

"When you pray" **Matt 6.5-8**

The first thing Jesus does when he begins to teach on prayer is to clear up some misconceptions about prayer.

Prayer is not optional

"When you pray..."

Jesus expects his followers to be people of prayer.

Relationships take work, including our relationship with God.

Make a time

Make a place

Make a start

Prayer is not a performance

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full."

There is always a temptation to do our "Christian stuff" for someone other than God.

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Jesus is telling his disciples to go and pray in the closet.

There is a place for people to lead in prayer, or to pray for others, the important question is, "Who is the audience?"

Prayer is not manipulation

⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think 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.

A very common, but totally unchristian, view of prayer is that if you say the right words, promise the right things, say it often enough, or loud enough, or with enough emotion, that somehow you can manipulate God into giving you what you want.

God is neither ignorant of your needs nor unwilling to provide for them.

Do you trust God enough to know your needs better than you do yourself?

Take aways

Prayer is part of the normal life of a follower of Jesus, but it doesn't always happen automatically. Make time, make space and make a start, if you haven't already.

Prayer is something that you do for God and for your relationship with him, not for others.

Prayer is an expression of a relationship of trust, not an attempt to manipulate God to do what you want.