



THE PRAYER CLOSET

ENCOURAGING & EQUIPPING BELIEVERS IN PRAYER

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HONESTY BEFORE GOD

In **Matthew 5:8**, Jesus Christ says, “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.” In this text, He emphasizes that Christianity is about the heart. It is a faith of the heart. Many people have attempted to condense Christianity into observance of outward rituals. They see Christianity as simply compliance to certain rules and regulations. It’s all about how you look outwardly, the behavior that you can see. Jesus Christ counters this thinking with this beatitude. In this text, Jesus Christ teaches us four great truths:

The fundamental issue in Christianity is what goes on in your heart.

In the Bible, the heart does not refer simply to the emotions. Biblically speaking, the “heart” involves the emotions, the intellect, and the will. Your heart is your true self. It signifies what you are all about at the center of your true being; it is your true identity.

Jesus Christ says that a Christian is to have a “pure” heart. It is His desire and plan to remove what is impure and to work into our lives what is pure. The word “pure” means unmixed, unalloyed. What’s crucial to understand in this text is to realize that our “hearts” are sinful. Our whole being is touched and contaminated by sin.

Our hearts are entangled in sin and rebellion toward God. We’re messed up! If Jesus Christ says that a Christian’s heart is to be purified, it means that our lives are in need of His transformation. Christianity is not simply about behavior. It is first about your heart – acknowledging that it is sinful and in need of Jesus’ transforming power. Christianity is about being changed from the inside out. Jesus Christ does make a difference in our behavior. However, He does this by transforming us inwardly, which leads to change in our outward behavior.

Jesus Christ has come to remake us. He desires to renew people from the inside out. This begins when we first come to Christ. When we turn to Jesus in faith, He begins by working in the deepest recesses of our lives by His Word and Spirit. This continues throughout our walk with Him, as He works to purify our emotions, our thinking, and our will. The fundamental issue in Christianity is our heart. That’s where His work starts.

Hypocrisy is the enemy of Christianity.

If Christianity is all about the heart, hypocrisy is its prime enemy. What is hypocrisy? It is the belief that as long as I outwardly conform to the Christian faith, this is acceptable to God. Yet, in this beatitude, Jesus explodes this kind of thinking. He calls us to purity of “heart.” He calls us to admit that our hearts are sinful and in need of transformation. He demands that we acknowledge our corruption and our need to be changed from the inside out.

Hypocrisy stands in opposition to Christianity. It is the opposite of this beatitude. It is content with outward conformity. In the hypocrite’s mind, as long as you avoid the big sins and live a good, moral life, you are acceptable to God. As long as you’re a nice person, God accepts you and forgives you. The problem is that Jesus Christ did not come to make us into nice people. When we turn to Christ, we become a “new” person. He begins to work in our hearts, exposing our sin and leading us to repent and to seek His change.

Hypocrisy blinds a person to the truth that there is something fundamentally wrong with our hearts. We are sinners; we need Jesus to transform us from the inside out. This inward work of Christ will express itself in outward change. Yet, when you deal only with the outward, you fall into the ditch of hypocrisy. You’re clean on the outside but you’re full of sin and filth on the inside. It ignores the heart and the need of the

transformation that only Jesus Christ can bring. It is the enemy of Christianity for this reason.

Don't defend your "niceness"; seek for God's grace.

Since Christ calls us to purity of heart and hypocrisy is the enemy of this, we are to be honest with God and ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying to God and yourself about yourself – about who you really are on the inside. Purity of heart means honesty – admitting the truth. It is acknowledging that our hearts are sinful and that we must be changed by the power of Jesus Christ. We must seek for His grace rather maintaining our goodness – defending our niceness.

This is the only way that we will "see" God. In other words, this is the only way that we will come to know God personally. When you see your sinfulness and come to Christ in faith, you "see" God – you come to know Him personally as He is. As you continue to admitting the truth and seeking for His grace, your knowledge of and experience with God grows. This lifelong honesty and seeking for His grace and power leads us into eternity where we will see the greatness and glory of God that we cannot comprehend now.

