



### **Introduction:**

I want to open today with a simple truth: **Christians never outgrow the basics.**

You grow in the basics. You never grow out of the basics. In other words, the truths and disciplines you learn in children’s ministry or VBS, are still true today even when you are a teenager. You never stop growing in prayer, Bible study, Scripture memorization, or in telling others about Jesus. Whether you are 9 or 90, there is always room to learn and grow in Christ.

Today, we are starting a new series on prayer, and if I’m honest, this is an area that I’ve always struggled with, even though it is so easy. I tend to like learning, reading, and studying but I struggle to slow down and pray, and to pray with sincerity. [[Here, share whether prayer is a strength or a weakness for you.](#)]

**What is prayer?** Prayer is **communication** and **communion** with God. It is the highest activity anyone in this life will ever engage in. Prayer affects the way God moves on Earth. God has spared cities because of the prayer of the people. And God has destroyed cities because He couldn’t find people who would pray and worship Him.

Prayer moves the heart and hands of God. If we truly believed what the Bible says about prayer, we would pray more. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul told us to “pray without ceasing.” I think he was saying that prayer is to the soul what air is to the body. It is an unbroken connection with our heavenly Father.

I’ve heard it illustrated that prayer is not like talking to God on the telephone. We don’t call God, talk to Him and then just hang up. But rather, prayer is like talking to God on a Walkie-Talkie. We speak and He’s always there. We don’t hang up and call back next week. We have ongoing conversations with Him throughout the day.

So, prayer is *communication* with God, and it is also our *communion* with God. **The most valuable thing we receive through prayer is God**

**Himself.** He is the treasure and He is the goal. And He has invited all of us to come to Him whenever we'd like.

As we get into the Scripture, we will read from the sermon on the mount. (Matt. 5-7) This is Jesus' longest recorded continuous teaching we have. In Matthew 6, Jesus gave the same warning about **giving, praying, and fasting**, when he said, don't be like the hypocrites and religious leaders of the day who love to do those things for attention and recognition. So, when you give, don't give for attention. When you pray, don't pray like the hypocrites. And when you fast, don't tell everybody for recognition. When we practice these three disciplines, we don't do it for others, we do it for God.

Let's pray before we read the Scripture together. [[Pray here.](#)]

### **Teaching:**

Let's read together:

*"Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 When you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. 8 Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him."* - **Matthew 6:5-8 (CSB)**

In the first century, the prayers of the pharisees had become **formalized, repetitive, regulated, long, overdone, and on display**. Jesus countered this with a few statements for His listeners concerning **how not to pray**.

### **I. DO NOT PRAY LIKE THE HYPOCRITES. (v.5)**

A hypocrite is an actor or pretender. Actors during Jesus' day would often wear a mask to cover up their true identity. What Jesus said was don't pray as a pretender/actor. Bring your true self to God when you pray. You don't have to wear a mask because God knows you better than you even know yourself. As Hebrews 4 tells us:

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