

## Matthew 6a

The rabbis considered alms-giving, prayer and fasting as the three chief acts of Jewish piety. Jesus dealt with each of these aspects of worship in vv. 1-18.

**What did Jesus caution His disciples about (v. 1)?** Jesus warns them against parading their righteousness by performing charitable deeds for the purpose of being seen by others. It is not the deed that He condemns, but the motive, i.e., doing good deeds for the wrong reason. Our primary motive should be love for God. “*Acts of righteousness*” are not primarily a matter between a person and others, but between a person and God.

**What was the consequence of this type of righteous act?** By doing what God approves in order to obtain human approval.....that person will not receive any reward from God.

**What was the specific illustration Jesus gave (v. 2)?** Announcing their giving in a way that all would notice – i.e., with trumpets. They were drawing special attention to themselves to be honored by men. They were hypocrites.

**What was the reward to be expected?** “*They have received their reward in full*” If public recognition is their motivating factor then that is the only reward they will receive. God will not reward hypocrisy.

**What was the specific instruction He gave (v. 3)?** The Lord said that in giving, one should not even let his left hand know what his right hand is doing, i.e., it should be so secret that the giver readily forgets what he gave. In this way he demonstrates true righteousness before God and not before people, so God in turn will reward him. One cannot be rewarded, as the Pharisees expected, by *both* man and God.<sup>1</sup>

Though we cannot be totally ignorant about our own giving, we can deny ourselves any indulgent self-congratulation.

**What was the negative example Jesus gave when it comes to praying (v. 5)?** Rather than making prayer a matter between an individual and God, the hypocrites had turned it into an act to be seen by men—again, to demonstrate their supposed righteousness. The synagogues and streets were public places where people could practice their righteousness with an audience. When we take the least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes the most notice of them.

**What was the reward that could be expected from praying like that?** The “reward” of human approval alone.

**How did Jesus tell the disciples to pray (v. 6)?** The key to answered prayer is to do it in secret, i.e., go into your room and shut the door. The point is not *where* we pray. At issue here is *why* we pray—to be seen by people or to be heard by God.<sup>2</sup> The idea is of a private place where we can impress no one except God. God rewards that type of prayer.

**What further instruction did He give (v. 7)?** Prayer should not consist of vain repetitions, i.e., stock sentences or empty phrases. Unsaved people pray like that, but God is not impressed by the mere multiplication of many words. He wants to hear the sincere expressions of our heart.<sup>3</sup>

**Why was there no need to be like them (v. 8)?** Our Father knows the things we have need of, even before we ask Him. There is no need for incessant babbling like the pagans.

In vv. 9–13 we have what is generally called “The Lord’s Prayer.” It was given to His disciples as a model after which they could pattern their prayers. **What is the significance/meaning of each phrase?**

1. **Our Father in heaven (v. 9).** Prayer should be addressed to God the Father in acknowledgment of His sovereignty over the universe.

2. **Hallowed be Your name.** We should begin our prayers with worship, recognizing His holiness and ascribing praise and honor to Him who is so worthy of it.
3. **Your kingdom come (v. 10).** After worship, we should pray for the advancement of God's cause, putting His interests first. Specifically, we should pray for the day when our Savior-God, the Lord Jesus Christ, will set up His kingdom on earth and reign in righteousness.
4. **Your will be done.** In this petition we acknowledge that God knows what is best and that we surrender our will to His. It also expresses a longing to see His will acknowledged throughout the world.
5. **On earth as it is in heaven.** This phrase modifies all three preceding petitions. The worship of God, the sovereign rule by God, and the performance of His will are all a reality of heaven. The prayer is that these conditions might exist on earth as they do in heaven.
6. **Give us today day our daily bread (v. 11).** After putting God's interests first, we are permitted to present our own needs. This petition acknowledges our dependence on God for daily food, both spiritual and physical.
7. **Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (v. 12).** This refers to the "parental" forgiveness that is necessary if fellowship with our Father is to be maintained. If believers are unwilling to forgive those who wrong them, how can they expect to be in fellowship with their Father who has freely forgiven them for their wrongdoings?
8. **And lead us not into temptation (v. 13).** This petition expresses a healthy distrust of one's own ability to resist temptations or to stand up under trial. It acknowledges complete dependence on the Lord for preservation.
9. **But deliver us from the evil one.** This is the prayer of all who desperately desire to be kept from sin by the power of God. It is the heart's cry for daily salvation from the power of sin and Satan in one's life.
10. **For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.** The last sentence of the prayer is omitted in the Roman Catholic and most modern Protestant Bibles since it is lacking in many ancient manuscripts. However, such a doxology is the perfect ending to the prayer and is in the majority of manuscripts. It should, as John Calvin writes, "not only warm our hearts to press toward the glory of God ... but also to tell us that all our prayers ... have no other foundation than God alone."<sup>4</sup>

**What is the point Jesus is making by including vv. 14-15?** It is not part of the prayer, but added to emphasize that the parental forgiveness mentioned in v. 12 is conditional.<sup>5</sup>

Though God's forgiveness of sin is not based on one's forgiving others, a Christian's forgiveness *is* based on realizing he has been forgiven (cf. [Ephesians 4:32](#)). One cannot walk in fellowship with God if he refuses to forgive others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 32.

<sup>2</sup> William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1224.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 32.