



Week 1: Matthew 6:5-8

THE POSTURE OF PRAYER

Near the start of his earthly ministry, Jesus lays out the essence of his ethical teachings in Matthew 5–7, commonly referred to as The Sermon on the Mount. In these chapters, Jesus explains how our hearts can and should align within the Kingdom of Heaven. Transitioning into chapter 6, the focus sharpens as the Lord addresses the problem of our outwardly hypocritical behaviors, exploring the various ways we might mask what's truly happening within us.

THE SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 6:5-8

⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites². For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

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² This word in the Greek, hupokritēs, refers stage actors who wore different masks to play various roles. The sense behind this word is a person who professes beliefs and opinions that he or she does not hold, in order to conceal his or her real feelings or motives.

LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS: WEEK 1

1. Imagine that you lead a class of first-graders at your church. How would you describe what prayer is to them?

2. How would you describe your current prayer life on the scale below?

Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

Why did you choose the answer you selected?

3. Do you often feel like you are a 'poorer pray-er' than others in the church?

4. Has there been a time in your life when your prayer life was much healthier? Why do you think that has changed?

5. Examining the broader context of Matthew 6, what do the first four verses of the chapter describe? Do you think they relate to this passage in any way?

6. Matthew 6:5 contains the central command of this passage. How would you rephrase it in a way that makes sense to you?

7. What else in the broader context should we be cautious of inauthentically doing to be seen by others? Why do you think that Jesus warned his disciples against such public displays of piety? Does this passage teach that we should never pray in public?

8. Considering verse 5, can you list some potential reasons why Jesus would have said what he said?

9. Why do you think Jesus gives this command, and why do you think it matters so much to the Lord?

10. Matthew 6:6 contains another command, as well as a reward. What are they? What kinds of rewards could we see from praying in a manner that honors the Lord?

11. Do you tend to pray more frequently and fervently when you are in public than when you are alone?

12. What do you think of the following statement: "Prayer is the easiest thing to do, but prayer is the hardest thing to do."

13. If your Bible consisted only of these four verses, what incredible truths would they tell you about the Lord, in terms of either his character or his power?

14. What ways are you tempted to play act your prayer life, and what steps can you take this week to seek to restore authenticity?