

“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. 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.” Matthew 6:5-6 NLT

lectio // Matthew 6:5-15

Okay, let’s get Captain Obvious out of the way. Jesus words, red-letter-words - WHEN you pray. Not if or want to should, simply when. Great. Got it. Then the DONOTS. Don’t be like... fakes that look and sound real, but they’re just acting for performance purposes. Today, we don’t have religious people praying on street corners. I DO HAVE preachers, preaching on my street corners tho - I live in Santa Ana and I love their boldness! I wouldn’t exactly call that open prayer kind of street recognition a reward, but to each his own. Our equivalent might be loud, complicated, deeply spiritual, without any sense of passion or connection to God that they are addressing. I’ve always enjoyed “short sentence” prayers when praying publicly, honest but brief because there are folks who are very intimidated by praying at all. And the thought of praying publicly is totally terrifying! Can a child learn to pray by my example? Now, private prayer? Oh, that’s another matter all together! Let er rip. Be honest, emotional, and intelligent about your thoughts and words. God already knows what’s going on, so be YOU, be real. There’s more to this thought that Jesus spoke about, like Gentiles babbling? I don’t know exactly what that meant or means today, but for now I’d like to think of tamping prayer down a few notch’s in public (if at all) and ratcheting it WAY UP in private. As for “rewards,” I don’t think we get bonus points, extra-lives or momentary “shields” of protection for praying. However, we do get better at having a super real, honest relationship with God that will endure and thrive in this life.

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Dad,

I immediately think of David and his advisors who wrote Psalms. I love those models of prayer. Especially the private prayers that are no one else’s business but you and me. Those hard question prayers. Those deep trauma prayers. Those emotionally vulnerable or frustrating prayers. And certainly those intelligent prayers. All of which are conversational in style. They are two-way, relational. I pray, I listen. And, I wait. You answer. You calm my spirit. You remind me of how great you are and how little to none I control and it gives me peace. I feel loved, encouraged and open to listen and obey your will at that point. Thank you for a real, life-giving conversation with you. You are my very breath!

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root