



The Sermon on the Mount Study  
**Bible Study Session 15b**  
**Matthew 6:7-15**

Study By  
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**Greek NT**

7 Προσευχόμενοι δὲ μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὡσπερ οἱ ἔθνηκοί, δοκοῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογία αὐτῶν ακουσθήσονται· 8 μὴ οὖν ὁμοιωθῆτε αὐτοῖς, οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὡν χρεῖαν ἔχετε πρὸ τοῦ ὑμᾶς αἰτῆσαι αὐτόν.

9 Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς· Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου, 10 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς· 11 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον· 12 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· 13 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ· 14 ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος· 15 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οὐδὲ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν.

**La Biblia de las Américas**

7 Y al orar, no uséis repeticiones sin sentido, como los gentiles, porque ellos se imaginan que serán oídos por su palabrería. 8 Por tanto, no os hagáis semejantes a ellos; porque vuestro Padre sabe lo que necesitáis antes que vosotros le pidáis.

9 Vosotros, pues, orad de esta manera: “Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos, santificado sea tu nombre. 10 “Venga tu reino. Hágase tu voluntad, así en la tierra como en el cielo. 11 “Danos hoy el pan nuestro de cada día. 12 “Y perdónanos nuestras deudas, como también nosotros hemos perdonado a nuestros deudores. 13 “Y no nos metas en tentación, mas líbranos del mal. Porque tuyo es el reino y el poder y la gloria para siempre jamás. Amén.” 14 Porque si perdonáis a los hombres sus transgresiones, también vuestro Padre celestial os perdonará a vosotros. 15 Pero si no perdonáis a los hombres, tampoco vuestro Padre perdonará vuestras transgresiones.

**NRSV**

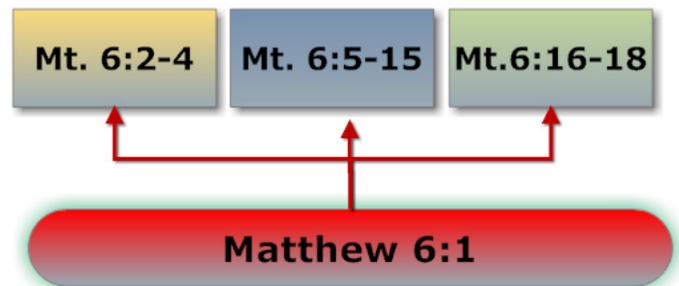
7 When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**NLT**

7 When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again. 8 Don't be like them, because your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. 11 Give us our food for today, 12 and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. 13 And don't let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. 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.”



**The Outline of the Text:<sup>1</sup>**

The second expression of piety in 6:1-18 is prayer and is found in vv. 5-15. The ‘double layering’ pattern of this subunit reproduces the structural pattern twice, in vv. 5-6 and in vv. 7-15.<sup>2</sup> The first unit, vv. 5-6, adheres

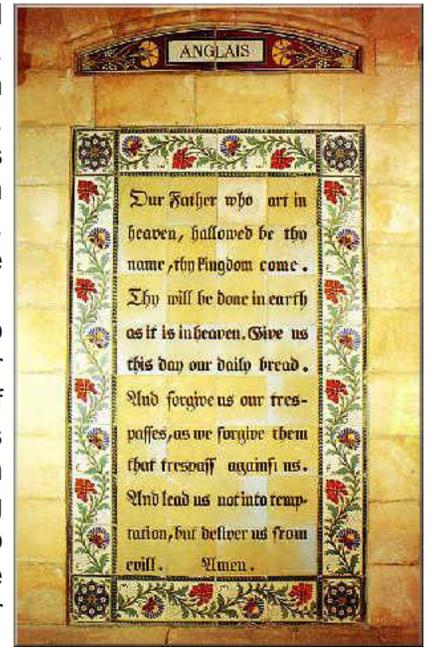
<sup>1</sup>Serious study of the biblical text must look at the ‘then’ meaning, i.e., the historical meaning, and the ‘now’ meaning, i.e., the contemporary application, of the scripture text. In considering the historical meaning, both elements of literary design and historical aspects must be considered. In each study we will attempt a summary overview of these procedures in the interpretation of the scripture text.

