

**Upside-Down Kingdom: When you Pray**  
Growth Group Discussion  
Matthew 6:5-15

**Opening Question** (get everyone involved in discussion):

- Can you think of someone whose prayers have really blessed you or ministered to your spirit? What is it about their prayers that contributed to that effect in your life?
- Begin with prayer. Pause in silence for a moment to reflect on who God is, before inviting his Spirit to lead your discussion.

**Read** Matthew 6:1, and 6:5-15, and then discuss the following.

1. Remember that Jesus' statement in v. 1 is the "big idea" that guides the specific teachings in the verses that follow. Before digging into those verses, how do you think the principle in v. 1 applies to the topic of prayer?
2. In v. 5, Jesus talks about the "hypocrites" of his day, who prayed in a showy way to get attention. What are some ways that you have seen people use prayer to get attention (without naming names!)?
  - What are some words that we sometimes use in prayer to impress people? What are less showy ways of saying the same things?
  - In Andy Boutcher's sermon this week, he said that we do not need to work to get God's attention—we don't need to "make a show." How easy is it for you to believe this claim? Do you still feel that you have to do something to get God's attention? Why or why not?
3. In vv. 5-8, Jesus uses the term "your Father" three times. Why do you think he does this while teaching on prayer?
  - Why does Jesus make a point of instructing that we go into a secret, private place for prayer?
  - Do you have a special, private place where you like to go to pray?
  - How can you have a "secret room in your heart" even when you are not in a private place?
  - If we are not heard because of our "many words" (v. 7), how can we be assured that God hears us when we pray?
  - If God knows what we need before we ask him (v. 8), then why do we pray?
  - Knowing that Jesus here commands prayer in the secret place, and that God also encourages corporate prayer (in other parts of Scripture), how can our corporate prayers embody the principles Jesus teaches here?

4. The “Lord’s Prayer” (vv. 9-13) is not so much a prescription of the exact words we should pray, but rather a “model prayer,” giving us an example of the principles that determine how we pray.
  - What principles do you see in this model prayer that are to guide how we pray? Do you see themes, emphases, or differing types of prayer?
  - What aspects of God’s character do you see in this prayer? How do these inform the way that we pray?
  - Andy said, “If we immediately launch into our list of requests, we miss the chance to know God better in prayer.” Why is this the case?
  - Why is our willingness to forgive others so important to our prayer life (vv. 14-15)?
  
5. Do you feel Jesus’ teaching on prayer stretching you in any way today?
  - What did Andy mean when he said, “Prayer includes you, but it’s not all about you?”

**PRAYER:**

- Use the Lord’s Prayer as a guide to your prayer time. Andy said that in the New Testament, only about 10% of prayers are for individual needs, and 90% of prayer consists of praise, or praying for the needs of others, or praying for God’s kingdom purposes. Let this principle guide the way that you pray.