

Matthew 6:5-6 Commentary

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MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES

KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."



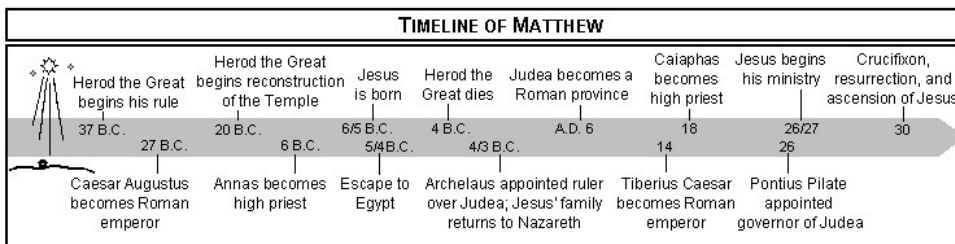
Click chart to enlarge
 Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
 Another Chart from Charles Swindoll

THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



Click chart to enlarge

Jesus Birth and Early Years
 Leading up to the Sermon on the Mount
 Matthew 1-7



Source: Ryrie Study Bible

Matthew 6:5 "**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**. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [Kai hotan proseuchesthe. \(2PPMS\) ouk esesthe \(2PFMI\) hos hoi hupokritai; hoti philousin \(3PPAI\) en tais sunagogais kai en tais goniais ton plateion hestotes \(RAPMPN\) proseuchesthai. \(PMN\) hopos phanosin \(3PAPS\) tois anthropois; amen lego \(1SPA\)I\) humin apechousin \(3SPPAI\) ton misthon auton.](#)

Amplified: Also when you pray, you must 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 people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward in full already ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

NLT: And now about prayer. When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I assure you, that is all the reward they will ever get. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Philips: And then, when you pray, don't be like the play-actors. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at street-corners so that people may see them at it. Believe me, they have had all the reward they are going to get. ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

Wuest: And whenever you are praying you shall not be as the actors on the stage of life, because they are fond of praying in the synagogues and while standing at the corners of avenues in order that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I am saying to you, They have their reward and the receipt for the same in full.

Young's Literal: 'And when thou mayest pray, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites, because they love in the synagogues, and in the corners of the broad places -- standing -- to pray, that they may be seen of men; verily I say to you, that they have their reward.

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: Kai hotan proseuchesthe, (2PPMS) ouk esesthe (2PFMI) hos hoi hupokritai; hoti philousin (3PPAI) en tais sunagogais kai en tais goniais ton plateion hestotes (RAPMPN) proseuchesthai, (PMN) hopos phanosin (3PAPS) tois anthropois

- **When you pray** - Mt 7:7,8; 9:38; 21:22; Psalms 5:2; 55:17; Proverbs 15:8; Isaiah 55:6,7; Jeremiah 29:12; Daniel 6:10; 9:4-19; Luke 18:1; John 16:24; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2,3; 1Th 5:17; James 5:15,16
- **You are not to be like** - Mt 6:2; 23:14; Job 27:8-10; Isaiah 1:15; Luke 18:10,11; 20:47
- [Matthew 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

[Related resource - The Kneeling Christian](#)

Ironsides calls on us to "Think of the privilege of sitting at the feet of the great intercessor Himself and hearing Him tell us how to pray! It is indeed a priceless opportunity not to be despised or passed on to disciples of some other age.

When you pray - Not "if" you pray. Prayer is the believer's lifeline to God. **Spurgeon** puts it this way...

Prayer pulls the rope below and the great bell rings above in the cars of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give but an occasional pluck at the rope; but he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously, with all his might. (Feathers for Arrows)

Stand - The posture is not the problem, for posture is irrelevant if the **motive** of the heart is to please God. Many postures are associated with prayer: prostrate (Num 16:22; Josh 5:14; Dan 8:17; Matt 26:39; Rev 11:16), kneeling (2 Chronicles 6:13; Dan 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5), sitting (2Sam 7:18), and standing (1Sam 1:26; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13).

A hypocrite (**hupokrites** - [see word study](#)) prays on his knees on Sunday and preys on his neighbors on Monday.

A T Robertson commenting on **synagogues and on street corners** writes that...

These were the usual places of prayer (synagogues) and the street corners where crowds stopped for business or talk. If the hour of prayer overtook a Pharisee here, he would strike his attitude of prayer like a modern Moslem that men might see that he was pious. (Robertson, A. Word Pictures in the New Testament)

Ron Mattoon adds: The street corners were a normal place for prayer, because devout Jews would stop wherever they were at the appointed hour for prayer, even if they were walking down the street or visiting at the corner. The appointed hours were at nine in the morning, noon, and three in the afternoon, perfect times for people who wanted to be seen praying because these were busy times of the day. ([Ron Mattoon - Treasures From Proverbs, Volume One](#))

C H Spurgeon's comments...

Prayer also is taken for granted. No man can be in the kingdom of heaven who does not pray.

Those around our Lord knew what he meant when he alluded to the hypocrites; for they had often been the proud sectary standing in public places repeating his prayers, and very likely they had hitherto felt bound to hold such in repute for superior sanctity. By our Lord's words these hypocrites are unmasked, and made to seem what they really are. Our King was wonderfully plain-spoken, and called both things and persons by their right names. These religionists were not seekers of God, but seekers after popularity; men who twisted even devotion into a means for self aggrandizement. They chose places and times which would render their saying of prayers conspicuous. The synagogues and the corners of the streets suited them admirably; for their aim was "that they may be seen of men." They were seen. They had what they sought for. This was their reward, and the whole of it.

