

MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY— SESSION 7  
SERMON ON THE MOUNT  
Homework for Matthew 6:1-18 — All for God Not Men, Part 1  
SYS 1/15/25     EWH 1/22/25

REVIEW

Matthew 5:21-48 offers "a detailed description of the righteous conduct and character that motivates others to praise God." Jesus correctly interprets the ethical demands of Old Testament law, focusing on righteousness in the heart and mind rather than the outward, hypocritical form. "Jesus' teaching... surpassed the law by insisting that one should avoid sinful attitudes and sinful actions.." The phrase, "You have heard it said, but I say..." is repeated six times in verses 21-48 to show "...that the behavior of His followers is to be guided by God's own character rather than merely by His commands" Charles Quarles; *Sermon on the Mount*; Excerpts, pg. 89, 106).

OUTLINE   ALL FOR GOD NOT MEN (Mat 6:1-18)

- > Not Giving to Be Seen by Men (6:1-4)
- > Not Praying to Be Heard by Men (6:5-8)
- > Not Fasting to Parade Before Men (6:16-18)s

READ Matthew 6:1-18

INTRODUCTION (6:1) *"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."*

Jesus continues to address His disciples-- those who know God as "Father." He gives guidance regarding three primary acts of worship in Judaism: giving, prayer, and fasting. His words, "When you give... when you pray... when you fast," show an assumption that His followers were giving, praying, and fasting. But He warns that practicing acts of righteousness must be for God's glory and not their own. The inner quality of humble sincerity before their Father "who sees in secret" is the heart of the passage.

QUESTIONS

1. Looking at the entire passage, how many times is the phrase "your Father" used in these 18 verses? What can you take away from this?
2. Jesus also repeated the word hypocrite (*hypokritēs*) warning His followers to avoid hypocritical conduct. A hypocrite refers to a pretender or stage-player. "Many ancient play-actors aspired to be celebrities adored by the masses.... The hypocrites to whom Jesus referred were spiritual actors who pretended to have a piety they did not actually possess to inspire the applause of a human audience" (Charles Quarles; *Sermon on the Mount*; pg. 176). Describe the characteristics of a hypocrite from these verses: Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 23:27; Luke 6:42. (See Blue Letter Bible for a deeper look into the word.)
3. Giving to the Poor (6: 2-4): In Matthew 6:2, Jesus instructs His disciples not to "sound a trumpet" when giving to the poor to call attention to their generosity, receive honor, or be applauded by people. Does this contradict His words in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Why or why not?

4. Prayer (6:5-8): Read these verses carefully and record the characteristics of the hypocrite's prayers. What is their reward? What are the qualities of the prayers the Father desires to hear? Do these reflect your prayers to your Father? If necessary, what adjustments do you need to make?

[Matthew 6:9-15, Jesus' teaching on the Lord's Prayer will be covered in the next session.]

5. Fasting (6:16-18): Fasting has been practiced by God's faithful in both Testaments, by Jesus Christ, and by many prominent Christian leaders since. However, only once has fasting been commanded in Scripture-- on the Jewish Day of Atonement, when the people were called to "humble" their souls (Lev 16:29). Apart from this, fasting has always been voluntary and associated with prayer, especially during times of spiritual testing, impending danger, crucial ministry decisions, or deep grief. Thus, a normal part of the Christian life, each individual determines when it is necessary to fast.

As with prayer, Christ teaches acceptable and unacceptable fasting. Read 6:16-18 carefully and record the characteristics of the fasting of the hypocrite, then contrast this with the proper kind of fast.

6. "Your Father, who is in secret... And your Father who sees in secret will reward you..." Read the following commentary from J C Ryle and answer the questions below:

"In praying, the principal object to be sought is to be alone with God. '*When you pray, go into your room*' (Mat 6:6). We should endeavor to find someplace where no mortal eye sees us and where we can pour out our hearts with the feeling that no one is looking at us but God. This is a rule that many find very difficult to follow; the poor man and the servant often find it almost impossible to be alone, but it is a rule that we must make great efforts to obey.... When people want to find someplace where they can be in secret with their God, they will generally find a way...

"In all our duties, whether giving or praying, the great thing to be kept in mind is that we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God. Everything like formality, affectation, or mere bodily service, is abominable and worthless in God's sight. He takes no account of the quantity of money we give, or the quantity of words we use. The one thing at which His all-seeing eye looks is the nature of our motives and the state of our hearts. '*Your Father ... sees what is done in secret*'.

May we all remember these things. Here lies a rock on which many are continually getting spiritually shipwrecked. They flatter themselves that all must be right with their souls if they only perform a certain amount of religious duties. They forget that God does not regard the quantity but the quality of our service. His favor is not to be bought...." (J C Ryle; *The Gospel of Matthew*, Excerpts; Precept Austin).

Where are our hearts?

Are we serving "*as to the Lord, not men*" (Ephesians 6:7)?

Do we realize the importance of the eye of God? (2 Chronicles 16:9)?

Do we simply and solely desire to please him who "sees what is done in secret" and by whom "deeds are weighed" (1 Samuel 2:3)?

These are the questions that should daily engage our souls.