

## Counter Culture

### "Prayer - Not Hypocritical or Mechanical, but Thoughtful"

Matthew 6:5-15 (From the NLT) - "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: 'Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.' If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."

#### I. What to beware of in prayer. (6:5-8)

A. Hypocrisy (6:5-6) - praying to be seen praying - praying only in public

B. Mechanical (6:7-8) - rote prayers

1. How we do it.

2. How we teach our children.

#### II. The Lord's model for prayer. (6:9-15) - Thoughtful

A. The question comes up, "If God knows what we need before we pray, then why pray?"

1. Because He wants to hear from us and fellowship with us.

2. He wants us to acknowledge our dependence on Him. Never forget that he is the Creator and we are His creatures.

3. To receive, to accept what He wants for us all along.

4. It is good and right to praise and thank God for His love, mercy and care for us.

B. Looking at the model or example of prayer that Jesus gives us in this passage, we see what kinds of things should be in our prayers - our conversations with God.

1. Praying for God's glory. (Vs. 9,10)

- "Our Father"

- "May your name be kept holy" - ("Hallowed Be Thy Name" in old English) -

2. Praying for God's rule in our lives and in the world. "May your Kingdom come soon."

"kingdom" - in two senses:

a) for the Church to expand.

b) our anticipation of heaven - His perfect rule

2 Timothy 4:8 - "And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing."

3. Praying for God's will - "May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Romans 12:2 tells us that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect.

- "on earth as it is in heaven" - How is God's will followed in heaven? Completely and perfectly.

C. Praying For our needs (vs. 11-15)

1. Provision - "Give us today the food we need."

2. Forgiveness - "And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us."

But note the reminder here that as recipients of God's mercy, He expects us to be merciful too - TO IMITATE HIM!

Vs. 14-15 are not to teach us that we somehow earn God's forgiveness by being forgiving of others, but to remind us that God will forgive those who come humbly in repentance to Him. And those who truly repent and receive God's mercy will leave changed, will leave willing to extend mercy to others in their own lives.

3. Protection - "And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."

James 1:13 tells us that God Himself does not tempt us, but allows us to be tempted.

D. Jesus concludes by praying again for God's glory and praise, (vs. 13) - "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

**Conclusion:** This is a model for prayer. It is not the actual prayer we should pray. It is not all we should ever pray for, because Jesus tells us elsewhere of other things to pray for - for example - to pray on behalf of others.