

English Transcript

Worship-based Prayer

Lesson 5: Jesus said, “Pray this way and not that way”.

Welcome back to Lesson 5 of Worship-based Prayer: Everything Changes When You Seek God’s Face. This lesson is titled, Jesus said Prayer this way and not that way. We will continue on page 19 in your handout.

Everyday millions of people pray in some form or fashion. Everyday, Jesus offers the truth and tools to help us pray effectively. In a moment, we will read the passage in Matthew 6 where Jesus is teaching on prayer. In this passage, Jesus delivers the final word on how not to pray and how to pray.

As we started this course, I asked you a few questions.

- Who taught you to pray?
- When you pray, are you following a biblical pattern for prayer or are you just following what someone else was doing?
- Do you feel like you know how to pray effectively?
- Do you feel confident that you could teach someone else to pray effectively based on a biblical pattern for prayer?

Pastor John MacArthur wrote this in his book titled, *Jesus’ Pattern of Prayer*.

“Because communion with God is so vital, the enemy constantly attempts to introduce errors into the church’s understanding of prayer. Every generation at every time faces the necessity to purify a corrupted or confused comprehension of prayer.”

There is much confusion related to prayer. There are many methods used that do not follow a biblical pattern. This is true today and it was also true 2,000 years ago when Jesus walked this earth. That is why Jesus took the time to teach clearly on the topic of prayer and why His disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray like He did.

Turn with me to Matthew 6:5 – 13. Let us read the passage, make some observations, and then ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand what Jesus means and how we can apply this teaching to our prayer lives.

“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. 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.

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

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

And some early manuscripts include this ending to the prayer, "For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

Let us first make some observations about this passage.

This is part of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is teaching about life in the Kingdom of God. Jesus exposed much of the superficial religious system of the day. In the beginning of chapter 6, Jesus teaches the crowd what not to do in their giving, praying and fasting.

A large crowd of people has gathered to listen to Jesus. Different groups of people are represented in the crowd. Obviously, there were men, women and children. There may have been different classes of people as well. In this teaching, Jesus references at least three distinct groups or classes of people.

Let us see if we can identify the three groups that Jesus is addressing in this passage related to prayer. There are a few pictures in your handout to help with this.

The first picture shows Jesus teaching a large group of people. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12 and then continues from 5:13 through 7:27.

The next picture should help us identify the first group of people that Jesus is referencing. Jesus says, do not pray 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. Often Jesus referred to the Pharisees or the religious leaders as hypocrites. A hypocrite is someone who says one thing but does the opposite. A hypocrite is not sincere or authentic. In this case, the Pharisees hid their true motives and desires from the people while they tried to show others that they were very spiritual or religious people.

The picture in your handout shows a Pharisee praying on the street corner. Jesus is teaching us that they were praying with the wrong motive. Jesus was not saying that it was wrong to pray with others or in public. Jesus was saying that we should examine our heart attitude and motivation when we pray. They were not praying to hear from God or to bring glory to God. They were praying to be seen by people. They were praying to bring glory to themselves. Jesus is saying, do not pray like them. He will soon reveal a better way to pray.

The teaching continues and Jesus points to second group of people. The next picture is to help us understand who Jesus is referring to. Jesus says, do not pray like the Gentiles. In some translations, these people are called pagans. This just means they were non-Jewish. They were not worshippers of Jehovah, the One True God.

The picture I selected is meant to depict the story of the confrontation between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal on the top of Mount Carmel from 1 Kings 18. In this story, the 450 prophets of Baal were having a competition. They believed that their false god, Baal, was more powerful than the God of Israel. These prophets prayed all day. They prayed with many words. They prayed very loudly. They danced and were cutting themselves in an attempt to influence their god.

Eventually Elijah prays to the Lord God Almighty. Before he prays, he asks for water to be poured on the altar three times until it is filled with water. This was to prove the power of the One True God. And then God brought fire down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice and even the water. In response, the crowd that had gathered bowed down and worshipped the Lord God Almighty.

Jesus was teaching, do not pray like the Gentiles or the pagans. They think that by saying just the right words, or praying long enough, or praying loud enough, or thinking that prayer is a formula, they can manipulate or influence God to give them what they are asking. Prayer is not about the manipulation of words. When people pray in this way, they show that they do not understand the true character of God. Jesus was saying, do not pray like them. They were praying with the wrong methods.

The Pharisees had the wrong motives, the wrong heart motive. They were praying not to glorify God, but to glorify themselves and be seen by people. The Gentiles were praying with the wrong methods - with many words, loudly, long prayers, and other superstitious behavior, thinking that they could influence or manipulate their god.

