

## **How Is Your Prayer Life?**

### **Series: Roadmap For Christian Living**

#### **How often do you talk to God?**

**Talking to God is called prayer.**

#### **What Does The Bible Say?**

5 “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. 6 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. (Matthew 6:5-6 NLT)

**Don’t make prayer a spectacle.**

7 “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. 8 Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

(Matthew 6:7–8 NLT)

**Don't recite meaningless prayers; be in the moment.**

**How Can You Obey?**

Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. (Matthew 6:9 NLT)

**Don't forget to Whom you are talking.**

10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10 NLT)

**It is not about you.**

**God is not a genie in a Bible!**

11 Give us today the food we need, (Matthew 6:11 NLT)

**All we have is from God.**

**There is no such thing as a self-made person!**

12 and forgive us our sins,... (Matthew 6:12 NLT)

**Asking for forgiveness acknowledges my sins.**

...As we have forgiven those who sin against us. (Matthew 6:12)

14 “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly

Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others,

your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14)

**Forgiving others acknowledges my Savior.**

13 And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the

evil one. (Matthew 6:13 NLT)

**Ask for protection.**

**What steps are you going to take to talk to God more often?**

## **Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

## **Notes:**

For more information about radiometric dating, please check out <https://answersingenesis.org/geology/radiometric-dating/>.

## **Explore:**

Ostentatious prayer (6:5–6)

5 Again Jesus assumes that his disciples will pray, but he forbids the prayers of “hypocrites” (see on v. 2). Prayer had a prominent place in Jewish life and led to countless rabbinic decisions (cf.

M Berakoth). In synagogue worship someone from the congregation might be asked to pray publicly, standing in front of the ark. And at certain times prayers could be offered in the streets (M Taanith 2:1–2; see on v. 2). But the location was not the critical factor. Neither is the “standing” posture in itself significant. In the Bible people pray prostrate (Num 16:22; Josh 5:14; Dan 8:17; Matt 26:39; Rev 11:16), kneeling (2 Chronicles 6:13; Dan 6:10; Luke 22:41, Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5), sitting (2 Sam 7:18), and standing (1 Sam 1:26; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13). Again it is the motive that is crucial: “to be seen by men.” And again there is the same reward (cf. Mt 6:2 and 5).

6 If Jesus were forbidding all public prayer, then clearly the early church did not understand him (e.g., 18:19–20; Acts 1:24; 3:1; 4:24–30). The public versus private antithesis is a good test of one’s motives; the person who prays more in public than in private reveals that he is less interested in God’s approval than in

human praise. Not piety but a reputation for piety is his concern. Far better to deal radically with this hypocrisy (cf. Mt 5:29–30) and pray in a private “room”; the word *tameion* can refer to a storeroom (Luke 12:24), some other inner room (Matt 12:26; 24:26; Luke 12:3, 24), or even a bedroom (Isa 26:20 LXX, with which this verse has several common elements; cf. also 2 Kings 4:33). The Father, who sees in secret, will reward the disciple who prays in secret (see on v. 4).

Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 165). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

### **Explore:**

Repetitious prayer (6:7–8)

7–8 Matthew 6:7–15 digresses from the three chief acts of Jewish piety. Yet the content of these verses is certainly relevant to the second of these, which is prayer. Prayer is central to a believer’s life. So Jesus gives further warnings and a positive example.

Many argue that whereas vv. 5–6 warn against the prayer practices of Jews, vv. 7–8 warn against those of Gentiles (pagans; see on 5:47), partly because the parallel in Luke 11:2 (MS D) has “the rest of men.” But the distinction is not quite so cut and dried. Every religious group harbors some who pray repetitiously. So with the Jews of Jesus’ day. He labeled all such praying—even that of his own people—as pagan! “Pagans” (cf. 1 Kings 18:26) are not so much the target as the negative example of all who pray repetitiously.

