

# Authentic Christians

Lesson 22 – Matthew 6:5-15

## 1. The Anatomy of Hypocrisy

- In order to be clear, though, this section is specifically targeting public “religious righteousness” – those actions done to honor and worship God in public.
- Jesus gives three very piercing illustrations of how *“the goal of pleasing the Father is traded for its pygmy cousin, the goal of pleasing men.”* (Carson, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, pg. 59)

## 2. Three Illustrations of Religious Hypocrisy

- Giving (Mt. 6:2-4) last week – the most public of the three
- Fasting (Mt. 6:16-18) in two weeks – the most private of the three
- Praying (Mt. 6:5-15) this week and next – the hybrid
  - Again we note that Jesus expects public prayer to continue ... “when you pray [publicly]” ... He DOES NOT expect public observation of our “religious devotion” to hinder the practice.
  - This model prayer was repeated at a later time when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Lk. 11:1-4) which makes us think that all of the 12 weren’t present at the SOTM.
  - The hypocrites (known religious actors ... definite Greek article ... i.e. the Pharisees) loved the attention of others when they prayed publicly – in this case, when they prayed in the synagogues and on the street corners.

*“In the Jewish culture of Jesus’ time, religious people prayed every three hours, at 3:00, 6:00, 9:00, etc. The hypocrites used to plan their day so that they would be in the busiest part of the village when it was time to pray. When they stopped, raised their arms, and prayed flowery, fluent prayers, people around them would say, “My, what wonderful, godly people they must be.”* (Jeremiah, Prayer: The Great Adventure, pg. 77)

- Notice also that they stood to pray ... see Mk. 11:25 & Lk. 18:9-14

*“But the location was not the critical factor. Neither is the “standing” posture in itself significant. In the Bible people pray **prostrate** (Num 16:22; Josh 5:14; Dan 8:17; Matt 26:39; Rev 11:16), **kneeling** (2 Chronicles 6:13; Dan 6:10; Luke 22:41, Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5), **sitting** (2 Sam 7:18), and **standing** (1 Sam 1:26; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13).”* (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- Jesus commands two actions when we pray: 1) seek privacy instead of publicity & 2) seek simplicity instead of verbosity.
  - Jesus is not condemning all public prayer (if so, the early church didn’t get it – Acts 1:15-26!)
  - The point is this: *“Sin, He shows us here, is something which follows us all the way, even into the very presence of God.”* (Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, pg. 300)

*“Some have wondered if the prayer of the Pharisee recorded in [Luke 18](#) accurately reflects the attitude of these very religious men. A prayer found in the Talmud (b. Ber. 28b) suggests that it does. The prayer reads,*

I thank thee, O Lord, my God, that thou hast given me my lot with those who sit in the seat of learning, and not with those who sit at the street-corners; for I am early to work, and they are early to work; I am early to work on the words of the Torah, and they are early to work on things of no moment. I weary myself, and they weary themselves; I weary myself and profit thereby, while they weary themselves to no profit. I run and they run; I run toward the life of the Age to Come, and they run toward the pit of destruction.

*“This prayer as well as the prayer of the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable expresses thanks to God for the benefits of dedication to Him. From Jesus’ viewpoint, however, both prayers display a self-righteous attitude and a contempt for others that is out of harmony with God’s love for human beings.” (Richards, Pegoda, & Gross, [Every Teaching of Jesus in the Bible](#), pg. 198)*

- Jesus reminds us that our sinful heart can pervert any behavior ... even obedience to God can become a tool of self-centeredness!

