



The Sermon on the Mount Study
Bible Study Session 15
Matthew 6:5-15: Topic 15.0

Study By
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Greek NT

6.5 Καὶ ὅταν προσευ-
χῆσθε, οὐκ ἔσεσθε ὡς οἱ
ὑποκριταί, ὅτι φιλοῦσιν
ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ
ἐν ταῖς γωνίαις τῶν
πλατειῶν ἐστῶτες προ-
σεύχεσθαι, ὅπως φανώσιν
τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἀμὴν
λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν
μισθὸν αὐτῶν. 6.6 σὺ δὲ
ὅταν προσεύχῃ εἰσελθε εἰς
τὸ ταμεῖόν σου καὶ κλείσας
τὴν θύραν σου πρόσευξαι τῷ
πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ·
καὶ ὁ πατὴρ σου ὁ βλέπων
ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει
σοι. 6.7 Προσευχόμενοι δὲ
μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὡσπερ
οἱ ἔθνηκοί, δοκοῦσιν γὰρ
ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν
εἰσακουσθήσονται. 6.8 μὴ
οὖν ὁμοιωθῆτε αὐτοῖς· οἱ
δὲν γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὧν
χρεῖαν ἔχετε πρὸ τοῦ ὑμᾶς
αἰτῆσαι αὐτόν. 6.9 Οὕτως
οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς·
Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς
οὐρανοῖς, ἁγιασθήτω
τὸ ὄνομά σου· 6.10 ἐλθέτω ἡ
βασιλεία σου· γενηθήτω τὸ
θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ
καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς· 6.11 τὸν ἄρτον
ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς
ἡμῖν σήμερον· 6.12 καὶ ἄφες
ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,
ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν
τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· 6.13
καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς
εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι
ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.
6.14 Ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφήτε τοῖς
ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώμα-
τα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν
ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος·
6.15 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς
ἀνθρώποις, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ
ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώ-
ματα ὑμῶν.

Gute Nachricht Bibel

5 »Wenn ihr betet, dann
tut es nicht wie die Schei-
neheiligen! Sie beten gern
öffentlich in den Synagogen
und an den Straßenecken,
damit sie von allen gese-
hen werden. Ich versichere
euch: Sie haben ihren Lohn
schon kassiert.

6 Wenn du beten willst,
dann geh in dein Zimmer,
schließ die Tür zu und bete
zu deinem Vater, der im
Verborgenen ist. Dein Vater,
der auch das Verborgene
sieht, wird dich dafür beloh-
nen.

7 Wenn ihr betet, dann
leiert nicht Gebetsworte
herunter wie die Heiden.
Sie meinen, sie könnten bei
Gott etwas erreichen, wenn
sie viele Worte machen. 8
Ihr sollt es anders halten.
Euer Vater weiß, was ihr
braucht, bevor ihr ihn bittet.

9 So sollt ihr beten:
Unser Vater im Himmel!
Mach deinen Namen groß
in der Welt. 10 Komm und
richte deine Herrschaft
auf. Verschaff deinem Wil-
len Geltung, auf der Erde
genauso wie im Himmel.
11 Gib uns, was wir heute
zum Leben brauchen. 12
Vergib uns unsere Schuld,
wie auch wir allen vergeben
haben, die an uns schuldig
geworden sind. 13 Lass uns
nicht in die Gefahr kom-
men, dir untreu zu werden,
sondern rette uns aus der
Gewalt des Bösen.

14 Wenn ihr den andern
vergebt, was sie euch an-
gehan haben, dann wird
euer Vater im Himmel euch
auch vergeben. 15 Wenn
ihr aber den andern nicht
vergebt, dann wird euer
Vater euch eure Verfehlun-
gen auch nicht vergeben.«

NRSV

5 And whenever you pray,
do not be like the hypo-
crites; 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.

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 se-
cret will reward you.

7 When you are pray-
ing, 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 be-
fore you ask him.

9 Pray then in this way:
Our Father in heaven, hal-
lowed 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 debt-
ors. 13 And do not bring us
to the time of trial, but res-
cue us from the evil one.

14 For if you forgive oth-
ers 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

5 And now about prayer.
When you pray, don't be like
the hypocrites who love to
pray publicly on street cor-
ners and in the synagogues
where everyone can see
them. I assure you, that is
all the reward they will ever
get. 6 But when you pray,
go away by yourself, shut
the door behind you, and
pray to your Father secret-
ly. Then your Father, who
knows all secrets, will re-
ward you.

7 When you pray, don't
babble on and on as peo-
ple of other religions do.
They think their prayers are
answered only by repeat-
ing 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 Fa-
ther 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 tempta-
tion, 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 Study of the Text:¹

¹Serious 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.

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1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

With this scripture text we encounter what many from the time of Martin Luther on have considered the high point of the Sermon. The literary structural diagram of the Sermon below reflects this long standing perspective. Once again the historical and literary backdrop to this text will play an important role in correct interpretation.

Historical Context:

The concept of prayer² in the ancient world was multi-faceted to say the least. Within our passage this huge diversity of viewpoint emerges with Jesus' reference to the praying of the Gentiles to their deities. This stood in contrast to patterns of prayer among the Jews. And this in turn was place in stark contrast to prayer as Jesus taught. As we take a summary look at these three perspectives on prayer we can gain helpful insight for better understanding of Jesus' teaching here.

