

Announcements

Want to keep up on what's going on around here? Drop your info card in the offering plate and we'll add you to the email newsletter list.

Communities:

This is where we gather to pray, study and encourage one another as part of the work of the Gospel. We would love to get to know you more, and this is one of the best ways to get planted /attached as a part of Seaside.

Please consider joining a Community to strengthen not only your family, but also the larger community.

Contact
eric@seasidechurch.com
for info on where groups meet or to lead/host one.

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Historically, the story behind this section in the sermon on the mount is fairly straightforward. In the OT there was a passage of the Bible called the Shema, which captured the essence of Judaism, "*Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one,*" which was part of a larger section of prayer found in Deuteronomy 6.4-9 (and 11.13-21, Numbers 15.37-41). The literal definition of Shema is something like - *Listen, or Hear & Do*, and in other places it can mean *accept*. Its base meaning and primary purpose was to proclaim the *oneness of God's Kingship*.

It was made up of 3 parts in Deut. 6.4-9, and was to be proclaimed *when you lie down, and when you rise up*. In addition to this, there was second set of prayers called the Shemoneh 'Esreh that was prayed in the morning, afternoon and evening. This is most likely the set of prayer spoken of in Daniel 6.10 and Acts 3.1. The key here is that these prayers had a "set" time, but not necessarily a set location. It was common for men to plan to be in public settings when the appointed "time" came to pray in order to be as conspicuous as possible. Jesus instead points us to the "inner room" to pray, most likely a storeroom of the house, which incidentally was also the only room that would typically be lockable.

Practically, Jesus is concerned here, as He has been throughout the SOTM, not with the practice in particular, i.e. with the public/private nature of prayers, or the length of prayers, because He both prayed in public (11.25, 14.19) and private (Luke 5.16, 9.18, 11.1), and prayed at length (26.39-42; Luke 6.12). He is more concerned with the place and condition of the heart.

"It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use, what matters is the faith which lays hold on God and touches the heart of the Father who knew us long before we came to Him." -Detrich Bonhoeffer

A real temptation in our prayer life is to slip into a mode that defines the *health* of our prayer life by the *location, length* and *verbosity* of our prayers. What Jesus is focused on is the **relationship of the Father with His children**. By pointing out the potential hindrances to that relationship, He is helping us redirect, even *simplify* our times in prayer. His desire is that we are able to talk with Him with right motives so that we would not be hindered from laying our requests before Him (James 4). Our Pathways document helps us see the broader purpose of prayer.

"True prayer does not depend on the individual or the whole body of the faithful, but solely on the knowledge that our heavenly Father knows our needs. That makes God the sole object of our prayers, and frees us from a false confidence in our own practical efforts." -D. Bonhoeffer

It is in the prayer relationship that we can finally put ourselves before Him and *know* Him. We acknowledge in that moment that we are *powerless* to effectively change something on our own. The temptation **in v.7** is to, in that very moment, try to explain to God what He needs to do, how He needs to do it, why He should act on our behalf, and even *when* He needs to do it. *This switches the relationship from a Father/Child to a Child/Father one. He knows what you need before you ask Him*, and we should ask, in confidence, knowing that He hears us (1 John 5.14-15) through the work of His Son on our behalf (Eph. 3). There is great joy in that fact.

"Thus the essence of Christian prayer is not general adoration. The right way to approach God is to stretch out hands & ask of One who we know has the heart of a Father." - Bonhoeffer