The verb *battalogeō* (“keep on babbling”) is very rare, apart from writings dependent on the NT (BAGD, p. 137b). It may

derive from the Aramaic *baṭṭal* (“idle,” “useless”) or some other Semitic word; or it may be onomatopoeic: if so, “babble” is a fine English equivalent. Jesus is not condemning prayer any more than he is condemning almsgiving (v. 2) or fasting (v. 16). Nor is he forbidding all long prayers or all repetition. He himself prayed at length (Luke 6:12), repeated himself in prayer (Matt 26:44; unlike Ecclesiasticus 7:14!), and told a parable to show his disciples that “they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). His point is that his disciples should avoid meaningless, repetitive prayers offered under the misconception that mere length will make prayers efficacious. Such thoughtless babble can occur in liturgical and extemporaneous prayers alike. Essentially it is thoroughly pagan, for pagan gods allegedly thrive on incantation and repetition. But the personal Father God to whom believers pray does not require information about our needs (Mt 6:8). “As a father knows the needs of his family, yet



teaches them to ask in confidence and trust, so does God treat his children” (Hill, Matthew).

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### **Explore:**

One of the dangers of engaging in rote memorization of a prayer, is that the prayer will quickly lose its meaning. Rote repetition quickly becomes a thoughtless, mindless, routine activity— simply going through the motions without any conviction regarding the meaning of the words. A perfect example of this is the fact that many practicing Muslims today memorize the Koran in Arabic, and repeat it over and over. Yet many of those who have it memorized and recite it don’t even understand

Arabic—they don't know what they are saying. There is no comprehension. Yet they think their god hears them by virtue of their many words. This was the kind of prayer Jesus was condemning.

Biblical prayer, on the other hand, was first and foremost to be personal, understandable words of communication directed toward an intelligible God who communicates with His people in comprehensible language. Paul said Christian prayer was to be typified with understandable language and comprehension.

“Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air.... I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind” (1 Corinthians 14:9, 15).

McManis, C. (2006). *Christian Living Beyond Belief: Biblical Principles for the Life of Faith* (pp. 168–169). The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications.

**Explore:**

Giving God preeminence and proper reverence in prayer has been the pattern of all the saints throughout biblical history.

Moses begins his long prayer of thanksgiving after the Exodus by first speaking of how great God is, jubilantly declaring, “The LORD is a warrior” (Exodus 15:3). Hannah starts her memorable prayer by saying “There is no one holy like the LORD” (1 Samuel 2:2). Solomon begins his extended dedicatory prayer by saying, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you” (1 Kings 8:23). David begins his prayer of deliverance by singing, “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer” (Psalm 18:2). Isaiah begins his prayer of praise by adoring God: “O LORD, you are my God ... you have done

marvelous things” (25:1). Daniel was exemplary in this manner, for his great prayer of supplication begins this way: “O LORD, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands” (9:4). And Nehemiah begins his memorable prayer lauding God by saying, “LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God” (1:5).

The lesson here for us is to get our eyes off ourselves when it comes to prayer. It’s all too common to go to prayer and immediately begin by demanding, “Gimme, gimme, gimme!” Prayer is a time for worshipping God, not for being a leech (Proverbs 30:15). God is not a magic genie in a bottle who is there just to grant our self-centered wishes. So when you go to prayer, begin by mimicking the angels of Revelation who pray to God saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty” (4:8).

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### **Explore:**

“The Lord’s Prayer,” as it is commonly called, is not so much his own prayer (John 17 is just that) as the model he gave his disciples. Much of the literature has focused on the complex question of the relation between Mt 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4. The newer EVs reveal the many differences. KJV does not show the differences so clearly because it preserves the numerous assimilations to Matthew in late MSS of Luke (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 154–56). Various theories attempt to account for the differences.

1. Formerly some argued that Matthew’s form is the original and Luke’s a simplified version of it. This view is no longer popular,

largely because of the difficulty of believing that Luke, who was highly interested in Jesus' prayer life, would omit words and clauses from one of his prayers if they were already in a source.

2. Others have argued strongly that Luke's account is original and that Matthew has added to it according to his own theology and linguistic habit (so Jeremias, *Prayers*, pp. 85ff., and Hill).

