



The Prayers of Jesus

Just Pray #2 • April 19, 2026 • Matthew 6:5-18

Introduction

You have the right words to pray.

Last week, we opened our short series on prayer with that encouragement! We talked about the fact that:

- Prayer is *talking to God*.
- Prayer is empowered by the Spirit.
- Prayer is about **relationship** and **reliance**.
- Prayer is less about your **words** and more about your **heart!**
- And prayer is **within reach** – it might not be flowery, but a sincere prayer is better than anything else! **You have the right words!**

How many of you tried the “praying Scripture” technique this week?

Remember: If it’s in the Bible, you can use it as a springboard for your prayers!

- **Simply go through a passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text.**



This week, I want to continue giving you encouragement. Remember, this series is not about doctrine. It is about *action*. This is a “**YOU CAN DO IT!**” series! I want to encourage you and equip you to pray well.

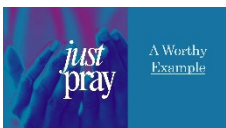
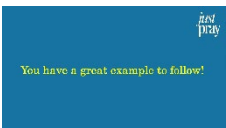
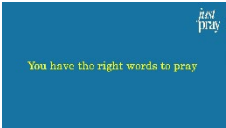
So, not only do you have the right words, but **when it comes to prayer... (here’s today’s big truth):**

You have a great example to follow!

If you want to get better at prayer, look at Jesus!

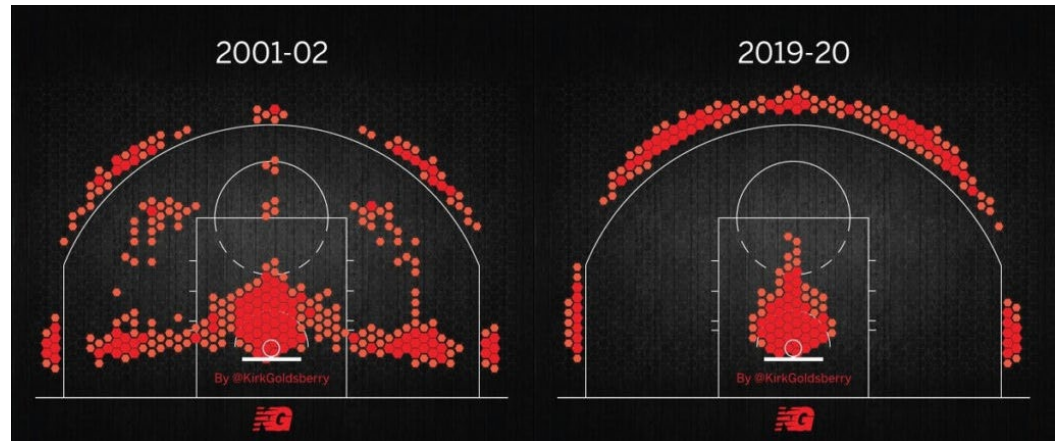
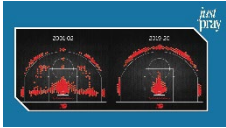
A Worthy Example

Fun fact: The ones we spend time **watching** influence who we become.



I saw a fascinating graphic the other day that showed how this plays out in the real world. In professional basketball, NBA strategies have undergone a huge shift. The game I grew up watching in the 1980s and 1990s with Michael Jordan and Larry Bird has changed significantly.

And this shot chart shows it.



Look at this graph. It shows the top 200 shot locations for players – where they take and make shots.

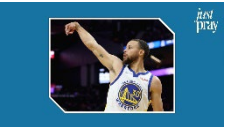
Notice anything?

Clearly there has been a shift in the 20-year span. Why? It's because **the ones we spend time watching influence who we become.**

And who did we start watching? Steph Curry.

For those who don't know the name, Curry has been one of the top players in the league since being drafted in 2009. At 6'2" he is not as physically imposing as some other top players, but what he lacks in size he makes up for in accuracy.