Lord, let me never be so profane as to pray to thee with the intent of getting praise for myself. [Commentary](#))

Pray (4336) (**proseuchomai** from **prós** = toward, facing, emphasizing direct approach in seeking God's face + **eúchomai** = wish, pray, a technical term for invoking a deity and so covers every aspect of such invocation: to request, entreat, vow, consecrate etc) (Click for in depth study of the related noun **proseuche**) means literally to prayer to or before. The prefix "**pros**" conveys the sense of being immediately before God and hence would also include the ideas of adoration, devotion, and worship.

The basic idea of this verb is to bring something, and in prayer this pertains to bringing prayer requests. In early Greek culture an offering was brought with a prayer that it be accepted. Later the idea was changed slightly, so that the thing brought to God was the prayer. In later Greek, prayers appealed to God for His presence. This word for prayer encompasses all the aspects of prayer: submission, confession, petition, intercession, praise, and thanksgiving.

Proseuchomai - 85x in 80v -

Matt 5:44; 6:5ff, 9; 14:23; 19:13; 24:20; 26:36, 39, 41f, 44; Mark 1:35; 6:46; 11:24f; 12:40; 13:18; 14:32, 35, 38f; Luke 1:10; 3:21; 5:16; 6:12, 28; 9:18, 28f; 11:1f; 18:1, 10f; 20:47; 22:40f, 44, 46; Acts 1:24; 6:6; 8:15; 9:11, 40; 10:9, 30; 11:5; 12:12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Rom 8:26; 1 Cor 11:4f, 13; 14:13ff; Eph 6:18; Phil 1:9; Col 1:3, 9; 4:3; 1 Thess 5:17, 25; 2 Thess 1:11; 3:1; 1 Tim 2:8; Heb 13:18; Jas 5:13f, 17f; Jude 1:20

The root noun **proseuche** is the more general word for prayer and is used only of prayer to God. **Lawrence Richards** writes that **proseuchomai**...

"In classical Greek was the technical term for calling on a deity. The NT transforms the classical stiffness into the warmth of genuine conversation. Such entreaty in the NT is addressed to God or Jesus and typically is both personal and specific." (Richards, L: Expository Dictionary)

Wuest picks up on this meaning translating it

"by prayer whose essence is that of worship and devotion".

In Jesus' day the pious Jews prayed publicly at set times, commonly, in the morning, afternoon, and evening (Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10; Acts 3:1). The Jewish historian Josephus points out that sacrifices, including prayers, were offered "twice a day, in the early morning and at the ninth hour." Jesus makes no mention of appropriate times for His focus is that of an appropriate attitude on any occasion on which one prays

Jesus is warning citizens of the Kingdom of heaven of the danger of emulating the "righteousness" (according to man's standard of what is righteous, not God's standard!) which they had seen in the lives and religious activities of the scribes and Pharisees.

Hypocrite (Click for in depth discussion) is the man or woman who puts on a mask and pretends to be what he or she is not in the

innermost person. Hypocrite describes the insincere person who pretends to be pious or virtuous when he or she really is not. The parallel thought is what others see what's on the outside. We call this **reputation**. God sees what's really present on the inside. We call this **character**. God is interested in our character, not our reputation.

THOUGHT - Who do we seek to please in our various religious activities? Are we "playing the part" like an actor/actress or are we seeking to please only our Father Who art in heaven? Do we pray in order to cause others to think highly of us? Do we pray to somehow impress even ourselves that we are spiritual? Do we pray in order to gain merit with God?

Unger adds that...

the hypocrite is a double person, natural and artificial. The first he keeps to himself, and the other he puts on, as he does his clothes, to make his appearance before men. Hypocrites have been divided into four classes: (1) The worldly hypocrite, who makes a profession of religion and pretends to be religious, merely from worldly considerations (Matt. 23:5). (2) The legal hypocrite, who relinquishes his vicious practices, in order thereby to merit heaven, while at the same time having no real love for God (Ro 10:3). (3) The evangelical hypocrite, whose religion is nothing more than a bare conviction of sin; who rejoices under the idea that Christ died for him, and yet has no desire to live a holy life (Matt. 13:20). (4) The enthusiastic hypocrite, who has an imaginary sight of his sins and of Christ and talks of remarkable impulses and high feelings, etc., while living in the most scandalous practices (2Cor. 11:14). ([Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. The New Unger's Bible dictionary. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Vine writes that a **hypocrite** is

primarily one who answers; then, a stage-actor; it was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice; hence the word became used metaphorically of a dissembler (one who hides by putting on a false pretense, concealing the real facts, their true intentions and genuine feelings), a hypocrite. It is found only in the Synoptists (Matthew - Luke), and always used by the Lord, fifteen times in Matthew; elsewhere, Mark 7:6; Luke 6:42; 11:44 (in some mss.); Luke 12:56; 13:15.

When (not if but when) you give, pray and fast, don't be an play actor hiding behind your mask of religious activity trying to convince people you are someone you devoted to God and pious, when you really are not. By way of application it would be wise to apply this warning by our Lord to all our "religious activities". Be honest and ask yourself "Why am I doing what I am doing at church?"

Ron Mattoon adds an interesting note pointing out that...

Pompous hypocrites would gather at busy street corners at these times to be seen praying. It is interesting to note that the word used here for street is not the same as that in Mt 6:2, **rhume**, which refers to a narrow street. The Greek word used here is **plateia** and refers to a wide, major street, and thus refers to a major street corner where a crowd was most likely to be. The implied fault here is that the hypocrites loved to pray where they would have the largest audience. This is why they gathered at the wide streets.