<sup>2</sup>Amazingly some commentators completely miss the literary pattern here, and thus see vv. 7-8 as an ‘excursion’ or digression from the main topic. For example, R. T. France (*The Gospel of Matthew*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 240.) “The ‘digression’ on prayer which breaks into the tripartite unit of teaching on religious secrecy (see above p. 233) begins with a similar contrast between the wrong and the right ways of praying, in which ‘the Gentiles’ take the place of the ‘hypocrites’ in v. 5.4”

very closely to the pattern present in vv. 2-4 and vv. 16-18, while the second unit, vv. 7-15, generally adheres to it but also goes its own distinctive direction. The reason behind this remains unclear. Many scholars are convinced with substantial indication behind it that the literary structural differences between vv. 5-6 and vv. 7-15 are primarily due to different sources in the largely oral Jesus tradition that Matthew drew upon. Matthew opted here to retain most of the form in his sources, rather than customize them to fit structurally into his narrative. Why this was done remains unclear, but perhaps the critical importance of the ‘model prayer’ played a role in this.<sup>3</sup>

Just as the first subunit contrasted improper praying by the ‘hypocrites’ to proper praying by disciples (vv. 5-6), this second subunit contrasts improper praying by ‘Gentiles’ to proper praying by disciples (vv. 7-13). The addendum of vv. 14-15 is added in order to stress the critical importance of proper relationships with others in the desire to be correctly related to God. It picks up on the fifth petition of the six in the model prayer, but the causal conjunction γὰρ defining its connection to vv. 7-13 and the shift from τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν (v. 12) to τὰ παραπτώματα (v. 14-15) make the twofold admonition on forgiveness the foundation of all proper praying. Prayer to God can not -- and must not -- ever be petitioning God to destroy our enemies.

One should note the vertical / horizontal emphases in the doubled layer of vv. 5-15. The Pharisees abused the horizontal focus, vv. 5-6, by praying to be seen of men. The Gentiles abused the vertical focus, vv. 7-15, by using prayer to manipulate deity into self-centered gratification. Jesus rejects both approaches, and, instead, stresses prayer as focused on God alone and coming out of proper relationships with others. We have a lot to learn about prayer.



## I. How not to pray, vv. 7-8

**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. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

**7 Προσευχόμενοι** δὲ μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὡς περ οἱ ἔθνικοί, δοκοῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν εἰσακουσθήσονται· 8 μὴ οὖν ὁμοιωθῆτε αὐτοῖς, οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὧν χρειάν ἔχετε πρὸ τοῦ ὑμᾶς αἰτῆσαι αὐτόν.

The ‘header’ “when you are praying” (*Προσευχόμενοι*) relates to the somewhat similar headers in v. 5 (ὅταν προσεύχησθε), v. 2 (Ὅταν οὖν ποιῆς ἐλεημοσύνην), and v. 16 (Ὅταν δὲ νηστεύητε). Since introducing a second layer on prayer, the Greek participle is appropriately used rather than the Greek temporal dependent clause as with the others, as a signal of a sub header.<sup>4</sup>

The negative admonition is against praying with numerous phrases piled on top of one another and that also have little or no meaning.<sup>5</sup> The admonition to not pray like Gentiles introduces a contrast not found in the other topics of almsgiving and fasting, in part because the non-Jewish world practiced neither of the actions.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Luke 11:2-4 (NRSV) for the other version of the model prayer: 2 “When you pray, say: Father, a hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 **And forgive us our sins**, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

The differences in Luke’s account from that in Matthew’s account may argue somewhat against this, although the differences are relatively minor, as a comparison of Luke with Mt. 6:9-13 illustrates (NRSV): . 9 “Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** 13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, **but rescue us from the evil one.**”

<sup>4</sup>It distinguishes itself from the other participle sub headers (σοῦ δὲ ποιῶντος ἐλεημοσύνην, v. 3; σὺ δὲ νηστεύων, v. 17) by using the plural number in matching the plural of the introductory headers in vv. 2, 5, 16.