Curry has the highest career free-throw percentage in NBA history (.912) and has led the league in successful three-pointers a record eight times. In 2016, he broke his own record for three-pointers made in a regular season, and he made at least one three-pointer in an NBA-record 268 consecutive games from 2018 to 2023.¹



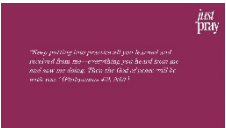
¹ [Stephen Curry - Wikipedia](#)



For those watching him, Curry’s success changed how they played. Those mid-range shots moved behind the three-point arc as other players and coaches tried to emulate his accomplishments!

What is true in basketball is true for the rest of life. **The ones we spend time watching? They influence who we become.**

That is why Paul frequently told his fellow Christians to *follow his example*.



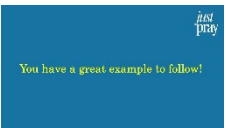
“Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9, NLT)

And if it is true for Paul, how much truer is it of Paul’s Lord. Our Lord says in John 13:15...



“I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.” (John 13:15, NLT)

You and I will never do *all* the things Jesus did. We won’t die on the cross for the sins of others; we won’t hold creation together, and we will never be the firstborn from the dead! **But...** the manner in which we treat others and try to love them, as well as the way we try to obey God the Father? Jesus’ example should be the only one we need!



We have a great example to follow!

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:5-18

This morning, I’d like to share a key passage from the Gospel of Matthew. This is part of Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount. In His teaching, Jesus addresses many different spiritual and practical actions, one of which is prayer.

Let’s turn to chapter six, starting in verse five. Please read with me:



“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:5–18, NLT)

I love that we get some direct instruction from Jesus on this topic! As our example, he helps us cut through the clutter and focus on what matters most when it comes to prayer.



Praying like a Hypocrite

Part of His example is to tell us what *isn't* His example.

Church, we cannot pray like “hypocrites.”

A “*hypocrite*” is a “*pretender*.” An “*actor*.” It is someone who “*plays the part*.” In prayer, then, to be a hypocrite is to pray for reasons *other* than what matters. You *pretend* to talk to God, but instead your words are designed for something else...for someone else.

Jesus speaks against such hypocrites here.



Attention on their Quality

Jesus warns against being **the person who prays for accolades!** *“Look at me! I pray well!”* This type of hypocrite – the one on the street corners – wants others to look and feel a bit of envy. They want others to hear their **quality** words and know that they are in the presence of a guy or girl who has their prayer life together!

Preacher Mark Moore puts it this way: “The problem is when prayer is for the point of speaking to an earthly audience rather than our Father in heaven. At that point, it’s oration, not supplication.”²

Have you ever sat around a prayer circle and spent more time worrying about what you are going to say rather than what is being said?

(Many of you don’t feel this pressure. You’re happy to never say a word of prayer out loud, ever. Amen?! Lol.)

But if you have, you run the risk of being a hypocrite – someone who is pretending to talk to God, but who would rather be heard by man. We can’t confuse our audience! We must remember that our prayers are only for an audience of One!



Attention for their Overflow

Jesus warns against being **the person who prays too much!** *“Let me keep praying!”* This type of hypocrite – the one with words overflowing – is keeping score of how much is said. If they say it enough, they think, God must listen.



Some of you might recall comedian Amy Poehler in a skit where she pretends to be a young girl wanting her ears pierced. She bombards her step-dad, Rick, with an avalanche of pre-teen energy.

“Rick! Rick! Rick! Can I get my ears pierced, Rick, please? Please Rick, I’m ten years old, Rick. Please, Rick, please! Rick I wanna get my ears pierced ‘cuz I want to look glamorous!!!!”

Scripture seems to support a similar **“God! God! God!”** approach, with verses like:

“Never stop praying.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NLT)



² Quest 52. P 188

But the advice to keep praying is less about the **quantity** of words and more about the **heart** that wants to be in communication with the Father.

Bombarding God with syllables isn't going to win Him over or draw you closer to him. Practices like the Roman Catholic Church's "praying of the rosary" (with each bead in the necklace standing for a prayer you must repeat) increase your risk of being a hypocrite – someone who is pretending to talk to God, but who is really talking for the sake of talking.



Attention when it's Obvious

Jesus warns against being **the person whose prayers invite sympathy!** "Look at me! Don't you feel bad for me?" This type of hypocrite – the one making their prayer and fasting **obvious** – wants others to look and feel bad. They want others to see their quest for suffering and know that a true saint is doing his or her part!