Jesus was saying, do not pray that way.

And then, Jesus turned to the third group and said, "Then you", meaning those who were looking to draw near to him, to be a part of the spiritual kingdom that had come with the arrival of Jesus. You, my followers, pray in this way. And Jesus went on to share what we know as the Lord's Prayer. In Matthew 6:9-13.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

This prayer is not necessarily meant as a prayer to be repeated word for word. There is nothing wrong with praying in that way. But if we think that there is power in just repeating these words, how is our praying any different from that of the Gentiles or pagans? Prayer is not about saying just the right words or thinking there is a secret formula to ensure that our prayers are answered.

Jesus is giving us a model or pattern for prayer. There are various aspects in this prayer that provide a balanced approach toward prayer. We will examine this prayer pattern in more detail in Lesson 6.

In this teaching, Jesus also refers to the concept of praying in secret. When we pray, do we always have to go into our room? Is it okay to pray with others? Jesus said, do not be like the hypocrites, but go into your room. What did he mean?

Obviously, prayer does not have to be done in a private room. Jesus, prayed alone at times with his Father. But he also prayed openly with his disciples. He prayed in community with others. He prayed in public settings.

If I asked you which leg is more important to you? Your right leg or your left leg? You would say that both are equally important.

If you were flying in an airplane, which wing of the airplane is more important? The right wing or the left wing? You would answer that both wings are needed to fly.

The same applies to prayer. Which is more important? Private prayer or corporate prayer? For definition purposes, “corporate” just means praying with more than yourself. It could be praying with one other person or praying with ten people or with hundreds of people.

The Word of God is very clear that there is great value in private prayer, and it is expected that we will pray with others. And the Scriptures are filled with examples of both. When Jesus said, go into your room, I don't think he had the intention of just going into a closet, a prayer closet by yourself. There may be a time for that. I think he was teaching more about our heart attitude related to prayer.

The location of our praying is not as important as the attitude of our heart. Whether praying alone or with others, our focus should be to draw near to God in humility and with reverence for God. Our desire is to worship Him and bring our requests before him. We can thank Him for all He has done. We can confess our sin and ask for forgiveness. Abiding in Christ is a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus. Prayer is primarily focused on building our relationship with God. Prayer is a spiritual discipline of grace, a gift from God, to walk in close fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There is one more picture on page 19. This picture may help us understand more about what it means to go into your closet to pray. The word for “closet” in the original Greek language means “storeroom”. This was probably a large room for storing food and other supplies for a

family. When the New Testament was translated into English in 1611, the King James Version of the Bible translated this word as “closet”.

The picture at the bottom of page 19 is a copy of the painting titled, “The King’s Closet”. This is found in Windsor Castle in England. You can see that this was not a small room for hanging clothes but rather the King’s closet was a large room where people would go to meet with the King. This is so interesting. In Hebrews 4:14-16, we are invited to come before the Throne of Grace with confidence. We are invited to meet with our Great High Priest, Jesus, who is also the King of kings and the Lord of lords as we seek the face of God alone and with others. When we pray we are meeting with the King!

When Jesus said, pray like this and not like that, He was not just offering prayer suggestions. This was a command for our good and for God’s glory as we pray. We are not permitted to freelance with our own methods of prayer. We do not override this model because we think we have a better formula or a clever approach that makes improvements upon what Jesus taught. The prayer pattern described on these pages, and the rest of this lesson, is based on a very basic premise.

This quote from pastor and theologian, J.I. Packer helps to make this point.

“This prayer is a pattern for all Christian praying; Jesus is teaching that prayer will be acceptable when and only when, the attitudes, thoughts, and desires expressed fit this pattern. That is to say: Every prayer of ours should be a praying of the Lord’s Prayer in some shape or form. We never get beyond this prayer. Not only is it the Lord’s first lesson in praying, it is all other lessons too.”

Let us examine this prayer pattern at a high-level. In the model prayer that Jesus gave us, the first half is focused on God’s glory. He is worthy. The second half of the prayer is focused on our needs. We are needy.

We could summarize this prayer pattern by saying that **God is worthy** and **we are needy**. As we begin to pray, it is helpful to begin our praying focused upward on God in worship and adoration. This is time well spent praising Him, thanking Him, reminding Him of His character, of His attributes, His names. That is the focus of the phrase “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” This is a good place to begin all prayers. This helps to aligns our heart with the character and will of God.

