

Holy Living and Prayer

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- We can thank Alexander Graham Bell for the telephone that was invented in 1876 or maybe not.
- In 1880, he received a patented for the first wireless telephone.
- It was about hundred times bigger than our phones and it was not very mobile.
- Plus, since there was no fiber optics at that time, the phone did not work every well.
- His landline phones did work well and we enjoy the ability to communicate to people from all over the world.
- When Bell died on August 2, 1922, the phone service was suspended for a full minute while Graham's body was lowered into his grave.
- An army of 60,000 telephone operators across the nation stood at attention and did not connect any new calls as 13 million phones went quiet in honor of Bell.
- The phone is now part of our life just like sleeping and eating is.
- That's how important phones are today.
- If we can't get a hold of someone, we just leave a voice message on someone's answering machine.
- If we lose our phone, a great panic forms and we'll risk our lives to find that phone.
- In 2015, a man lost his phone during a roller coaster ride at Cedar Point amusement park.
- He climbed over a fence into a restricted area to look for his phone.
- He was struck and killed by a passing roller coaster.
- They can be dangerous. In 2022, 12% of fatal crashes in America was because of cell phones being used.
- Yet, they are part of our lives because we feel connected to everything because of them.
- You can talk to almost anybody and do about anything on your phones.
- We know what's going on before its on the TV news.
- Many think they can't communicate without their phone.
- When we look at our phones and see how important they are, how important are they compared to prayer?
- Most people are on their phones more than they do praying each day.
- Yet, prayer is the main ingredient to a healthy spiritual development.
- It's so important that Scripture tells us that if we don't know what to pray for, the Holy Spirit will step in and pray for us (Romans 8: 26-27).

- Prayer is the most reliable resource for communicating with God through His Spirit.
- Just look at what happened the other Friday.
- The 911 Communications went down and many people in PA couldn't get through to 911 unless they used a different phone number.
- We have to understand Holy living and prayer go together like two peas in the same pod.
- In fact, Holy Living helps to improve our prayer life by helping us to pray out of love for Jesus.
- So, today, we'll spend some time looking at prayer.
- So, let's turn to Matthew 6: 5-6, where we read this from Jesus, ⁵ "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 tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. (Biblegateway.com)"
- The Greek term used here for "pray" means "pray".
- It does add a term to the definition which is "earnestly" (Strong's Concordance).
- Earnestly can also mean "sincerely".
- There is a reason Jesus spends some time on prayer.
- In fact, He starts off by telling us that we are not to pray to the Father like the hypocrites do.
- Many Pharisees liked to pray out in the open for all to see and hear and that was the custom of the day.
- Now, this doesn't mean we don't pray out loud.
- It does mean what is our motive when we pray.
- Jesus doesn't want us to be like Pharisees or other people who prayed out loud to get attention.
- The Greek term used for "hypocrite" was used for Greek theater actors.
- Greek actors would wear many masks and costumes to portray people they were not.
- We can also say they were pretending to be someone they were not.
- Jesus is concerned with the motive of prayer.
- Why are we praying?
- In other words, Jesus wants us to pray in a sincere and genuine manner.
- People who pray just to hear themselves talk or to get praise from others will receive that praise as their only reward.
- Jesus tells us that in verse 5.
- They won't get any reward from God because their motive for prayer was wrong.

- There is no love for God in the hypocrite's prayer.
- This is why Holy living is so important.
- Holy living is loving the Lord with everything we have, which is a command from God, and the love flows into our prayer life.
- Holy living helps us to have the right motive when we pray – we pray out of love for Jesus.
- All Jesus wants is a genuine and sincere prayer.
- This means you don't have to make your prayer into some theological text or use all kinds of big words to sound important.
- Jesus wants you to be you.
- If you know only simple words, then use simple words.
- If the Holy Spirit thinks more needs to be added for you, He will do it.
- When we get behind closed doors, we usually act in our true manner.
- We usually act differently when we are in a group of people and sometimes, we feel unfree.
- In a closed room, we sincerely and genuinely pray in faith to an invisible God.
- When we get used to praying in this manner, then it gets easier to pray in public.
- Our public prayers become sincere and genuine as well when we learn to pray this way behind closed doors.
- An authentic prayer arises out of a pure heart that seeks only God's attention.
- God will then reward you.
- Now, Jesus uses two different Greek terms for reward.
- The Greek term for the reward to the religious man or just man that prays for attention means wage and reward.
- The Greek term for the reward Jesus will give to those who pray with the right motive means to give away, render.
- To me, this sounds like the first reward is a human reward only.
- The second reward is a Godly reward. In other words, if you pray with the wrong motive, you will get only human results.
- Praying with a pure heart and out of love for God will result in a God who will give away all that is needed to help you.
- Do you see how important it is to pray with the right motive?
- Let's continue with what Jesus says about prayer and turn to Matthew 6: 7-8 where we read this, ⁷ "When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸ Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! (Biblegateway.com)"