Prayer in the Gentile world. Mt. 6:7-8 opens a window from inside the New Testament into the pagan world at the point of praying. The most noticeable aspect mentioned by Jesus is the use of many words in praying (βαπταλογήσητε ὡσπερ οἱ ἔθνηκοί... ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν). A study of prayers outside Judaism and Christianity in the ancient world confirms this perspective. Many words were typically used, but also important was the use of precisely correct words. Prayer in the Greco-Roman religions of the first century were highly ritualized and one had to be extremely careful to say the correct words before the deity if the deity were to hear and to respond in positive answer.³ Prayer was virtually always expressed audibly and not silently. The view of prayer typically was that it was essential for getting the gods to do what one desired.⁴ The line of distinction between prayer and magic in ancient paganism was blurred to the point of not being distinguishable. Prayer was offered in public sacrifice in the various temples scattered over the ancient Mediterranean world. And it was offered as a part of the worship practices to family deities at altars to the patron gods that were set up in the homes. Additionally prescribed ritual prayers would be offered as a part of worship at the roadside altars to different gods on the major roads throughout the empire. The manner of praying both then and today takes on a wide variety of patterns, all

²The origin of the English word 'pray' is quite interesting and informative as the Wikipedia article highlights:

"Pray entered Middle English as *preyen*, *prayen*, and *preien* around 1290, recorded in The early South-English Legendary I. 112/200: *And preide is fader wel gerne*, in the sense of "to ask earnestly." The next recorded use in 1300 is simply "to pray." [8] The word came to English from Old French *preier*, "to request" (first seen in *La Séquence de Ste. Eulalie*, ca. 880) In modern French *prier*, "to pray," the stem-vowel is leveled under that of the stem-stressed forms, *il prie*, etc. The origin of the word before this time is less certain. Compare the Italian *Pregare*, "to ask" or more rarely "pray for something" and Spanish *preguntar*, "ask." [Prayer: Etymology," Wikipedia online]

³"The pagans mistakenly believed that it was the squeaky wheel that would get the grease, and so they plied the diffident gods with lengthy invocations, names, surnames, and descriptive predicates to solicit their attention and to get them to draw near to hear their requests. In Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, a man is imprisoned by the emperor Domitian because at a public sacrifice he omitted to mention that Domitian was the son of Athene (a virgin goddess, 7.24). This pettiness, many people feared, was typical of deities. One had to invoke the gods with meticulous care so as not to offend them; but since the gods had completely different functions and domains of power under different names, one had to be sure to utter the right name to get the response one wanted. An example of pagan invocation in prayer is found in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass)* 11.2. Lucius appeals to the 'blessed queen of heaven, whether Thou be the Dame Ceres ...; whether Thou be the celestial Venus ...; or whether Thou be the sister of the god Phoebus ...; or whether Thou be called terrible Proserpine....' After each name, he gives a lengthy recital of the deeds and qualities of the goddess." [David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew : A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel*, Originally Published: New York : Crossroad, 1993., Reading the New Testament series (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 78.]

⁴"In the pre-Christian religions of Greeks and Romans (Ancient Greek religion, Roman religion), ceremonial prayer was highly formulaic and ritualized.[24][25] The Iguvine Tables contain a supplication that can be translated, "If anything was said improperly, if anything was done improperly, let it be as if it were done correctly."

"The formalism and formulaic nature of these prayers led them to be written down in language that may have only been partially understood by the writer, and our texts of these prayers may in fact be garbled. Prayers in Etruscan were used in the Roman world by augurs and other oracles long after Etruscan became a dead language. The Carmen Arvale and the Carmen Saliare are two specimens of partially preserved prayers that seem to have been unintelligible to their scribes, and whose language is full of archaisms and difficult passages.[26]

"Roman prayers and sacrifices were often envisioned as legal bargains between deity and worshipper. The Roman formula was *do ut des*: "I give, so that you may give in return." Cato the Elder's treatise on agriculture contains many examples of preserved traditional prayers; in one, a farmer addresses the unknown deity of a possibly sacred grove, and sacrifices a pig in order to placate the god or goddess of the place and beseech his or her permission to cut down some trees from the grove.[27]" ["Prayer: Pre-Christian Europe: Etruscan, Greek, and Roman paganism," Wikipedia online.]

the way from sitting to standing, from bowing one's head to looking up into the sky, from standing quietly to whirling, from silently praying to shouting aloud one's prayers.⁵ Thus to the pagan prayer was a key means of getting one's desires from the gods, and also a key means of placating the gods so that they would leave the worshipper alone in peace. Of course, this view is completely false and stands utterly rejected and condemned by Jesus and the apostles.

Prayer among ancient Jews. By the time of Jesus prayer among the Jewish people had evolved from the concepts found in the Old Testament into more ritualized, institutionalized patterns of praying. In the Old Testament most all the recorded prayers are by individuals with the exception of one in Ezra.⁶ By content and orientation, the most common forms of prayer are petition, thanksgiving, and worship.⁷ The book of Psalms by this point had become the basic prayer book of Judaism in both the temple at Jerusalem and in the synagogues scattered over the Diaspora. Also it formed the basis of individuals praying to God, in that the appropriate psalm for the moment would be uttered from memory to God as a prayer. Not much indication can be found suggesting that spontaneous prayers were employed to any extent. Prayer, both public and private, corporate and individual, was overwhelmingly memorized prayers coming largely from the book of Psalms.⁸

What Jesus attacks in verse five is not praying in public nor does he criticize the content of their prayers. He doesn't attack the scheduled prayer time of morning, noon, and mid-afternoon, which had developed by this point in time. Rather, he condemns the ostentatiousness of their public praying; how they did it was wrong. Interestingly, the scribal traditions preserved in the Talmud speak out against self-serving display in public prayers as well. Among religious Jews today, prayer is both individual and especially corporate. It follows prescribed written prayers found in the Siddur, the traditional Jewish prayer book. There are the daily prayers for morning, noon, and mid-afternoon for individuals, along with the

⁵Various spiritual traditions offer a wide variety of devotional acts. There are morning and evening prayers, graces said over meals, and reverent physical gestures. Some Christians bow their heads and fold their hands. Some Native Americans regard dancing as a form of prayer.[10] Some Sufis whirl.[11] Hindus chant mantras.[12] Orthodox Jews sway their bodies back and forth[13] and Muslims kneel and prostrate as seen on the right. Quakers keep silent.[14] Some pray according to standardized rituals and liturgies, while others prefer extemporaneous prayers. Still others combine the two.

These methods show a variety of understandings to prayer, which are led by underlying beliefs.