<sup>5</sup>βατταλογέω (βαττολογέω v.l.; s. Rdm. 44; Mlt-H. 272) 1 aor. subj. βατταλογήσω onomatopoeic word; to speak in a way that images the kind of speech pattern of one who stammers, use the same words again and again, speak without thinking (explained by πολυλογία) Mt 6:7; Lk 11:2 D. Except for writers dependent on the NT the word has been found only in Vi. Aesopi W 109, where Perry notes the v.l. βατολογέω for βαττολογέω (it is missing in the corresp. place ed. Eberhard I c. 26 p. 289, 9. But Vi. Aesopi G 50 P. has the noun βαττολογία=foolish talk, but in a different context), and in Simplicius (c. 530 A.D.), Comm. in Epict. p. 91, 23 in the spelling βαττολογέω=‘prate’. It is perh. a hybrid form, rendering Aram. ܕܡܪܬܘܢܐ=‘talk idly’ (B-D-F §40). Differently FBussby, ET 76, ’64, 26.—S. DELG s.v. βατταρίζω for discussion of this type of word. M-M. [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 172.]

By introducing Gentile prayer patterns Jesus set up a strong contrast to the right way to pray as set forth in the model prayer in verses 9-13.

The point of Gentile praying to their deities centers on two phrases in this sentence: ‘empty phrases’ (*βατταλογήσητε*) and ‘many words’ (*τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν*). Clearly one point is the quantity of words used in praying. The second Greek word *πολυλογία* is quite clear at this point. Less clear, however, is the meaning of the first word *βατταλογέω*. The likely meaning is to talk on and on but with words that have little meaning or substance. Gentile praying sought to catch the attention of their gods and goddesses with both quantity and empty praise of their deity. Generally this worked off the assumption that the gods paid little or no attention to mortals normally. Thus prayer had to first get their attention, but do so in a way that would generate a favorable response.

The mistake of ‘long winded’ prayers is a failure to understand God. The Gentile perception of deity was that one had to get their attention first, and then make requests of them. But it took lots of words, especially magical words that could arouse the interest of the deities.<sup>6</sup>

Disciples are not to be like the Gentiles in praying. The reason is that the true God is not like the pagan deities. Not only do we not need to use extensive words to ‘get His attention’, we pray to a God who already knows our needs as ‘Heavenly Father.’ We don’t pray to inform God of something He doesn’t already know. He is our Father. This means that prayer is to bring Father and praying child closer together; something just the opposite of the Gentile praying that was intended to keep barely interested and dangerously unpredictable deities at arms length away from the prayer.

## II. How to pray, vv. 9-15

9 Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

9 Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς· Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου, 10 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, γεννηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς· 11 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δός ἡμῖν σήμερον· 12 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· 13 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

14 ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφῆτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος· 15 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφῆτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν.

Praying properly as a disciple means understanding the role and content of prayer in the Kingdom. Luke also includes the model prayer in his narrative in order to stress the importance of proper praying. Though very similar, the two prayers are distinct from one another:

### Matthew 6:9-13

9 Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς· **Πάτερ** ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· **ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου**, 10 **ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου**, γεννηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς· 11 **τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον** δός ἡμῖν σήμερον· 12 **καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν** τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· 13 **καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν**, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

9 Pray then in this way: Our **Father** in heaven, **hallowed be your name**. 10 **Your kingdom come**. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day **our daily bread**. 12 **And forgive us** our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 **And do not bring us to the time of trial**, but rescue us from the evil one.

### Luke 11:2-4

2 εἶπεν δὲ αὐτοῖς· Ὅταν προσεύχησθε, λέγετε· **Πάτερ, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου· ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου**· 3 **τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον** δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ’ ἡμέραν· 4 **καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν** τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν· **καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν**.

2 He said to them, “When you pray, say: **Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come**. 3 Give us each day **our daily bread**. 4 **And forgive us** our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. **And do not bring us to the time of trial**.”

