

# **The Sermon on the Mount (Part 2)**

## **The New People of God**

### **Study 9 – How not to pray**

#### **Introduction**

Prayer is without doubt one of the most important elements of the disciple's life of faith. True prayer is an act of faith, for when we pray we speak to a God who is unseen. Thus our prayers arise out of what we know by faith to be true about God from His word, the Bible. True prayer is a relational activity for when we speak to God in prayer, we affirm that God is personal and relational, the Living God who hears and answers the prayers of His people. True prayer is an act of humility for when we pray we express our utter dependence upon God, affirming that it is He and not ourselves who ultimately rules the world.

Sadly however prayer is also an area of spiritual life about which people are confused. We know this from our own experience, but this fact is also highlighted in the words of warning which Jesus spoke to His disciples in Matthew 6:5-9. In this short paragraph, Jesus once again draws attention to the danger of hypocrisy, warning against prayer which is done in order to be 'seen by men'. But He also warns against superstition, a view of prayer which sees it not as the expression of relationship with God but as a means of controlling and manipulating God to get what we want from Him. To this day, the danger of hypocrisy and superstition in prayer remain real so that the words that Jesus spoke long ago to His disciples are words that we need to hear and take to heart.

#### **Investigate and Think**

##### **Read Matthew 6:5-9**

1. Jesus begins His teaching with the words "when you pray". What does this tell us about the place that Jesus gives to prayer in the lives of his disciples?



8. Why, according to this passage, do the pagans use many words when they pray?

9. What is Jesus' counter to this superstitious view of prayer?

10. In what way does the fact that God knows what we need before we ask affect

a. Whether we pray?

b. How we pray?

11. What does Matthew 5:5-9 teach us about God?



1. How does Jesus' teaching challenge the way that people think about prayer today?
2. What implications does Jesus teaching have for our public prayers at church or in our small groups?
3. In what way has this passage challenged or encouraged you with respect to your own prayer life?
4. How would you use this passage to commend Christianity to someone?