

## **PRAYING VAIN REPETITIONS**

Imagine if I went to my wife and said, “I am hungry, I am hungry, I am hungry, I am hungry”. “Please make dinner, please make dinner, please make dinner.” And after we eat, I would say, “Thank you, dear, thank you, dear, thank you, dear.” How do you think that is going to go? Imagine if I did this day after day. I think after a short while she would feel like smacking me, or perhaps calling for professional help – something!

We should not do this with God. Often, prayers can get pretty mindless, just mouthing mantra words.

### **Matthew 6:7 (NKJV)**

**7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.**

Not only should we pray in secret with a total God-centered emphasis (see Matt. 6:5-6), but also when we pray, we should not use “**vain repetitions as the heathen do.**”

The Greek word translated “repetitions” (battalogo) denotes “babbling or speaking without thinking” (Liberty Bible Commentary).

Pagan prayers are ridiculous and mindless. They are chants. They are mindless mantras, thinking **that they will be heard for their many words.**”

Just repeating a bunch of verbiage is not God-honoring prayer. True prayer puts your mind and heart into it. We don’t meaningfully communicate with other people with “**vain repetitions,**” how much more insulting to do this with God.

Someone has said, “**All of us have one routine prayer in our system; and once we get rid of it, then we can really start to pray!**” There is probably more truth in that than we want to admit.

Frankly, a lot of people memorize what is called “**The Lord’s prayer**” and, in mantra style, just continually quote these words. Jesus specifically said not to pray this way. I am always reminded of this travesty whenever I go to some event, such as a funeral, and the religious leader asks the people to pray “The Lord’s Prayer”. It sounds like a bunch of rote, monotonous words that get no further than the ceiling.

**Roman Catholics** do this as they mindlessly quote the rosary, which has even deeper theological blasphemy involved than the mere repetition of certain words.

I have **heard charismatics** claim that tongues is their private prayer language and that they pray for hours in this mindless way, spouting nothing but sheer gibberish.

Sometimes, some choruses follow suit with a bunch of mindless repetition that is all emotional in orientation but virtually nothing for the mind. And we call it worship. I wonder sometimes if it is not just “vain repetition” with little or no substance. Some meetings almost put people in some sort of trance as they repeat over and over and over to build to some kind of emotional experience.

In effect, Jesus is saying, when it comes to praying, put your mind and heart into it. Don't use vain repetitions like the heathen do. Don't just do “mantra praying”. Constantly mouthing some form of abracadabra is not impressive to God!

People who have a “heathen approach” to prayer in the sense of “vain repetition” have a wrong view of God. They seem to think it's not about the substance of what they are saying, but rather it's about the AMOUNT. And that if they just say enough words, they may wear God down to where He grants what they are mumbling about.

Some people seem to approach God with this strategy – if I just pester Him long enough with enough words, He will eventually weaken and give me what I want. It is a manipulative approach to prayer! It really is a very small view of God.

But it doesn't work that way. For one thing, God-honoring prayer is not the idea of trying to get my way with God; rather, it's about getting God's will done. God-honoring prayer has a God-agenda from start to finish – not a self-agenda.

God doesn't need to have many words. Long prayers are not necessarily more effective than short prayers. Really, it is thoughtful, heartfelt prayers that are God-honoring. These are the prayers God delights in.

**Matthew 6:8 (NKJV)**

**8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.**

Don't come to God like He needs an education. He already knows what we need before we ask Him. This is not a matter of filling God in or trying to wear Him down.

So, the legitimate question then arises. If God already knows then WHY do we need to pray at all?

Prayer is a fascinating study. The short answer is we pray so that God will be glorified, and we will be strengthened.

Prayer is talking to God. It is communication with God. Every relationship is based on communication. God desires to have a meaningful relationship with us – a prayer relationship. He talks to us through the Word of God, and we speak to Him in prayer.

In verse 8, Jesus says, “your Father knows the things you have need of,” so in view is prayer about our needs. We are to pray about these things because it acknowledges our DEPENDENCE upon Him.

God could do it without prayer, but in relying upon God through prayer, it draws us closer to Him. It shows our God to be living and in a real relationship with us as He answers. We ask God, and then when He answers, we thank Him. And in this continual process, God is glorified through prayer. You see, prayer is not merely about communicating information – it's about WORSHIP – A WORSHIPFUL RELATIONSHIP!