

# The Right Way to Pray

Matthew 6:5-8

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Priests are mediators that represent God to the people around them; they also represent the people around them before God.

### 3 myths dispelled by our priestly identity:

1. Only mature Christians can draw near to God; **young Christians cannot.**
2. Only Pastors and full-time ministers can build the Church spiritually; **lay members cannot.**
3. Only "Christian" work is sacred before God; **secular work is not.**

To pray is to be human. To be human is also to be dependent; we need people and we also need God. While we might know how to pray, we might not know what prayer really is.

### 3 Ways to Pray

#### **1. Like a Pharisee**

Jesus says there is clearly a wrong way to pray (v. 5). It is wrong to pray like "the hypocrites" (Jesus was referring to the Pharisees). Hypocrites are people who do not live in line with their beliefs. The Pharisees claimed to believe in a holy God and in the importance of prayer. Yet they prayed as if God wasn't real or important and used prayer as a platform for them to be seen and applauded by people. The way they prayed was the complete opposite of what they claimed to believe. Jesus warns against the desire to be seen and acknowledged (Matthew 6:1). Wanting to be seen shapes the way we pray: prayer becomes manward rather than Godward. Prayer is meant to come from a place of neediness, weakness and dependance, not from a place of pride. God rejects the prayers of the proud (James 4:6b).

#### **2. Like a Pagan**

The Pagans are Gentiles (non-Jews) who do not worship the God of the Bible. Differences between the way Pharisees and Pagans pray:

Pharisees	Pagans
Public Prayer	Sufficient Prayer
Quality	Quantity
Attain to God	Appease God
Good enough?	Done enough?
Platform	Incantation
Hypocrite	Delusional

The prayers of the Pagans, while lengthy and loud, are gibberish and insincere. They are not heard by God. Pagans do not know who they are praying to. God is so holy, that the earth would do well to keep silent before Him (Hab. 2:20). Prayer is not meant to be used to manipulate God. These

kinds of prayers are an insult to the Holy God, and they fall flat to the ground instead of rising up before God.

### **3. Like a Priest**

#### 2 Parts:

#### **A. Pray in secret (v. 6)**

God is the Father who is in secret. When we put aside the fanfare, hype and the opinions of people around us - and look for God in prayer, we will find Him there. It is there that we have His attention and reward. *Prayer is an invitation from God, to God.* The best way to cultivate a Godward heart of prayer is by accepting the invitation to the secret place where God is; pray in secret!

#### **B. Pray with sincerity (v. 8)**

We need to throw away the bargaining mentality and wanting to appease God. The first concern we have about prayer cannot be about the quantity or length. Instead, we need to ask, "Am I pouring my heart before God in prayer?" Prayer is not transactional. We still pray even though God already knows what we need because it helps our hearts breathe from the suffocations of our fears, concerns, true longings, and deep desires. While God hears the prayers that come from our minds, wills and emotions, what He desires most is that we pour out and open our hearts before Him in sincere prayer. Steal moments away with God and find Him in the secret place!

Being priests is not natural for us. We are more naturally Pharisees and Pagans. It is our hearts that need to be transformed. Jesus loved the secret place and being in solitude with His Father but on the cross, He was thrust into the spotlight. He was standing on the most public street corner in all history and instead of revealing how majestic, holy and powerful He is, He was treated like a Pharisee and Pagan. Amidst the agony, Jesus sought out the secret place to no avail. His cry to the Father, "Why have You forsaken me?" was treated like a heaping of empty phrases. He suffered what we deserve so that we might enjoy what He alone is worthy of. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we can enter into the secret place where God is. Enter into the secret place through the name of Jesus with gratitude and thanksgiving!