

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

KAPONO: Amen. Would you join me in a word of prayer? Lord, thank You so much. We give You all the praise and glory for what You're doing, Lord. And we thank You so much for this time that is ever so important, Lord, this time where we can come together and pray, but Lord, also to learn how to pray, Lord. So Holy Spirit, would You lead and guide us tonight? Would You teach us how to pray? In Jesus' name, Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen. How are you doing tonight?

[Congregation says, "Good!"]

All right. So glad you came tonight. Looking forward to what the Lord has for us just in our time praying together. But before we jump in, I want to let you know about Thursday night, day after tomorrow, actually, we're going to have Pastor Steve Santos here.

Please note the start time: 7:00 p.m. Usually that's when the worship starts. Then the Bible study begins around 7:30. But we're going to start right at 7:00. Go till about 8:30. We'll have worship prior. We'll start the worship about 6:00. We're online, right? Okay.

So hi. Welcome, online. Sorry, I wasn't ignoring you. So just note the start time. Online, we'll livestream it beginning at 7 p.m. and the entirety of it — yeah, pretty sure — unless Steve says otherwise. I'm trying to think if we're going to be talking about censorship sensitive material. I don't think so. So yeah, the entirety of it will be on YouTube and Facebook. If it's not, you'll know why, and we'll try to let you know ahead of time.

So 7:00 p.m. Thursday night, really looking forward to having Steve and Kim here and we're just going to do part two of what we did back in September. Wow. How long ago was that?

So... and we have a couple of things that we're going to talk about specifically. Pastor Steve put together a very interesting video that we're going to share. It's about 10 minutes, right, in length on a — eight?

See, look at how exact you are, Mike. Thank you very much. Excuse me. It's 8 minutes in length, but it's very good and it's very telling. And so we'll be showing that on Thursday night as well.

So all right, let's get to it. I want to share with you out of *Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6:5-8*.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

But I have a confession to make. That always gets your attention, right? I have to confess that this passage has been one for which I've been dismissive over the years. And the reason is that I treated it, like many do, as not really being applicable to me personally by virtue of how Jesus is addressing hypocrites specifically, and I'm not a hypocrite.

You might be a hypocrite, but I'm not. So, well, this doesn't apply to me. This is not really for me. Jesus is clearly speaking to and rebuking them for being hypocrites.

Well, I couldn't get away with it very long. I might save you the time and just let you know, don't try, it won't work. This is applicable to you, you hypocrite. So I can't dismiss it any longer. And the sad thing is, is that in my dismissing of this passage, I've robbed myself of the rich blessings in this passage.

So we're just going to take this little portion here in God's word, because God, as only He can, has opened my eyes to the importance of this specific teaching from Jesus on prayer.

Now we're only going to look at *verses 5-8*, but it should be noted that Jesus goes on in *verse 9* to teach what is affectionately referred to as the Lord's Prayer, which isn't actually the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is actually in *John 17*, not *Matthew 6*, **“Our Father, which art in heaven.”** That was Jesus teaching them who asked Him to. I've always found that in and of itself interesting that the disciples would ask Jesus to teach them how to pray, not —see, I wouldn't have done that. I would have said, Jesus, teach me how to preach, not pray.

But they didn't ask Him to teach them how to preach. They asked Him to teach them how to pray. And thus we have what we call the Lord's Prayer, which is really not the Lord's Prayer, but our prayer that the Lord taught us to pray.

Now, why do I point that out? Because we're not going to get to that portion of Jesus teaching how to pray because *verses 5-8*, I know this is deeply profound, come before *verse 9*. And actually I would even go as far as saying they are in some ways more important than what we are taught beginning in *verse 9*.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

I mean, we could all recite the Lord's Prayer, as we call it. But do we know what led up to it, what preceded it, and even more so, how important it is, what Jesus talked about before He said, this is how to pray, pray in this way?

So as we're about to see, there are riches to be mined from this text, *verses 5-8*, concerning our prayer lives that have the propensity to change our entire lives. And I know that's a big and bold statement to make, I mean, life changing. Okay.

But when we come back full circle, I want to answer just how it is that this text that we have before us tonight has the potential to be life changing. It will change your life. It will change your prayer life, which by extension will change your life.