These beliefs may be that

*the finite can actually communicate with the infinite

*the infinite is interested in communicating with the finite

*prayer is intended to inculcate certain attitudes in the one who prays, rather than to influence the recipient

*prayer is intended to train a person to focus on the recipient through philosophy and intellectual contemplation

*prayer is intended to enable a person to gain a direct experience of the recipient

*prayer is intended to affect the very fabric of reality as we perceive it

*prayer is a catalyst for change in one's self and/or one's circumstances, or likewise those of third party beneficiaries
the recipient desires and appreciates prayer

*or any combination of these.

The act of prayer is attested in written sources as early as 5000 years ago.[15] Some anthropologists, such as Sir Edward Burnett Tylor and Sir James George Frazer, believed that the earliest intelligent modern humans practiced something that we would recognize today as prayer.[16]

Friedrich Heiler is often cited in Christian circles for his systematic Typology of Prayer which lists six types of prayer: primitive, ritual, Greek cultural, philosophical, mystical and prophetic.[17]" ["Prayer: Forms of Prayer," Wikipedia online]

⁶Prayers occur several times in the Torah, mostly associated with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Long prayers by Solomon and Daniel are recorded in Tanakh. Many of the Psalms are in fact prayers by David for example Psalm 103:

...Bless the Lord O my soul and do not forget all his benefits...

verse 2)

Shorter prayers by many individuals are also detailed, some famous, others comparatively unknown. For more details see the articles on the individual books of the Hebrew Bible, or look at a version of the text itself. Many Jews believe God still speaks directly through the words recorded in this ancient book.

Almost all of the prayers in the bible are of individuals (only in Ezra is there a prayer by a congregation of people), as the idea of congregational prayer evolved later. ["Prayer in the Hebrew Bible," Wikipedia online]

⁷Cf. "Prayer:Abrahamic religions: Bible," Wikipedia online. For a more detailed treatment see Dennis L. Okholm, "Prayer," *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* online.

⁸By Jesus' day, these prayers were brought together in the *Amidah* (Hebrew: הַדְּימְעָה תְּלִיפָת, *Tefilat HaAmidah* "The Standing Prayer") and were also known as the *Shmoneh Esreh* (הַרְשֵׁעַ הַגִּמְשׁ, *Shmoneh Esreh* "The Eighteen," in reference to the original number of constituent blessings). The *Amidah* contained individual daily prayers but especially focused on corporate prayers for the synagogue. See "Amidah," Wikipedia online for more details.

corporate prayers for the Sabbath service on Fridays along with prayers for special occasions.

Early Christian teaching about prayer. The teaching of the apostles elsewhere in the New Testament beyond the four gospels that contain the teaching of Jesus on prayer is fairly extensive. The vocabulary of prayer language in the New Testament includes numerous terms related to prayer.⁹ But the texts using these terms provide only a partial understanding of prayer in the New Testament. Unquestionably, Jesus' own teaching and example served as the foundation for early Christian understanding of prayer. The discussion of prayer in the writings of the apostle Paul are particularly important as well. Ballentine effectively summarizes the New Testament emphasis:¹⁰

But in contrast with the OT, which preserves more than 250 prose and psalmic prayers, the NT contains relatively few recorded prayers: the prayers of Jesus (Matt. 11:25–27 = Luke 10:21–22; Matt. 26:39 = Mark 14:36 = Luke 22:42; Matt. 27:46 = Mark 15:34; Luke 23:34, 46; John 11:41–42; 12:27–28; 17:1–26); the prayers of Peter and the assembly (Acts 1:24–25) and of Peter and John (4:24–30); the prayer of Stephen (7:59–60). Prayer is prominent in Paul, particularly in the introductory thanksgivings (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4) and the benedictory blessings (Rom. 16:25–27; 2 Cor. 13:13) that conclude the letters, but otherwise the actual words of Paul's prayers are not recorded. Also in contrast with the OT, which offers very little instruction in prayer (cf. Job 8:5–6; 11:13–15; 22:23–27), is the significant attention in the NT to teaching about prayer.

The NT offers both a continuation of the forms and traditions of Israelite and Jewish prayer and a distinctive Christian perspective on them. Jesus continues the practice of lament (Matt. 27:46 = Mark 15:34 [Ps. 22:1(2)]; Luke 23:46 [Ps. 31:5(6)]) and praise/thanksgiving (Matt. 11:25–27 = Luke 10:21–22; John 11:41–42) and is thus revered by his followers as one who modeled the essence of Hebraic prayer (cf. Heb. 5:7). The Gospel of Luke portrays Jesus as having prayed at critical junctures in his life — at baptism (Luke 3:21), the choosing of the disciples (6:12), transfiguration (9:28–29), in Gethsemane (22:32, 41–42), and at his crucifixion (23:46) — thus modeling the legacy preserved especially in Hebrew narratives of the importance of prayer in life's decisive situations.

The NT's distinctive perspective is especially evident in its instructions concerning how to pray. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus cautions against impious and pretentious prayer (Matt. 6:5–8) and offers the Lord's Prayer as a pattern for his disciples (Matt. 6:9–13 = Luke 11:2–4). This model prayer, which combines praise and petition in a simple, personal, and spontaneous form, is itself rooted in Jewish antecedents (cf. the Amidah or Prayer of Eighteen Benedictions). A further emphasis in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is the exhortation to be persistent in prayer (Matt. 7:7–11 = Luke 11:9–13), a theme also prominent in Paul, who calls believers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17; cf. Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2). Luke's Gospel elaborates further on this theme in two parables, Luke 11:5–8; 18:1–8, the latter of which connects persistent prayer with the promise of justice for the disadvantaged and the oppressed.