*What are some practical yet creative ways that a Christian can violate vs. 6? (Lloyd-Jones mentions that there are those who want to be known as “people of prayer” and there are those who love to be seen [or known to be] praying)*

- “Vain repetitions” (*battalogeō*) means literally “to stammer or stutter”; some think it originated from Battus, the King of Cyrene, who stuttered or a poet Battus, who wrote long and tedious poems (Vine thinks it’s a nickname [*Battalos – the Gabbler*] given to Demosthenes, a great orator [given by his opponents]).
  1. The implication is that pious/religious extortion (convincing God or trying to get something out of Him) is unbiblical and ungodly, not just the use of perfect and polished wording in a public prayer.
  2. Another implication is that there are no “special words” or incantations that unlock the resources of God – you don’t have to pray long enough or repeat your petitions in the correct order in order to have your prayers answered.
  3. The last implication is that those outside the faith (pagans) are dependent on their “religiosity” and not their relationship for the answer to their prayers. (See Eccl. 5:1-3 & Mt. 7:7-12)

*“We should remember that the slang term ‘pitter-patter’ in English comes from the Latin words that begin the Lord’s Prayer (Pater Noster) and are an observation on how meaningless the empty repetition of even the famous words has sometimes seemed to unbelievers. Augustine was on the right track when he properly distinguished between much speaking in prayer and much praying.” (Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 1](#), pg. 97)*

### 3. The Lord's Prayer

- Notice that Jesus DID NOT say “This is what you pray” but “This is how you pray” – vv. 9-13 is a model prayer, not a sacrament.
- There are 6 petitions:
  - Hallowed be Thy (God's) name
  - Thy (God's) kingdom come
  - Thy (God's) will be done
  - Give us this day our daily bread
  - Forgive us our debts
  - Do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one
- There are multiple ways to divide the prayer; basically, though, there are three divisions - 1) Initial address to God as Father; 2) God's honor – God's kingdom – God's will; and 3) human needs.
  - **Our Father**
    - Jesus did not teach us to pray “MY Father” though He is; Jesus taught us to pray with a broader scope – “OUR Father”. (See 1 Jn. 5:1-2)
    - Although there are examples of Jewish writings that address God as “Father”, they are extremely rare; Jesus is foreshadowing the familial relationship that results from salvation – Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:4-7 & Eph. 2:13-22.
  - **Hallowed be Your Name**
    - “To hallow” means “to make holy or consider holy”. (See 1 Pt. 3:15)
    - Citizens of God's kingdom reverence, honor, and consider holy the NAME of God and therefore God Himself.

*How significant is the NAME of God? How should the praying of this petition affect or influence the speech of a Christian?*

- This petition is not so much about what must happen in us, but what the chief end of man's existence truly is – we were created to make God glorious! Our prayer and life's objective should be to see God's glory realized in ourselves and in those around us.
- **Your kingdom come & Your will be done**
  - The full and physical arrival of God's kingdom “*will be the perfect accomplishment of the Father's will, without rebellion, prevarication, delay, evil agencies, and those mysterious twists by which God now works even through men's evil (Isa. 10:5-19)...*” (Carson, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, pg. 71)
  - Although this petition longs for a day in which God's righteousness will reign fully and freely, it's also a petition for “heavenly righteousness” to be accomplished in the “earthly context” (an obvious context of evil, corruption, and rebellion).

*Should the Christian be active (socially and/or politically) in advancing God's righteousness in their community, government, family, etc.? What are the risks? Rewards?*

- **Give us this day our daily bread**
  - The first three petitions are not NEEDS of God, but the last three are NEEDS of ours – we need daily food, spiritual life, and loving protection.

- This petition reveals the precarious nature of first century existence: “daily” is an adjective that means “... of the day that is coming”.

*“In Jesus’ day, laborers were commonly paid each day for the work they had achieved that day; and the pay was frequently so abysmally low that it was almost impossible to save any of it. Therefore, the day’s pay purchased the day’s food ... Living a relatively precarious existence, Jesus’ followers were to learn to trust their heavenly Father to meet their physical needs.” (Carson, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, pg. 72-73)*

- God the Father is the ultimate source of all that is good for us – there is nothing that we enjoy or that benefits us that has escaped the provision of God. (See 1 Cor. 4:7 & James 1:17)

○ **Forgive us our debts**

- This petition is the primary reason why its improper to call vv. 9-13 “The Lord’s Prayer” - Jesus did not pray in these terms since He would not have asked God to forgive Him!
- “Debts” obviously refers to sins committed against God and/or others; the Aramaic Jesus spoke would have implied forgiveness needed for a transgression.

