

Commentary on Matthew 6:5-15

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, November 20, 2011**, is from **Matthew 6:5-15**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse by verse **International Bible Lesson Commentary** below. The **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the **Bible Lesson Forum**, will aid teachers in class preparation and in conducting class discussion. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Matthew 6:5-15

(Matthew 6:5) “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

The hypocrite wants others to think he loves and serves God, when he actually loves himself and wants the adoration and approval of others. The hypocrite will receive only the reward he seeks, and may not even receive that from those who understand his motivation. The hypocrite will not receive any reward from God in response to his prayers, because he is not really seeking a conversation with God.

(Matthew 6:6) But whenever 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.

Some people do this literally and will not pray in public. Jesus does not forbid public praying, but He does warn against praying in public if our intention is wrong (seeking to be seen, for example). If we seek our Father in heaven, to talk to Him, to praise Him and thank Him, to show God and others how much we love Him and want to serve Him, then He will reward us by hearing our prayers no matter where we pray or when. Praying in public can also teach others how to pray and encourage them to have their own conversations with God their Father.

(Matthew 6:7) When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

Reciting the Lord's Prayer can become for some the heaping up of empty phrases. They do not pray each word to God from their heart, but they seem to rush through the Lord's Prayer as quickly as possible. The empty phrase can be a mantra, a new age chant, meaningless words, repeating the name of a Hindu god (knowingly or unknowingly), possibly even repetitiously repeating a verse from the Bible; such as, "Come, Lord Jesus" or "Our Lord, come" (see 1 Corinthians 16:22). The repetitious heaping up of empty phrases would be just as boring to God as it would be if a child did this in the lap of their father or mother.

(Matthew 6:8) Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

God knows what we need even before we begin to pray, but God still wants us to pray and ask Him to meet our needs. Many times God gives us what we need without our asking, but sometimes He will only give us certain things we need only if we ask Him. He wants to meet our needs; He only waits for us to ask; just as a friend or parent may know what we need, but wait until we ask for help. Requesting the same thing repetitiously so that it becomes an empty phrase will not manipulate God into helping us.

(Matthew 6:9) Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Rather than chanting phrases to God, Jesus teaches His followers how to talk to God with reason and respect. The Lord's Prayer covers some, but not all, of the most important and reasonable topics for our prayers to include. The child of God begins by recognizing that God is our Father; God is the specific God of the Bible and not the god of some other religion. We come to our Father as a child, but also with the respect due to Him and His Name, lifting up clean hands to Him.

(Matthew 6:10) Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Believers pray for Jesus' kingdom to come; for Jesus to reign visibly over and in the world as the visible King of the universe and not just as the invisible King in heaven. We pray for God's will to be done in our lives, and for us to know and do His will; that is, love God and obey His commandments, bring joy to His heart and live a holy life. We pray for His will to be done by everyone on Earth, and we pray for God to rule over all and overrule all who might do evil in the world.

(Matthew 6:11) Give us this day our daily bread.

We ask God to provide our daily food and meet our daily needs. For some, bread may be all that is

available to them because of poverty, persecution, oppression, war, or disasters. Sometimes, God will use His children to provide the food that is needed by others; perhaps through a food pantry. This prayer can include all that a person needs for life: food, clothing, shelter, protection, and spiritual needs.

(Matthew 6:12) And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Our trespasses, sins, or debts are what we owe to God and to others for the wrongs we have done to them, intentional and unintentional, by commission and omission. We cannot make right every wrong we have done. We can and should try to make right our wrongs when it is practical, advisable, and wise (that is, “make amends”). We need forgiveness by God and others. Just as many who have sinned against us cannot always repair the damage, we need to forgive them too.

(Matthew 6:13) And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

“Time of trial” is, perhaps, a better translation than “temptation,” for God will never tempt anyone to do evil. The devil will tempt us to do wrong. We can pray that God will protect us from being tempted by the devil to do evil. We can pray that our resolve to do right will not be so tried that we fail the test. We can

pray for God to rescue us from the devil or anyone who would lead us into evil.

NOTE on Matthew 6:13 in the King James Version. Some later Greek manuscripts added the words translated in the King James Version of the Bible: **“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”** which are omitted from most contemporary English translations. Even later Greek manuscripts added the words: “for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost for ever. Amen.” These additions to the Lord’s Prayer are consistent with what the Bible teaches in other places. For example, compare the addition in the King James Version with 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 — “Thine, O LORD, *is* the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*; thine *is* the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour *come* of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.” Compare “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost for ever. Amen.” with Matthew 28:19-20 — Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things

whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world.

(Matthew 6:14) For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

We can rejoice in this promise if we forgive others their trespasses against us. Unhappily, too many people who claim to be Christians refuse to take this verse seriously, because they persist in living unforgiving lives. But along with this wonderful promise, Jesus gave the warning in the verse immediately below. The forgiveness of God for your sins is conditioned on your forgiving others who have sinned against you. A spirit of unforgiveness can lead to many debilitating health issues.

(Matthew 6:15) but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

If someone comes to us and repents and is truly sorry for their sins against us, we must forgive them as an act of our will, even though our feelings may not forgive them immediately. We may forgive them, but never want to be their friend again. We cannot always control our feelings, and when tempted to feel unforgiving we need to forgive again as an act of the will and ask God to help us forgive. Refusing to forgive anyone, even those who do not repent or seek our

forgiveness, will only hurt our own hearts and spirits, perhaps ruin our health and shorten our lives. It is best to try to forgive and report to God in prayer that we do forgive anyone who has wronged us. We can do our part to remove any barriers to God's forgiveness.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. In some places or parts of some countries, some Christians pray publicly before a meal in a restaurant. What do you think about doing this? What do you think Jesus would say about doing this?
2. Some have objected to saying the Lord's Prayer in unison in a service of worship. What might some of their reasons be for opposing the public praying of the Lord's Prayer in worship? What reasons might someone give for beginning or maintaining the practice of praying the Lord's Prayer in a public worship service?
3. In your opinion, what is the most important part or parts of the Lord's Prayer?
4. Some have argued that because God already knows what we need and what He is going to do that we should never ask God for anything, but only offer God prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

5. What might you say to someone who thought they could go to heaven even though they refuse to forgive someone who sinned against them but also repented and asked them to forgive them?

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