There was nothing wrong with praying at a major intersection if that was where you happened to be at the time for prayer, but something was very wrong if you planned to be there at prayer time for the specific purpose of praying where the most people could see you. The real evil of those hypocritical worshipers, whether in the synagogues or on the street corners, was the desire to display themselves in order to be seen of men. ([Ron Mattoon - Treasures From Proverbs, Volume One](#))

The Pharisees were like actors in a play, speaking from under a mask. Their mask was that of self-righteousness which men would look at and be deceived thinking that they were something they were not. They were not praying to honor God but themselves! They sought the esteem of men not that of God. Praying in an inner room as Jesus instructs below would have been the last thing these pseudo-pious hypocrites would do. Who would hear their lengthy and embellished oratory?

Phil Newton writes...

You can picture the scene. The rabbi calls upon Brother So-and-so to pray in the synagogue, and then he begins the most polished, flowery prayer that the congregation had ever heard. Once he sat down the members of the congregation were awed by his knowledge and use of language and obvious spirituality! He sat with a smug grin, knowing that he had impressed the whole congregation by what he had said. Jesus declared that he got what he wanted, the approval of men. But he did not receive what he prayed for in the least.

Charles Spurgeon was alarmed when he heard one of his students begin his prayer, "O Thou that art encinctured with an auriferous zodiac!" The man proved to be an imposter that finally became a playwright and actor, abandoning his wife and the ministry. His desire for the attention of men exposed the sinful motives that dictated his prayer. (Read his full message on [Matthew 6:1-18](#))

[Our Daily Bread](#) explains that...

A hypocrite is a pretender. He is a person who does not act his real self but disguises himself to be another. God hates hypocrisy but loves sinners. In all the records of the Gospels, Jesus spoke to sinners with sympathy, kindness, and forgiveness. But to the hypocritical religious leaders, He used the strongest possible language of condemnation. He called them blind guides, whitewashed tombs, and vipers (Matthew 23:24,27,33).

The biggest hypocrite of all, however, is the man or woman who refuses to come to Christ because there are so many hypocrites in the church. Such a person is being inconsistent. Business is full of hypocrites, but that does not stop him from doing business. Society is full of them, but he does not decide to become a hermit. Hell is full of hypocrites, so if a person doesn't like hypocrites he had better make sure he's not going there.

If your excuse for not bowing before Christ and accepting Him as your Savior and Lord is that you don't like hypocrites, will you let me show you the biggest hypocrite of all? I say this in love, dear friend. Look in the mirror. Stop pretending. If you can't think of a better excuse, you have no excuse! —M R De Haan ([Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

One day before God's judgment bar
All sham and pretense will take flight,
We'll all be known for who we are—
There'll be no hiding from His sight. —D. De Haan

There's no bigger hypocrite than the person who pretends he doesn't need Jesus.

R A. Torrey explains that...

We should never utter one syllable of prayer, either in public or in private, until we are definitely conscious that we have come into the presence of God and are actually praying to Him... I can remember when that thought transformed my prayer life. I was brought up to pray. I was taught to pray so early in life that I have not the slightest recollection of who taught me to pray... Nevertheless, prayer was largely a mere **matter of form**. There was little real thought of God, and no real approach to God. And even after I was converted, yes, even after I had entered the ministry, prayer was largely a **matter of form**. But the day came when I realized what real prayer meant, realized that **prayer was having an audience with God, actually coming into the presence of God and asking and getting things from Him**. And the realization of that fact transformed my prayer life. Before that, prayer had been a mere **duty**, and sometimes a very **irksome duty**, but from that time on prayer has been not merely a duty but a **privilege, one of the most highly esteemed privileges of life**. Before that, the thought that I had was, "How much time must I spend in prayer?" The thought that now possesses me is, "How much time may I spend in prayer without neglecting the other privileges and duties of life?" ([Torrey, R A: The Power of Prayer](#)) (Bolding added)

TRULY I SAY TO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD IN FULL: amen lego (1SPAI) humin apechousin (3SPPAI) ton misthon auton

- **Truly** - Mt 6:2; 23:14; Job 27:8, 9, 10; Isaiah 1:15; Luke 18:10,11; 20:47
- [Matthew 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

As someone has well said this passage explains how a hypocrite can be broke (in the eternal sense) when they are paid in full (in this present life)!

Truly (Amen) - The following conclusion is trustworthy; valid and binding. Only the Lord Jesus uses **amen** at beginning of a sentence (in this case the beginning of the concluding clause) which guarantees the truth of what He is saying and also affirms His authority

Ironside comments that Jesus first warns us

against mere formality in prayer and pretended piety, rather than concern for the glory of God. He demands reality. There were those of the Pharisees who looked on prayer as having a certain degree of merit in itself (even as Mohammedans, Romanists, and others do now). Formal prayers were recited in public places, and the longer the prayer the more intense was the impression made on those who stood by. They were inclined to judge a man's piety by the length of his devotions. Jesus warned His disciples against such an abuse of prayer. He did not forbid their praying in public places. In 1 Timothy 2:8 ("I want men in every place to pray... ") this is definitely implied. But He did inveigh against praying to be seen of men, or engaging in any other religious exercise for ostentation.

Dwight Pentecost applies Jesus' warning to our modern church noting that...

While man's faith in God will manifest itself in a man's relationship to men, a man's faith in God is a matter between himself and God alone. When one's religion is used to impress men, God disavows it as providing any basis for His approval. Multitudes assemble themselves in churches, not out of a heart of love and devotion to God, nor because they recognize a sense of obligation to come together with God's people around His Word to fellowship with the Father. They gather together to maintain an image, a reputation before men. They go through empty forms of worship, devoid of any reality. They are there to impress men, and the Lord said they will get what they want. They will have their reward, but not from God. ([Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in Holiness from the Sermon on the Mount. Kregel Publications](#))

Reward ([3408](#)) (**misthos** [word study]) literally refers to pay which is due for labor performed or dues paid for work.

