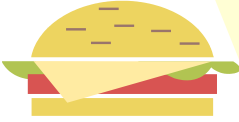


Our Place



It was our favorite place. Many Monday afternoon's my two sons and I would go to a little restaurant by the river in our small Midwest town to order lunch. We went to the Riverfront Café so frequently that the waitress became familiar with our particular favorites on the menu. While waiting for our food we passed the time by playing either Candy Land (my particular favorite—with the old fashioned graphics) or Rummy. During those summer lunches we spent many hours together laughing and talking (how many teenage boys are willing to hang out with their mothers?). This restaurant was our special meeting place for several years until it closed down. We were blessed and strengthened as a family during these times we spent fellowshiping together at "our place."

Please read Matthew 6: 5-6.

In verse 6 who did Jesus tell us not to be like? _____ .

What are some characteristics of hypocritical prayer? _____ .

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The word for *hypocrites* transliterates *hupokrites* which means interestingly "a man who assumes and speaks or acts under a feigned character." The word *character* can be understood to mean a role in a play or drama. I also felt the Spirit prompt me to see that *character* also means our personal integrity and beliefs. I hope it is not out of character for me to spend time in prayer. *Hupokrites* also translates as, "people who pretend to be what they are not" (Word Study Series, 1423-1424).

According to verse 6 what is the main goal of hypocritical prayer?

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I do not believe that the hypocrite really is as concerned about the outcome of his prayer as he is about being seen *in prayer*. The motives of his heart are impure; he is concerned about getting glory for himself instead of God being glorified.

What does the end of verse 5 say this person will gain? _____ .

Reflect for a few minutes on what type of a reward this could have been. List your ideas: _____

The word we see used for prayer in this text is the same word we saw yesterday, *proseuchomai*, another facet of the definition for this word is to literally, "speak out and to express a wish. To pray or vow to God in an absolute sense or on behalf of someone...to desire earnestly" (Word Study Series, 689). The only thing the hypocrite desired earnestly was to be seen by others praying; he truly cared not about the outcome of his prayers.

Matthew Henry wrote the reward that hypocritical prayer receives is, "... not the reward *God* promises to those who do good but the reward *hypocrites* promise themselves , and a poor reward it is; they did it to be seen of men, and they are seen of men" (emphasis mine). End of story. How sad to miss out on a reward from God.

We have learned from scripture how not to pray now let's take a look at verse 6 and learn how to pray.

Please read verse 6. What are some characteristics of sincere prayer?_____.

God calls us to come away from the business of life and spend time with Him alone in prayer. The word for closet used in this text is *tameion* which means "any private room, secret chamber" used "for storage or privacy, a spot for retirement." I

especially like the idea of *retiring* in fellowship with God part! That sounds like heaven to me!



Jesus even had his own private place for prayer and fellowship with God.

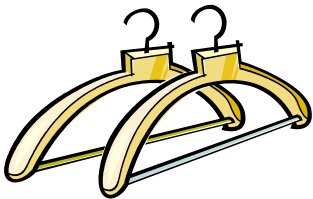
Look up Matthew 14:23 and record where Jesus went to pray.

Think of this just for a moment; what if the president of the United States called you and asked to meet with you privately each day because he had things he wanted to discuss with only you. Despite your political beliefs most of us would count that privilege as an honor. But it's not the president who is calling and asking for our daily fellowship, but our Most Holy God of the Universe. In particular, He is asking **you** to choose a special place and time just for you and Him to meet and fellowship.

**Do you have a special place and time to meet with the Lord?
Please describe it!**_____

If you do not have a special time and place in which to spend time with our Holy Father, why not choose one right now? Personally I like to spend time with God right after breakfast. I've tried other times of the day but it is too easy to push my Quiet Time aside once the kids are up and the business of the day has begun.

When and where will you meet with



God?_____ .

Go back to verse 6 for a moment and read it again.

According to verse 6 where is God right now? _____ .

You see, you do not have to worry whether or not He will show up or be late—He is always waiting for you in that secret place. He's waiting right now!

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