The **bold italic words** are where the Greek in both prayers are identical. Each gospel writer is distinctive in the wording of the prayer. Matthew’s account contains

<sup>6</sup>“With regard to prayer in the Gentile world, the magical papyri put us in touch with a piety which believed in incantations and in the beneficial effect of mechanical repetition; and Seneca could speak of *fatigare deos* (Ep. 31:5; cf. the material parallel in 1 Kgs 18:20–9); and one Roman emperor thought it expedient to offer this exhortation: ‘A prayer of the Athenians: “Rain, rain, O dear Zeus, upon the ploughed fields of the Athenians and their plains”. Either pray not at all, or in this simple and frank fashion’ (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus 5:7). It is possible that the polytheism of non-Jews, which required naming the names of many different gods, is relevant for understanding Mt 6:7.” [W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 584]

wording and phraseology that are distinctly Jewish in tone, while Luke is more ‘Gentilish’ in orientation.

One should also note the later Byzantine text tradition adds Ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας Ἀμήν<sup>7</sup> at the end of verse 13. This was not in the original text and was added several centuries later in order to make the prayer more useful liturgically for public worship. The sentence is taken from 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 (LXX) in Solomon’s prayer of dedication of the temple.

The introductory headers in both Matthew and Luke stress praying consistently and appropriately:

Mt. 6:9, Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς, *Therefore be praying thusly.*

Lk. 11:2, Ὅταν προσεύχησθε, λέγετε, *Every time you offer a prayer, be saying.*

The assumption is of a pattern of praying done regularly and consistently. Nothing is said of prescribed times of prayer, such as the Jews of Jesus’ day practised. Nowhere else in the NT does one find early Christians regimenting prayer in such a way. But the language of Jesus here and the teaching of the NT generally clearly asserts that disciples of Jesus will make extensive and regular use of prayer in their devotion to God.

**Prayer Header.** We begin prayer with proper addressing of God: Mt., Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς; Lk., Πάτερ. God is to be addressed as our Father. The tone is not over familiarity, nor distant and unconnected. Rather, *Father* underscores the relationship of the disciple with God in the context of family, a spiritual family.

**First petition:** ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου, “*hallowed be your name.*” Both Matthew and Luke have the exact wording, reflecting their common Q source. Two interpretive points here. First, in the Jewish heritage, one’s name equals one’s person. For one’s name to be treated a certain way is the same as treating the person that way. No distinction between name and person existed in the mind of Jesus and His listeners that day. Second, for someone to be treated as *ἀγιασμός* in that world fundamentally meant they were revered and considered distinct and unlike anyone else. The prayer petition admonishes disciples to pray that God will so work in the world that He will be revered and treated as very special (cf. Exodus 3:13-15). With the emphasis upon God’s name, the prayer is that such reverence of God will be reflected in hesitancy to speak His name, especially in a causal flippant manner. This men do because they have come to reverence God profoundly. Unlike contemporary Islam that seeks to physically enforce -- often by violent means -- a reverence for their deity, Allah, Christians are called upon to pray that God will bring about profound reverencing of Himself.

**Second petition:** ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, “*Your kingdom come.*” Again Matthew and Luke reflect their common Q source with identical wording. The heart of the petition is that God will bring about His rule and reign in this world. It builds upon the first petition and asks the Heaven Father to assert His absolute authority in this world. The Kingdom of God / Heaven has both present and future aspects. God certainly is active now in His world asserting His authority and power in it, but in the eschatological return of Jesus that power will become absolute, or to use the apostle Paul’s words (1 Cor. 15:24-27a), “*24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’*” Until that time arrives, disciples are to constantly be praying for God’s authority to be exercised in increasing fashion in this world.