A further distinctive of prayer in the NT is the importance of intercession. In the high priestly prayer of John 17, Jesus embodies the role of intercessor as he entrusts the faith community and the efficaciousness of its witness in the world to God. Paul frequently exhorts congregations to become communities of intercession for him and for the success of his mission (Rom. 15:30–32; Col. 4:3; 2 Thess. 3:1). Peter and Paul pray for the healing of the sick (Acts 9:40; 28:8), a practice that the Letter of James commends to the elders of the church (Jas. 5:13–16). Elsewhere intercessions are offered for spiritual growth (Eph. 1:16–17; Phil. 1:9), sustenance in times of peril (Acts 12:5; Phil 1:19; Heb. 13:18), and for the civil authorities (1 Tim. 2:1–2). Especially noteworthy is Jesus' admonition to his followers to pray for the forgiveness of their persecutors (Matt. 5:44 = Luke 6:28). Jesus himself models such intercession in his last words from the cross (Luke 23:34). Stephen reflects Jesus' example in his own last words (Acts 7:60). The theology of the Cross in turn shapes Christian prayer definitively, and the principle of blessing, not cursing, one's enemies becomes a foundational imperative for Christian piety and practice (Matt. 5:39–48; Luke 6:27–36; Rom. 12:14).

Against this historical backdrop must one attempt to understand Mt. 6:5-15. Only then can the nuances in the words of Jesus in this text be grasped. Without such a background understanding, most of His teaching here will float by with little or no real understanding. Then the almost inevitable tendency will be to read modern theological constructs back into His words as though this is what Jesus said. Eisegesis

⁹"The NT uses a variety of terms with reference to prayer (*proseúchomai*, "pray"; *deómāi*, "ask/seek"; *eucharistéō*, "give thanks"; *krázō*, "cry")." [Samuel E. Balentine, "Prayer," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1077].

Also see C.W.F. Smith, "Prayer," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach:

"In the NT. The most generally used word (and the most frequent but not uniform LXX translation) is the noun *προσευχή*, with the middle deponent verb *προσευχόμεναι*, found most often in Luke-Acts (see the Hebrew idiom in [Jas. 5:17](#)). It applies particularly to asking of God and is a more religious term than *δεήσις* and *δεομαι*, which are also found often in Luke-Acts and the LXX, and which mean "a request" and "to ask," but not necessarily of God. (On the absence of these terms from the Fourth Gospel, see § [C4below](#).) For "prayer" the Fourth Gospel uses principally the verb *αἰτέω*, which may be used of asking man or God. It is used with *προσευχόμεναι* in [Mark 11:24](#), and the two are in apposition in [Col. 1:9](#). *Ἐντυγγάνω* in the sense of "intercede" (cf. [גָּבַח](#)) is used of prayer in [Rom. 8:27](#), 34; [Heb. 7:25](#) only, but of a legal petition in [Acts 25:24](#)."

¹⁰Samuel E. Balentine, "Prayer," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1077

will replace exegesis resulting in wrong headed understanding.

Literary Aspects:

Again, the literary aspects of this passage also play an important role in accurate understanding of the words of Jesus.

Literary Form:

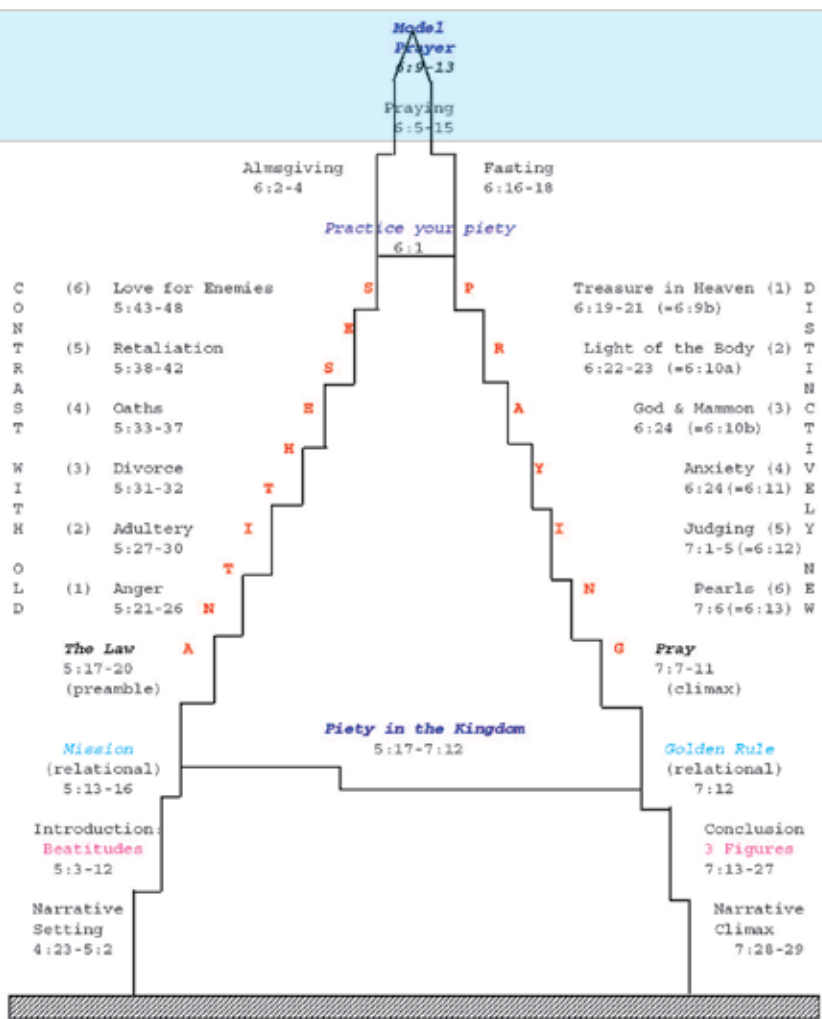
A ‘discipleship saying’ of Jesus is a label that has been given to these verses. Indeed these do reflect sayings of Jesus and are focused on discipleship. The pattern of expression in vv. 5-15 is both similar to and different from either vv. 2-4 or vv. 16-18. The similarity is found in the common structure of ‘don’t do piety that way; instead, do it this way.’ This structure, found with the almost exact same pattern of headers in vv. 5-6, matches that in vv. 2-4 and vv. 16-18.¹¹

The section in vv. 7-13 has distinctive traits that, although generally conforming to the negative / positive pattern, go their own distinctive direction. This has led much to modern biblical scholarship to conclude that Matthew is here inserting a piece of the Jesus tradition separate from that found in vv. 2-6 and 16-18. The parallel but shorter version of the Model Prayer in Luke 11:2-4¹² -- not located in Luke’s version of the Sermon -- provides some confirmation of this conclusion. The poetic nature of the six strophes in the Model Prayer represent a carefully crafted formal prayer that was designed for both individual memorization and church liturgical usage. It has some of the tones of the Jewish *Amidah* prayers used in the synagogues of that time.

