**Matthew 6:5-9 And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret place*;* and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do.* For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.**

We’ve been looking at prayer for several weeks. Today, we’ll start the Lord’s Prayer – found in Luke 11 and Matthew 6, the Lord’s Prayer is the most sacred of prayers. I could spend the rest of my life exploring the model of prayer that Jesus gave us, and I’d never find all the things He taught us in His prayer. Layer upon layer, teaching upon teaching, truth upon truth – Today, we’ll look at the things Jesus said before He prayed – things He told His disciples when they said – Teach us to pray. Our heart needs to cry each and every day… Teach us to pray – draw us nearer – help us to commune with You Oh God! Once we learn to truly Commune with the Father, nothing… nothing… nothing will ever be the same.

So far, we’ve talked about humility, faithfulness, gratefulness, understanding in prayer. We’ve seen that current perception must be seasoned by past protection in order to embrace God’s future provision. All of this leads us to preparation to meet with God. In our scripture, Jesus doesn’t immediately begin to pray, but gives us instruction – He teaches us to pray.

Verse 5 – *And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.* A command! You shall not be like the hypocrites – literally actors under an assumed character – someone pretending! They love being seen and heard. It’s all about self – pride – praise of man… and that is their reward. Emptiness and separation from God. Pride and a haughty spirit always separate us from God.

Verse 6 *But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*Verse 5 was a don’t. Verse 6 is a do. When you pray, leave pride outside the door. Leave self sitting on the doorstep. Go into your room – this may be the bedroom for some, bathroom for others, the front porch, back porch, the car – wherever it is, shut the world out and commune with your Father – God wants us to focus - God is waiting for us there… He’s in this place waiting to meet you. He will reward you openly.

As an aside, there are some in this church that pray so intimately with God, when they begin to pray, I feel like I’ve interrupted… I start feeling like I should back out and leave them alone with God. We are blessed to be a praying church.

Verse 7 *And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.* Another don’t. Jesus isn’t talking about persistent prayer here. He makes that very clear in Luke 11 – keep asking, keep knocking, keep seeking the things of God. Pursue God. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to us. Vain repetition literally means to prate or talk foolishly and tediously, unendingly – because they think they will be heard for their much talking. All of us have heard prayers like this – some of you may be thinking, “Yeah Richard… just a few minutes ago!” God is not looking for all the right words… He hears the right heart – a broken and contrite spirit He will not despise.

Verse 8 *Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.* Here’s the offsetting positive from Jesus. Do not be like those who prate and look for the approval of man. For your Father knows your needs. Does this mean we hold back with Him? No. Prayer is all about relationship with God. We entreat Him… entreat simply means to ask earnestly. When a child cringes in fear and won’t ask a father for needs, won’t share earnest hopes and dreams with a mother, we call that a bad relationship. My heart bleeds when a see a child fearful to approach a parent – there is something broken in that child. God is a good Father and wants to give His child the very best.

Let me tell you today – God hears more in a sigh than any human can gather from a million words. He traces our tears. He smiles at our joys. He is a personal God, able to hear a lad named Ishmael lying beneath a bush dying of thirst. It is we who bring the pretense, the religiosity, and the relationship blocks.

Jesus finishes with verse 9 - *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven.* Jesus says – address God as your Father. My Father in heaven. This is relationship. This week, let’s think about that relationship with our Father. We’re looking for connectedness, intimacy so deep that, when others walk in, they blush and start to back out. Lord teach us to pray… may we not just say a prayer, but may we be a prayer…. fully connected, fully committed, fully communing with Our Father in Heaven. This is the prayer Jesus is teaching us to pray – may we learn our lesson well.