Misthos is used in two general senses in the NT, either to refer to wages or to reward, recognition or recompense. In this latter figurative usage, **misthos** refers to rewards which God bestows for the moral quality of an action, such rewards most often to be bestowed in eternity future.

Some uses as in this present passage in 2Peter refer to "wages" obtained through iniquity, similar to the "wages" paid to Judas for his betrayal of Christ (see Acts 1:18).

Although Paul does not use **misthos** in the following passage, the principle of spiritual reaping clearly is related to rewards both here and in the future...

For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal 6:8)

Jesus associates **rewards** with giving, fasting and praying teaching that are dependent upon one's motive (Mt 6:2, 5, 16-see notes Matthew 6:1 6:2; 6:5; 6:16). Note especially future rewards for having suffered for the Name of Christ in this life (Mt 5:12note; Lk 6:23).

To both the Greek and Hebrew mind the idea of reward had to do with the wholeness of an action or stated another way with the completion of a deed. The reward was part of the action or deed. Therefore, just as work completed would result in the payment of wages, so it was assumed that an action naturally carried certain results, either reward or punishment. The concept of a reward also involved a return commensurate with the action or deed performed.

The concept of rewards for good behavior and punishment for bad behavior is common in the Old Testament and in Jewish literature. Deuteronomy 28 lists a series of rewards and punishments (blessing and cursing) that are distributed according to Israel's faithfulness to the covenant (cf Isa. 65:6, 7; 66:6).

PRAYING IN PUBLIC - When Jesus told people to pray in secret, He didn't mean that praying in public is wrong. What He condemned are insincere prayers made only to impress people. We may all sense that subtle temptation at times.

A group of delegates from a Christian conference stopped at a busy restaurant for lunch and were seated at several different tables around the room. Just before eating, one member announced in a loud voice, "Let's pray!" Chairs shifted and heads turned. Then followed a long-winded "blessing" that did more to cool the food than warm hearts. Finally, amid snickers and grumbling, came the welcome "Amen."

Contrast that story with another scene. A history teacher at a large state university was having lunch with his family in the school cafeteria. As they began their meal, their little 3-year- old cried out, "O Daddy, we forgot to pray!" "Well, honey" said the man "would you pray for us?" "Dear Jesus," she began, "thank You for our good food and all these nice people. Amen." From

nearby tables came "amens" from professors and students alike who were touched by that child's simple and sincere prayer.

May all our public praying be like that. - D J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Though lines to heaven should ever be
Attuned to praying ceaselessly,
Let's take that extra special care
To guard our words in public prayer.--HGB

**If we pray to catch the ear of man,
we can't expect to reach the ear of God.**

Matthew 6:6 "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. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [su de hotan proseuche](#), (2SPMS) [eiselthe \(2SAAM\)](#) eis to tameion sou kai kleisas (AAPMSN) ten thuran sou [proseuchai \(2SAAM\)](#) to patri sou to en to krupto: kai o pater sou o blepon (PAPMSN) en to krupto [apodosei \(3SFAL\)](#) soi.

Amplified: But when you pray, go into your [most] private room, and, closing the door, pray to your Father, Who is in secret; and your Father, Who sees in secret, will reward you in the open. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

NLT: But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father secretly. Then your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Philips: But when you pray, go into your own room, shut your door and pray to your Father privately. Your Father who sees all private things will reward you. ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

Wuest: But, as for you, whenever you are praying, enter into your secret and well-guarded place, and having closed your door, pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Young's Literal: 'But thou, when thou mayest pray, go into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who is seeing in secret, shall reward thee manifestly.

BUT YOU, WHEN YOU PRAY, GO INTO YOUR INNER ROOM, CLOSE YOUR DOOR AND PRAY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET: [su de hotan proseuche](#), (2SPMS) [eiselthe \(2SAAM\)](#) eis to tameion sou kai kleisas (AAPMSN) ten thuran sou [proseuchai \(2SAAM\)](#) to patri sou to en to krupto

- **Enter** - Mt 14:23; 26:36, 37, 38, 39; Genesis 32:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29; 2 Ki 4:33; Isaiah 26:20; John 1:48; Acts 9:40; 10:9,30
- **Pray** - Ps 34:15; Isaiah 65:24; John 20:17; Romans 8:5; Eph 3:14
- [Matthew 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

But (de) introduces the diametrically opposite approach we are to have to prayer.

When - Not "if" you pray but "when"! Let us pray.

You is plural in Mt 6:5 and 6:7 but here it is singular emphasizing private, personal one on one communion as between a child who goes into his father's study and has his ear. The basis of all prayer is that of the Fatherhood of God and our relationship to Him as His children. Don't forget this foundational principle of prayer.

Inner room (5009) (tameion) describes any place of privacy. The idea is to go into the inner room of a house, normally without any windows opening outside, so that you have the most private location possible. This is a direct contrast with the hypocrites who sought out the most prominent public place to pray. The focus is on the intimacy of communion with God in one's heart, which is at the center of all prayer, whether it happens to be given publicly or privately. Secret prayer alone with God is one of the best barometers of one's devotion to Christ because in the secret place for this is no one (or only One!) present to be impressed by your words.

Spurgeon told the following illustration regarding enclosing one's self in the inner room...

