

## The Model Prayer - Matt 6:5-14

**5** “And when you pray, you shall not be like the [b]hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

**6** But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you [c]openly.

**7** And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

**8** “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

**9** In this manner, therefore, pray:  
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 forgive our debtors.

**13**

And do not lead us into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**4** “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**5** “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

## 1. “Do not be like the hypocrites” — prayer as performance

They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men... they have their reward.

What’s actually being condemned?

Not public prayer, but performative prayer.

The issue isn’t where they pray — it’s why.

- Their audience is people
- Their reward is recognition
- Their god is appearance

### Jesus is saying something razor-sharp here:

If human approval is what you’re praying for, human approval is all you’ll ever get.

That’s not punishment.

That’s simply truth reflecting motive.

### Hypocrite

ὑποκριταί (hypokritai)

singular: ὑποκριτής (hypokritēs)

Original meaning (before it was moral)

A hypokritēs was:

- a stage actor
- someone who performed a role
- someone who spoke from behind a mask

It comes from a verb meaning:

to answer, interpret, or speak from underneath

So at its root, the word means:

one who presents a voice that is not their own

### What Jesus means contextually (this is key)

In Matthew 6, Jesus is not primarily accusing people of lying.

He is accusing them of misaligned identity.

A hypocrite is someone whose:

- outer spiritual expression
- does not match their
- inner motive or allegiance

They are not pretending to pray —

they are pretending to relate to God.

## **Contextual definition**

A hypocrite is someone who performs devotion for an audience while claiming God as the reason.

Or more precisely:

A hypocrite is a person whose religious actions are aimed at human recognition, while their language claims divine orientation.

## **Why Jesus pairs hypocrisy with visibility**

Notice the pattern in the text:

- They pray standing
- In synagogues and street corners
- “to be seen by others”

Visibility is not accidental — it’s the point.

The hypocrisy is not public prayer.

The hypocrisy is prayer shaped by the crowd instead of God.

“In the Sermon on the Mount, a hypocrite is not a sinner pretending to be righteous — but a performer pretending to be sincere.”

**6** But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you [c]openly.

## **2. “Go into your room... shut your door” — re-centering the audience**

Pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

This isn’t about isolation for isolation’s sake.

It’s about removing every competing witness.

Closed door =

- no validation
- no comparison
- no performance
- no religious signaling

## **Only you and God, exactly as you are.**

The “secret place” is not a location — the greek word means hidden, concealed, unseen realm.

it’s the absence of an audience.

God doesn’t reward secrecy.

He rewards honesty that only happens in secrecy.

An “open reward” is a visible, lived-out consequence of inner alignment with God — not applause, not status, and not something you can manufacture.

ἀποδώσει (apodōsei) — will give back, will repay, will render  
φανερῶ (phanerō) — openly, visibly, manifestly, in plain view

So Jesus is not talking about a secret reward later revealed. He is talking about a reward that becomes evident in the open realm of life.

**An open reward is not:**

- public praise
- spiritual status
- influence
- authority
- material blessing
- success as the world defines it

Those are the same rewards the hypocrites were already chasing — and Jesus explicitly says they already have theirs. So the open reward must be qualitatively different.

An open reward is the natural visibility of an interior transformation. Think in terms of fruit, not trophies.

**Examples of “open rewards” in real life**

- Peace that shows under pressure
- Clarity where others panic
- Freedom from bitterness that others are still chained to
- Integrity that quietly earns trust
- Stability in suffering
- Wisdom that doesn’t need to announce itself
- Authority of character, not position

People see something — but they can’t trace it to performance. That’s why it’s a reward only God can give.

**You can fake:**

- words
- rituals

- volume
- emotion
- spirituality

### **You cannot fake:**

- patience over time
- forgiveness that costs you
- calm when you should be anxious
- humility when praised
- restraint when provoked

Those are open rewards — and they expose the source without advertising it.

**7** And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

### **3. “Do not use vain repetitions” — prayer is not manipulation**

They think they will be heard for their many words.

This isn't condemning repetition itself (the Psalms repeat constantly).

It's condemning mechanical speech meant to force a response.

Pagan prayer assumed:

- gods are distracted
- gods are moody
- gods must be persuaded
- volume + length = effectiveness

Jesus cuts through that completely:

“Your Father knows what you need before you ask.”

So why pray at all?

Because prayer is not about informing God

—it's about aligning the self.

