

The Alignment Factor

Matthew 6:5–15 (ESV)

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: “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 also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

1 John 5:14 (HCSB)

Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Seven principles for proper prayer alignment:

I. Recognizing “our” God expects us in community.

- Most prayers are weakened by utter selfishness. (1 Peter 5:8)

2. Be serious about God’s reputation.

- We are praying that God would enable us not to associate His name with anything He is not associated with.
- God has put his reputation partially in our hands.

3. Be focused on kingdom expansion.

Acts 1:8 (HCSB)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

4. Be obedient to God’s known will.

(Colossians 3:23-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:3 & 5:18; 1 Peter 2:15)

5. Trust God for our daily provision. (Philippians 4:6)

- Since God has kept His most costly promise doesn’t it make sense He will keep the lesser as well? (Romans 8:32)

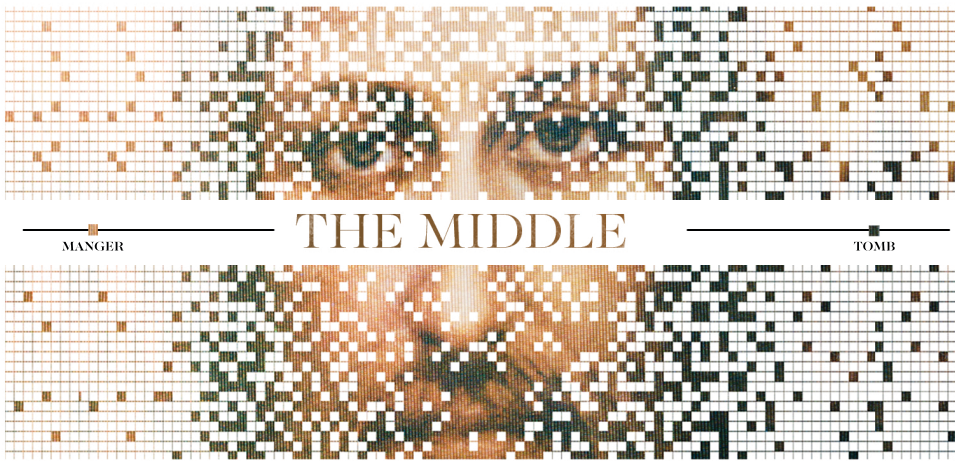
6. Stay mindful of the forgiveness factor. (James 5:16)

- Unforgiveness is the pothole to our prayer lives.
- We forgive others because God has forgiven us. (Ephesians 4:32)

7. Realize we are in a battle.

James 4:7 (NIV)

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.



THE PRAYER OF JESUS MATTHEW 6:5-15 #NVSTORYSHARE

CONNECT THE STORY

What happened in our last story? What key principles or truths did we discover through the story of the temptation of Jesus? Can someone retell the story?

TELL THE STORY

Tell the story: as best as you can, do not stop and teach, try not to make points (Commentary), just tell the story.

REBUILD THE STORY

As a group: chronologically rebuild the story from memory. Ask questions if necessary. Like – “What happened first?”, “What happened next?”, “Did we leave out anything?” Finally, have participants look at their Bibles and see if anything was added or left out of the story as they go through it one more time.

ASK QUESTIONS

- **Where do you see yourself in this story?**
- **What do we learn about Jesus/God in this story?**
- **What do we learn about man in this story?**
- **What is Jesus teaching you personally through this story?**
- **What application/adjustment do you need to make in your life due to the truth discovered in this story?**

ADULTS

- How would you define prayer?
- Jesus spends two verses on forgiveness...why is that important?
- What does forgiveness look like to you?
- What part of forgiveness gives you trouble?
- Is it hard for you to forgive the people that have done you wrong?
- Why is it important we do not simply recite our prayers?
- Since God knows what we need before we ask - why ask?
- What is the importance of praying “your will be done?”

COLLEGE

- What is your definition of prayer?
- Jesus gives us a model to use as we pray. What can you be praying for in your own life?
- Why does God warn us about not forgiving other people?

STUDENTS

- How would you describe your current prayer time with God?
- Make a list of things you can begin to pray for, and commit to praying for them this week.

