

## GROUP LEADERS NOTES – STUDY 15

### Question 1

- a) 'When you pray': Like 'giving' in verse 2 it is something that is expected by those who follow Jesus.
- b) Jesus assumes that it is a normal discipline of the Christian life.
- c) We should also be looking for similar teaching on motives and rewards.
- d) On the surface it appears very repetitive but this time Jesus will not only warn against wrong motives but develop His teaching on the right way to pray.

### Question 2

- a) Prayer is a relationship with God rather than an outward sign of piety.
- b) It is no coincidence that Jesus refers to God as 'your Father'. It is He who hears and answers according to His perfect will.
- c) Prayer is not a performance. We must be very careful about this when we either lead public prayer or participate in it.
- d) It is easy to fall into the trap of wanting to be known as someone who prays well.
- e) The real test of our prayer life is not the praying that goes on in public but that which goes on in secret.
- f) Praying alone is important. We see examples with Jesus (**Mark 1:35**); Elisha (**2 Kings 4:32-33**); and Daniel (**Dan 6:10**).

***“The specific ancient Greek word “room” was used for a storeroom where treasures were kept. There are treasures waiting for you in your prayer closet!”***

### Question 3

- a) God knows everything about us; our motives and our hearts.
- b) He knows what is really behind what we pray and therefore whilst we can hide things from people listening in prayer meetings we can never hide anything from God: **Psalm 139:23-24; James 4:1-3.**

### Question 4

- a) The Jewish rabbis of Jesus' day said things like: *"Whoever is long in prayer is heard"* and *"Whenever the righteous make their prayer long, their prayer is heard."*
- b) Our prayers are not answered in proportion to the length of them or the complexity of the words we use. There is not a specific 'prayer vocabulary'!
- c) God sees through all of the falsehood.
- d) Jesus is not saying that we should avoid repeating a prayer but He does teach against heaping up empty phrases (*"vain repetitions"* KJV). Both Jesus (**Matt 26:44**) and Paul (**2 Cor 12:8**) used repetition that was acceptable.
- e) We must avoid mechanical praying.

### Question 5

- a) It is true that God knows all things and yet as we will see in the next passage in the Sermon on the Mount God wants us to pray and ask.
- b) His sovereignty does not preclude the necessity or effectiveness of prayer.
- c) We must be obedient.
- d) The issue here is that of motive. God is not moved by the eloquence of our praying but the condition of our heart.
- e) The fact that God wants us to pray and commands us to pray will to some extent remain a mystery. We however must see it as a real blessing and privilege.

### Question 6

- a) Jesus was not forbidding public prayer and we only need to look into the Early Church to see that it was a regular part of the gathering together of the church e.g. **Acts 3:1; 4:24; 1 Tim 2:1ff** etc. Indeed, in Acts 1:14-15 we find 120 people praying together.
- b) Don Carson suggests questions to ask in order to avoid wrong motives in our public praying: *"Do I pray more frequently and more fervently when alone with God than I do in public? Do I love the secret place of prayer? Is my public praying simply the overflow of my private praying?"*
- c) Carson suggests that if the answers to those questions are 'no' then we are at risk of having the wrong motives for public prayer.
- d) What Jesus teaches here should encourage us to be able to pray together. All of us can bring prayers that are acceptable to the Lord; providing they come from a heart that is right with Him.