

## Matthew 6:5-15 – This is How to Pray

Intro: 1755, a young Colonel and Providence. Our text and the verses surrounding it are about contrasting hypocrisy with holiness, in our giving, our fasting, etc. Today we are going to narrow our focus to the portion in vs.5-15 about prayer. This isn't everything about prayer; Jesus says other things about prayer, there are different types of prayer; Paul gives us instruction about prayer, etc. Yet this is important because it lays the groundwork, it is the framework of prayer. Jesus is establishing certain basic principles He wanted to ground and to guide us with. This text is not everything *about* the subject, or the last word *on* the subject, but it is foundational *to* the subject. This message does not include all the issues that this particular text addresses, but this is biblically based instruction on *this* subject from *this* text of scripture.

Luke 11:1-4 gives the essence of this framework also, and there we see Jesus first describing these ideas of being consistent and persistent (ask, seek, and knock – Luke 11:9-10). The phrases point to the frame, not that we should repeat the phrases. Jesus speaks of empty phrases not empty framework, and this is what He is doing here, providing us with a framework for prayer with an understanding of Providence.

Here in this text Jesus starts by addressing two of the great problems we encounter in prayer, and then also gives the antidote to it. In vs.5-6 He speaks about being hypocritical and in vs.7-8 about being superstitious. After that He gives us a pattern for prayer, so we understand that we must avoid taking this pattern and using it in a hypocritical or superstitious way.

- **Be sincere** (vs.5) – don't be like the others who just want to be seen as holy, you can pray in public but don't try to be a great performer
- **Be secret** (vs.6) – make sure you get alone with God, how you pray in private is what you really are, and then if you pray in public it will be real, and powerful, not just a show
- **Be succinct** (vs.7) – don't think that having all the right magic words and flowing phrases are what matters, it is not length or loudness that counts, it is okay to use big words and to be fervent, but don't just keep repeating yourself and getting louder as if this is what God is looking for
- **Be sure** (vs.8) – yes we should petition God and be persistent, but it should be with an understanding of who He is, not as if we must inform Him of who we are, we pray with persistence while relying on Providence

**Vs.9-11 – Thank Him for what you have before you ask Him for what you need** – We have a relationship with Him. He already knows what you need (Matthew 6:8, 32); what He wants is to hear how much you appreciate what He has already done.

**Vs.12-13 – Tell Him what you have done wrong before you ask Him to make it right** – God already knows what you have done wrong, but He wants you to live in view of the fact that He does know all about you, more than we know about ourselves. Realizing we are open to God helps us to live a more holy life.

**Vs.13 (KJV) / Vs.9-10 – Praise Him for who He is no matter what He does** – Prayer recognizes who God is – Even if the doxology at the end was not in the original the first phrases (vs.9-10) point to the same thing. Do your will, Lord, you are just, holy, good, you are God, I worship You through prayer. Our prayers should have praise in them. Until our hearts find their safety, satisfaction, and rest in God, they will have no rest. We cannot glorify God in the world until we have first glorified Him in our hearts.

**Vs.14-15** – forgiven people become forgiving people – Jesus is saying that unforgiveness messes up your prayer life, that asking without giving is hypocritical. Yet we must also realize that this is a generic statement; it is about holding something against someone right now or just being a generally unforgiving person, this is what causes us to be hypocritical. It would be superstitious to think we need to search out all of our past unforgiveness or God won't answer our prayers. That would go against what we know about God's forgiveness. We should not be hypocritical or superstitious. We are not trying to find prayers that "work" we are praying to God because He IS God and through Christ He has done the most important work.