



Three Acts of Righteousness Part 2: Do Pray (Matthew 6:5-15)

What, why, and how do you pray? Do you pray solely for your personal comfort and abundance? Do you ever pray in a public restaurant, hoping that people seated near you will see you? Do your nighttime prayers sound like broken records saying the same selfish things in the same selfish ways for the same selfish reasons? What would happen if you prayed for what God prayed?

Prayer is being online with God when our hearts are connected with His. In this connection, we upload our requests, and He downloads His presence, shaping our hearts and transforming our desires to be like His (Psalm 37:4). Consequently, God's design is that we would be online with Him 24/7 where we can experience His links with others. Too often, we work offline from God, limiting our encounters with Him to a church building with a particular group of people, functioning in a certain style for one hour on one given day of the week.

In His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus described the *be-do-go of full surrender*. In essence, He said, "Who you are to *be* determines what you *do* which determines where you *go*." In Matthew, Chapter 6, Jesus moved from who we are to *be* to what we are to *do*. He began with three acts of piety in Judaism: (1) giving to the needy, (2) praying, and (3) fasting. In each, Jesus cut to the heart of the matter exposing why we do what we do. We either have a selfish motive or a selfless one. With each good deed, He described what *not* to do, then what to do. Jesus said, "Do pray."

First, do not pray with the motive to be recognized and honored. "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men" (Matthew 6:5).

Hypocrites were actors. They wore masks on stage, pretending to be one way on the outside, though they were another on the inside. Jesus said that if being seen (outside) was one's motive (inside), then the attention he had received was His reward in full (a reference to payment in ancient business receipts). There would be no reward of an intimate relationship with God because of the selfish motive.

Street Smarts for The Restoration Road

Are there any arenas in your life where you love to be recognized or honored when you pray? Ask the Holy Spirit to take an inventory of your heart and surrender any impure motives to Him.

Second, do pray in secret. "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:6). Jewish homes had only one room with a door—a storage chamber. Jesus used this imagery to describe a secret place where no one but the heavenly Father would see. This does not mean that we cannot pray publicly. Rather, it



means that we should not seek selfish recognition and honor when we pray. When our prayer motive is unselfish, our reward is intimacy with God.

Jesus cautioned against babbling like pagans who, when they prayed, reminded their deity about their good deeds in order to receive a return favor (Matthew 6:7). Sometimes we do the same with God, reminding Him of all of the righteous acts that we accomplished in order to receive a one-for-one benefit. Greeks used many names for their deity in order to gain its attention. Often times, we pray publicly using many names for God in order to be seen and heard by others. Two thousand years ago, Rabbis debated the use of fixed prayers, a pattern used by many of us today. They determined that they were acceptable only if offered genuinely. Thankfully, Jesus taught us how to pray to the One who knows what we need before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8).

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When you pray, are you seeking a one-for-one benefit from God for your good deeds? Do you frequently offer the same prayer without heartfelt authenticity or thanksgiving? Next time you pray, offer your heart to God. Ask Him for His desires to become evident in your prayers.

Jesus taught each of us how to be a person who *PRAYS* (Matthew 6:9-15). Remember that prayer is the connection of one's heart with God's. Jesus said, "This, then, is how you should pray" (Matthew 6:9).

(1) Praise. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). *Heaven* had three meanings: (1) where we go when we die, (2) the stars in the sky, and (3) the air in and around us. When we praise our heavenly Father for who He is (holy) and for being as close as the air that is in and around us, He downloads His Person and power that we can share with others.

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Praise God the most where people expect it the least. Praise Him 24/7, including in your work, play, home, and church. Identify any setting where you believe that you are limiting your praise of God. Commit to lifting up God in that setting with your heart, desires, and life so that you worship Him 24/7. When you pray, praise your heavenly Father for Who He is (holy) and for being as close as the air in and around you. God will download His Person and power into your life, empowering you to link the same with others.