*“This use is perfectly natural in itself, since an obligation to God which is not duly met becomes to us a sin ... In like manner the English word duly denotes that which is due, owed.” (Broadus, Commentary on Matthew, pg. 137)*

- The petition reveals the nature of forgiveness: 1) Releasing someone from the debt (obligation) they owe us; 2) Resolution (promise) to never bring it up again; and 3) Determination to seek the offender’s good.
- Jesus expounds further on forgiveness in vv. 14-15 and on the surface seems to place a condition on God’s forgiveness of us: forgive others so that (implied) God will forgive you.

*“The point of the parable [Mt. 18:23-35] it seems does not so much turn on temporal sequence (X must forgive Y before Z can forgive X) as on attitude. There is no forgiveness for the one who does not forgive ... His unforgiving spirit bears strong witness to the fact that he has never repented.” (Carson, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, pg. 75)*

- Forgiveness begins in a heart thankful for God’s forgiveness through Christ, and then reaches out to others in their moment of need; i.e. we forgive others as evidence of our saving relationship with God through Christ.

*Is it possible or are believers even obligated to forgive offenders when they don’t ask to be forgiven? How does Lk. 17:3 apply?*

*“... we must have a profound change of heart, expressing itself, among other ways, in a willingness to forgive others if we have experienced forgiveness ourselves. It is similar to having saving faith. We are not saved by our faith; salvation is by grace. But faith must be present if we are to receive forgiveness.” (Boice, The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 1, pg. 100)*

- **Do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one**
  - “Temptation” can also be translated “trial” as in James 1:2 & 1 Pt. 1:6.
  - Broadus sees in these last three petitions re: human need as petitions revealing the avenues in which sin breach our heart – it enters through our demands for sustenance and our relationship with others; it also enters through troubling life experiences.
  - Satan desires to defeat us through our physical needs, our relationships with others, and our handling of trials.

*“The humble believer, self-distrustful because conscious of remaining tendencies to sin, and weaknesses in restraining them, prays that God will not bring him into temptation. (Cp. 26:41, 1 Cor. 7:5, Gal. 5:7) And yet, when God sees fit, notwithstanding his prayer and effort, to bring him into temptation, he is then to rejoice (James 1:2) because when met in the strength of the Lord, it will certainly be overcome (1 Cor. 10:13), because it will develop his Christian character and thus prove a blessing (James 1:3ff), and because it will secure for him an eternal reward (5:12, James 1:12, & Rom. 8:18).” (Broadus, Commentary on Matthew, pg. 138)*

#### 4. **Applications**

- The way we pray displays truths about God ...

*Roman Catholicism teaches two key heresies about God through their teaching on prayer: 1) God is distant and doesn’t know what you need, and 2) God doesn’t care about our needs and is generally apathetic toward them (reluctant).*

*“All men, moreover, are full of the hope and confidence that prayers which might be received with less favor from the lips of unworthy men, will be accepted by God when they are recommended to him by the Most Holy Mother and will be favorably heard.” (Octobri Mense, Pope Leo XIII [1878-1903])*

*Roman Catholics are instructed to repeat the Hail Mary a number of times in order to affect the heart and mind of God ... “We have a confident hope that God will at length let himself be moved and have pity upon the state of his Church, and give ear to the prayers coming to him through her whom he has chosen to be the dispenser of all heavenly graces.” (Superiore Anno, Pope Leo XIII [1878-1903])*

*How do we answer these things biblically? What does the Bible say about God being distant or unknowing? What does the Bible say about God being apathetic?*

*How does a lost person refer to God in their prayers? How important is the term “Father”?*

- Pagan prayer rests its success on repetition and many words; biblical (godly) prayer rests its success on the intimate knowledge of a loving Father who desires to answer.