So you might be asking how, how is this so life changing? I'll just answer this way: Jesus, ever so marvelously and magnificently, yet purposely and powerfully, and might I add bluntly, teaches us how to pray vis-à-vis first teaching us how not to pray.

You know how it is that sometimes the best way to learn how to do something is to first learn how not to do it? It's kind of like don't do it this way, and in so doing, you'll learn the way you should do it by learning first the way you should not do it.

And that's what Jesus is doing here. And we're going to see it right out of the chute, we're going to see the "do nots" beginning in *verse 5*.

And you'll forgive me, but we're only going to get four words in. Okay? It's going to be a long night. No, it's not. Maybe not. Jesus is teaching, *verse 5*, and says, "**And when you pray...**"

Stop. Notice He doesn't say, if by chance you should happen on occasion to pray. I mean, on that rare occasion, should you happen to pray.

No. "**When.**" The presupposition is you pray. It's not "if." It's "when," when you pray. This presupposes that you pray, that I pray.

So now He's going on from that, making that statement and that presupposition. "**When you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites.**"

See, this is where I just turned the page and moved on. I surely didn't have it highlighted. This is not for me because, again, I'm not a hypocrite.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

But wait a minute. You know what a hypocrite is? An actor, a stage player. This is in the Greek, “hypokritēs” where they would wear these masks that on the outside might have a smiling face, but it would cover up what was underneath, which was a frowning face. It was to put on an act that was not representative of who you were. It was all an act, all a show.

So when He refers to them as hypocrites, He's calling them actors. They're outwardly praying this way, and you are not to pray that way, like these hypocrites.

Well, how are these hypocrites praying?

Jesus answers that. **“For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”**

So picture this with me. Here's these actors there. It's all a show. And the only reason they pray, and they love to do this this way, is to pray where people can see them and go, wow, what a man of prayer. I mean, standing in the synagogues? I mean, there's a distraction right there. And on the corners of the streets?

What's the common denominator here? Where everybody can see them. I mean, let's just say for purposes of illustration that the sanctuary is full, and you're sitting, you know, kind of in the middle here, and somebody just all of a sudden out of nowhere stands up and lifts up their hands and just starts worshiping and praying, perhaps in a prayer language for you to see them.

It's all a show. It's an act. They want to be seen by men, perceived as being men of prayer. They want the attention to be on them so that people will say of them, wow, what a spiritual giant, what a man of — look, he's there standing. Everybody else's sitting. He must be more spiritual. He's on the street corner.

You have to understand in that culture in that day and that time, the way it was that, you know, it'd be akin to somebody with a sign on a street corner. You're going to pay attention to that. You're going to take notice to that. They stand out, right?

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

So there they are, praying on the sidewalk, on the corner where the traffic is the busiest. And they would time it. This is interesting. Church historians and Bible commentators suggest that they actually would time it during rush hour traffic, so to speak.

They would time it when there were the most people in that area at that time. And then they would put on the show: Pray.

Wow, wow. I'm not worthy. I'm not worthy. You're such a man of prayer. You're so spiritual.

And they loved it.

And what Jesus is saying is I hope they enjoy it because that's the only reward they're going to get from it is the accolades and the applause and the attention that it's going to draw from the people who see them do this.

Because the reward is "they saw me," and it kind of feeds their pride, and that's all they're going to get. Wait. I thought they were praying. Are they going to get an answer to prayer? Are you kidding me? Like God's going to answer. In fact, they're not even praying to God. They're praying before man, to be seen by man. We'll talk about that in a moment a little bit more.

Let's move on to *verse 6*. We're making progress. **"But you..."**

Now notice the contrast here. So don't be like that. But you be like this. And here it is again, **"...when you pray, go into your room..."**

Now, this is an interesting word because it carries with it the idea of being the storeroom where you would store all of your treasures in that secret place. In fact, we'll see Jesus mention this as and refer to this as the secret place.

Why is it a secret?

Because your treasures there, and you don't want everybody to know. That's where you hide your treasures, in this secret room, all of your treasures.

What Jesus is saying is go in there instead and **"...pray to your Father who [Watch this] is in the secret place."**

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

Translated: He is not on the corner, on the sidewalk, and He's not standing next to you or sitting behind you in the synagogue when you're putting on this whole show and this whole act. No. Where is He?