(2) Renew. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It was understood that after God's kingdom came, His will would be done on earth as in heaven. Jesus ushered in God's kingdom. As a result, this part of Jesus' prayer calls for a renewing of our minds in order to experience God's kingdom and will in our lives. Paul taught, "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act



of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2). This is a 180-degree turn from our world's standards. Jesus prayed for His Father's will (Matthew 26:39). When we renew our minds to be focused on God's kingdom, rather than our own, He downloads His passion so we can transfer that passion to others.

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Renew your mind 24/7 to refocus your efforts toward the advancement of God's kingdom rather than your own. Memorize Romans 12:1-2. Recite it to God, praying to Him as you seek the renewal of your mind. God will download His passion, namely His will for your life, and you will link that passion with others.

(3) Ask. "Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). This referenced God's provision of manna in the desert for the Israelites. It is an illustration of total dependence on God for our needs to advance His kingdom. When we ask God to meet our needs to advance His kingdom, He downloads His provision that we can share with others.

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Ask God 24/7 to supply your needs to advance His kingdom through you and into others. When you pray, ask His Spirit to help you identify and provide any missing resources for you to communicate Christ to those in your life. God will download His provision and equip you to link His provision with others.

(4) Yield. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). C. S. Lewis said that "as" was the most sobering two-letter word in all Scripture because the prayer is for God to forgive us in the same exact manner in which we have forgiven others. For some of us, this is a scary prayer. We have to yield all unsettled accounts to God, radically issuing to others the forgiveness that we have received from Him. If we don't, then we really haven't received God's forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15). When we yield all unsettled relational accounts to God, He downloads His peace that we can experience with others.

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Yield 24/7 all unsettled accounts to God. Let go and let God bring peace to your relationship with Him and your relationships with others. When you pray, seek the Spirit's guidance to reveal to you all unsettled relational accounts as you yield those to Him. God will download His peace and help you link His peace with others.

(5) Surrender to be Spirit-led. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). The Aramaic sentence structure might indicate "Let us not sin when tempted," rather than "Let us not be tempted." This is supported by the fact that Scripture tells us that God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13). When we



surrender our hearts to be Spirit-led, God downloads His protection to guide us with others.

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Surrender your heart to be Spirit-led 24/7. When you are tempted, surrender to the Holy Spirit the bait and your desires that are luring you. When you wake up every morning, pray to God, surrendering your heart to be Spirit-led. God will download His protection and guide you to link His protection with others.

30-Day Experiment

Take a 30-day experiment, and be a person who unselfishly *PRAYS* in secret. Go into your own room at night, get on your knees if you are physically able, and (1) *praise* your heavenly Father for who He is, (2) *renew* your mind to seek His will for your life, (3) *ask* for His provision of your needs to advance His kingdom, (4) *yield* all unsettled relational accounts to Him, and (5) *surrender* your heart to be Spirit-led. In this pattern, pray specifically for someone who is either skeptical of or seeking God to surrender his heart to Him. The kingdom of God will break through your life in a way that only God's intimacy can do. That intimacy will attract others to Christ in you.

Conclusion

Each of us is designed to be a person who *PRAYS*, worshiping God 24/7 in our work, play, homes, and churches. First, when we *praise* our Heavenly Father for Who He is 24/7, He downloads His *Person* and *power* for us to forward the same to others. Second, when we *renew* our minds with God, He downloads His *passion* for us so that we can transfer His passion to others. Third, when we *ask* God to supply our needs to advance His kingdom, He downloads His *provision* so that we are equipped to share His provision with others. Fourth, when we *yield* all unsettled accounts to God, He downloads His *peace*, allowing us to transport His peace to others. Fifth, when we *surrender to be Spirit-led*, God downloads His *protection* that we can offer to others. Christ has paid the cost for each of us to become a person who *PRAYS*, offering us His Spirit that empowers us to be online with God 24/7 (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).