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2.3 **How we should pray**

- Having challenged *'Where'* people should pray Jesus now moves on to speak about *'How'* we should pray.
- In Jesus' day all prayers would have been said in Hebrew and every good Jew would have repeated a familiar set of short prayers three times a day. What is so radical about the Lord's Prayer is that Jesus said it in Aramaic, the common language of the day.
- Jesus was saying that if we are going to have a meaningful conversation with God our Father in prayer that we need to use words that are familiar to us. We need to speak to God as we would our best friend. We don't need to put on airs and graces with God and we don't need to repeat a familiar set of words. *'When you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.'* (Matthew 6:7)

2.4 **What should we pray about?**

- Having spoken about *'Where'* and *'How'*, Jesus now moves onto *'What our prayers should be about'*.
- He gives us a framework for what to pray about. Firstly our prayers need to focus on God: *'Our Father in heaven.'* (Matthew 6:9) How often do our prayers immediately focus on us and our needs and issues.
- Having focussed on God we are then encouraged to remember that God is Holy: *'Hallowed be your name'* (Matthew 6:9) and to pray for the Kingdom of God to be extended: *'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'* (Matthew 6:10)
- When we have done these three things only then are we encouraged to move onto to pray for our needs: *'Give us today our daily bread.'* (Matthew 6:11)
- Jesus then reminds us to seek forgiveness from his Father for all that we have done wrong and to forgive others as we have been forgiven: *'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors'* (Matthew 6:12)
- Finally our prayers should also be about seeking help from being tempted to do wrong: *'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'* (Matthew 6:13)

2.5 **Conclusion**

- In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus lays the foundation for our prayer life. He encourages us:
 - i) To find a quiet place to pray,
 - ii) To speak to God as we would a close friend
 - iii) To use the Lord's Prayer as a framework for what to pray about.

3. **Questions to consider at home**

- 3.1. What was Jesus condemning about *'the hypocrites'* (v 5) and *'pagans'* (v 7)? Who might be the modern equivalent? Are we ever in danger of being like either of these groups when we pray? How might we seek to rectify any such tendencies?
- 3.2. Jesus puts some store on praying *'in secret'* (v6). Do you do most of your praying like this or, alternatively, with some person or people in private (prayer partners etc) or in 'public prayer'? What sort of balance, if any, should we seek to develop?
- 3.3. If *'your Father knows what you need before you ask Him'* (v 8) what is the point of prayer?
- 3.4. How do you think Jesus intended us to use *'The Lord's Prayer'* – as a 'set prayer' or as a 'pattern' or in any other way?
- 3.5. *'Your kingdom come'* (v 10). What do you think this means?
- 3.6. Why does Jesus put such a strong emphasis on forgiveness?
- 3.7. How would you use this passage to help to teach a young believer how to pray?

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Matthew 6:5-15 - How to pray?

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

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1. **Talk Passage** – Matthew 6:5-15

5'And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9'This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11Give us today our daily bread. 12Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. 14For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

2. **Talk Notes**

2.1 Introduction

- Have you ever wondered how radical you are being every time you have said the Lord's Prayer?
- Jesus shares his teaching on prayer in the middle of what is known as the 'Sermon on the Mount.' (Matthew Chapters 5 to 7)
- Jesus starts this sermon by encouraging the crowd of ordinary folk, like you and me, who had gathered to listen to him on the side of a mountain, to be counter-cultural, to live lives that are radically different from everybody else. (Matthew 5:1-14, The First 11 verses are often referred to as 'The Beatitudes' - A pattern for Holy Living')
- Having done this he then explains in detail how we should go about living those radical lives. (Matthew 5:15- 7:12) Having just spoken about how we should give money to charity (Matthew 6:1-4) he now moves onto prayer. (Matthew 6:5-15)
- We often repeat, by rote, the words of the Lord's Prayer but this was never Jesus' intention. His words on prayer found in the Sermon on the Mount give us a framework for our prayer life. Thus the so called "Lord's Prayer" would probably be better described as the "Disciples Prayer Framework"
- In this sermon Jesus teaches:
 - i) *Where* we should pray
 - ii) *How* we should pray
 - iii) *What* our prayers should be about.

2.2. **Where should we pray?**

- Most people then and probably most people today would associate prayer as an activity that occurs during a service inside a church.
- Jesus teaches: *'When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.'* (Matthew 6:6) Jesus says if we are going to have a meaningful conversation with God our Father then we need to find a quiet place to spend time with Him in prayer. Somewhere familiar to us where we can close the door on the hubbub of what is going on in our busy frantic lives. On our own, in a quiet place, with the door closed, we can then spend quality uninterrupted time with God our Father in prayer.
- It is to be just God and us without other distractions.
- Our prayer life is meant to be private between us and God not for public show: *And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on*

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