



Morningside Church

Sermon Discussion Guide

Title: The Way to Pray

Date: July 26, 2026

Scripture Text: Matthew 6:5-15

Notes:

When the disciples were given the opportunity to ask Jesus to teach them, it wasn't to teach them how to preach or to perform miracles. The only recorded request of Jesus' disciples was for Him to teach them how to pray ([Luke 11:1](#)). In today's text we look at two aspects of Jesus' teaching on prayer. He instructs us *how* to pray then gives us an example of *what* to pray commonly known as the Lord's Prayer.

I. How to Pray ([Matt. 6:5-8](#))

Jesus teaches in these verses that the way to pray is in secret and to do it sincerely. Effective prayer is a matter of the heart. If we pray for the recognition of others, we may get their recognition, but not God's. Similarly, we need to be sincere in our prayers. This means to be intentional and focused on who God is and what His will is. This is not prohibiting public prayer, but encouraging us whenever and wherever we pray, to be seeking God and not to seek to be noticed by others.

- Based on Jesus' instructions in [vv. 5-6](#), what would it look like to be motivated to pray for the recognition of others today?
 - What would it look like to pray in secret, as Jesus instructed?
 - Why is it such a temptation to seek the recognition of others when we are doing 'righteous works' such as praying, or giving ([vv. 1-4](#))?
 - What is the reward for those who do so?
 - What is the reward for those who pray in secret?
- How can we guard our hearts from seeking the approval of others over the approval of God?
 - What are the dangers of seeking others' approval?
- What are examples of someone praying in *meaningless repetitions*?
- How can it affect your prayer life to know God knows your needs even before you ask?

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II. What to Pray ([Matt. 6:9-15](#))

These verses are commonly known as the Lord's Prayer, but a more accurate description could be the Disciple's Prayer. Jesus teaches His disciples what *they* are to pray for. There are two aspects of this prayer: the vertical Godward aspect and the horizontal manward aspect. The vertical aspect includes perspective (understanding who God is and His worthiness of our worship, [v. 9](#)) and plans (seeking God's plans and how we can be involved, [v. 10](#)). The horizontal aspect includes requests related to physical needs ([v. 11](#)), our relationship with others ([v. 12](#)) and praying for ourselves (often seeking God's forgiveness, [v. 13](#)).

- How does your typical prayer compare to the example Jesus gave?
- When you pray, what proportion is your focus on God (who He is, His worthiness, His work, His will), compared to focus on yourself and your needs?
 - NOTE: Nothing is wrong with lifting your needs up in prayer ([v. 11](#)), but how much of your prayer time is spend on recognizing God?
- What one thing about Jesus' prayer example stands out to you the most?
- What can you do to better model your prayer after Jesus' example?

By commanding his disciples to **pray like this** rather than simply "pray this," Jesus demonstrated that this prayer was offered as a model rather than a mantra to be recited.

If you need help with organizing how you pray, consider following the **A.C.T.S.** acronym:

A – Adoration (Express your appreciation for God. Praise Him for who He is and what He has done, both in your life and the lives of others.)

C – Confession (Confessing your sins, agreeing that you have indeed sinned and repenting from it.)

T – Thanksgiving (Sharing what you are thankful for. We should always be able to find something to be thankful for!)

S – Supplication (Make your requests to God but seeking His will above your own.)

"When we pray "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we do not imply that anyone could prevent the fulfillment of God's will or that he needs our prayer to accomplish his will. Rather, we pray that his will be done in all. Think of heaven and earth as a picture of our very selves, spirit and flesh. The sense of the petition is the same, namely, that in us (as spirit and flesh, as heaven and earth combined) the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now, what does God will more than that we ourselves walk according to his ways? We ask therefore that he supply us with the energy of his own will and the capacity to do it, that we may be saved, both in heaven and on earth. The sum of his will is the salvation of those whom he has adopted."

Tertullian (150 – 229 AD)