

# Connect360: Have You Noticed My Humility?

February 7, 2024

- *Lesson 5 in the Connect360 unit "Kingdom Power: The Sermon on the Mount" focuses on Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18.*

Even though it is important to know how to pray for those gathered on any occasion, the temptation always is there to attempt to impress those who are listening. Jesus considered that kind of piety phony. He rebuked the religious leaders who showed up in the synagogues and street corners praying to be seen by men. They have no heavenly reward, he warned.

Jesus also exposed the hypocrisy of meaningless repetitions in prayers. When the Jews repeated the Shema every morning and evening, it easily might have become trivial, ritualistic and meaningless. In 1 Kings 18, the prophets of Baal called out to their god from morning until evening, dancing around the altar, even cutting themselves with knives. Yet their god was not real and was unable to answer them. Elijah responded with a simple two sentence prayer to Yahweh, and God answered with fire from heaven.

Jesus was not rebuking persistent prayer; He spent all night in prayer on occasions. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for hours and admonished the disciples for being unable to stay awake and pray. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Was Jesus saying we should avoid praying in public? Did he advise us against using written prayers of others? Obviously not, because right after

these admonitions, he prayed publicly giving us an example of a prayer we continue to use as a model prayer.

Jesus and his followers went to the temple to pray. Quoting from Isaiah 56:7, Jesus was angry at the money changers in the temple and said, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a robbers’ den’” (Matthew 21:13). Even after the resurrection the disciples continued to pray in the temple. “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1).

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