

INTRODUCTION

A masquerade ball is built on illusion. People who attend the ball wear masks that are carefully crafted. The roles they play are rehearsed. Their appearances are intentionally curated for admiration. From the outside looking in, everything looks impressive but beneath the surface, in a room full of people, no one is fully known. Jesus uses a similar image in Matthew 6 to expose how easily prayer can be like a masquerade – a performance rather than a personal encounter with God.

In this passage, Jesus addresses the right motivations and intent behind prayer. He makes it clear that prayer is expected in the life of a believer, saying "when you pray," not "if you pray." He also warns against "praying on display" or praying in ways that are meant to impress people instead of connecting with God. When prayer becomes about being seen or heard by others, the reward of prayer stops with the applause of people.

Jesus points His listeners to the "inner room," a place that represents private devotion and honesty. Jesus isn't saying public prayer is wrong. Instead, He is teaching that prayer should come from a sincere heart, not a desire for approval. God sees what happens in secret, and He responds to prayer that is real and honest.

This passage invites us to look closely at our own prayer lives. Are we focused first on talking to God, or on trying to sound spiritual? Are we wearing a mask, or coming to God just as we are? Jesus calls us to remove the mask and return into authentic relationship where prayer is no longer a performance, but a sacred meeting place with the Father.

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever felt pressure to "look put together" even when you weren't feeling that way inside?
2. When it comes to having meaningful conversations, do you prefer quiet, private moments or shared, group settings?

LET'S GET PERSONAL

1. How would you describe your current prayer life – more public, more private, or a mixture of both?
2. Is there an area of your life where you have been more concerned with appearance than authenticity before God?
3. How can you shift your focus in prayer from sounding right to being real with God?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. What practical steps can you take this week to create intentional space for private prayer with God?
2. Pray and ask God to expose any masks you may be wearing in your prayer life and to lead you into deeper authenticity.
3. ***Want to dig deeper?*** Take a look at the following passages: Matthew 6:5-6; Colossians 4:2; Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Matthew 14:19; 2 Chronicles 6:1-42; Nehemiah 9:5-38; Acts 2:24; Jeremiah 17:10; 1 Samuel 16:7; Ephesians 3:17; Psalm 51:6; Psalm 139:23; Romans 10:9-10

RENEW YOUR MIND

“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.” — Matthew 6:5-6