He's in the treasure storehouse, the room where all the treasures are. How appropriate is that? What a treasure we have in prayer. And He is there.

We're going to see that in a couple of weeks, actually, the 14th, Lord willing, when we finish the *Book of Ezekiel*. And the Lord is there. Where's the Lord? He's there. Where? In the secret place. **“And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”**

Can you just even begin to wrap your mind around this? This is the very thing they were doing all of this to begin with for. That didn't come out right. Let me try that again.

What were they wanting in doing this whole show of praying outwardly where everybody could see them in the open? They wanted to receive the reward from men, the pleasing of men.

And Jesus is saying, No, you'll be rewarded openly if you pray privately. See, they were praying openly, but they were not going to get the reward that they were praying openly, hoping to get. That was better. I better quit while I'm ahead.

Now, here's — we're going to turn a corner, *verse 7*. **“And [Here it is again] when you pray, do not use vain repetitions...”**

Now, this is where, in the original, it's helpful because it's babbling, babble. Just, we say babbling on, going on and on. I never do that. (Chuckle)

But you just keep babbling. You just keep talking. And that's what they were doing. They were using many words, and it was all repetitive and they were just babbling repeatedly and even nonsensically. It was liturgy. It was formality. It was just meaningless. It was rote. It was just scripted. And I'm sorry, but this is Catholicism. It's a recitation. You're reciting.

This is why I've always had a hard time with — and I — (Sigh) when people put together prayers in a book, a book of prayers, pray these prayers.

I think Jesus said don't do that because all you're doing is repeating, and you're just — it's you know, and it's by repeating, I mean, repeating.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

Hang in there with me. You're saying the same thing over and over and over and over again, like I am right now. Just saying something over and over and over again. I just keep repeating myself over and over and over again. Please let me know that you've got it and I'll stop.

That's what they were doing. And this is what Jesus refers to as the heathen. So now we've got the hypocrites and the heathens. I think we're in pretty good company here.

But don't pray that way “...as the heathen do. *[And here's why they do it, Jesus said]* **For they think that they will be heard for their many words.**”

In other words, it's the repetition and the prayer with — by the way, not just babbling, repeating words, but eloquent words. I mean, you're drawing from the vocabulary words that you would not ever — in fact, I was thinking about this. We don't talk to people the way we pray to God.

Can I just use an example here? I'm going to use Pastor Mac and Pastor Leitu. I'm talking to Pastor Mac and Pastor Leitu, and I say, Hey Pastor Leitu, you know, thank you, Pastor Leitu, for, you know, this, Pastor Leitu, and then, you know... But we do that when we pray.

Lord, we just thank You, Lord, and, Lord, please, Lord. And it's like, what, He forgot His name? He forgot His title? He forgot who He is? We got to keep reminding Him and informing Him?

Now, before we get — come down too hard on these heathen — you heathen, you hypocrite — we do this.

How do we do this?

Well, we pray, and we like have to update God and apprise Him of, you know, kind of the situation just so He understands. And here's God going, No need. You don't have to. Yeah, but I need to kind of, you know — I call them “directional prayers.”

We pray, and then we give God directions on how to answer the prayer. So, Lord, You know what happened? You know, You saw what happened?

And the Lord's like, No! When?

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

How disconcerting would that be? You pray, you say, God, you know, thank You for what You did on Tuesday.

When? What day? What did I do?

Or we flip it around. Lord, did You see what happened on Tuesday?

No. What happened? How did that happen? Where was I?

I don't know. You're supposed to be all-present, all-knowing, all-powerful. What happened to You?

I don't know.

No, He knows. He knows everything. You don't have to tell Him and bring to Him all of the details. He already knows. You can save a lot of time in prayer. And prayer doesn't have to be fancy Nancy.

If you're named Nancy, we love you. And I'm so sorry we — it's just, it rhymes. That's the only reason, Nancy, that we say, "fancy Nancy."

That reminds me of a humorous quip about a husband and wife. And it's actually — I'll kind of merge them together. First of all, the wife comes home and says, "Honey, we need to pray." To which the husband responds, "Is it that bad?"

