

The Secret Life of Prayer (Matthew 6:5-14)

I'm sure you've experienced the joy of a meaningful conversation with someone who loves you. One where you pulled away from the noise, even if for a few minutes, to share your heart and focus on theirs. There's a kind of energy and renewal that comes into a relationship when that happens. Prayer is intended to bring that kind of energy and renewal into your life. Jesus invites his followers into a meaningful, unrehearsed, secret life of prayer. It's about pulling away from the noise to share your heart with someone who loves you.

1. SECRET and unrehearsed (Matthew 6:5-6)

V5 "WHEN you pray" - prayer is expected.

"you **MUST NOT** be like the hypocrites". Word used for actors who put on masks to play different roles.

"Go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret."

A metaphor for private, behind the scenes, unannounced prayer.

This is an invitation to pull away from the noise.

"Pray to your Father who is **IN** secret." John 1:12

Jl Packer: "He's my Father – and He's God in heaven; He's God in heaven and He's my Father...Grasp this or let it grasp you; then tell God what you feel about it; and that will be the worship that our Lord wanted to evoke when He gave us this thought-pattern..."

"Your Father who **SEES** in secret will reward you." What we do in private will define/shape our lives.

2. SIMPLE and unrestrained (Matthew 6:7-8)

"Your Father **KNOWS** what you need before you ask."

You can be honest. You don't have to hide. You can get right to it; straight to the point.

Prayer is deeply meaningful. It creates an atmosphere for intimacy - where tender affection, quiet rest and expressed fear can be made known. We share real words, thoughts and desires with our Creator.

3. CENTRAL and unrivaled (Matthew 6:9-14)

Jesus prayed early in morning while it was still dark (Mark 1:35), would often retreat to a desolate (lonely) place to pray. VV9-14 "Pray then like this..."

Each phrase will launch us into places of expressed dependence and expectation.

His faithfulness in one area becomes fuel to that flickering flame of faith in another area.

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Think of a time when you pulled someone you loved aside, got away from the noise of life, and had a meaningful conversation. How did it bring energy and renewal into the relationship?
2. Jesus invites his followers into a meaningful, unrehearsed, secret life of prayer. It's about pulling away from the noise to share your heart with someone who loves you. In light of that, read Matthew 6:6-8. Who does Jesus say we *must not* be like? Why?
3. What does Jesus say we *should* do when we pray?
4. What do we learn about God the Father in VV5-7?
5. Read the Jl Packer quote above. How does this way of addressing God "re-center" us? How does it protect us from misconceptions and lies?
6. How does knowing the Father "*knows what you need before you ask*" help you pray?
7. Prayer was the central habit of Jesus' life. He often prayed early in the morning while it was still dark or retreated to desolate places to pray. What do you do (or what will you do) in order to "pull away from the noise"? How has prayer brought energy, renewal and joy into your life?
8. Daryn said, "*Our health, strength and vibrancy as a local church depends on the health, strength and vibrancy of our private prayer lives.*" Have you thought much about the public impact of your private prayer life? Why would our private prayer lives impact the health of the church?

Spend time praying through Matthew 6:9-13, allowing each phrase to launch you into more places of dependency and expectation. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us an increased passion for prayer in secret.