

## Prayer: How so that God may answer?

Throughout the Old Testament, God is regarded as the utmost high King of the universe. Take a moment to read the titles human beings called God: The Most High God / Exalted One, God Who sees me, God of Eternity / God the Everlasting One, Lord God, The Lord will provide, The Lord God of Israel, The Lord of hosts / The Lord Almighty, The Lord is my shepherd, and Only Sovereign, The King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus Christ tells us about the nature of our relationship to God – He is our heavenly Father. When we pray with a focus on how we feel, we forget the high sovereign omnipotent position of God. When we regard God as the utmost high King of the universe, we pray in order that God our Father may answer.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matt 6:5-6, ESV)

1. When you observe the word “hypocrite,” what do you see in Jesus statement about prayer that explains the hypocrisy?

2. Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of people praying alone (i.e. Jonah [Jonah 2:1!]). What type of attitude do you infer from the phrase, “go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.” Do you perceive a key phrase?

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### Teacher Notes

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Inform the student: Matthew 6, part of the Sermon on the Mount, begins with a warning to Believers of religious hypocrisy:

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 6:1, ESV)

This opening prefaces Jesus' comments to three common acts by Pharisees: giving alms, prayer, and fasting that follows (Matt 6:1-18).

1. When you observe the word “hypocrite,” what do you see in Jesus statement about prayer that explains the hypocrisy?

Ask the student: when Jesus starts to explain how to pray, do you observe a positive or negative statement? Is there a purpose?

Jesus starts with a negative command. A negative statement is instructive, because it sets a contrast to emphasize the positive that follows.

Ask the student: from your observation of the passage, explain the hypocrisy of how Pharisees pray. Why does the Pharisee pray?

The hypocrite prays publicly to be seen by others, and to give people the impression of being righteous. He is more concerned with his reputation rather than his piety.

Here is the hypocrisy: while the hypocrite prays to God, he prays to gain the approval of men; but, he does not gain the approval of God.

2. Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of people praying alone (i.e. Jonah [Jonah 2:1!]). What type of attitude do you infer from the phrase, “go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.” Do you perceive a key phrase?

Ask the student: in your observation of the passage, what is Jesus saying here? Why go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret?

In a contrast to praying publicly with the awareness of others around you, praying in a room privately emphasizes the importance of praying with a focus on God without any consideration of people around you.

The key phrase is “pray to your Father.”

Ask the student: why do you tell someone a secret?

Prayers to God in secret tends to be more authentic and genuine revealing our true thoughts and concerns.

Ask the student: how do you pray?

1. Pray with a focus solely on God whether people are around or not.
2. Pray to God in a genuine manner revealing your true thoughts and concerns.