



A SIMPLE PRAYER

Bible students may be struck with amazement that a body of Jewish followers would ask Jesus to teach them to pray. These were men of a nation that grew up with prayer. It was a staple of their home life, it was taught in the synagogue schools, and it was a public practice weekly at the synagogue service. Did the disciples of Jesus see something different about the prayers of Jesus that struck them as simple? One may easily suppose they did. And it is even more apparent in the model prayer that Jesus taught them in answer to their request. That prayer is recorded by both Luke and Matthew as a part of the Sermon on the Mount in the context of Jesus' criticism of the prayers of fellow Jews, especially the prayers of the nation's leaders on street corners and in other public places ([Luke 11:1-4](#); [Matthew 6:9-15](#)). We do know, according to Luke's gospel, that prayer was a must in the life of Jesus, and that He taught the disciples that they

“ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Jesus petitioned the Father after His baptism before He faced the devil in the wilderness of temptation; He needed to get from the pressure of crowds to be alone with God; He communed all night with God before He chose the twelve; He fell prostrate to His knees and face when He agonized to God about His upcoming death; and He spoke to God in His final hour on the cross ([Luke 3:21](#); [5:16](#); [6:12](#); [22:41-46](#); [23:33-49](#)). It is from this intimate and personal relationship with the heavenly Father that Jesus draws the principle elements of effective, simple, and meaningful prayer. Prayer is really not complicated when a disciple, as Jesus, really knows the Father, genuinely depends on Him daily, and earnestly seeks His help in times of need.

Intimate Prayers

Men who make a show of prayer are not genuine. Jesus says, They are hypocrites who have a purpose in prayer beyond a real need for God. To be seen of men and to receive the approval of men has its momentary reward, Jesus says, such prayers have no value in receiving grace and mercy from God in

desperate and critical times. But withdrawing to a hidden and unseen place to call on God provides a setting where nothing is to be gained beyond a sincere appeal to a Father Who loves His children and will reward them with His approval and blessings. So Jesus says: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to the Father who is in secret, and thy Father Who seeth in secret shall recompense thee" ([Matthew 6:6](#)).

Direct Prayer

Men who seek out flowery and eloquent phrases to repeat again and again in their prayers have an image of a God who needs to be impressed and awaits an abundant display of the right words again and again before He responds. Jesus corrects that impression when He teaches the disciples that "in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" ([Matthew 6:7](#)). God, the Father of Jesus, knows our needs before we ask and eagerly awaits our supplications. When we approach Him at midnight in need, we must ask, seek, and knock to

receive His gracious provisions ([Matthew 7:7-11](#)).