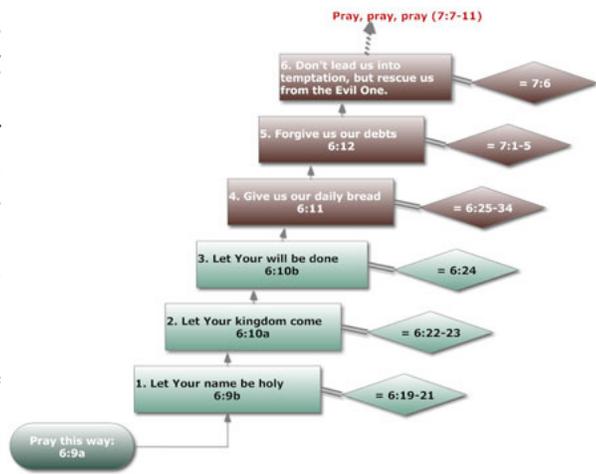
**Third petition:** γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς, “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*” Matthew and Luke uniformly use the core admonition from Q, but Matthew adds the comparative clause. The admonition encourages disciples to ask God to “*make His will happen*” (γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου) in this world to the same degree that it takes place in Heaven. God’s will is important in Matthew’s gospel; cf. also 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:31. This petition brings the vertical petitions to a climatic point. We ask God to make Himself revered; to assert His full authority; and then to bring about the doing of His will in this world. To be clear, all this will take place at the end of time in the second coming of Jesus. But our responsibility is to be praying that God will increasingly be acknowledged by and in this world as we move toward that great day at the end.

**Fourth petition:** τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον<sup>8</sup> δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον, “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” The

<sup>7</sup>“For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.”

<sup>8</sup>“One of the great unresolved puzzles of NT lexicography is the derivation and meaning of ἐπιούσιος, upon which hinges the in-

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essential idea is the same between Matthew and Luke, although their wording of this petition is somewhat different.<sup>9</sup> The first part is identical: τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον, and represents a request for enough ‘bread’ to get one through a single day. The second part is different. Matthew says, δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον, i.e., ‘give this time bread for today.’ The prayer is prayed intensively at the beginning the day asking for provisions to get one through that day. Luke says, δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ’ ἡμέραν, i.e., ‘be giving us enough bread to get us through each day.’ The prayer is to be offered at the beginning of each new day, asking God to grant enough provisions to get one through that day. For Jewish peasants of that time life was a day to day matter of survival, and Jesus recognized this reality.

Our Lord here acknowledges the legitimacy of asking God to help us with the basics of daily living. We are not allowed to pray for material riches; instead, just for the basics. The boundary between basics and abundance, although relative to individual cultures, are here seen in terms of basics being just what is needed to prevent starvation.

**Fifth petition:** καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Again the essential idea of this petition between Matthew and Luke is virtually the same, but considerably different wording is employed by the two gospel writers.<sup>10</sup> The core admonition, καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν, is the same between the two accounts. Jesus admonishes disciples to ask God to ‘put distance’ (ἄφες) between themselves and their ‘debts’ / ‘transgressions.’ Luke uses the clearer term τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, ‘our sins,’ rather than the rather archaic Hebrew based τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ‘our debts.’<sup>11</sup> Luke’s use of ὀφείλοντι in the second part matches Matthew’s ὀφειλήματα, thus making it clear that Luke was understanding Jesus’ words the same way that Matthew did. The second statement is where differences surface. Matthew sees the request to God for forgiveness defined as ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν, i.e., to the degree that we have already forgiven those with ὀφειλέταις against us. Luke comes at the idea differently: καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν. “God, forgive us because we are also forgiving every ὀφείλοντι being done against us.” In both instances the vertical / horizontal aspects are critical. We can’t expect God’s forgiveness when we are unwilling to forgive others!

**Sixth petition:** καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, “And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.” Luke has the exact same initial negative admonition, καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, and omits the second one in Matthew. This second emphasis of Matthew is linked closely to the first one.<sup>12</sup> The petition is that God will not lead us into a time of testing, and when those times do come in life that God will rescue His people from the grip of the Devil who seeks to use the testing as a temptation to disobey God. πειρασμόν is better taken here as ‘testing’ than as ‘temptation,’ since according to James 2:13 God doesn’t lead people into temptation.<sup>13</sup> In times of testing of our faith, we need God’s help to overcome, and this petition admonishes us to seek that divine help.<sup>14</sup>

**The foundation for proper praying:** 14 ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος· 15 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν. Here the basis for this kind of praying is set forth in terms of antithetical parallelism. Divine forgiveness

terpretation of the present verse. The word has not, despite assertions to the contrary, been found outside the gospels, save in literature influenced by them (cf. Origen, *De orat.* 27:7); see Metzger (v) and Hemer (v). On the references sometimes made to ἐπιούσιος in the margin of the LXX for 2 Macc 1:8 see Stendahl (v), p. 81, n. 17, and Hadidian (v).” [W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 607.]

