

## Unanswered Prayer: Pretentiousness

We are often taught how to pray and perhaps what to pray for; but, rarely do we learn what prevents our prayers from being heard and answered. Jesus, assuming that His disciples will pray, teaches what not to do when praying.

“And when you pray, you shall 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 men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. (Matt 6:5-7, NKJV)

1. Is Jesus making a comment about the location or posture of prayer? What do you learn from your observations?

2. What is Jesus forbidding when praying “as the heathen do?”

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### Teacher Notes

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1. Is Jesus making a comment about the location or posture of prayer? What do you learn from your observations?

Ask the student questions that test his observations: what is Jesus saying, “for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets?”

Neither the location nor posture of prayer is being forbidden by Jesus. It is the motive of the praying person. What does the praying person desire?

Ask the student: what is the hypocrisy? What is the contrast between public verses private emphasizing? Are you suppose to only pray in your secret place? Ask questions to help the student figure out what Jesus is saying.

The person praying in public so that “they may be seen by men,” is more desirous of man’s approval than of God’s. A person who wants the **reputation** of being righteous more than just being righteous / holy.

Just as Jesus does not forbid praying in public, He does not limit praying only in your secret place. The contrast between public verses private is placing an emphasis on a Believer’s holiness / righteousness which only God determines and approves of. The approval of other human beings is meaningless.

Ask the student: what is the hypocrite’s reward?

The hypocrite’s reward is the approval of men – not God’s.

2. What is Jesus forbidding when praying “as the heathen do?”

Ask the student: does God need to be informed about our condition / state of affairs / needs? Help the student understand the omniscience of God.

Ask the student: what is Jesus saying about repetitive prayer? Can you give an example of a repetitive prayer? Encourage the student to share his examples.

Incantations and repetition are meaningless and makes a prayer less effective.

God knows the needs of His family, and teaches us to ask in confidence and trust.