Don't get me wrong. Fasting is good. It is part of the example we have from the early church.

"One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting..."
(Acts 13:2, NLT)

Fasting enabled them to listen more intently to the Holy Spirit!

There are **spiritual benefits** to telling your body it isn't the boss! But fasting can be used for **attention** rather than **relationship**. Some hypocrites really hype up how hungry they are so others are aware. They make sure they *look* the part, so people can notice their suffering.

Even if you aren't fasting, though, there are other ways to make your hypocrisy known. You can broadcast your piety to people. You might flash your prayer journal. You might share a humble brag about how much time you spent in prayer before breakfast. You might complain about your knees hurting from prayer time over lunch.

Doing so puts you at risk of being a hypocrite – someone who is pretending to talk to God, but who is really trying to prove your own superiority.



Bad Examples...

None of these actions fit the example that Jesus is giving. He knows that hypocrites' false actions have them looking at the *wrong relationship* and assuming the prayer's power **relies** on *their* own strength.

So, we should ignore these examples of men and women who pretend to pray with attention-grabbing quality, with excessive quantity, or with an eye on making public piety known.



Praying like Jesus

Instead, we need to remember that ***we have a great example to follow!***

We have Jesus!

Jesus calls us to look past the hypocrites and see a better example. He gives us direct instruction, and He backs up His teachings in practice.



Avoiding Attention

He is an example when it comes to avoiding attention.

“But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private...” (Matthew 6:6, NLT)

“But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private” (Matthew 6:17–18, NLT)

Sometimes, we must get away from people and pray. There are times and places when prayer is public. But Jesus says that private prayer is important. You need to make **time and space** for prayer.

And He knows what He's talking about!

“But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.” (Luke 5:16, NLT)

Jesus had a habit of taking time – whether before a big moment of ministry, after an intense season of serving, or just because it was morning – and making private prayer a priority. He would find a place away from the crowds and away from his disciples, just to spend time talking to God.

What is the value of privacy?





Some suggest that it avoids **distraction**. Private prayer might mean setting your phone in another room, or sitting out in the car in the driveway, or taking a longer shower. Find a place where others can't find you.

But private prayer also creates a **sacred space**. That closet, or that shower stall, or that corner of the living room is a place where you converse with the Almighty. Its location is a spot that becomes filled with new meaning. Just like the Garden of Gethsemane became a sacred space for Jesus, your spot can become a place where you look forward to meeting with God and placing your full trust in Him.³

Where is your spot? What time can you set aside? Write down a time and place and show up there this week.



Aligning Words and Actions

Jesus is an example when it comes to aligning our words and actions.

In this passage, Jesus teaches His disciples some words to pray. Those words include a line about forgiveness that you know well.

“and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.” (Matthew 6:12, NLT)

Right after the words of prayer, though, Jesus doubles down on what He said.

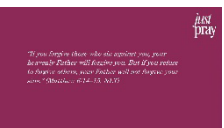
“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:14–15, NLT)

He expects His followers not only to say the words...but to *live them out*. The words we pray should match the moves we do.

He knows what He’s talking about!

For example, even on the cross, as Jesus hung there in the presence of those who called for his death and who nailed him to the cross, Jesus cried out.

“... “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing”.... (Luke 23:34, NLT)



³ See suggestions from *Too Busy Not to Pray* p. 50-52

The difficult teachings He shared about loving enemies, going the extra mile, turning the other cheek? Jesus did them! His words and actions aligned!

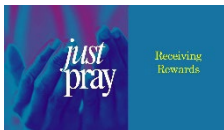


So, ask yourself, how can you follow that example? How can you match your prayers and actions?

- If you pray for someone to know Jesus... invite them over for dinner and build the relationship so they can get to know Him.
- If you pray for someone to have comfort after a loss...go over and give them a hug and sit with them for a while.
- If you pray for your nation's leaders to be more godly, send them a letter praising their faithfulness when they follow Jesus or rebuking their arrogance when they deviate from the truth.
- If you pray for your kids to find a Christian spouse, make sure you are encouraging them to be in environments consistently where they interact with other believers.

Think about the steps you can take that will advance the issues you bring to the Father. Add another **column to your prayer journal**: Requests, Answers...and then, **Actions**.

