

DANGEROUS PRAYERS

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INTRODUCTION

Two men were talking together. The first challenged the other, "If you are so religious, let's hear you quote the Lord's Prayer. I bet you \$10 you can't." The second responded, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." The first pulled out his wallet and fished out a ten dollar bill, muttering, "I didn't think you could do it!" While we might recognize that "Now I lay me" is not the Lord's Prayer, have we sought to understand the true meaning of the prayer Jesus taught? This weekend, we take a deeper look into the words of Christ found in Matthew 6:9-13. Our Savior challenges us to reach beyond the status quo by setting aside pride, selfishness and materialism to focus on Him.

DISCUSSION

Read **Matthew 6:9-13**, **Psalm 1:1-2**, **Joshua 1:8** and **Psalm 66:18**. Then discuss which of these verses relate to each of the following situations. Consider how you would apply these passages in each situation through prayer, counseling or other transforming influences.

1. Sherri tells your Bible study group that her husband, Jason, has been taking a class on meditation for stress relief. The teacher is an eastern mystic who instructs students to focus on an object of their own choosing while meditating. Sherri asks you what the Bible says about the practice of meditation. How would you respond from a scriptural perspective?
2. Jim is a successful salesman who lives well by most standards... gorgeous home, two new sports cars, tailor-made clothes and four box seat tickets for Vikings home games. He tells you over lunch he and his wife are constantly fighting over money and that he plans to file divorce papers next week. He laughs nervously as he says his divorce lawyer will accept payments on his platinum credit card. Jim asks what you would do in his situation.
3. George is highly respected in your church. He is the first to volunteer and gives generously in weekly offerings. When asked to pray in a small group, he often says "Lord, we believe" and completes the sentence with a Bible verse. While visiting a bookstore in Minneapolis, you run into George as he is thumbing through a dirty magazine. Red-faced in embarrassment, he greets you in a subdued voice and asks, "Are you going to tell anyone?"

THINK ABOUT IT

Early African male converts to Christianity were earnest and regular in private devotions. Each one reportedly had a separate spot in the thicket where he would pour out his heart to God. Over time the paths to these places became well worn. As a result, if one of these believers began to neglect prayer, it was soon apparent to the others. They would kindly remind the negligent one, "Brother, the grass grows on your path." Is the grass growing on your path?

DO SOMETHING

1. Pray the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6 each day this week while asking God to show you how to change your "status quo." Take notes of the things that come to mind and save these for your next prayer time. Then ask God to help you to take the next steps.
2. This New Year's Day, commit to Max Lucado's Before Amen Prayer Challenge, and pray for four minutes a day for the next four weeks. Follow the site's suggestions to guide you to a stronger prayer life as you start the New Year.