CHILDREN

- Older Child 1 – What are 2 reasons we pray? What are 2 ways we should not pray?
- Older Child 2 – How did Jesus pray?
- Younger Child 1 – What is one reason that we pray?
- Younger Child 2 – How did Jesus say we should pray?

KINDERGARTEN/PRESCHOOL

- Where did Jesus travel?
- What did Jesus teach people to do?
- What does it mean to pray?
- Who hears us when we pray?
- What are things we can pray for?
- When does God want us to pray?
- Can you tell me something you can pray for this week?

THE MIDDLE

MY
TIME
WITH
GOD

MONDAY

READ MATTHEW 6:1-4

What does it mean to “practice righteousness?” How do people practice righteousness in front of others? The first example Jesus gives to illustrate righteousness is giving. Jesus’ statement, “whenever you give,” assumes that giving and caring for others are natural parts of being disciples. The same phrase is repeated in verses 5 and 16 in regards to prayer and fasting. What are some selfish motivations for serving the poor? How do these motives compare with the ones Jesus desires us to have? How did Jesus describe hypocrites in these verses? What are their motives for giving? The instructions about the left hand and the right hand (vv. 3-4) prohibit us from celebrating our own acts of righteousness. When you give, remember that nothing you have comes from your accomplishments. All that you own is given to you by God. By giving in private, you eliminate the temptation to take the praise for yourself.

TUESDAY

READ MATTHEW 6:5-8

How can we know if our motives are pure when it comes to prayer? What are some obvious clues our motives might not be pure? If you prayed only in public and never in private, what might that reveal about your heart? Why are both types of prayer necessary? Verse 7 warns against prayers that attempt to wear God down to the point of giving the person what they are asking. The opposite of babbling is humble, honest, and brief prayers. God knows what we need and desire before we ask; we do not need to hold Him under a siege of words. Jesus gave an example of the type of prayer God approves of in verses 9-13, commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer.

WEDNESDAY

READ MATTHEW 6:9-13

Take a look at the six specific things Jesus prayed for in His model prayer. What general aspect of prayer does each specific statement represent? What do we learn about how to pray from Jesus’ example? Why do you think God approves of this type of prayer? Jesus began by praising God, mentioning His role as Father and His holiness. He then voiced His submission to the Father’s spiritual reign in this world by praying for the kingdom to come and the Father’s will to be done. Jesus petitioned God as Sustainer and Provider when He asked for daily bread (v. 11). Of course, Jesus taught in other places that we can bring all our needs to God. Next, He demonstrated how to confess our sins before God to be sure that we haven’t become the obstacles to our own experiences with God. And finally, He asked for God’s protection. He closed His prayer with another statement of praise. How does praying as Jesus demonstrated help us keep our motives in check?

THE MIDDLE

MY
TIME
WITH
GOD

THURSDAY

READ MATTHEW 6:14-15

Why do you think God values forgiveness so highly? With that in mind, what is the appropriate motive for forgiveness? Jesus showed that forgiveness is important for His followers. He expects those who experience His forgiveness to practice forgiveness. He said if you forgive people, then your Heavenly Father will forgive you, and if you don’t, God will not forgive you. The point is that Christians are to forgive others in response to God’s forgiveness. However, if we don’t forgive others, we cannot claim God’s forgiveness for ourselves. Failing to forgive others demonstrates that we have not experienced God’s forgiveness. What differences do you see between the attitude of Jesus’ model prayer and the way you usually pray? What specific action or attitude regarding prayer is God asking you to change right now?

FRIDAY

READ MATTHEW 6:9-10 AGAIN

Describe in your own words what it means for God’s name to be “hallowed.” Why do you think this was the first aspect of prayer Jesus mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer? How does this specific request frame all the other components of the Lord’s Prayer? The desire for God to be glorified in all the earth forms the backdrop for all our other requests. As we connect relationally with Him, we will find ourselves wanting others to know the Father we have come to know. Prayer, over time, becomes as necessary to the Christian as breathing in and out.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

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. **Matthew 6:6**