A little boy, who was accustomed to spend some time every day in prayer, went up into a hayloft, and when he climbed into the hayloft, he always pulled the ladder up after him. Someone asked him why he did so. He answered, "As there is no door, I pull up the ladder." Oh, that we could always in some way cut the connection between our soul and the intruding things which lurk below! There is a story told of some person, I never knew who it was, who desired to see me on a Saturday night, when I had shut myself up to make ready for the Sabbath. He was very great and important, and so the maid came to say that someone desired to see me. I bade her say that it was my rule to see no one at that time. Then he was more important and impressive still, and said, "Tell Mr. Spurgeon that a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see him immediately." The frightened servant brought the message; but the sender gained little by it, for my answer was, "Tell him I am busy with his Master, and cannot see servants now." (Barbed Arrows from the Quiver of C. H. Spurgeon)

Although prayer is private communication between God and His child, Jesus is **not** forbidding **public prayer** (which even carried out - Mt 14:19, 15:36), but the **motive** behind such prayer. Public praying that is an overflow of much prayer in secret.. The early church met together for collective prayer (Acts 2:42; 12:12; 13:3; 14:23; 20:36). Jesus' main point was not so much where believers pray, but why we pray. Is it for men or for God? Public versus private prayer however does potentially provide a measure or test of one's motives, for the person who prays more in public than in private reveals that he or she is less interested in God's approval than in human praise.

C H Spurgeon's comments...

Be alone; enter into a little room into which no other may intrude; keep out every interloper by shutting the door; and there, and then, with all thy heart pour out thy supplication. "Pray to thy Father ": prayer is mainly to be addressed to God the Father; and always to God as our :Father. Pray to thy Father who is there present, to thy Father who sees thee, and specially takes note of that which is evidently meant for him only, seeing it is done "in secret ", where no eye can see but his own. If it be indeed to God that we pray, there can be no need for anyone else to be present; for it would hinder rather than help devotion to have a third person for witness of the heart's private intercourse with the Lord.

As the very soul of prayer lies in communion with God, we shall pray best when all our attention is confined to him; and we shall best reach our end of being accepted by him when we have no regard to the opinion of anyone else. Secret prayer is truly heard and openly answered in the Lord's own way and time. Our King reigns "in secret ": there he sets up his court, and there will he welcome our approaches. We are not where God sees when we court publicity, and pray to obtain credit for our devotion. ([Commentary](#))

AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES WHAT IS DONE IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU: kai o pater sou o blepon (PAPMSN) en to krupto apodosei (3SFAI) soi.

- [Matthew 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

OUR FATHER SEES ALL

Proverbs 15:3 says "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good."

He not only sees but He hears every whisper, every faint cry, every praise, every cry, every thing!

Sees ([present tense](#) - continually)([991](#)) ([blepo](#)) means perceive with your eyes. **Blepo** can denote simple voluntary observation and so mean to look at, behold. Many NT uses convey the sense of becoming aware of or taking notice of something, of perceiving or discerning or understanding. The **present tense** is used reflecting God's omniscience -- He is the All Seeing God.

Secret ([2927](#)) ([kruptos](#) from **krúpto** = keep secret. Eng., "crypt," "cryptic," etc) means hidden, concealed, and thus secret or in secret where it cannot be seen by others.

Jesus reveals that one of the real secrets of prayer is secret prayer! And so as **Spurgeon** exhorts us...

Get into some quiet nook — some secret place, no matter where. Shut thy door, so that nobody can hear you — not wishing anybody to know even that you are at prayer.

Don't pass over this awesome truth too fast, but ponder what Jesus has just said. The OT reminds us of this axiomatic truth that...

(in context Hanani the seer speaking for God to Asa king of Judah) **the eyes of the LORD** (Jehovah) move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. (**2Chronicles 16:9**) (The Septuagint/LXX renders it "the eyes of the Lord look upon [epiblepo = epi = upon + blepo = look - present tense = continually] all the earth, to strengthen every heart that is perfect toward him")

Behold, **the eye of the LORD** (Jehovah) is on those who fear (reverential awe) Him, on those who hope (not "hope it might chance to be" but tarrying with confident expectation and trust) for His lovingkindness, (Ps 33:8)

Spurgeon comments: Behold. For this is a greater wonder than hosts and horses, a surer confidence than chariots or shields.

The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him. That eye of peculiar care is their glory and defence. None can take them at unawares, for the celestial watcher foresees the designs of their enemies, and provides against them. They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them.

Upon them that hope in His mercy. This one would think to be a small evidence of grace, and yet it is a valid one. Humble hope shall have its share as well as courageous faith. Say, my soul, is not this an encouragement to thee? Dost thou not hope in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus? Then the Father's eye is as much upon thee as upon the elder born of the family. These gentle words, like soft bread, are meant for babes in grace, who need infant's food.

The eyes of the LORD (Jehovah) are toward the **righteous** (Who are the righteous? Ge 15:6 and Hab 2:4 teach it is those who have faith - not those who are righteous by virtue of OT sacrifices or any other supposedly meritorious work = these are true believers) , and His ears are open to their cry. (Psalm 34:15)

Spurgeon comments: The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous. He observes them with approval and tender consideration; they are so dear to Him that He cannot take his eyes off them; He watches each one of them as carefully and intently as if there were only that one creature in the universe.

His ears are open unto their cry. His eyes and ears are thus both turned by the Lord towards His saints; His whole mind is occupied about them: if slighted by all others they are not neglected by Him. Their cry He hears at once, even as a mother is sure to hear her sick babe; the cry may be broken, plaintive, unhappy, feeble, unbelieving, yet the Father's quick ear catches each note of lament or appeal, and He is not slow to answer His children's voice.