Literary Setting:

As is reflected in the diagram to the right, verses 5-15 represent the second of three examples of piety that Jesus touches on in vv. 1-18. The role of prayer is highlighted to the pinnacle of importance with the doubling nature of the ideas. This is one of the reasons for the long standing view that prayer is the center point of the Sermon on the Mount. Great emphasis on how to pray is provided by the twofold negative/positive structures in vv. 5-6 and 7-13.

The Literary Structure of the Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 4:23-7:29



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

¹¹Note the similarity:

Alms: Negative: 6.2 Ὅταν οὖν ποιῆς ἐλεημοσύνην
Positive: 6.3 σοῦ δὲ ποιούντος ἐλεημοσύνην

Prayer: Negative: 6.5 Καὶ ὅταν προσεύχησθε,
Positive: 6.6 σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχη

Fasting: Negative: 6.16 Ὅταν δὲ νηστεύητε
Positive: 6.17 σὺ δὲ νηστεύων

The longer unit in vv. 5-15 creates a doubling effect. The second set of negative / positive items is introduced as follows:

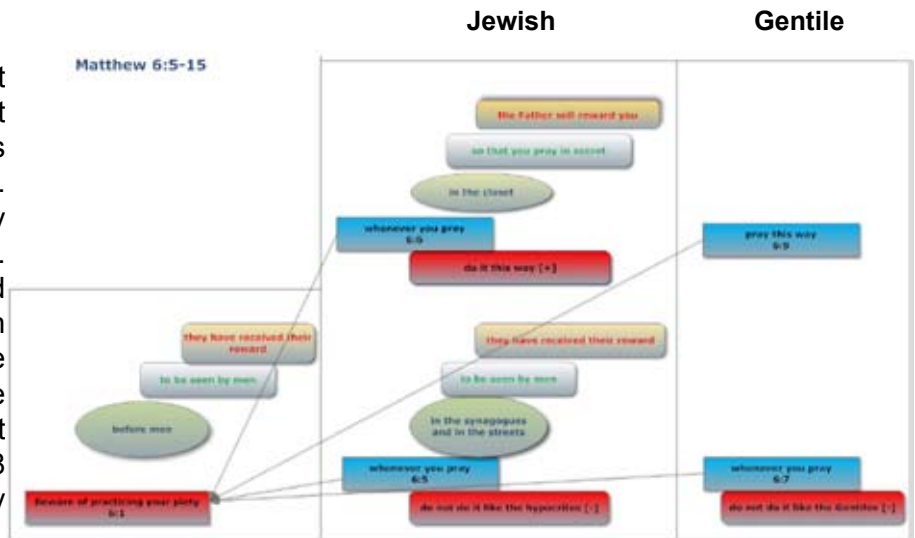
Negative: 6.7 Προσευχόμενοι δὲ
Positive: 6.9 Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς

¹²Luke 11:2-4, NRSV: “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.’”

As subsequent exegesis of the Model Prayer will illustrate, a second important literary contextual consideration for these verses is Mt. 6:19-7:6. The six strophes of the Model Prayer are linked conceptually to the six pericopes in 6:19-7:6, as is reflected in the above diagram. These six pericopes form the third major division of the body proper of the Sermon and represent the distinctively Christian perspective to prayer in the teaching of Jesus.

Literary Structure:

As the diagram to the right illustrates, the internal thought structure in vv. 5-15 both conforms to the other two pericopes in vv. 2-4 and 16-18, but also has very distinctive elements as well. Literarily this is necessitated by the contents of the ideas. In verses 4-6, the contrast with the Jewish religious leaders practice of prayer is made. This is a part of the threefold contrast of 6:1-18 to Jewish piety and that taught by Jesus.



But in verses 7-13, the contrast is made between the pattern of praying by pagan Gentiles (vv.7-8) and that advocated by Jesus (vv. 9-13). Gentile praying to idols had a very different pattern than that practiced by the scribes and Pharisees. Thus the structure used with them would not be appropriate. Therefore, although the core elements of ‘don’t do it that way, but do it this way’ are preserved, the details go a different direction. One must then understand the Model Prayer in vv. 9-13 against the backdrop in particular of the negative criticism of Gentile praying (vv. 7-8). In general the Model Prayer stands in contrast to the prayer patterns of Jewish praying (vv.5-6).

Verses 14-15 at the end of the pericope stand as a commentary elaboration on the fifth strophe of the Model Prayer in verse 12. The Markan source in Mk. 11:25 comes out of another teaching session of Jesus about prayer.¹³ With this extension to the fifth line of the Model Prayer heightened emphasis upon forgiveness is made upon the disciple’s willingness to forgive others.

Exegesis of the Text:

Don’t pray like the hypocrites, v. 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.” (6.5 Καὶ ὅταν προσεύχησθε, οὐκ ἔσεσθε ὡς οἱ ὑποκριταί, ὅτι φιλοῦσιν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς γωνίαις τῶν πλατειῶν ἐστῶτες προσεύχεται, ὅπως φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν.)

