

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer Series: 1

First Words

Matthew 6. 5-13

Jesus' First Word.

Jesus' first word to his disciples on this subject of prayer, as recorded in this passage is '**when you pray**'. He makes this statement three times in verses 5-7; note Jesus said '*when*' not '*if*'. Jesus expected his disciples to pray, and He expects us to pray too.

He says the same in Mark 11.24

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask **when you pray**, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.”

The apostles also spoke and wrote of the importance, urgency and the command to pray – and this was common practice in the church.

“but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Acts 6.4

“rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer” Romans 12.12

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...” Ephesians 6.18

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” Colossians 4.2

“pray without ceasing” 1 Thessalonians 5.17

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” 1 Timothy 2.8

“...therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers” 1 Peter 4.7

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” Acts 1.14

“Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” Acts 12.5

“And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made...” Acts 16.13

Motive of Prayer vs5

We are not to be like the hypocrites – these made a public show of their praying. Their motive was to be seen and heard by men, and to receive the praise of men.

Prayer is not to be seen, heard or for show.

In this study we are talking about personal prayer - there is a place for corporate prayer which is meant to be vocal.

- There is the possibility that when we are together in a church gathering that we might have a wrong motive in praying.
- We must check our heart – are we hoping that others will think we are spiritual or good prayer warriors?

Place of Prayer vs6

Our private personal prayer should be in the secret place.

‘Shut the door’, shut out ALL distractions – people, phone, TV

Purposeful prayer – set time aside, be determined to pray, no distractions, have set petitions.

Language of Prayer vs7-8

We are not to be like the heathen – Here is another admonition from Jesus about our prayers. We are not to be like the hypocrites who wanted to be seen and heard by men. Neither are we to be like the heathen whose prayers were lengthy and repetitive.

Prayer should be simple, not lengthy, non-repetitious, non-rote, and specific.

Jesus condemned the heathen who prayed thinking that they would be heard because of their many words.

Vain repetition.. this is just

- repeating the same prayer
- saying the same phrases
- saying the same words over and over

Jesus hears prayers prayed in faith not because of the many words or the length of prayers.

Being constant in prayer, or praying always does not mean a lengthy prayer.

Jesus told us that we do not need to be like them because the Father knows the things we need, before we even ask Him.

Jesus followed up these statements about the motives of the hypocrites and heathen by giving us a pattern prayer.

Because of Jesus' teaching that we have just seen, I don't believe that this prayer was intended to be a public prayer or to be prayed repetitiously word for word, but rather that it was given to us as a pattern or as guidelines to help us pray.

Jesus says, as He introduces this prayer, that we should pray '*in this manner*'. The Greek word *houtos*, used here means 'in this way'. This is a way to pray not a prayer to pray. What Jesus went on to teach were guidelines or principles to direct us as we pray.

Structure of Prayer vs9-13

Our prayer should include the following:

- Worship and Thanksgiving (vs9)
- Submission to the Lordship of Jesus (vs10) - "thy Reign begin" (Moffatt)
- Revelation of the Will of God (vs10) – through His Word
- Daily Provision of Needs / Petitions (vs11)
- Forgiveness of our sins - Repentance (vs12)
- Forgiving (vs12) – Love, Compassion
- Protection from the enemy (vs13)
- Praise (vs13) – releases faith

In the next session we will look more closely at the teaching of this pattern prayer and draw any practical guidelines from it to help us pray.