Thou dost **scrutinize** (winnow, discern, comprehend, search out, be familiar with, have knowledge of an object which is relatively intimate) my path and my lying down, And art intimately acquainted with all my ways. (Ps 139:3)

Spurgeon comments: Thou compasses my path and my lying down. My path and my pallet, my running and my resting, are alike within the circle of thine observation. Thou dost surround me even as the air continually surrounds all creatures that live. I am shut up within the wall of thy being; I am encircled within the bounds of Thy knowledge. **Waking or sleeping I am still observed of Thee.** I may leave Thy path, but you never leave mine. I may sleep and forget Thee, but thou dost never slumber, nor fall into oblivion concerning Thy creature. The original signifies not only surrounding, but winnowing and sifting. The Lord judges our active life and our quiet life; He discriminates our action and our repose, and marks that in them which is good and also that which is evil. There is chaff in all our wheat, and the Lord divides them with unerring precision.

And art acquainted with all my ways. Thou art familiar with all I do; nothing is concealed from Thee, nor surprising to Thee, nor misunderstood by Thee. Our paths may be habitual or accidental, open or secret (cp "**sees in secret**"), but with them all the Most Holy One is well acquainted. This should fill us with **awe**... so that we sin not; with **courage**... so that we fear not; with **delight**... so that we mourn not.

M R De Haan writes: The guillemot is a small Arctic seabird that lives on the rocky cliffs of northern coastal regions. These birds flock together by the thousands in comparatively small areas. Because of the crowded conditions, hundreds of females lay their pear-shaped eggs side by side in a long row on a narrow ledge. Since the eggs all look alike, it's incredible that a mother bird can identify those that belong to her. Yet studies show that she knows her own eggs so well even when one is moved, she finds it and returns it to its original location. She is never confused.

The Bible tells us that the heavenly Father intimately understands each of His children. He knows their every thought and emotion, and is "acquainted with all [their] ways" (Ps. 139:3). From morning till night He gives personal attention to all their circumstances. Overwhelmed by this glorious reality, the psalmist exclaimed in amazement,

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it" ([Psalm 130:6 Spurgeon note](#)).

Not only does God's knowledge of us evoke our praise and worship, but it also brings great comfort to our hearts. Isn't it wonderful to be so well-loved and well-known by our Lord!

He knows each winding path we take
And every sorrow, pain, and ache;
His children He will not forsake--
He knows and loves His own.
--Bosch

Will reward you - The KJV/NKJV says "**openly**". This is the Greek phrase "*en to phanero* (phaneros = that which is clearly seen or well-known/recognized, clear, plain, evident)" which is not present in the more modern Greek manuscripts. I personally think that God will reward you "publicly" in the future (e.g., At the bema seat or in the Millennial Kingdom and/or in the new heaven and new earth). Many an unknown saint of God will be revealed as a person of prevailing, powerful, private prayer.

Will reward (591) (**apodidomi** from **apó** = from + **dídomi** = give) means to pay or give back, implying a debt. This word carries the idea of obligation and responsibility for something that is not optional. The prefixed preposition **apo** (off, away from) makes the verb mean "to give off" from one's self. To give back or pay back or to do something necessary in fulfillment of an obligation or expectation. The idea is that God will fulfill His promise to meet His "obligation".

Matthew's uses of **apodidomi** -

Matt. 5:26; Matt. 5:33; Matt. 6:4; Matt. 6:6; Matt. 6:18; Matt. 12:36; Matt. 16:27; Matt. 18:25; Matt. 18:26; Matt. 18:28; Matt. 18:29; Matt. 18:30; Matt. 18:34; Matt. 20:8; Matt. 21:41; Matt. 22:21; Matt. 27:58;

Tony Evans asks a question believers often wrestle with "Did you know it's fine with God if part of your motivation for serving Him is to get a reward? Some Christians say, "You should serve Christ because you love Him, not to get a reward." That's only half right. We serve Christ because we love Him, but that's not all the Bible says. Jesus told us to lay up treasures in heaven (see). The book of Hebrews says God "is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (see note Hebrews 11:6). (Evans, A. T. The Best is Yet to Come : Bible Prophecies Through the Ages. Page 153. Chicago: Moody Press)

J C Ryle writes that "In praying, the principal object to be sought is to be alone with God. "When you pray, go into your room". We should endeavor to find some place where no mortal eye sees us, and where we can pour out our hearts with the feeling that no one is looking at us but God. This is a rule which many find very difficult to follow; the poor man and the servant often find it almost impossible to be really alone; but it is a rule which we must make great efforts to obey. Necessity, in such cases, is often the mother of invention. When people really want to find some place where they can be in secret with their God, they will generally find a way. In all our duties, whether giving or praying, the great thing to be kept in mind is that we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God. Your Father ... sees what is done in secret". Everything like formality, affectation, or mere bodily service, is abominable and worthless in God's sight. He takes no account of the quantity of money we give, or the quantity of words we use: **the one thing at which His all-seeing eye looks is the nature of our motives and the state of our hearts** May we all remember these things. Here lies a rock on which many are continually getting spiritually shipwrecked. They flatter themselves that all must be right with their souls if they only perform a certain amount of "religious duties." They forget that God does not regard the quantity, but the **quality** of our service. His favor is not to be bought, as many seem to suppose, by the formal repetition of a number of words, or by the self-righteous payment of a sum of money to a charity. **Where are our hearts?** Are we doing everything, whether we give or pray, "as if you were serving the Lord, not men" (Ephesians 6:7)? Do we realize the eye of God? Do we simply and solely desire to please him who "sees what is done in secret," and by whom "deeds are weighed" (1 Samuel 2:3)? Are we sincere? These are the sort of questions we should often ask our souls. (Bolding added)