“Whenever you pray.” The opening ‘header’ (Καὶ ὅταν προσεύχησθε) that introduces the subject of praying follows the same pattern as with the other two opening headers on almsgiving (v. 2: “Ὅταν οὖν ποιῆς ἐλεημοσύνην) and fasting (v. 16: “Ὅταν δὲ νηστεύητε). The topic of prayer is placed on the table for consideration as an important issue for disciples in the Kingdom of Heaven. The historical background of prayer in the ancient world has already been discussed and thus will not be repeated here. The present tense form of the Greek verb carries with it the clear understanding that prayer is to be an ongoing part of discipleship. To be a Christian means to be a praying person. The two concepts are inseparably linked. To not pray is to not be a Christian.

“Do not be like the hypocrites.” The emphasis (οὐκ ἔσεσθε ὡς οἱ ὑποκριταί) is similar to that concerning almsgiving (μὴ σαλπίζης ἔμπροσθέν σου, ὡς περ οἱ ὑποκριταί ποιοῦσιν), but the wording is different. The negative with the future tense verb sets forth a strong warning somewhat in the language of the LXX. The pattern of praying by the ‘hypocrites’ must not be repeated by disciples in the Kingdom of Heaven.

¹³Mark 11:22-25, NRSV: 22 Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, “Be taken up and thrown into the sea,” and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

Again, the identification of ‘hypocrites’ here is the same as for verse two, the Pharisees who were seen as models of piety among first century Jews, and thus to be imitated in their practice of devotion to God. Jesus utterly rejects them as a worthy examine to copy.

“For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners.” The ‘for’ (ὅτι) introduces the reason for the warning not to copy these people. The use of φιλοῦσιν for “love to” has an interesting tone. Prayer prayed in this manner was seen as the Pharisee’s friend. Prayer offered publicly in the synagogues is quite easy to understand. To moderns prayer offered ‘on the street corners’ may seem strange, unless one has familiarity with Israeli Jewish and Moslem practice of prayers offered three times daily. In ancient Judaism devout Jews were expected to stop all activities at mid-morning, noon, and mid-afternoon to offer a prayer to God. These were taken from the Psalms as a part of the daily prayers set forth in the Amidah.¹⁴ Secularized western society can hardly grasp the importance of prayer in the ancient world.

The Bible student would make a big mistake to conclude, as has sometimes been the case in the history of interpretation of this passage, that Jesus here condemned praying in the synagogue and on the street corner. This view is based on the false understanding of “*your room*” (τὸ ταμεῖόν σου) in verse six as an exclusively spatial designation, and thus the opposite of synagogue and street corner. Such is not the case at all. Jesus was absolutely neutral about public prayers in the synagogues and on the street corners. Consequently public and private praying for disciples is completely within proper boundaries. Additionally, any conclusion about standing while praying as being forbidden by Jesus would be equally false.

“So that they may be seen by others.” The self-serving motive for praying is where the wrongness of the Pharisees’ praying was found, not in the location and posture of their praying. The Greek purpose clause, ὅπως φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, goes back to the similar purpose infinitive phrase in 6:1, πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς, and thus defines the wrongness of the pietistic action. Although their theology claimed ultimate awareness of their praying by God, because the more people that observed them the more certain they could be that God saw them, Jesus’ point here just as with their almsgiving is that such misses the point of praying completely. We don’t pray to impress God with our prayers. This is not praying! Jesus’ parable about the Pharisee and tax-collector praying in the temple captures the essence of his point here!¹⁵

“Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.” The negative assessment here, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν, is the exact same wording as with almsgiving in verse two, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν. Both play off the negative assessment in 6:1, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (“for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven”). Their prayers were intended to impress others with their piety, and they did. But God wasn’t impressed at all. Thus their prayers were wasted breath, because they weren’t really praying.

Pray this way, v. 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.” (6.6 σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχη εἰσελθε εἰς τὸ ταμεῖόν σου καὶ κλείσας τὴν θύραν σου πρόσευξαι τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι.).

“But whenever you pray.” The English translation unavoidably obscures the wording of this header in the Greek, σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχη, that clearly signals the same topic but from a positive perspective.

“Go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.” At first glance, Jesus seems to be advocating against the public praying in the synagogue and on the street corner with the specification of location for prayer here.¹⁶ The obvious hyperbolic language here dramatically stresses the

¹⁴See the above **Prayer among Ancient Jews** for details.

¹⁵Luke 18:9-14, NRSV: 9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.” The Greek phrase πρὸς ἑαυτὸν in verse 11 has a double meaning that the NRSV fails to capture. Positioned between the participle ‘standing’ and the verb ‘prayed’ it carries both the meaning ‘standing by himself’ and ‘prayed to himself.’ By separating himself off from other worshippers he ended up talking to himself, rather than to God in his prayers. His arrogance in prayer invalidated his praying completely.

¹⁶Compare Isa 26:20 LXX (εἰσελθε εἰς τὰ ταμίεία σου ἀπόκλεισον τὴν θύραν σου) and 4 Bas4:33 (εἰσήλθεν Ελισαιε

importance of prayer being focused on God and not on impressing people, as Davies and Allison note.¹⁷

“And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Once again the wording here, καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι, exactly parallels the similar emphasis about almsgiving in verse 4, καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι. The eschatological thrust of this commendation is present with an emphasis upon God acknowledging proper praying in eschatological judgment. Both statements here and in verse four reverse the negative assessment of improper piety in verse one, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (*“for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven”*).¹⁸ The eschatological nature of the pronouncement here shifts the understanding away from the idea that God’s reward is granting me what I request in prayer. Far more important is the point that when we stand before God in final judgment He will acknowledge that we have prayed to Him correctly and in a way that has pleased Him.

Don’t pray like Gentiles, 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.”* (6.7 Προσευχόμενοι δὲ μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὡσπερ οἱ ἔθνηκοί, δοκοῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν εἰσακουσθήσονται. 6.8 μὴ οὖν ὁμοιωθῆτε αὐτοῖς· οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὧν χρεῖαν ἔχετε πρὸ τοῦ ὑμᾶς αἰτῆσαι αὐτόν.)