In Lesson 6 we will see that this prayer model is also balanced. In this lesson, we want to emphasize that Jesus is teaching us not to pray with wrong motives and wrong methods. He says, “this then is how you should pray.”

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

That's the first half of the prayer. **God is worthy.**

And then the prayer continues.

"Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we all have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."

This is the second half of the prayer. **We are needy.**

Before we discuss the various elements of this prayer model in Lesson 6, I just want to make the point that Jesus is teaching, "do not pray that way but pray this way".

This is just the beginning of developing a biblical pattern for prayer. We stated at the beginning of this course that prayer should be focused on building a relationship with God.

Prayer is not just focused on what we can get from God. Prayer is also focused on drawing near to God. It is developing our relationship with him. Prayer is "seeking God's face". It is seeking God's face, not just his hand.

We see an example of this in Psalm 27:4.

David said, there is one thing that I ask, one thing I desire. That is to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and seek Him in His temple. At that time, David may have been running from his son Absalom. He was away from Jerusalem and the Tabernacle which represented the manifest presence of God on earth. David's one desire was to meet with God in the Tabernacle.

Then in verse 8, God invited David (and us), to seek His face. David replies, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."

On page 21, there is a picture of a hand holding some money.

This is an illustration of this principle that we must seek God's face, not just His hand. Imagine I was having a conversation with you, and I was holding out a 20,000 CFA bill. I am looking at you, and saying, that I love you, I have thought about you, and I desire to bless you with this gift. And the whole time that I am speaking to you, instead of looking at me, your gaze is fixed on the money in my hand.

This is perfect picture of how we often approach God. We look at His hand only. We are seeking His hand. We are most interested in what we can get from God, instead of first seeking His face and, and drawing near to Him and, and developing a closer relationship with Him.

If we seek God's face, we get so much more, we get Him, plus everything else that comes with this. If we seek only His hand, we may miss our relationship with Him. Let me be clear. There is nothing wrong with asking God for things, we are His children. But if prayer is only about seeking God's hand, we are missing the primary blessing of prayer.

Prayer is first about seeking God's face, deepening our relationship with God. This is a key principle. The clearer God's face, the bigger His hand becomes. This just means, as we grow to know and love the Lord, we will appreciate and value the blessings that He showers on us. We come to know that He truly does satisfy all our needs in His perfect way and perfect timing.

As we prepare to clearly understand and apply this pattern for prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, let us first review a short list of "pray this way, not that way" principles.

Pray this way and not that way!

- **We should pray with our heart fixed on God's glory, not just our personal satisfaction.**
This is the emphasis of seeing God's kingdom come and His will be done, and hallowing His name in our lives.
- **We should look to pray out of the treasury of God's word, not just from our own list of ideas.**
Often people will say, I don't know what to pray about. Well, just open your Bible. The Psalms are a wonderful place to begin to pray. We saw this at the start of this course when we read Psalm 103. There are many written prayers throughout the Scriptures. We saw this in Lesson 4 as we looked at the beautiful prayers recorded by the apostle Paul. If we are praying what is in God's Word, we can be sure that we are praying according to God's will.
- **We can pray according to the Spirit's instruction, not only our human reason.**
Allow the Holy Spirit to guide our praying, not just following our own agenda. There is a blessing in praying with others. When we pray in a group we should not just be waiting for someone to stop praying so that we pray what we want to pray. Praying in one accord means that we should be listening to how others are praying. We should allow the Spirit of God to lead us in prayers that build upon each other. The Holy Spirit of God desires to shape our prayers and align them with God's will. In Romans 8 we are told that the Spirit helps us in our weakness. When we do not know what to pray, The Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

- **We can pray with our hearts completely surrendered to God's will, not our own hurried agenda.**
- **Pray in anticipation of living triumphantly in the war zone not in satisfaction with our comfort zone.**

It is good to remember that this world is not our home. We are citizens of heaven. We are currently in enemy territory representing the King of kings. This is a battlefield. God has left us here for a purpose, to make disciples. We can live victoriously here as we wait for heaven. We recognize that we are in a war zone.

- **And finally, pray that God would change you and me, not just change things around us.**
This is the ultimate focus of prayer. God would change our hearts, align our hearts more with his purposes and conform us to the likeness of Christ.

As we close this lesson, take some time to review this list of principles and consider which ones you may put into practice to refresh and transform your prayer life as you seek God's face and not just His hand through worship-based prayer.

In Lesson 6 we will breakdown the prayer pattern in Matthew 6:9-13 as we further define worship-based prayer.