

Prayer Is Personal

Text: Matthew 6:5-13

INTRODUCTION:

1. Prayer is crucial and must be central in the life of a Christian.
2. It is much more than mere ritual or an act to be performed perfunctorily.
3. Prayer is profoundly personal.
4. It is man expressing the deepest desires and extreme emotions of his heart to the loving ear of Almighty God.

I. PRAYER IS NOT A PERFORMANCE FOR MEN (MATTHEW 6:5-6)

- A. Notice that prayer is an expected action – “when” not “if.”
- B. Because prayer is a sign of a faithful spiritual life, many have used it to pretend to be someone they are not.
 1. As hypocrites, they merely play the part.
 2. Their goal is to be seen of men, and they have their reward.
- C. Instead, prayer is to be a pouring out of one’s heart, desires, and vows to God as a freewill offering.
- D. Thus, prayer is to be private and personal with secrecy and sincerity.
- E. Jesus does not condemn public prayer – certainly not in the assembly – but does demand that one’s prayer must come from the heart.

II. PRAYER IS NOT A PERFORMANCE FOR GOD (MATTHEW 6:7-8)

- A. In the same way, prayer must not be viewed as a ritual means to get the attention of God (cf. 1 Kings 18:26-29; Acts 19:34).
- B. Vain repetitions are mechanical memorizations stated again and again without thought as to what one is saying – insincere utterances.
 1. Repetition is not condemned (cf. Matthew 26:39, 42, 44; Daniel 9:18-19).
 2. Even memorization is allowed so long as it comes from the heart.
- C. One does not have to gain God’s attention to pray to Him, for He is always present, ready to hear, and already knows the needs of man!
- D. Thus, prayer is to be personal, sincere communication with the Lord.

III. PRAYER IS NOT A PERFORMANCE FOR SELF (MATTHEW 6:9-13)

- A. One must not enter into prayer with God while being dishonest with himself.
- B. God already knows us perfectly, inside and out (Hebrews 4:12-13).
- C. One must not try to hide his sins from God (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:7-10).
- D. One must not try to deny his dependence upon God.
- E. Prayer is to be a personal cry of reliance upon the Father in Heaven.

CONCLUSION:

1. Prayer is not a performance.
2. Instead, prayer is personal, between me and God.
3. How will understanding this affect my prayers?
4. What changes can I make to be more personal in my prayers to God?

Exercises

Prayer Is Patterned

1. Read Matthew 6:9-13. What things are involved in the pattern provided by Jesus in the model prayer?
2. Read Matthew 6:9-13. How can one show reverence to God the Father in prayer?
3. Read Matthew 6:9-13. Understanding that the kingdom is the Lord's church, how should one pray for the kingdom?
4. Read Matthew 6:9-13. What does it mean to pray for God's will to be done? Must one also be willing to submit to His will?
5. Read Matthew 6:9-15. What can hinder God from answering one's prayer for forgiveness?
6. Read Matthew 6:9-13. What does it mean to pray for God not to lead one into temptation? How can one be delivered from temptation and evil?