In Gospel of Matthew 6:7, the word translated “heathen” is:

ἔθνικοί (ethnikoi)

### **Literal meaning**

- Derived from ἔθνος (ethnos) = nation, people group
- ἔθνικοί = people of the nations

So literally:

“those of the nations”

→ non-Jews

→ Gentiles

### **What it did not mean**

Jesus was not saying:

- ignorant people
- morally inferior people
- stupid people
- spiritually hopeless people

That later, harsh tone attached to “heathen” is medieval English baggage, not first-century meaning.

In Jesus’ mouth, it’s descriptive, not contemptuous.

### **What it did mean in context**

In Jewish thought of the time, ethnikai were people who:

- did not know the God of Israel
- worshiped many gods
- believed divine favor had to be earned or triggered
- used ritual speech, repetition, volume, or formulas to get attention

So when Jesus says:

“Do not babble like the ethnikai...”

He is critiquing a method of prayer, not a people group.

“Any prayer that treats God like a lever instead of a Father is heathen — no matter who’s praying it.”

**4. “In this manner, therefore, pray”** — the Lord’s Prayer as a re-ordering of the soul

This prayer is not a spell.

It’s a framework that reorients reality.

The hidden pattern of the Lord’s Prayer

In Gospel of Matthew 6:9–13, the prayer unfolds in a descending–ascending structure that moves from God → world → self → threat, then (in the church’s tradition) returns to God.

Think of it as orientation → alignment → dependence → protection.

### **Overview of the structure**

1. Orientation — Who God is
2. Alignment — What reality is ordered toward
3. Dependence — What humans actually need
4. Restoration — What breaks relationships
5. Protection — What threatens the soul
- (→ 6. Praise — what ultimately belongs to God)

### 1. Our Father in heaven

Relationship before request

- “Our” → communal, not private ownership of God
- “Father” → intimacy without control
- “In heaven” → closeness without familiarity

You are loved, but not in charge.

### 2. Hallowed be Your name

Reverence before agenda

This is not saying “make Your name holy.”

It means:

Let me not drag You down to my level.

Prayer begins by lifting God up, not bringing Him down.

### 3. Your kingdom come / Your will be done

Authority and Surrender before provision

This is the death of transactional prayer.

You’re saying:

“I want what You want, even if it disrupts what I want.”

This line dismantles self-centered spirituality.

### 4. Give us this day our daily bread

Dependence, not stockpiling

Daily bread = enough

Not excess.

Not anxiety.

Not hoarding.

It’s Israel in the wilderness again:

trust renewed every morning.

Jesus teaches us to ask for what sustains life, not what inflates identity.

5. Forgive us... as we forgive

Grace that must flow through you, not stop with you

This is the only part Jesus circles back to afterward — and that's deliberate.

Why?

Because unforgiveness blocks prayer at the relational level.

You cannot receive mercy while refusing to release it.

Not because God is petty —

but because a clenched fist cannot receive a gift.

6. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

Acknowledging weakness, not denying it

This is humility:

- “I am vulnerable”
- “I need guidance”
- “I am not self-sufficient”

Spiritual maturity doesn't claim strength — it asks for protection.

This word does not strictly mean “temptation” in the modern sense.

It can mean:

- testing
- trial
- pressure
- proving
- ordeal
- temptation (in the moral sense)

So the phrase could just as accurately read:

“Do not bring us into testing.”

## **2. Does God tempt people?**

Scripture answers that directly elsewhere:

In Epistle of James 1:13:

“God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.”

So we already know:

God does not seduce people into sin.

That rules out the idea that Jesus is implying God is morally trying to trap us.

## **3. But does God allow testing?**

Yes.

Throughout Scripture:

- Abraham was tested.
- Israel was tested in the wilderness.
- Job was tested.
- Even Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tested.

Testing is not the same as tempting.

The prayer is not accusing God of evil intent.

It is expressing humility:

“Father, do not permit us to enter into circumstances of testing that would overwhelm us.”

It’s a prayer for:

- protection
- limitation of exposure
- merciful guidance
- preservation

It assumes vulnerability.

## **5. Why would Jesus include this?**

Look at the flow of the prayer:

- Your will be done
- Give us bread
- Forgive us
- Do not bring us into testing
- Deliver us from the evil one

It is moving from alignment → dependence → weakness → danger.

The disciple is saying:

“I want Your will, but I know my weakness. Guard me.”

### **The wilderness connection**

Jesus Himself was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested.

So He knows what testing feels like.

This prayer acknowledges:

- Testing exists.
- Evil exists.
- Weakness exists.
- We need help navigating it.

### **The Evil One?**

## **In Matthew's Gospel specifically**

In Gospel of Matthew 6:13, the phrase is:

ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ

“from the evil one”

Now ask: how does Matthew use that phrase elsewhere?