Ask God how He wants to use you specifically and then have the courage and boldness to act.



Receiving Rewards

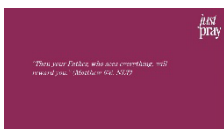
Jesus is also an example when it comes to receiving rewards.

*“Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”
(Matthew 6:6, NLT)*

Rewards are not always what we ask for. Rewards aren't always a “yes” to our requests.

- *What if you received a “yes” when you asked God to make that man your husband?*
- *What if you received a “yes” when you asked God to give you that job?*
- *What if you received a “yes” when you asked God not to give you any more kids?*

Maybe you wouldn't have the amazing spouse you have now, or the other job that was so much better, or the extra three kids you are raising. Or maybe



you wouldn't have the patience from waiting, or the spiritual growth that came from repeatedly asking, or the maturity to see that God needed you elsewhere.

Jesus says that our private, faithful, acted-upon prayers come with a reward... and **He knows what He's talking about!**



“He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”” (Matthew 26:39, NLT)

Jesus didn't get a “yes” from His request. But He got a reward!

*“he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names,”
(Philippians 2:8–9, NLT)*

In your prayers, approach God with the trust that He wants to reward you. If you ask for a fish, he won't give you a snake; if you ask for an egg, he won't give you a scorpion (Luke 11:11-12). God loves you, and He loves to bless you. So pray with an expectation that whatever His response, He can and will reward you as a beloved child – maybe not in the way you expect, but one day!



Good Examples...

We have a great example to follow!

If you want to be better at prayer, just hang out in the Scriptures and watch what Jesus does. Do what Jesus says. And trust like Jesus trusts. He shows that prayer is just what we've been saying: it's a matter of **relationship** and **reliance**...building up the *right relationship* with the Father and *relying on Him* for strength.

We should follow His example of privately praying, actively aligning, and gratefully receiving.

Closing

Most people look at this passage and focus on the part we call **“the Lord's Prayer.”** In verses 9-13, Jesus gives us some language to follow.



Will you pray it with me?... (using “debts” and “debtors” instead of “trespasses”)



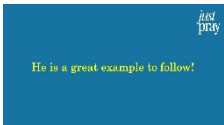
“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

(Matthew 6:9–13, KJV 1900)

I encourage you to use those words as a springboard for your own prayers:

- to worship God’s holiness,
- to seek His will,
- to trust him for needs,
- to experience forgiveness,
- to find protection,
- and to seek His glory

But as you pray, don’t pretend. Don’t go through the motions looking at others or hoping for attention.



Instead, if you want to get better at prayer, look at Jesus! Remember, “The ones we spend time watching influence who we become.” And **He is a great example to follow...for everything, but especially for prayer!**

Church, let’s pray like Jesus! Let’s avoid attention. Let’s align our words and actions. And let’s look to the Father to receive His rewards!

Let’s not just say the Lord’s Prayer, but let’s *pray like our Lord*. Amen? Amen!



Prayer

Invitation

Let’s stand and continue our time of worship.

Sermon Notes

A Worthy Example

(Philippians 4:9; John 13:15; Matthew 6:5-18)

Praying like a Hypocrite

(1 Thessalonians 5:17; Acts 13:2)

Praying like Jesus

(Matthew 6:6, 17-18; Luke 5:16; Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Luke 23:34; Matthew 26:39; Philippians 2:8-9)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- When you hear the phrase “*pray like Jesus,*” what comes to mind first?
- How does regularly watching Jesus in Scripture shape the way we pray?
- In Matthew 6:5–18, what three wrong motivations for prayer does Jesus warn against? Why do you think Jesus speaks so strongly against hypocrisy in prayer?
- What is the difference between praying *to be heard by God* and praying *to impress people*?
- Have you ever caught yourself focusing more on *how your prayer sounds* than on actually speaking with God?
- Jesus often withdrew to pray privately (Luke 5:16). Where is your best “private place” to meet with God?
- What is one prayer request in your life that needs an “action step” from you?
- Can you share a time when God said “no,” but later you saw the reward in His answer?
- What part of your prayer life most needs to look more like Jesus?
- What is one way you can stop “pretending” and start praying more honestly?