



how not to ~~WHEN WE~~ PRAY

Discussion guide | Matthew 6:5-8

How Not to Pray: On Sunday, Kyle kicked off week zero of our prayer series. **Matthew 6:5-8** is a passage from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In these verses, Jesus instructs His followers on **how not to pray**, emphasizing that prayers should be sincere and not performed for show. He criticizes those who pray in public places to be seen by others, like the hypocrites who seek admiration rather than a genuine connection with God. Such outward displays, Jesus argues, are not truly spiritual or effective. Instead, Jesus advocates for private, heartfelt prayer. He suggests that individuals should retreat to a quiet place to pray in solitude.

Starter:

- What is prayer?
- What is the purpose of prayer?
- On a scale of 1-10, how would you score your own prayer life.
- What is the context of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6? How does it fit within the larger context of the Sermon on the Mount?

Digging Deeper:

Read: Matthew 6:5-8

5 “And 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. 6 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.

On Sunday, Kyle gave several obstacles (below) that can keep us from praying.

- What are some of the obstacles that keep you from praying?
Unbelief, Distraction and Busyness, Our View of God is Too Small, Spiritual Dryness, Guilt and Shame, and Disappointment and Anger.
- How does the true purpose of prayer help to overcome these obstacles?

Jesus warns against the pretentious prayer of the hypocrites.

- What is Jesus talking about here? Is he suggesting that all forms of public prayer should be avoided? Why or why not?
- How is this warning especially relevant for those who do public ministry?

Here are a set of questions that are worth processing if you are someone who does a lot of public prayer.

- Does the language and vocabulary of your prayers change when you are around other people?
- When you are by yourself, do you use all the theological language you use in public?
- Do you normally quote Scripture when you pray?
- Do you typically pray with that kind of zeal and passion alone that you use when you are in public?

Read: Matthew 6:6

6 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.

How do you know that you are seeking God and not just putting on a religious show? [You have a private prayer life that is consistent with your public one.]

Read: Matthew 6:7-8

7 “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Read 1 Kings 18:16-40

- How does this story illustrate the verses that we just read in Matthew 6?
- What is the bottom line of what Jesus is communicating in this warning?

Moving Forward

- Ask God to remove any obstacles that stand in the way of your prayer life deepening.
- Repent of anything that the Spirit puts on your heart that might have surfaced from Jesus' instruction on "how not to pray"?
- Spend some time meditating on the following questions:
- Do I have a private prayer life?
- If not, what steps do I need to take to ruthlessly fight for this time with God?
- Who is one person that I can ask to help me grow in this practice?