Point being that prayer's the last resort. It's come to this. We have to pray. Not the first response, the last resort. So they're going to pray now. It's that bad. So the wife starts.

Now she's, you know, been walking with the Lord longer, more spiritually mature than the husband, which is oftentimes the case. So she starts in on this prayer. "Oh, Creator of the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that in them is, almighty God..." And she's going on and on and on and on.

And here's the husband going, "Okay." Now it's his turn to pray. And after that prayer, he just goes, "God, I don't have the foggiest idea what she just said, but can I just ask You for..." And he just went right to it.

You understand the whole point of that? What, God's going to say, "Well, now we're talking. Now we're praying. It's about time. You know, Oh, reverent, Holy God Almighty. Well, it's

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

about time. Now I'm going to answer that prayer because that's a good prayer. I mean, you're using all the right words. You're saying all the right things. And your husband? Yeah, no, he just, he's calling Me 'God' and talking to Me like I'm right there."

Yeah, because that's what prayer is. It's just talking to God. I think we would do well to understand that when we come to God in prayer we're having a dialog, not a monologue. I picture God — and you'll forgive the humor that I see in this. But we go, we rattle on, we babble on in our prayers.

Oh, Lord, please. Oh, Lord, oh, thank You, Lord. And oh, Lord and Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord and Lord and Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord and, and.

And here's the Lord going, (Struggling to get a word in) You were asking. I was going to — can I talk? I can't get a word in edgewise.

Could you imagine you're having a conversation with somebody, and you don't let them talk? You're just going on and on and on, babbling on and on and on, repeating yourself like I do all the time when I preach; I repeat myself. My wife says, "Stop repeating yourself." I said, I'm not repeating myself. I said, I'm not repeating myself. I don't repeat myself. Am I repeating myself? I'm repeating myself.

So yeah, you're saying the same thing over and over again. Don't do that.

So... and never think for a second that God answers that prayer over the other when the other is just talking to God and letting Him talk to you.

How does God talk to you? Through His word. That's why sometimes the best prayers are ones that you pray as you pray the Word because you're praying through Scripture and God answers through Scripture.

That's the number one way that God speaks to us is through His word. In fact, this is the four legs on the table. I had no intentions of going this far, but too late.

The four ways to know is Number 1, first and foremost: The word of God.

Number 2: The peace of God. None of these are stand-alone. Don't make a life decision based on just how you feel a peace about it. If it's not compatible with the word of God, then it's not the peace of God.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

And then the third one is: The providence of God. That's the circumstances that He orchestrates the steps that He choreographs, where He begins to lead you in this direction, open a door here, shut a door there. The providence of God.

So I've got the word of God, the peace of God, the providence God. And fourthly, lastly, this is what keeps the table up, and you need all four, and the fourth one is: The confirmation from God.

And this can come in a variety of ways where you'll be talking to a brother or sister in Christ, and they'll say something like — you're like, how did you know? Did somebody call you? Because that was a word for at least spoken.

Or they'll quote a verse, or they'll say something to you like, “You know, you were really strong on my heart. The Lord put you on my heart and I've been praying for you about such and thus.”

And you're blown away because that was God who put you on their heart. And now they're coming to you, and they're sharing that with you, and it's confirming everything that you were seeking God about and praying to God for.

So you've got the word of God, the peace of God, the providence of God, and the confirmation from God. And God is not going to favor the one who has the many words or the eloquent vocabulary. It's a relationship that we have with our Father.

I mean, what would you do if your child came to you, as their father, and said, Oh, father, which thou art on earth, respected be thy name.” And they just went on.

I'd be like, “What's going on with you? What do you want?” First of all, you would say, “What do you want? Can you just get to it? What? I'm your Dad. Just come to me. Let's talk. What's going on? What do you want? What, I'm not going to give it to you?”

I mean, if we're earthly parents, and we know how to give good gifts to our children who ask — we're not going to give them a stone instead of bread. If they ask for bread, we're going to give them bread. We know how to give good gifts. How much more our Heavenly Father?

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

So we don't have to go in there, like with a, you know, with an approach, like we've got to approach God. We can approach boldly, confidently, His throne of grace anytime, anywhere, about anything. Bring it to Him and just ask.

