

- 1) As we study the Sermon on the Mt, why did Jesus's listeners (and why do we) need to be reminded to abandon a legalistic list of External Behaviors and pursue Internal Character when seeking righteousness?
- 2) Why might you agree or disagree with the following statement? "A proper application of the law, necessitates a proper condition of the heart."

Mt 6:5-8

5) "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 6) But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. 7) And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 8) So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

Improper Motivation v.5

- 3) What might be some wrong motives that would compel us to pray?
- 4) How is our current understanding of the definition of the word "Hypocrite" different from how Jesus' listeners would have understood the word when He used it?
- 5) What are some of the things that might make for a good actor that, if carried over into our prayer lives, would not be consistent with Godly Character?
- 6) If "being seen by men", is our motivation in praying, where is our focus? What should we expect from God when our motivation for prayer is misplaced like this?
- 7) In what ways do Believers today desired to be seen by men in the church?
- 8) When you are feeling "undervalued" or "unappreciated" in the church, how might this be an indicator of a heart condition that needs to be addressed with the Lord?
- 9) What are some things that Believers may do in public to look spiritual?
 - a. What might be a way to check our motives where these types of behaviors are concerned?

Improper Understanding of God v.7

“...meaningless repetitions...” – The idea of “meaningless repetitions” has to do with using the same words over and over, to add words that are without meaning that bring no value to the thought being conveyed”

10) Why were these Pagans (Gentiles) using many words in their “prayers”?

11) How do we know that this warning (in v.7) is not simply a command from Jesus to keep our prayers short and never repeat ourselves?

12) Why is it important to understand our Father where prayer is concerned?

Be Consistent in Prayer v.5,6,7

13) What are some of the reasons Believers might use for not praying more consistently?

14) Discuss opportunities to improve consistency in prayer with the Father throughout the day?

Be Rightly Motivated v.6

The type of religion that was being modeled by the Pharisees was a legalistic list of exterior behaviors that needed to be performed to be considered righteous. Jesus is exposing the motivation of their hearts regarding prayer. He is encouraging the listeners to develop communion with the Father independent of the pressures of Show and Performance.

15) How does private prayer expose the motives of our hearts?

- a. How do the statements “Prayer becomes real in private.” and “What we do when we are alone, is who we really are.” relate to this?

16) Why is it important to understand that private prayer was a part of Jesus’ discipline?

Be Informed v.8

The Pagans (Gentiles) thought if they could put enough words together and prayed long enough, they could manipulate an outcome from God. This thinking reflects a lack of understanding of who the Father is. Foundationally, we must understand the God we serve. He is All Good, All Powerful and All Knowing. A lack of understanding in any of these areas leads to an uninformed and often misguided prayer life.

17) Have you ever felt the pressure of needing to remember every sin to be confessed, or every prayer request that needed to be brought before the Lord?

a. Why might this pressure be misplaced?

18) How does understanding that our Father knows what we need before we ask Him:

a. ...take pressure off our compulsion to make sure we cover each prayer item on the list?

b. ...help us to see the Father's desire for relationship with us as opposed to being an answer machine?

c. ...relate to our need to perform or meet certain prayer expectations?

d. ...impact who the focus is on during our prayer time?

We need to move away from following a rote list of prayer steps that have the illusion of righteousness, and moving towards a passionate prayer communion with the Father that reflects our dependence on Him and our recognition of His goodness and sovereignty.

What changes will you seek to make in your prayer life to move to a time that focuses on developing a relations with the Father as opposed to checking a "discipline" off the list?