How do we come to this place of admitting the truth and trusting Jesus for His transforming work in our lives? It is through the gospel. This is not something we work up or manufacture. The gospel shows us that we are sinners – vile, pretentious hypocrites – people Jesus had to die for.

Yet, the gospel also shows that God through Jesus Christ receives, forgives, and love sinners. He smiles on us because we are in Christ. Therefore, we can be honest with God without any fear of rejection. Purity of heart is a response to grace. It means being honest and vulnerable before God, admitting our sin and confessing our need for His grace. God loves you and accepts you no matter what; you can be brutally honest before Him about who you really are.

Be authentic around others.

Purity of heart is not just being honest with God and ourselves. It's also being honest with others. Purity of heart will work itself out in your personal relationships. It calls us to be transparent before others. We are to be honest and authentic in how relate to others. In our relationships, we are honest about our sinfulness and our need for Jesus and His grace. At the same time, it makes us generous and kind to others because we all have the same need.

The bottom line is that the pure of heart are not fake. In this beatitude, Jesus summons us to be honest with others about our struggles, our sins, our weaknesses, our flaws, and the mistakes that we make. We are to forsake pretending like we have it all together. We don't labor to project ourselves better than we are. We model our need for grace and show mercy to others. Purity of heart is admitting to God, ourselves, and others that we are sinful, our hearts are impure, and that we desperately need Jesus as our Savior every day.

Purity of heart doesn't mean that you have a perfect or sinless heart. However, it means that you acknowledge before God and others and to yourself that you aren't pure in heart. It means having the courage to admit that your heart is impure and then seeking Jesus Christ for the cleansing and change that you need as you walk daily with Him.

How does this beatitude teach us to pray?

- **Honestly admit your sin and need before God.** This is where purity of heart starts. We are to do this the first time we come to Christ and every day after this. Be brutally honest with your Father; resist the temptation to maintain your "niceness." No matter what, your Father will love you; be honest with Him.
- **Cry out to God for His cleansing and change by the Word and the Spirit.** Your Father loves you and desires to change you. This is His will and longing for you. Plead **Psalm 139:23-24** before Him.
- **Ask God to deliver you from hypocrisy.** It's easy to be a hypocrite. Yet, it takes God's grace and help to overcome this and be an authentic person. Pray that He will help you to be transparent before others, resisting the temptation to project yourself as having it all together but still a sinful person daily in need of Jesus' power and help.
- **Rejoice and thank God that one day you will be totally transformed.** This beatitude gives us a precious promise. One day we will be transformed and will see the glory of God like we have never before. Let this promise strengthen you and help you, especially when you get discouraged. God will be faithful: He will do this one day!

When Temptation Confronts Your Child

The Bible warns us about our enemy Satan (**1 Peter 5:8-9**). His goal is to tempt and destroy. How can you pray for your child in the midst of this battle? **Proverbs 1:8-19** provides a model of how you can pray for your child against the temptations that the enemy will throw at him or her:

- ✓ **Pray that your child will be filled with God's truth that will enable him or her to stand firm against temptation (1:8-9).** Ask God to give your child a longing for His Word and that he or she will be filled with the Word, ready and willing to obey. Pray that he or she will hear the Word and will not forsake it, especially in times of temptation.
- ✓ **Ask that your child will stand firm against temptation (1:10).** Plead that they will not entertain temptation nor toy with it. Ask the Holy Spirit to stir their hearts to say a firm "No!" to temptation.
- ✓ **Plead that your child will see through the enticements to sin (1:11-14).** The devil seeks to make sin attractive. He covers the ugly side of sin and magnifies the temporary benefit and pleasure of sin. Ask that your child will see through this deception and see the destructive power of sin.
- ✓ **Pray that your child will resist the influence of those who would tempt him (1:15-16).** Ask God to give your child the wisdom and discernment to see the evil influences around him and to avoid these. Satan often uses people to make sin more attractive and pleasing to us; call on God to open your child's eyes to this deception.
- ✓ **Ask that your child will see the result of temptation – destruction and death (1:17-18).** Yielding to temptation has only one outcome – it destroys (**James 1:15**). Sin takes from us; it robs us. When we yield to temptation, we are setting an ambush for our own lives. Call on God to open your child's eyes to this stunning reality. Pray that the blinding power of temporary benefit and pleasure will be stripped away and his or her eyes will be wide open to the destructive power of sin and temptation.
- ✓ **Plead that your child will crave and hunger for the things of God (1:19).** Willpower and determination are not enough to overcome temptation. To overcome temptation, you have to have a superior desire. It is only as we desire Jesus,