And you don't have to be formal. In fact, that would be offensive. I know I would be offended. Actually, I would ground my children for the rest of their lives if they did that, which they don't, because they call me Baba.

We call Him Abba, Papa, Daddy. It's a relationship that we have with our Heavenly Father. We can just talk to Him like we're talking now. You don't have to get all formal and use big words or even many words — thinking — like these heathen — that if you do that, that's when God will hear you, and that's only when God will hear you is if you come to Him in that way.

So now Jesus says, lastly, *verse 8*, **“Therefore do not be like them. [And here's why, and I love this] For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”**

He already knows what you need. It's kind of like this. Again, you'll forgive the humor that I see in this. But you come to God; you bring your need to God. You approach His throne of grace confidently and, you know, for mercy in your time of need, and He'll give it to you.

And James says, **“He'll not withhold anything.”** And Paul, when he writes to the Romans, says, **“If God, the Father, would not withhold His only begotten Son, is there anything He would withhold from you? “Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above.”** **“There's no [Changing of His mind or] variation [Or back-and-forth or] shifting of shadows,”** as James says it.

So here we come with that need. And **“You have not because you asked not.”** So I'm going to ask. Luke's Gospel, it says — Jesus says, **“He may answer you.”**

But how are you going to know unless you ask? This, by the way, settles an issue, a misnomer that we probably need to address very quickly. Because when people say, or come up to you and say, “Well, then why bother to pray? I mean, God's just going to do what God's going to do.”

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

No. God may do, based on you asking Him. And by the way, God is never going to be surprised or caught off guard. That would be even more disconcerting. Could you imagine?

“Father in heaven...”

“What!”

“Oh, is this a bad time? I'm sorry.”

Then now you're sheepish. You're not going to ask Him for what you were going to ask Him for because it doesn't look like it's a good time. So I'm surely not going to get this so I'm not going to ask. How do you know? No, you can bring anything.

And you need to know that He already knows. So here's the humor I see in it. We come to God in prayer, and we're all like, “O, God, O, Lord, please...”

And here's the Lord, “Hi, JD. I've been expecting you. I already knew that you would need this before you even knew that you needed this. How's that one? In fact, I actually allowed the need just so I could hear from you because I haven't heard from you in a while.

You know, like that college kid. The only time you call is when you need money, you need something. The only time you call on Me is when you need something.

So I figured it out. If the only time I'm ever going to hear from you is when you need something, here comes some need. Now I'm going to hear from you. I've been expecting you.

“Yeah, O, Lord.”

“Yeah, I know. I know what your needs are. And I know that maybe the only time you ever come to Me is when you need something. So now you need something. And I knew you would need this. In fact, I'm the one who did this so that you would need this, so that you would come to Me, so I can hear from you.”

Is that weird? Is it weird for you to know that God likes to hear your voice? That you bring great delight and joy just — it's good to hear your voice, we say.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

When my children were little, I used to make them make noises just so I could hear — (Chuckling) How grandparents, you guys are the worst. But that's another story. And I got really hard on you, I know, the other time. But that's because I'm not a grandparent yet.

Just wait. If the Lord tarries, and I'm a grandparent, that's going to change the whole complexion of how I see grandparents. But anyway, so we want — we just — they're so adorable. They're so cute! So we want to hear their voice.

We want to — I would do everything to make them laugh. I mean, the real belly laugh that comes from deep inside. Just make them laugh because I love to hear them laugh. I'll take anything. Just the noise. Just make some noise. I just want to hear your voice. It just blesses me so.

And I'm an earthly fallen father. How much more our Heavenly Father? Is it surprising to you that maybe God likes to just hear from you? That He loves to hear your voice? How precious is this thing we call prayer?

That God in the Book of Revelation, we're told, has them as a fragrant incense before His throne. And there's also this — not only is prayer fragrant to Him, but there's almost this heavenly hush, as it were.

When we pray, it's like, shhh! JD's praying. And He gives us His attention, His full attention, and He's attentive to us when we cry out to Him.

And He hears us, and He moves His mighty hand on our behalf and hearkens unto the voice of our cry. He knows what we need. He knows everything that we need, and He's promised and can never go back on the promise that if we need it, His hand will provide it, to quote that classic hymn of old.

