



Group Discussion Guide

For group meetings from October 11 afternoon through October 18 morning

Matthew 6:1-18

As we continue through the Sermon on the Mount, we read how Jesus taught about the importance of motives. The first section of Matthew 6 focuses on this and can be viewed in light of the opening verse:

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)

Jesus offered three specific applications of this truth: giving to help others, praying and fasting (vs. 2-18). In each of these applications, Jesus taught his audience that they must not follow the example of the hypocrites, who he said participated in giving, prayer and fasting so that other people would see them. When good works were done for selfish reasons, the only reward received was to be recognized by people on earth. Jesus said there would be no reward from God the Father for works done with selfish motives.

In this section of the sermon, Jesus spent more time teaching about prayer than the other two subjects, perhaps because specific teaching regarding giving and fasting already were outlined in the Old Testament law but there was less instruction regarding prayer. Jesus even gave to his followers a model prayer (which we often call the "Lord's Prayer" but which would be more appropriately named the "Disciples' Prayer"). This model prayer offers some structure for believers, which is important because as humans we often benefit from structure to help us stay on track and stay focused. These central elements help us as we go to God in prayer:

- Worship of God - acknowledge Him as our Heavenly Father and declare that His name is holy (v. 9)
- Submission to God - desiring for His kingdom to come to earth, and for His will to be done (v. 10)
- Petition God for daily needs (v. 11) - realize He is our provider and ask Him for help
- Petition God for forgiveness (v. 12) - confess our sins to Him and ask Him to forgive us and help us to forgive others
- Petition God for deliverance (v. 13) - follow His leading to avoid temptation and rescue from evil

We must remember that the length of our prayers and the words we use are not the point; the point is coming before our Father as we are and speaking with Him in a way that is sincere. Jesus also taught that as we experience forgiveness from God, we cannot withhold forgiveness from others (vs. 14-15).

Matthew 6:19-24

The next section of the sermon contains a very well-known truth:

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)

Jesus taught that any earthly treasures will eventually be subject earthly forces. Ultimately, they will not last. He stated that his followers must desire light rather than darkness; we must desire what matters in the kingdom of God rather than what matters in the kingdom of man. Jesus was very clear: a person cannot love and serve God, while also loving and serving money.

Matthew 6:25-34

The final section of the sermon recorded in chapter 6 deals with trust and worry. Jesus taught his followers they should not be concerned with what they will eat or drink, nor what they will wear. He used examples from nature to demonstrate that God takes care of His creation, and because people are even more valuable to Him, He will certainly take care of them. His teaching was not meant to discourage people from planning, but to discourage them from worrying. This quote from Rick Warren, pastor and author, can help us better understand worry:

Worry is unbelief. God has promised to take care of all your needs. When you doubt that, you actually become an unbeliever in that moment. You're acting like there is no God and there are no promises in Scripture. Worry is practical atheism.

That may sound a bit harsh, but worry does in fact demonstrate a lack of trust in God. And eventually, it can lead to further disobedience as we take matters into our own hands to “fix” our source of worry. Jesus said if we first seek the will of the Father, He will take care of things in His timing:

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways are you tempted to do good things and have those things seen by others? How has social media affected you regarding this?
2. What have you put in place in your life to help you give, pray and fast in such a way that you only seek to glorify God?
3. In teaching about the need to pray “in secret,” Jesus also spent time instructing his followers *how* to pray. How has his model prayer helped you as you spend time with God in prayer?
4. Why is it sometimes hard to forgive those who have wronged you? How does the teaching of Jesus in vs. 14-15 help you to forgive?
5. What earthly treasures have you sought after in this life? Why do you think Jesus said it is impossible to serve both God and money? How do we develop a kingdom mindset regarding money and possessions?
6. Jesus said, “do not be anxious about your life,” (v. 25). How does his teaching in vs. 25-34 help you to deal with worry and anxiety? What do you think he meant when he said, “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (v. 33)?