kingdom's coming**. *His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever* though evidence is against those words being part of Jesus' way to pray, of what Matthew wrote and of the Bible.

From that request follows praying for our next greatest need: **Your will be done, on earth** (To what standard?) **as it is in heaven**. Yikes! Heaven's creatures aren't mindless tools. They choose to do God's will timely, energetically and accurately. Even greater is the standard by which the man from heaven, Jesus, does it. This is a praying for yourself and for humanity to so do His will.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn recorded in his book, *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, than Ivan amidst Soviet Union Communist prison camp horrors was praying. A fellow prisoner ridiculed him: *Prayers won't help you get out of here any faster*. Ivan answered: *I don't pray to get out of prison, but to do God's will*.

Only then pray what Jesus next says:

**Give us** (When?) **this day, our** (How much?) **daily bread.** Though some people make their mark by bad-talking **bread**, it has long been common calories which our bodies must **daily** have to work as needed. It is representative of all the basics each person needs. Our Heavenly Father gives us annual seasons to grow food, strength day by day and jobs with pay in order to have what we and others need. God's word is clear about disassociating with Christians who won't work and not feeding them. Depend on our Heavenly Father. For the long term best, each day's calories should be about what we need. So if we all prayed for that daily, for a few of us God may supply more. For the rest of us, God may lovingly cut us back from the harm we are doing ourselves and from what others need.

Randy Rowland was broke, down to a family taking him in and his pair of boots. Then he lost his boots. Sitting on the porch, the family's 4-year-old girl asked: *Have you prayed to Jesus that you'll get your boots back?* He hadn't. She prayed. Minutes later the neighbor's dog dragging his boots up on the porch to the feet with the same smell, dropped them and left 😊

Now, pray verse <sup>12</sup> **And forgive us our debts, (Forgive how much?) as we also have forgiven our debtors.** Our debts to our Heavenly Father likely far outweigh what others owe us. You and I set how forgiving our Heavenly Father is of us by how forgiving we are of others. That's by His design. It is powerful for appreciating what other people are going through.

Verse <sup>13</sup> **And do not lead us into temptation,** Jesus warned His apostles <sup>Mt26:41</sup>: **Watch and pray.** A preacher short on time found no metered space so parked his car in a no-parking zone and put this note under his windshield wiper: *I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses.* When he returned, he found a ticket and this note: *I've circled this block 10 years. If I don't ticket you, I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation* 😊 Evil only tempts because it look good, has ap-

peal, seems needed, grows pride, and *they all do it.* Satan is stronger than you. In Jesus' **way** I've often prayed some form of: *Heavenly Father, please keep him from the thinking and actions that drag him down to less fruitful in Jesus.*

1<sup>st</sup>-grader Ruby Bridges Hall first climbed William Frantz Elementary steps with a big bow in her hair and a lunch box in hand as that school's first black student. 11/1960. Columnist Shiela Graham She was escorted by armed federal marshals between angry people screaming at her, a 1<sup>st</sup>-grader! Years later she explained: *One thing my mother always said to me was that when she couldn't be with me, if I was ever afraid, I should say my prayers and it sort of stuck with me.* Read on: **but deliver us from evil.** That phrase is powerful for building in us humble awareness of our weaknesses and ready to rely on Jesus to stay out of messes from which He must rescue us. Don't be childish, our enemy the devil is on the prowl seeking a weakness in someone to bring them down and devour them. Again, I have often prayed some form of this: *Heavenly Father, please protect them from those who would harm them or deprive them or steal from them what you would want them to have.* That's Jesus' way to pray.

<sup>Richmond Register</sup> Lucien Young asked Kentucky Governor Blackburn to pardon his former classmate Sam Holmes. Blackburn remembered Young had rescued people from a wrecked boat so granted the pardon. Young hurried to see Holmes. As they visited Lucien asked: *Sam, if you were pardoned, what would be the first thing you would do?* Sam said: *I'd go to Lancaster and kill Judge Owsley and a man who was a witness against me.* Lucien finished the visit, walked outside and tore up the pardon.

Decide now to have praying by Jesus throughout your life. Jesus, knowing human arrogance added a warning from verse <sup>14</sup> **For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.**

# Matthew 6:5-13: Pray

		Suggested start times
<b>Opening</b>		<b>Introduce guests 0:00</b>
	Small Talk; Check-in with each attendee; icebreaker activity	
<b>Look up</b>		<b>Worship 0:10</b>
<b>Opening Prayer</b>		<b>0:25</b>
<b>Look in</b>	Seek life applications	<b>Shepherd 0:30</b>
5-6: How does consciousness of people around you affect your praying? How does consciousness of God being present affect your praying? What's good and bad about praying unnoticed by people?		
7-8: What of your praying was meaningless and meaningful? Since our Father knows our needs, why should we ask?		
9-10: Why should hallowing God's name, His kingdom's advance and His will done be our prayer concerns?		
11-15: How should we expect God to answer each of these personal concerns?		
<b>Look out</b>	Share needs, prayer requests and ways to meet needs	<b>Disciple 1:05</b>
<b>Wrap up</b>	Check out with every attendee; Snacks	<b>1:15</b>
<b>Dismiss</b>	Decide who you will invite for next week	<b>1:30</b>