If you need it, He's going to provide it. He's going to provide all of your needs, and He knows the things that you have need of.

Let me just kind of see if I can wrap this up — I say that very carefully — just with a couple thoughts, the first of which is that — and I want you to think this through with me — I'll either pray to God and be blessed, or I'll pray so that man will be impressed.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

And here's another thing along those lines. Sometime after — hey, by the way, after I'm done, and I will get done, Pastor Mac is going to come up, right? And he's going to open it up for all-church prayer. And then Pastor Leitu's going to come up and close. So we're going to have a time of prayer.

And I was just thinking that after this teaching, you're not going to want to pray. I will have accomplished the exact opposite of what I was hoping to accomplish with this teaching out of *Matthew 6:5-8*. So please, when I talk about this and I mention something specifically, as I'm about to, please don't get self-conscious when you pray, okay?

I'll speak of myself, and I won't look at anybody. How's that? When we pray it's like we're praying — we're talking to them disguised as a prayer to God.

Lord, we know the dangers of pride. And God's like, really? Why don't you just talk to them? You're not praying to Me. You're talking to them through Me under the guise of praying to Me.

But you're really — and in marriage — maybe I should have started off in the context of marriage. But marriage, the husband and the wife — you know, early on in our marriage, I was such a jerk. My wife has major treasures in heaven.

But when we would pray together, this — I'm sorry. I hope you don't see me differently. I want you to know this was over 30 years ago. It was probably 35, 36, 37 years ago. That make it better? Well you haven't heard what I'm going to say yet.

So we would pray. And I would pray like this — so pious, so full of myself, so pompous, so proud. “Lord, I just pray that you'll minister to my wife, that she'll grow in grace.” Oh yeah, this one's going over really well.

So then it's her turn to pray. Ouch. Ouch. She's like, “God...”

I'm not going to tell you what she prayed anyway. Guess whose prayer God answered? We'll just leave it at that.

Here I am, you know, praying, “God just...”

You know — especially if you're having marital conflict. Okay, an argument. As one pastor said, “We don't call it that. We call it intense fellowship.”

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

So you're, you know, you're kind of going at it, and then you pray and your prayer's something like this. "God, show her that she's wrong and I'm right, and she needs to repent and ask me for forgiveness."

And God's like, "Yeah, I know. That's what I was thinking."

No. Oh, wait. Oh, I'll take it one step further. Why not? What have I got to lose at this point?

So you get the silent treatment. We've talked about this, right, Husbands?

Wives, you'll go days. I know nothing of this. I have a perfect marriage. But you'll go days and not talk to each other. "I'm not talking to..."

And we think we're getting to them. We're not. We're getting to ourselves. And we separate from each other emotionally. And there's a silent treatment. And again, it can go on for days, sadly.

But the prayers individually, not collectively as a couple are more like this: "Lord, show her where she's wrong so that she can repent and come to me and ask for forgiveness."

Now, (Chuckle) this is all hypothetical. I'm praying this. You know what she's praying? "God, show him that he's wrong."

And here's God going, "Aye yai yai yai! What am I going to do with you guys?"

Okay. I went way off on that, but I think you get the point. Don't pray to God and disguise it as something you want to say to somebody else. Because they're not going to interrupt you. How rude would that be? And how bad would that make them look if they — you know, here you're praying, "God just, you know, some people are just full of pride." And you're going, "You talking about me? You talk — hey, you talking to me? Then talk to me."

No, just don't do that. So we'll have silent prayer for the last part of our prayer meeting tonight. Just talk to God. You're not talking to man. You're not trying to impress man. You're not trying to please man. Are you a man-pleaser or a God-pleaser?

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

Now, I want to take it just one step further, and then we'll get closer to the end. I want you to again think about this and think this through with me. I'll either pray and be rewarded from God outwardly, or I'll pray and only be rewarded by man inwardly.

Let me explain. These hypocrites were praying to be seen by men, and that was the only reward they were going to get. They were not going to get a heavenly reward. They had opted for the earthly reward inwardly with the satisfaction of having been noticed and perceived as being godly. So that was the only reward. But that's only inward.

