

HYPOCRITICAL PRAYING

Don't pray like a hypocrite. They pretend to be so spiritual in their grandiose, self-oriented praying. They pretend like it's all about God, but really, it's all about them.

Matthew 6:5 (NKJV)

5 “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Hypocrites LOVE the attention. It's like the guy who came running into the room crying, “ATTENTION, ATTENTION, ATTENTION,” and when everyone gave him their attention, he said, “Oh, *I just wanted ATTENTION.*”

Hypocritical praying is all about SELF. They love the attention of being seen by men. They love coming off all impressive in prayer because it makes them look so spiritual. Once again, this is not about God, rather they make it all about SELF.

In truth, their prayers were not really directed to God but to other people. They were praying with people in mind – not God. With self in view – not God. Narcissistic praying is always WRONG!

And once again, Jesus said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*” They have no reward from God, just that momentary recognition from people who may be impressed by their hypocritical display.

Matthew 6:6 (NKJV)

6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Want to pray in a God-honoring way? Then don't focus on putting on a show. No matter the oratory, no matter the tone, no matter the tears, God is not impressed. In fact, He sees right through it. He sees the heart. He sees the motivation.

Jesus is saying, “Make prayer all about God”, not about SELF in any way. And the best way to do this is to get away all by yourself where it is just you and God.

Genuine God-focused prayer is precious to God. Prayer that truly makes Him the focus (in the secret place) will be rewarded. There is a special reward for praying. Every prayer offered up has its own reward.

God works through prayer. If people don't use the "prayer closet" it really proves they don't put much stock in prayer. People that really believe prayer matters – pray!

Do you believe that even ONE single heart felt prayer can change the course of the nation – or can change the eternal course of a human being.

James, after saying, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Ja. 5:16b) then said this:

James 5:17–18 (NKJV)

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

God works through prayer! That was not just true of Elijah, but of us as well.

Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV)

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

God is able to do far more than we can ask or think. If you study the whole of Scripture you will find God consistently working mightily in answer to prayer. And God-focused prayer done in SECRET is the SECRET weapon. This is the secret to answered prayer.

Sure we can also pray publicly, but I think the emphasis here is that first and foremost the reality of prayer life is seen in private.

Now of course Jesus wasn't prohibiting all public praying. Really, He was correcting the whole misguided practice of "showy praying". Whether we pray in private or in public the focus should always be on God. There is certainly a place for public praying...

1 Timothy 2:8 (NKJV)

8 I desire therefore **that the men pray everywhere**, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

In the early Church, we see a constant practice of publicly praying together and not only in private. The Church was born out of a prayer meeting as seen in Acts 1-2. The first missionary journey was born out of a prayer meeting as seen in Acts 13 (cf. Acts 1:24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24-30; 12:12; 13:3; 14:23; 18:19-20; 20:36).

The issue is not merely in where we pray, but WHY. What are our motives? Are they truly God-centered and God-focused?

“The point is not *where* we pray. At issue here is, *why* we pray – to be seen by people or to be heard by God.” – ***William MacDonald***