<sup>9</sup>Matthew 6:11, τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον **δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον,**

Luke 11:3, τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον **δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ’ ἡμέραν,**

<sup>10</sup>Mt. 6:12, **καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν** τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς **ὀφειλέταις** ἡμῶν.

Lk. 11:4a, **καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν** τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ **ὀφείλοντι** ἡμῖν.

<sup>11</sup>“Here probably Luke has avoided the more archaic ὀφειλήματα, which may not have been as easily understood by his gentile readers (but he has kept the root in the participial form at the end of v 4). The concept of sin as a ‘debt’ owed to God has an Aramaic background (in the rabbinic literature, נִבְצָר, ḥōbā., is sin construed as a debt). [Donald A. Hagner, vol. 33A, *Word Biblical Commentary : Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 150.]

<sup>12</sup>For a detailed treatment of this, see my article “Throwing your Margaritas to the Pigs. A Rhetorical Reading of Matthew 7,6,” *Gemeinschaft der Kirchen und gesellschaftliche Verantwortung: Die Würde des Anderen und das Recht anders zu denken, Festschrift für Dr. Erich Geldbach*, pp. 351-363. Edited by Lena Lybæk, Konrad Raiser, and Stefanie Schardien. Münster, Deutschland: Lit Verlag, 2004.

<sup>13</sup>“No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one.”

<sup>14</sup>We can count on the promise in 2 Peter 2:9, “then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.”

of our τὰ παραπτώματα is critical. And divine forgiveness depends upon our willingness to forgive others. Once more the vertical / horizontal aspects of discipleship become central to devotion to God. We must never forget this.

### Diagram of the Sermon on the Mount Mt. 6:7-15

6.7           And  
                  while praying  
74    **do not babble on and on**  
                  like the Gentiles,  
          for  
75    **they suppose**  
                  that with their many words they will be heard.

6.8           Therefore  
76    **you must not be like them;**  
          for  
77    **your Father knows**  
                  about what you need  
                                  before you ask Him.

6.9           Therefore  
78    **you be praying in this manner:**

          Our Father  
                  who is in Heaven,  
79    **Let Your name be made holy;**  
80    6.10 **Let Your kingdom come;**  
81    **Let Your will be done,**  
                  as in Heaven so also on earth;  
82    6.11 **Give us daily our bread**  
                  sufficient for the day;

6.12           and  
83    **Forgive us our debts**  
          as we also forgive our debtors;

6.13           and  
84    **Do not lead us**  
                  into temptation,  
          but  
85    **rescue us from the Evil One.**