But Jesus said in contrast, I'm going to reward you openly, outwardly. So it's an either/or proposition. I'm either going to pray in such a way that God is going to reward me outwardly, or I'm going to pray in such a way where my only reward is man seeing me, and that's inwardly.

Second thought is, and this is more specific to not praying with many words, knowing that our Father knows what we need even before we ask Him.

Now stay with me because I want to share with you personally in my praying for my wife, who, as you know, is battling breast cancer, again, I have to confess that this passage has really been opened up to me because I'm just kind of wired this way.

And I — when I would pray for my wife, it was like I was apprising God of the diagnoses, what the doctors were saying and, you know, providing Him with all of the details, like He needs that information to make a decision.

And I found myself just praying as if God didn't know what I needed. I need You to heal my wife, God. I need You to remove all of the cancer from her body, God. And this passage was a much-needed reminder that I didn't even need to waste that time because God already knew what I needed when I brought that need to Him in prayer.

So it really simplified everything. And I think that the takeaway, if you hear nothing else that I say tonight, is this: Don't complicate prayer. It is so simple.

And my wife has even told me that I have the gift of complication, which, you know, I shared with her, being the godly man of the word that I am, that that's not a gift in the Bible. That didn't go over very well either. That's not a gift.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

But she said, “I don't care. You still have the gift of complication. You could take something so simple, and it's a gift for you. You can just make it so complicated. You just get your hands on it, you start — you know, you take something so simple, and before you know it, it is so complicated. That's a gift.”

I want you to know that's a gift, not in the Bible, but I have that gift of complication. And I found myself doing this, and I needed that reminder of just the simplicity of prayer. Just the simplicity of prayer. He already knows everything. And the truth is, it was already known by Him even before it was a need to bring to Him. So He was already ahead of me.

So I — it just it was life changing, and it changed my prayer life, and it changed my life. And I just started praying very simply, knowing that God knows. Not a lot of words.

And by the way, that's another gift. I can, with the best of them, I can get fancy Nancy, you know. I can use some — I have a pretty expanded vocabulary, I'll have you know, and that's what I was doing. And I'm confessing this to my brothers and sisters.

I was coming at this thing with everything I had.

And God's like, What are you doing? Well, Oh, God, you know, creator of the heavens and the earth and the...”

“Stop! Let's just talk. Let's just talk, you and Me. I know what you need. I know why you're here. I know why you're in prayer. I know what you need.”

And my prayer life has... I know I've said this before. It's always been a get-to and not a got-to. But now I'll go to bed at night knowing that I get to wake up in the morning and pray. And it's almost like, okay, I'm going to bed. But you know what? Tomorrow I can get right back to prayer on this.

And it's very settling. And it's so simple and it's very freeing. And it takes the chore and the burden of prayer out of prayer where it doesn't belong.

Because see, the enemy is really good at getting us to see prayer as a chore, a got-to.

“Man, I need to pray more.”

“That's okay. Don't bother.”

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

Again, could you imagine your kids coming to you and going, “Man, I need to spend more time with you, Father.”

“That's all right. Don't worry about it. I don't want it like that. Oh, you've got to spend more — no, I want you to want to spend more time with me. I want it to be something you look forward to, not something you dread. Like what, you're putting in your time?”

“Okay. God, I'm going to give you...”

You know, we time it. Can't wait to get it over with so we can get on with our day. I mean, come on, let's be honest. We do that. I'm confessing it to you. I do that. I tend to do that, and I did that.

And the Lord just broke me and settled me and simplified everything and reminded me.

“I knew what you would need. And now you come to Me in your time of need, and I'm going to hear and answer your prayer as I said I would.”

So you're ready for a praise report? It appears that God is significantly shrinking the tumor and miraculously stopping the spread. That's God!

[Applause]

Praise the Lord, right?

Okay, let me answer this question, though. What would you attribute it to? The treatment?
(Shaking head “no”)

In a word, prayer. It was not because of my pastoral position, because, you know, I've got connections with people in very high places. It wasn't my perceived persona or even my proficient prayer, as eloquent as it might be.

No, it was just prayer. And not prayer with many words, prayer from many people all over the world. God answers prayer, and God is answering our prayer and God knows our need.