“When you are praying.” The header here, Προσευχόμενοι δὲ, serves to re-introduce a negative perspective but as a part of the continuing topic of praying begun in verse five. The present tense of the Greek participle here is consistent with the present tense verbs προσεύχησθε; προσεύχη in verses five and six. The plural form of the participle links it back more closely to the plural verb in verse five.

“Do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.” 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. 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.¹⁹ The likely meaning is to talk on and on but with words that have εἰς τὸν οἶκον καὶ ἀπέκλεισεν τὴν θύραν ... καὶ προσηύξατο πρὸς κύριον). For the imperative of εἰσέρχομαι + εἰς see 10:5; 25:21, 23 (these last two also have εἰσελθε + εἰς + accusative + genitive). εἰσέρχομαι + εἰς + ταμεῖον was a common expression: Gen 43:30; Exod 8:3; Judg 15:1; 3 Βαc 21:30; Isa 26:20; T. Jos. 3:3. ταμεῖον (= innermost or secret room or storeroom; cf. Gen 43:30; Exod 8:3 LXX, both for *heder*; 1 Clem. 50:4; *tamyōn* is a loanword in rabbinic Hebrew) appears in Matthew here and in 24:26 (v.1. ταμεῖον, the older form), where the subject is the location of false Christs. Augustine, De serm. mont. 2:3:11, wrongly identifies the ‘inner room’ with the heart and cites Ps 4:4 in support.” [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]

¹⁷” The command to go into one’s innermost room and lock the door and then pray is clearly hyperbolic (cf. 6:3). Even if there were no sessions of public prayer at Khirbet Qumran (a disputed issue; see Wacholder, pp. 88, 253, n. 333), in Mt 6:5–6 public prayer is not being banned (cf. Mt 11:25; Mk 6:41; Lk 11:1; Jn 11:41–2), only its vainglorious use; otherwise temple cult and synagogue service would here be abolished. The point is this: prayer is for God alone; it requires no human audience. The soul in prayer must be turned only towards God. One who went into the inner room only making sure beforehand that others knew where he was to be and what he was to do would be no better off than one who prayed for show on the street corners (cf. Chrysostom, Hom. on Mt. 19:3).” [Ibid.]

¹⁸As was the case in 6:4, so here later copists of the text attempted to amend the wording to make it read, ‘will reward you openly’ by adding the phrase ἐν τῷ φανερῷ. This alternative reading is late and without worthwhile support. Thus it was not a part of the original writing of the text.

¹⁹”The verb, absent from the LXX, occurs only here in the NT, save for Lk 11:2 D. It presumably means ‘to babble’ and is clarified here by πολυλογία. The Greek lexicon traditionally ascribed to Suidas implausibly explains βατταλογέω by reference to Battus, the stammering Libyan king (see Herodotus 4:155). According to BAGD, s.v., the word appears outside of the NT — save for literature influenced by Matthew — only in *Vita Aesopi* (ed. of A. Westermann, 1845, c. 19, p. 47; it is absent from the edition of Eberhard I, c. 26, p. 289, 9) and in Simplicius, *Comm. in Epict. Ench. 37*. At least three explanations of its etymology have been offered. It is impossible to decide between them. (1) It might be a hybrid form, deriving from the Aramaic *bātēl* (‘empty, inane’) + λόγος (cf. BDF § 40, citing Blass; see sy^{s.h}). *bātēl* appears in an Aramaic papyrus from Murabbaʿat with the meaning of ineffectual; see Mur 25a 1:7. Also from the Semitic sphere is the Hebrew *bātā* = ‘speak rashly, thoughtlessly’ (Lev 5:4; Ps 106:33). (2) According to Schlatter (p. 206), the non-literary word refers to the futility of gathering bramble twigs and thus to futile exertion in general. βάτος = ‘bramble’ and λέγειν can mean ‘to gather’. (3) In the opinion of G. Dellling (TWNT 1, p. 598) βατταλογέω was simply formulated on the analogy of the better known βατταρίζω (= ‘stammer,

little meaning or substance. As discussed above under Historical Context, 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 not attention to mortals normally. Thus prayer had to first get their attention, but do so in a way that would generate a favorable response.²⁰

“Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” This second admonition reenforces the preceding one and provides the reason. Disciples in the Kingdom of Heaven need not bombard God with long prayers. The sneaky wheel principle doesn't work here. We don't have to attract God's attention in our praying. In fact, we don't need to elaborate details of our needs and desires. The reason? God already knows 'what you need before you ask Him.' Thus prayer is not informing God, nor getting His attention. Why then pray?

Clearly Jesus expects His disciples to pray. And the language of the New Testament is rich in describing different kinds of praying. The point is that God is already near His people and knows His people. He seeks then to communicate with His people and prayer is their way to speaking to Him. The content of praying specified in the model prayer bring to light the nature and goal of our praying as both praise and petition.

Pray this way, vv. 9-13: “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. “ (6.9 Οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς· Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου· 6.10 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς· 6.11 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον· 6.12 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· 6.13 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.).

One has to ask at the beginning about the sources of this material since a shorter but parallel version of the same prayer exists in Luke 18:2-4.

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.'

Most likely the Model Prayer belongs to the so-called Q source material that is common to both Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark.²¹

The conceptual structure of the six strophes in this rather poetic structure play off the vertical / horizontal understanding of religious experience that we've already noticed in the Beatitudes. The first three are vertical while the last three are horizontal.