Several reasons for this theory follow.

a) All Luke's content is found in Matthew 6:9–13. But this could support condensation by Luke as easily as expansion by Matthew. More important, mere expansion-condensation theories do not account for the linguistic differences (e.g., tense in the fourth petition, vocabulary and tense in the fifth), and the theory is further weakened when it is argued (e.g., by Hill, Matthew) that in the fourth petition the priorities are reversed and Matthew's form is probably more original than Luke's.

b) Matthew's more rhythmical, liturgical formulation may reflect the desire to construct an ecclesiastical equivalent, for Jewish Christians, of the synagogue's main prayer, the Eighteen Benedictions (Davies, *Setting*, pp. 310ff.), to which the Lord's Prayer structurally and formally corresponds. But these correspondences have been greatly exaggerated. They are no closer than those found in fine extemporaneous prayers prayed in evangelical churches every Wednesday night (on the differences, cf. Bornkamm, *Jesus*, pp. 136f:). Moreover, Jesus was far removed from innovation for its own sake. Why should he not have expressed himself in current forms of piety?

c) Hill (Matthew) argues that the Matthean introduction (v. 9) suggests that the prayer is a standardized liturgical form. On the contrary, the text reads "this is how [houtōs] you should pray," not "this is what you should pray." The emphasis is on paradigm or model, not liturgical form.

d) Hill (Matthew) also argues that the emphatic “you” (v. 9) “sets off the new Christian community from the synagogue (and Gentile usage) whose piety is being contrasted with Christian worship in the surrounding context.” But not only is this needlessly anachronistic, it also ignores the constant stress on “you” designating Jesus’ disciples as the exclusive messianic community in Jesus’ day (see on 6:2).

3. Ernst Lohmeyer (The Lord’s Prayer [London: Collins, 1965], p. 293) argues that the two prayers do not spring from one source (Q?) but from two separate traditions. In Matthew the prayer reflects the liturgical tradition of the Galilean Christian community and emphasizes a certain eschatological outlook, whereas in Luke the prayer reflects the liturgical tradition of the Jerusalem church and focuses more on daily life. He refuses to be drawn out on what stands behind these two traditions.

Lohmeyer’s geographical speculations are not convincing, but his emphasis on two separate traditions of the Lord’s Prayer is



worth careful consideration. Evidence from the Didache and the demonstrable tendency for local churches to think of themselves as Christian synagogues (e.g., in the letters of Ignatius) and to adopt some synagogal liturgical patterns combine to suggest that the Lord's Prayer was used in corporate worship from a very early date. If (and this is a big "if") such church liturgies stretch back to the time when Matthew and Luke were written, it seems unlikely that the evangelists would disregard the liturgical habits of their own communities, unless for overwhelming historical or theological reasons (e.g., correction of heresy within the accepted liturgy). But none such is evident. This reinforces the theory of two separate liturgical traditions. On the other hand, if fixed liturgical patterns had not yet included any form of the Lord's Prayer by the time the evangelists wrote, the differences between the two are not easily explained by a common source. Though the evidence for two traditions is strong, equally significant is the fact that there are two entirely different

historical settings of the prayer. Unless one is prepared to say that one or the other is made up, the reasonable explanation is that Jesus taught this sort of prayer often during his itinerant ministry and that Matthew records one occasion and Luke another. Matthew's setting is not so historically specific as that of Luke only if one interprets the introduction and the conclusion of the entire discourse loosely or if one postulates Matthew's freedom to add "footnotes" to the material he provides (see prefatory remarks for 5:1–7:29). The former is exegetically doubtful, the latter without convincing literary controls; and even in these instances the evidence for two separate traditions for the Lord's Prayer is so strong that the simplest comprehensive explanation is that Jesus himself taught this form of prayer on more than one occasion.

Few have doubted that the prayer is in some form authentic. Goulder (pp. 296–301) argues that Matthew composed it from fragments, most of which were authentic but uttered on other

and separate occasions, and that Luke copied and adapted Matthew's work. His theory is unconvincing because it does no more than show parallels between elements of this prayer and other things Jesus said or prayed. The same evidence could equally be read as supporting the prayer's authenticity. It is well worth noting that there is no anachronism in the prayer—no mention of Jesus as high priestly Mediator, no allusion to themes developed only after the Resurrection.

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### **Question 1 of 5**

When is the best time for you to pray and why?

## **Question 2 of 5**

How can Jesus' prayer life be a model for our own?

Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. (Mark 1:35)

## **Question 3 of 5**

What does it mean to pray according to God's will?

## **Question 4 of 5**

Why does forgiving others show that Christ is our Savior?

## **Question 5 of 5**

Why is radiometric dating of rocks a problem?