And it's not because of the length of the prayer, it's because of the strength of the prayer. Please note that does not apply to sermons.

*James says, 5:16, “**The effectual, fervent prayer [The strength of the prayer] avails much.**”*

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

Not the length with many words. No, the strength of the prayer. And sometimes the strongest, most powerful prayers are wordless prayers. We've talked about that. Or as one said, liquid prayers, where all you can do is just cry, cry out unto the Lord, and He hearkens unto the voice of your cry.

Sometimes it's not even — the tear ducts dry up. It's not even tears that you're crying. It's just groaning and moaning. And the Holy Spirit takes those groans that we cannot put words to, and He intercedes on our behalf.

And never forget that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father praying for us. Did you know that? Did you need to be reminded of that?

I mean, if Jesus is praying for me and the Holy Spirit is interceding for me with those groans that I cannot put to words, I'm pretty covered. I'm good because I know that God knows, and that God is going to answer my prayers the same exact way I would answer my own prayers if I knew what He knew and loves as He loves.

So not my will be done, but Your will be done, O God. And so my prayer life has been just, I mean, revitalized, and now it's so personal in that secret place where the Lord is, that treasured place of prayer.

When I pray, I mean, the Lord and I have a lot of fun. It's a lot of fun, that time together in prayer, just Jesus and me. And I'm just praying for my wife, and God's hearing that prayer, and God's answering that prayer along with all of the prayers that are being lifted up, which, by the way, thank you for that.

It's been so overwhelming. And just people from all over have shared how they are praying fervently, some daily for my wife. And God is hearing that prayer. And I'm just trusting that God — I don't know how. I don't know the way. I don't know when. I just know that God's going to do this.

And He's teaching me a lot of things, and I got a lot of things that I need to learn. And one of them is to trust Him. I mean, if you think about it, we really don't have much of a choice. We have to trust Him, right?

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

I mean, what are you going to do? You got to trust God. I mean, this thing is — I have to trust God. And we're trusting God, and we're believing God by faith, though the size of a mustard seed, that God is going to do this for His glory.

And nobody's going to take the credit for it, especially me, because I'll be first in line just because I'm a man of God and a man of prayer.

Did you see me on the street corner the other day, standing up over here the other day praying? I mean, of course, you know, Pastor JD, of course God's going to because you're the pastor.

Actually, no. This is a danger. And I'll end with this, actually, one more thing after this. But this is a danger when it comes to prayer because we'll pray, and then God will answer the prayer, and then we'll take credit for it. It's because I prayed.

Oh, really? Wait, wait, wait. So you're attributing this miracle — and this is actually miraculous already from what was it, three-plus centimeters down to less than a centimeter, maybe a half a centimeter.

That's God. That's God. Now, I'm not going to go into the doctor's office and say, "Thank you. All glory be unto you, O Doctor."

No. The treatments, of which there are many, am I going to thank the treatment? Am I going to thank the physician? No, I'm going to thank the Great Physician, the God who heals, because that's who did it.

And it's not because I'm a man of prayer or a man of God. No, it's because He is God. He is God.

Okay, let me finish. How does this passage concerning our prayer life have the propensity to change our entire life?

Answer: In closing, let me simply say, pray TO God, not FOR man, and know that God already knows.

Let me say the same thing a different way. Pray to GOD, not man, and know that God already knows. And that'll settle you and simplify prayer and make prayer such a joy, such a joy and God will hear.

Topical Message
How Not To Pray
Pastor JD Farag

All right, Pastor Mac, come on up. I saw you standing over there like those hypocrites. You see him back there standing up like we just read in the text? You see that? Leitu will be out on the corner later. Pastor Leitu will be praying so all of you see them. Okay, it's all yours.

PASTOR MAC: Praise the Lord. So we're going to open up for open prayer now. We have the prayer list up here. If you have not acquired one, you can come grab one. But you don't have to pray specifically on the prayer list alone. Also, pray as the Lord leads. So I'll just open it up in prayer so we can begin that process.

Father in Heaven, I want to thank You, Lord, so much for allowing us to be able to be here this evening and partake in corporate prayer. We're all in need of prayer. And Lord, I just pray that You would answer, heed our prayers tonight and be blessed by them.