He uses the same expression clearly in:

- Matthew 13:19 — “the evil one comes and snatches away...”
- Matthew 13:38 — “the sons of the evil one”

In both cases, it unmistakably refers to a personal adversary.

So contextually within Matthew:

👉 “the evil one” most naturally refers to Satan.

## **2. How Matthew introduces this figure**

Early in the Gospel:

- Jesus is tempted in the wilderness.
- The tempter is called:
- “the devil”
- “the tempter”
- “Satan”

Matthew presents him as:

- personal
- intelligent
- oppositional
- attempting to derail obedience

So when the Lord's Prayer ends with:

“Deliver us from the evil one”

It fits that narrative arc perfectly.

## **3. But what does “evil one” mean conceptually?**

The Greek term ὁ πονηρός (ho ponēros) literally means:

“the malicious one”

“the corrupting one”

“the destructive one”

It emphasizes:

- active harm
- moral corruption
- destructive intent

So this is not abstract evil floating around.

It is personalized opposition to God's purposes.

#### 4. How the Jewish world understood this

In Second Temple Jewish thought (Jesus' era), there was belief in:

- a personal adversary (Satan)
- accusing spirits
- forces opposing God's rule

Not equal to God.

Not rival in power.

But real.

The worldview was not dualistic (two equal powers).

It was:

- God sovereign
- evil rebellious

#### 5. So who is the evil one?

In Matthew's context:

The evil one is the personal spiritual adversary who opposes God's will and seeks to derail obedience.

In practical terms:

- The tempter.
- The accuser.
- The corrupter.
- The one who exploits weakness.

#### The Hebrew word is:

שָׂטָן (śāṭān)

It literally means:

- adversary
- opponent
- accuser
- one who stands against

It is a functional term before it is a personal name.

By the Second Temple period (the era before and during Jesus), Jewish thought had developed the concept into a more personalized adversary — the figure we commonly call "Satan."

In the New Testament:

- "Satan" functions as a proper name.
- It refers to a personal spiritual opponent.

So there is development over time:

- from role → to identity.

## 6. Why the prayer ends here

Notice the progression of the prayer:

1. God's name
2. God's kingdom
3. God's will
4. Our provision
5. Our forgiveness
6. Our weakness
7. Our rescue

It ends not in fear — but in dependence.

## What Jesus is not doing

He is not:

- teaching demonology
- encouraging fear
- blaming all sin on Satan

He is acknowledging:

- that temptation is not neutral
- that harm has agency
- that humans need rescue, not just instruction

This fits perfectly with the humility of the prayer.

“The Greek allows ‘evil,’ but Matthew’s language points more naturally to ‘the evil one’ — a recognition that temptation is not just internal weakness, but also external pressure.”

Or more simply: “Jesus ends the prayer not by asking for strength alone, but for rescue — because the danger is real.”

**The closing words, “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever,” were likely added later in early Christian worship.** They are not found in the earliest manuscripts of Matthew, but reflect a beautiful doxology the church used to conclude the prayer.

The earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts of Gospel of Matthew:

- Codex Sinaiticus (4th century)
- Codex Vaticanus (4th century)

Do not include: “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

The longer ending appears in later Byzantine manuscripts, which became very widespread in the medieval church. We also see a shorter doxology in the Didache (late 1st / early 2nd century): “For Yours is the power and the glory forever.”

**“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15** But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

### **5. Why Jesus ends with forgiveness again (vv. 14–15)**

If you forgive... your Father will forgive you. If you do not... neither will He forgive you.

This isn't God withholding grace out of spite.

It's cause and effect in the moral-spiritual realm.

Unforgiveness:

- keeps you in the judge's seat
- anchors you to the offense
- preserves the ego
- blocks reconciliation

Forgiveness:

- releases control
- restores alignment
- mirrors the Father

### **In short:**

You cannot live in the posture of grace while refusing to extend grace. You can't receive a gift with a clenched fist.

“Jesus is not describing a transactional God who withholds forgiveness until we earn it. He is describing a spiritual reality: the heart that refuses to forgive cannot receive forgiveness, because it has chosen the posture of judgment instead of mercy.” And judgment and mercy cannot occupy the same interior space at the same time.

### **The core thread tying it all together**

This entire passage is about interior alignment.

- Prayer is not a performance
- God is not impressed
- Words are not currency
- Secrecy reveals motive
- Forgiveness proves transformation

Jesus is forming people who are:

- whole, not theatrical
- humble, not verbose
- aligned, not anxious
- forgiven and forgiving