His Word, and His worship that we will be able to say "No!" to sin. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your child's eyes to the beauty and greatness of Jesus. Pray that he or she will long for the Word and worship. Those who are greedy for sin will yield to temptation and suffer for it. Those who long for Jesus and His Word and worship can say no to temptation and grow in holiness.

Leading Your Family Into God's Family

Many believers walk through the painful experience of having family members who do not know Jesus Christ? What do you do in this situation? The following are some suggestions on how to respond to this situation:

- Realize that there is hope (**Acts 16:15, 29-34**). God has saved whole households! Don't let the enemy discourage you that there is no hope.
- Keep up a vibrant spiritual life (**1 Peter 3:15**). A healthy daily relationship to Jesus Christ cannot but help spark others' curiosity. When Christ makes changes in us, it will cause your family to take notice. This may cause them to ponder why you have different attitudes and behavior.
- Pray for the influence of other Christians in the lives of your family members (**Matthew 9:37-38**). Often it is another person who can lead our family members to Jesus Christ. Many times our loved ones will know other Christians. Pray that these Christians will have powerful impact on them for Jesus Christ.
- Be prepared to share the gospel with your family members (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**). While we can pray for the influence and witness of others on our loved ones, we must be prepared to share the gospel personally with them. When our family asks us what we believe and why, we must be ready to give an answer to them.
- Be patient in planting the seeds of the gospel (**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 7:8, 8:5-6**). Lost people will vacillate between times of openness and opposition to Christ and His gospel. We must faithfully sow the gospel into their lives without being pushy or judgmental.
- Ask God to grant opportunities to demonstrate love to your family (**Matthew 5:13-16**). Even when your loved ones will not listen to words, they will "hear" your actions. Listen to them, be available to them, and establish common interests. There is an

old saying, “90 percent of evangelism is love.” Show that Christlike love to them.

- o Pray diligently for them (**James 5:16**). Prayer is essential to breaking through spiritual blindness. It is prayer that breaks through this blindness and opens the way for the gospel of Jesus Christ to penetrate a person’s life. Plead the promises of God. Pray for God’s mercy and grace in the life of your loved ones. Ask other believers to pray in agreement with you. Call on God to draw your loved one to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
- o Never give up (**Galatians 6:9**). No one is too far-gone for God’s love to reach! There is hope as long as they have breath in their body. God is a merciful and sovereign God. No one is beyond His power and love. Don’t give up. Don’t let discouragement cause you to stop praying, loving, and striving to reach your loved ones. Never give up!

Prayer Closet News

If you have been receiving The Prayer Closet for a while, you will notice a change in the newsletter. We’re giving the newsletter a new look and format for a time. We’re striving to make this newsletter as helpful as we can to our readers.

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We are still in the process of working on the building. Once we finish this, we are looking to move the ministry into the facility. We are also looking at having some one day conferences and seminars in the near future at the facility. The next phase in our plans is to build a conference center. However, until we do this, we will look to have seminars in our present building.

Please pray for God’s provision and direction in all these matters. We would also ask you to prayerfully consider giving to this ministry. Your donations enable us to carry out the ministry God has given us – spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and equipping and encouraging believers in prayer. We greatly appreciate your prayers and your support. May God richly bless and sustain you!

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