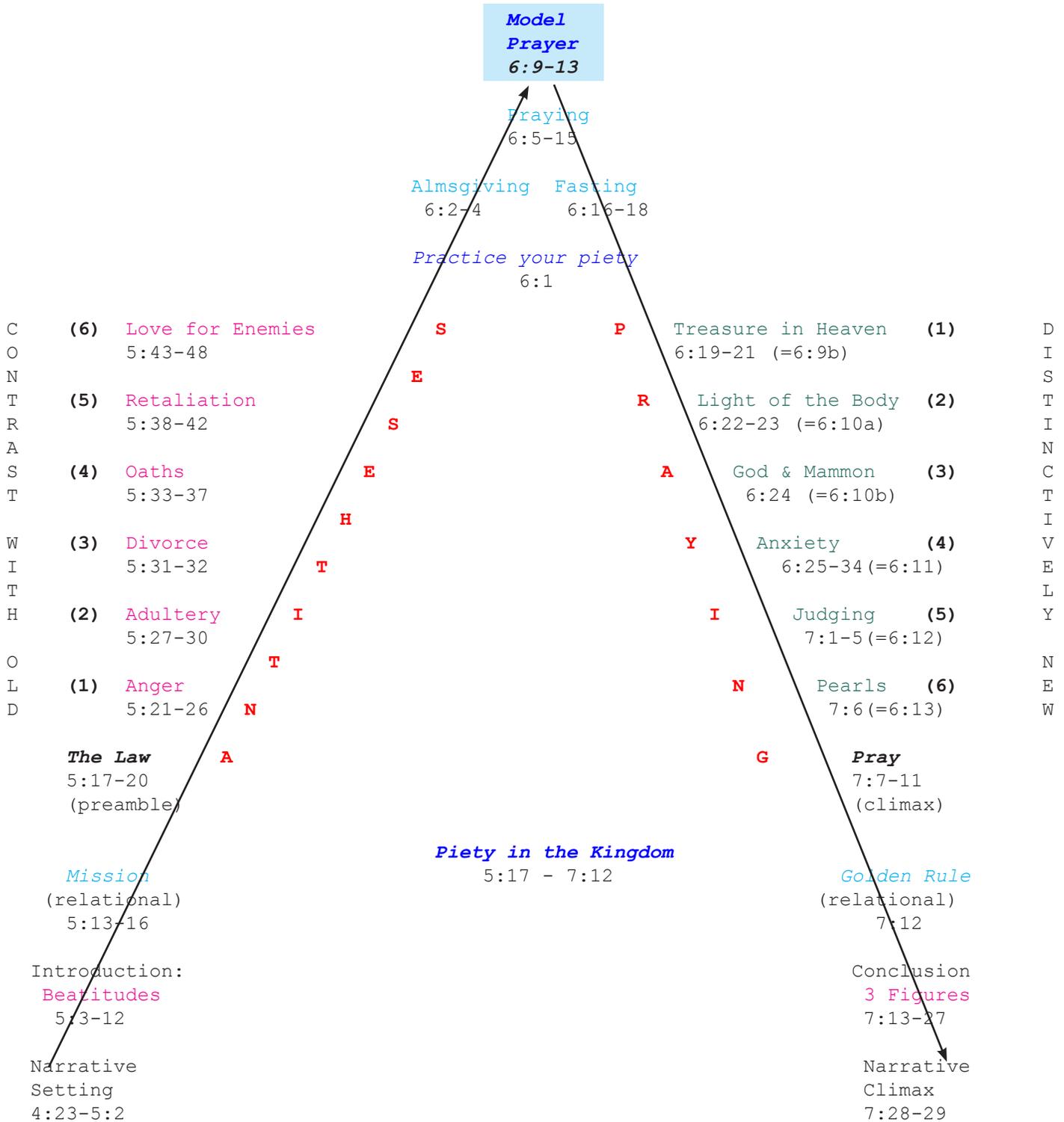
6.14           For  
                  if you forgive men that transgressions  
86    **you Heavenly Father will also forgive you;**  
6.15           and  
                  if you don't forgive men,  
87    **neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.**

Clearly the text divides into two basic units: statements 74-77 and 78-87. The first is the negative example of the praying of Gentiles. Statements 74 and 76 issue essentially the same admonition: don't use long winded Gentile praying. Two reasons are given, #s 75 and 77, with the first being a false assumption about the Gentile gods and the second being the contrast of the knowledge of God. So the two sets of admonition with reason stand in parallel to one another with the second reason advancing the idea forward.

The second unit, #s 78-87, also divides into two subunits: #s 78-85 and 86-87. The first subunit sets forth the model prayer as the proper way to pray. The unit begins with the general admonition to pray in #78. It is followed by six core admonitions, #s 79-85 with #s 84 and 85 being flip sides of the same coin, as the Lukan parallel in 11:4 makes clear. The six admonitions flow from the vertical relationship, #s 79-81, to the horizontal, #s 82-85. The second subunit, #s 86-87, stand as the basis for the prayer as defined by 'for' (γὰρ), a coordinate causal conjunction. Thus the prescribed praying to God must rest on the foundation of forgiveness, of us by God, and of others by us.

# The Literary Structure of the Sermon on the Mount

*Matthew 4:23-7:29*



**Source:** Lorin L. Cranford, *Study Manual of the Sermon on the Mount: Greek Text* (Fort Worth: Scripta Publishing Inc., 1988), 320. Adapted from Gunter Bornkamm, "Der Aufbau der Bergpredigt," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977-78): 419-432.