Related Resources:

- [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Prayer Quotes](#)
- [Colossians 1:9 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 4:12 Commentary](#)

- [Devotional on Prayer](#)
 - [Guide to Praying for Missionaries](#)
 - [Pithy Prayer Phrases](#)
 - [Prayer - Greek Words for Prayer](#)
 - [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
 - [Prayer Hymns and Poems](#)
 - [Prayer Quotes](#)
 - [Prayer Quotes, Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
 - [Praying for People from Every Tribe, Tongue, People and Nation](#)
 - [Praying His Word](#)
 - [Praying in the Spirit](#)
 - [Spurgeon's Gems on Prayer](#)
-

ALONE WITH GOD

by Johnson Oatman, Jr

When storms of life are round me beating,
 When rough the path that I have trod,
 Within my closet door retreating,
 I love to be alone with God.

Refrain

***Alone with God, the world forbidden,
 Alone with God, O blest retreat!
 Alone with God, and in Him hidden,
 To hold with Him communion sweet.***

What tho' the clouds have gathered o'er me?
 What tho' I've passed beneath the rod?
 God's perfect will there lies before me,
 When I am thus alone with God.

Refrain

'Tis there I find new strength for duty,
 As o'er the sands of time I plod;
 I see the King in all His beauty,
 While resting there alone with God.

Refrain

And when I see the moment nearing
 When I shall sleep beneath the sod,
 When time with me is disappearing,
 I want to be alone with God.

Refrain

Our Daily Bread explains that... When Jesus told people to pray in secret, He didn't mean that praying in public is wrong. What He condemned are insincere prayers made only to impress people. We may all sense that subtle temptation at times.

A group of delegates from a Christian conference stopped at a busy restaurant for lunch and were seated at several different tables around the room. Just before eating, one member announced in a loud voice, "Let's pray!" Chairs shifted and heads turned. Then followed a long-winded "blessing" that did more to cool the food than warm hearts. Finally, amid snickers and grumbling, came the welcome "Amen."

Contrast that story with another scene. A history teacher at a large state university was having lunch with his family in the school cafeteria. As they began their meal, their little 3-year-old cried out, "O Daddy, we forgot to pray!" "Well, honey," said the man, "would you pray for us?" "Dear Jesus," she began, "thank You for our good food and all these nice people. Amen." From nearby tables came "amens" from professors and students alike who were touched by that child's simple and sincere prayer.

May all our public praying be like that. --D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

*Though lines to heaven should ever be
Attuned to praying ceaselessly,
Let's take that extra special care
To guard our words in public prayer.
--HGB*

If we pray to catch the ear of man, we can't expect to reach the ear of God.

How to Make a Call in the Dark - Years ago, a man who was visiting the United States wanted to make a telephone call. He entered a phone booth but found it to be different from those in his own country. It was beginning to get dark, so he had difficulty finding the number in the directory. He saw a light in the ceiling but didn't know how to turn it on.

As the man tried again to find the number, a passerby noticed his plight and said, "Sir, if you want to turn the light on, you have to shut the door." To the visitor's amazement, when he closed the door, the booth was filled with light. He soon located the number and completed the call.

In a similar way, when we draw aside to a quiet place to pray (Matthew 6:6), we must "shut the door" to block out our busy world. As we open our hearts to the Father, we receive the light of His wisdom. Our Lord often went to be alone with His heavenly Father for strength and guidance. Sometimes it was after a busy day of preaching and healing (Luke 5:12-16). At other times, it was before making a major decision (Luke 6:12-13).

We can have the confidence that "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). But we must remember that to "turn the light on," we must first "shut the door" by getting alone with God. —R W De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

*Oh, help me, Lord, to take the time
To set all else aside,
That in the secret place of prayer
I may with You abide. —Anon.*

One secret of effective prayer is prayer in secret.

Spurgeon comments that...

Public prayer is no evidence of piety. It is practiced by an abundance of hypocrites. But private prayer is a thing for which the hypocrite has no heart.

'MID ALL THE TRAFFIC OF THE WAYS

by William A Dunkerley

'Mid all the traffic of the ways,
Turmoils without, within,
Make in my heart a quiet place,
And come and dwell therein.

A little shrine of quietness,
All sacred to Thyself,
Where Thou shalt all my soul possess,
And I may find myself.

A little shelter from life's stress,
Where I may lay me prone,
And bare my soul in loneliness,
And know as I am known.

A little place of mystic grace,
Of self and sin swept bare,

Where I may look upon Thy face,
And talk with Thee in prayer.

God desires to answer the prayers of His children that are according to His will. John writes...

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1John 5:14-15)

According to these verses, if you pray anything that is according to His will, you can know that He will hear and answer your prayer.

Kent Hughes offers the following thoughts on how each of us can assess our prayer life...

Our responsibility is not to monitor our brother's and sister's prayer life but our own. Perhaps a few questions would help us.

Do I pray frequently or more fervently when I am alone with God than when I am in public?

Is my public praying an overflow of my private prayer?

What do I think of when I am praying in public?

Am I looking for "just the right" phrase?

Am I thinking of the worshipers more than of God?

Am I a spectator to my own performance?

Is it possible that the reason more of my prayers are not answered is because I am more concerned about bringing my prayer to men than to God? (Hughes, R. K. [Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom. Crossway Books](#))

F B Meyer on THE SECRET PLACE OF PRAYER...

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to Thy Father which is in secret."--Matt. 6:6.

