



Stepping Stones

Matthew 6:5-8 New Revised Standard Version

5 "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever 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 When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Notes: _____



It is not the body's posture, but the heart's attitude that counts when we pray." –Billy Graham

I can't tell you how many times my parents asked at bedtime when I was growing up, "Did you say your prayers?" Early on, I learned to repeat "Now I lay me down to sleep...", so, for me, the obvious answer was "Yes, I said **my** prayers." Why did I do it? Because I was told that's what a good church-going person is supposed to do. Now, they weren't exactly **my** words, but one has to start somewhere.

I'm not going to say I didn't mean the words, but, to be quite honest, it became a habit. It was a good habit mind you, but not one into which I put very much thought. It was easy to "get it out of the way" so as to be able to go to sleep. I believe that is some of what Jesus was trying to address in the "Sermon on the Mount" concerning prayer.

Prayer was a necessity for the Jewish community. There were prescribed times, places, and occasions for praying, and, like us, it was easy to do “just because.” For some, it was done with the right heart, but for others, it became a matter of proving one’s religious commitment. It’s the latter which Jesus called into question in today’s sermon text.

1. We must choose between being seen and being present.
2. We must learn to appreciate the quiet with God.
3. We must value hearing more so than being heard.

Prayer Pebble: Lord, when I pray, may you be my only audience. Amen.