As the subsequent exegesis of 6:19-7:6 will explore in detail, these six strophes provide the foundation for the obligations of praying as a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven. The mandates of the later material in the Sermon are linked to these six strophes as obligations to the prayer.

stutter') in connection with -λογεῖν. [Davies - Allison, *ibid.*]

²⁰“Jesus was not the first to advise that in prayer the tongue should not go before the heart: the criticism of long-winded prayer or of the profane repetition of prayer was known in Judaism. Already in Eccles 5:2 we find this: ‘Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few’. Compare Isa 1:15; Eccles 7:14; and *b. Ber.* 61a, which reads: ‘A man's words should always be few towards God’. According to *Mek.* on Exod 15:25, the prayer of the righteous is short. In 2 Bar. 48:26, Baruch is commended for having prayed ‘simply’. See further *m. Ber.* 3:5; 4:4; *b. Ber.* 32b–3b; SB 1, pp. 403–5. Contrast y. Ber. 4:7b: ‘He who multiplies prayer will be heard’. 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.” [Davies - Allison, *ibid.*]

²¹“Both in Matthew and in (Luke 11.1–4) it appears as the ideal Christian prayer, although the two contexts are different. The Lukan context sets it in contrast to the prayers that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. The prayer also occurs in the Didache, a Christian document of great authority during the early Christian centuries. The form of the prayer in the Didache is practically identical with that of Matthew, and questions regarding the original form, whether to be found in Matthew or Luke, remain unresolved. Scholars have often argued in favor of the originality of the Lukan form, since it reflects less of a liturgical structure. On the other hand, Matthew is more eschatologically oriented, while Luke's interests seem to have shifted to the affairs of everyday living.” [Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*, Originally Published: A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew, c1988., UBS helps for translators; UBS handbook series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 163.]

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

The Matthean wording Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου is paralleled by Luke 11:2, Πάτερ, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου. Heavenly Father is more Jewish in tone, and thus reflects Matthew’s Jewish orientation.

The petition, couched in polite request tones, simply asks for God’s name to be made holy.²² We ask for God, who is represented by His name, to become special and set apart both in our life and in the world around us. Matt. 6:19-21 carry the implications of such a request.

“Your kingdom come.”

The Matthean wording ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου is matched by the Lukan wording ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου in Lk. 11:2b. The petition asks that God’s rule come to pass now in the life of the disciple and in his world. Matt. 6:22-23 carries the implications of such a request.

“Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Matthean wording γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς is not found in the Lukan version. The request is parallel to the first two petitions above and provides additional affirmation of the desire for God to actively work in authority in His creation. The implications of this request are spelled out in Matt. 6:24.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

The Matthean wording τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον is matched by Luke’s account τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ’ ἡμέραν in 11:3. The shift in the request here is for God’s provision of physical needs. Matt. 6:25-34 spells out implications behind making this request to God.

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

The Matthean wording καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν is close to the Lukan wording καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν in 11:4. While Matthew uses ‘debts’ (τὰ ὀφειλήματα), Luke uses ‘sins’ (τὰς ἀμαρτίας). Both ideas are virtually interchangeable, and refer to improper conduct before God. Matthew qualifies divine forgiveness as equal to the level of human forgiveness that exists in the one praying (ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν). Luke, however, sees divine forgiveness predicated on the basis of the already expressed forgiveness of others by the one praying (καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν). Both ideas complement one another. Matt. 7:1-5 spell out the implications of this request.

Also Matt. 6:14-15 adds emphasis to the importance of this request with its commentary on this prayer request.

“And do not bring us into the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.”

The Matthean wording καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ is longer than that in Luke 11:4, καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν. The second clause in Matthew has Jewish tones and thus may explain the longer expression. The Greek word πειρασμός covers a range of meanings from ‘trial’ to ‘temptation.’ In the context it seems better to understand it as ‘temptation’ to wrong doing. The deliverance requested is to be rescued from the clutches of the Devil who is our tempter. The implications of this request are set forth in Matt. 7:6.

Thus the prayer both illustrates and instructs the disciple on proper subjects of prayer concern in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Also it is important to note that recent translations do not include the phrase *“For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.”* The King James Version along with other pre-twentieth century translations included this scribal addition taken from 1 Chron. 29:11-13 because of the influence of the Latin Vulgate. With the growing liturgical use of the Lord’s Prayer in later Christian circles, this statement was added to give the prayer ‘an appropriate ending.’²³ But it clearly was not a part of the prayer as taught

²²“The archaic *Hallowed be thy name* is translated “may your name be honoured” by [Phps](#) and “May your name be held in reverence” by Brc. NJB translates “may your name be held holy.” Together with RSV, a number of so-called modern English translations perpetuate the archaic *hallowed* (NIV, NEB, NAB), which translates a Greek verb meaning “make holy.” TEV incorporates the idea of holy, but the restructuring is quite different: “*May your holy name be honored.*” [Newmann-Stine, *ibid.*]

²³“The ascription at the close of the Lord’s Prayer occurs in several forms. In [K L W Δ Θ Π](#)¹³ *al* it is the familiar triple

by Jesus.

Be forgiving, vv. 14-15: “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.” (6.14 Ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφῆτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος· 6.15 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφῆτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν.).

This material comes from the Jesus tradition in Mark 11:25 as a commentary insertion on the importance of forgiveness. The stress is clearly that divine forgiveness is predicated on a forgiving spirit by the disciple seeking God’s forgiveness. Again the vertical / horizontal nature of religious experience is brought into sharp focus.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

- 1) How important is prayer to you?

- 2) What do you seek to accomplish in prayer?

- 3) What do you pray about mostly in your prayers?

strophic form, whereas the Sahidic and Fayyumic (like the form quoted in the Didache) lack ἡ βασιλεία καί, the Curetonian Syriac lacks ἡ δύναμις καί, and the Old Latin k reads simply “for thine is the power for ever and ever.” Some Greek manuscripts expand “for ever” into “for ever and ever,” and most of them add “amen.” Several late manuscripts ([157](#) [225](#) [418](#)) append a trinitarian ascription, “for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen.” The same expansion occurs also at the close of the Lord’s Prayer in the liturgy that is traditionally ascribed to St. John Chrysostom.

“The absence of any ascription in early and important representatives of the Alexandrian (Ⲙ B), the Western (D and most of the Old Latin), and other (*f*¹) types of text, as well as early patristic commentaries on the Lord’s Prayer (those of [Tertullian](#), Origen, [Cyprian](#)), suggests that an ascription, usually in a threefold form, was composed (perhaps on the basis of 1 Chr 29.11–13) in order to adapt the Prayer for liturgical use in the early church. Still later scribes added “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 12.]