IN PRAYER there must be deliberateness, the secret place, the inner chamber, the fixed time, the shut door against distraction and intruders. In that secret place the Father is waiting for us. He is as certainly there as He is in Heaven, Be reverent, as Moses when he took the shoes from off his feet! Be trustful, because you are having an audience with One who is infinite sympathy and love! Be comforted, because there is no problem He cannot solve, no knot He cannot untie!

God knows even better than we do what we need and should ask for. He has gone over every item of our life, every trial, every temptation--the unknown and unexpected, the glints of sunshine on the path, and the clouds of weeping. He listens to our forecast and requests, and rejoices when they accord with His infinite foreknowledge; or He may give us something better and more appropriate to our case.

"He will recompense thee." If He does not remove the cup, He will send an angel to strengthen; if the thorn remains unremoved, He will give more grace. You may be sure that, in some way or other, your Heavenly Father is going to meet your particular need. It is as certain as though you heard Him say: "Go your way, your prayer is heard: I will undertake, trust Me, leave all in My hand!" When you have once definitely put a matter into God's hands, leave it there. Do not repeat the committal, for that suggests that you have never made it. Your attitude thenceforward is to look into God's face, not to ask Him to remember, but to say: "Father, Thou knowest, understandest, carest! I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that Thou wilt not fail."

There is a prayer which is without ceasing; but surely that is not the reiterated request for the same thing, but the blessed interchange of happy fellowship. Use not vain repetitions, as do the heathen, who think that they will be heard for much speaking, but count Him faithful that promised! This reckoning of faith is probably the loftiest attribute of prayer, for faith is the quiet assurance of things not yet seen!

PRAYER - Lift us into light and love and purity and blessedness, and give us at last our portion with those who have trusted in Thee, and sought in small things as in great, in things tempered and things eternal, to do Thy Holy Will. AMEN.

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
The joys I feel, the bliss I share,
Of those whose anxious spirits burn
With strong desires for thy return!
With such I hasten to the place
Where God my Savior shows His face,
And gladly take my station there,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
Thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose truth and faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His Word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
May I thy consolation share,
Till, from Mount Pisgah's lofty height,
I view my home and take my flight:
This robe of flesh I'll drop and rise
To seize the everlasting prize;
And shout, while passing through the air,
"Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!"

R. W. De Haan writes... In a letter to friends, hymn writer Wendell P. Loveless told about a visitor to the United States who wanted to make a telephone call. He entered a phone booth, but found it to be different from those in his own country. It was beginning to get dark, so he had difficulty finding the number in the directory. He noticed a light on the ceiling, but he didn't know how to turn it on. As he tried again to find the number in the fading twilight, a passerby noted his plight and said, "If you want to turn the light on, you have to shut the door." To the visitor's amazement and satisfaction, when he closed the door, the booth was filled with light. He soon located the number and completed the call.

When we draw aside in a quiet place to pray, we must block out our busy world and open our hearts to the Father. He then will illuminate our darkened world of disappointments and trials. We will enter into communion with God, sense His presence, and be assured of His provision for us. Our Lord often went to be alone with the heavenly Father. Sometimes it was after a busy day of preaching and healing, as in Luke 5. At other times, it was before making a major decision (Luke 6:12).

We too can have the confidence that "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). But we must remember that to "turn on the light," we must first "shut the door" by getting alone with God. —R. W. De Haan. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

One of the great secrets of prayer is prayer in secret.

*Sweet secret prayer, comfort divine,
There do I feel I truly am Thine;
Heav'n's windows open, Jesus is near,*

Near to my soul, and the Father will hear.

--C H Gabriel

Alone With God - A committee was assigned to tour a factory to judge its efficiency. These people were shown the various departments where many large machines were making a great deal of noise. Then they were led to a much smaller and quieter room containing nothing but control panels.

One of them said, "This isn't very important; nothing's happening here."

The guide smiled, "Oh, but you misunderstand, sir. This is the most important room of all. This is where the power is distributed to the entire factory."

There's a lesson in that for us: In the Christian life, the place of prayer is the "power room." We need a quiet place where we can be alone with God. In such a place we can speak to Him and reverently allow Him to speak to us as we meditate on His Word.

In Matthew 6:6, Jesus taught the value of intimate fellowship with heaven, which can be attained only in the sacred solitude of our prayer closet. He did not discourage public prayer, but He did warn against the evil of seeking attention by parading our piety before others.

How long has it been since you've shut the door on the distractions of life and poured out your heart before the Father's throne? -- Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

*The world will alarm you,
But Jesus will calm you;
Spend much time in the secret place,
He'll meet you there. --Houghton*

Kneeling keeps you in good standing with God.

Read (or listen to) Fanny Crosby's great hymn, pondering especially the "timing" of one's prayers and let this encourage you today, this week, this year to pray without ceasing...

THE SIMPLE, EARNEST PRAYER

by Fanny Crosby

In the twilight of the morning,
When the shadows steal away,
And we wake from balmy slumber
To behold another day,
Let us go alone in secret,
And unburden all our care
At the feet of our Redeemer,
In the simple, earnest prayer.

Refrain

***Let Thy presence, blessèd Savior,
Our protection ever be;
Give us strength for every trial,
Keep, oh, keep us close to Thee.***

In the noontide, calm and peaceful,
When we pause awhile to rest,
Ere the sun in all its glory
Is declining towards the west;
In the midst of our temptation,
When the cross is hard to bear,
If we cannot go in secret,
God will hear the silent prayer.

Refrain

When the toils of day are over,
And we seek the hallowed place
Where by faith we meet our Savior,
And adore Him for His grace;
How we feel our burden lighter,
Till we loose our weight of care,
While we lift our hearts together
In the simple, earnest prayer.

Refrain