- Now, Jesus tells us that we are not to keep on babbling like the pagans when we pray.
- Have you ever known someone who liked to babble?
- I prefer to talk to those who like to babble on the phone so I can do other things.
- It's hard to do in person.
- They might think you are rude.
- Jesus doesn't want to hear us babbling just like we don't like people to babble to us.
- Plus, what is the motive for babbling in prayer?
- I had a professor one time tell a class that a good prayer is a prayer that lasts about three hours.
- So, I went home after class and later that night, I tried it.
- I did a lot of babbling.
- The Greek term used here means to babble or repetitions (KJV).
- I found myself saying the same thing over and over again.
- Now, I'm not saying you can't pray for three hours.
- There are times where we can pray and should for a long time.
- When we're going through a tough time or praying for a lost soul.
- If you spend time praying a thankful prayer, you find that you can pray for a long time when thanking God for all He has done in your life.
- So, praying a long time is not wrong, but what is the motive?
- During Jesus' day, pagans would pray for a long time to their gods.
- This is a known fact.
- Ancient Greek and Romans would use lengthy prayer formulas to try to get the attention of their gods or god.
- Our God is better than pagan gods because our God already knows what we need.
- Jesus tells us in verse 8 that God already knows what you need before you even ask Him.
- What a Great God we serve! I was reading a commentary that said some people prayed long prayers to their gods because of mistrust.
- So, the motive of long prayers for those praying to pagan gods was fear, mistrust, uncertainty, or all three mixed together.
- Jesus would add onto this in Matthew 6: 31 – 34, ³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God^[a] above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. ³⁴ "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Biblegateway.com)"

- Again, Jesus tells us God already knows what we need, so we don't need to continue to babble for things.
- We are to seek the Kingdom of God and live righteously (Holy living) which will help to give us the right motive in praying.
- Now, I know verse 34 is easier said than done.
- We worry about many things, especially our loved ones.
- We worry about them.
- However, when we pray in the right motive, our prayers through the Holy Spirit will help us to worry less and less.
- When we live righteously and are focused on the Kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit will help to remind us God already knows what we need and He'll remind us all the times Jesus was with us through thick and thin times.
- Our worry will get less and less.
- Do you start to see how important prayer is to our spiritual life of this earth.
- Let's continue on and turn to Matthew 6: 9-15 where we read this from Jesus, ⁹Pray like this:
- Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.
 May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today the food we need,^[a]
¹² and forgive us our sins,
 as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
¹³ And don't let us yield to temptation,^[b]
 but rescue us from the evil one.^[c]
- ¹⁴ "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.
- Finally, Jesus gives us a sample prayer.
- He does this after spending time talking about the motive for prayer.
- When we have the right motive, then this prayer makes more sense. The main focus of this prayer is the Kingdom of God and living a righteous life (again Matthew 6: 33).
- Jesus starts with the Kingdom and ends with praying about not giving into temptation and about forgiveness.
- Plus, Jesus does allow us to ask for our daily bread even though He already knows what we need.

- When we ask for our daily bread from God, we are showing our direct need for Him just like Israel needed God to supply their needs in the wilderness – in Old Testament.
- This shows our real need for Him through love.
- We can talk a lot more about the Lord's Prayer, but this sermon was more on the motive of prayer.
- Holy living helps us to fine tune our prayers and the Holy Spirit adds a little fire to it.
- He adds flavor to it.
- So, never feel that since you are just a common person that your prayers are too simple.
- God loves a simple prayer that is genuine and sincere.
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- If you don't know how to pray that way, you have a helper and that is the Holy Spirit and He is better than any type of smart phone.
- Ask Jesus to help you to pray with the right motive in true faith and He'll have the Holy Spirit show you the way.
- What is your motive when you pray?

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001