November 1, 2026

Sermon on the Mount

Never Turn Devotion Into A Display

Matthew 6:1-18

1. **Sermon Outline**:
    a. The Heart Driving Your Spiritual Habits Is Critical
        i. Personal spiritual habits matter.
        ii. Periodically assess why you're doing the spiritual things you do
        iii. God will bless and reward genuine devotion to Him
    b. Carefully Guard Your Heart for Prayer
        i. Jesus gives particular attention to the heart driving our prayer
        ii. Pray simply and directly
        iii. Pray with a focus on God and genuine needs
        iv. Pray with a heart of forgiveness toward others
2. ***Sunday –*** As soon as possible after the sermon, consider:
    a. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
    b. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
    c. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
    d. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
    e. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
3. ***Monday:***
    a. Since the Lord's Model Prayer is included in this week's focal passage, we suggest that you begin each day's devotional by praying (not just reciting) it, either individually or in unison using whichever version you learned.
    b. Read Matthew 6:1-18. If you have them, read the passage first in the NIV (or CSB) to get an overall sense of what Jesus is teaching, then read it a second time more carefully from the ESV. (This week's discussion questions will generally be based on the ESV, but can be answered using any version you prefer).
    c. What instruction does Jesus use to introduce this teaching section?
        i. In your understanding, what does Jesus mean by "righteousness"?
        ii. Read Matthew 5:6, 10, & 20, Romans 3:21-26, Philippians 3:8:9, and James 2:14-26. How would you now describe righteousness?
        iii. Compare Matthew 5:14-16 with Matthew 6:1. Why is there no contradiction between these two passages?
            1. What is the motivation described in Matthew 5:16?
            2. What is the motivation Jesus warns us to avoid in Matthew 6:1? In this context, what do you think is meant by "in order to be seen by them"?

iv. What is the penalty for disobeying the instructions in this command?

1. Do you think that Jesus was implying that we should practice our righteousness so that we will get rewards in heaven (consider Matthew 6:19-20, Luke 12:16-21 & 33, Colossians 3:23-24, Hebrews 10:34-36, and 2 John 8)
2. But is Jesus actually saying we must wait until we are in heaven to get rewarded?
    a. Should we expect any kind of rewards if we practice our righteousness in order to get them?
    b. What is the only acceptable motive for practicing righteousness (see John 5:16)?
3. How would you see the account of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 relate?

4. ***Tuesday:***
    a. Begin by praying the Lord's Prayer, focusing especially on the first phrase. What does "hallowed" mean, and how can we embrace the concept in our prayers?
    b. Read the focal passage in its entirety again today.
        i. What are the three ways of "practicing righteousness" (some may find 4 if they see verses 5 and 7 as related but separate examples) that Jesus presents as examples?
        ii. What literary technique does Jesus use to tie the examples back to the main instruction of verse 1?
        iii. Which would you say Jesus felt was more important, grasping and obeying the principle inherent in verse 1 or "religiously" following the examples?
        iv. What is the clearly stated assumption associated with each example (2nd word in verses 2, 5, 7, and 16)? Why was it not necessary that Jesus tell His disciples to:
            1. Give to the needy (see Deuteronomy 15:10-11, Proverbs 14:31 & 19:17, Isaiah 58:6-10, and Ezekiel 16:49)?
            2. Pray (see 1 Chronicles 16:11, Psalm 5:1-3, 50:15, 91:15, & 102:17, Proverbs 15:8 & 29, Isaiah 55:6, and Daniel 6:10)?
            3. Fast (see Leviticus 16:29-31, 2 Chronicles 20:3-4, Ezra 8:21-23, Isaiah 58:3-7, and Joel 2:12)?
    c. Of the three disciplines presented as examples, which do you think Christians struggle with most? Which is easiest for you??
    d. Before moving on to consider each example individually, can you identify other areas of the Christian life and ministry where the truth that Jesus is teaching us also applies?

5. ***Wednesday:***
    a. Again, begin today's study by praying the Lord's Prayer, giving special emphasis to verse 10 in the version in our focal passage. What are the life implications of including that sentence in a prayer to the Father?
    b. Read and meditate on Matthew 6:2-4.
    c. Since we've already established that the "when you" implies that we will give, who is Jesus talking about the gift being given to?

i. Who are the needy? Do you think Jesus intended His example to apply only to that subset of our giving that goes to "the needy"?

ii. Do you think it is sufficient to equate "needy" with "poor"?

iii. In a spiritual sense, who are the most "needy"? With that in mind, how does it expand the scope of our giving to "the needy"?

d. What would be some modern-day equivalents to "sounding a trumpet"? Using what Jesus said in verse 2, what would make any action into the equivalent?

e. Is it actually possible to do something with one hand that the other would not know? What is Jesus doing by using this hyperbole?

i. In our society, with its many rules about receipts and tax records, what would have to be done to give in complete secrecy? Do you believe that is what Jesus was asking of us?

ii. Read Luke 21:1-4 and Acts 4:36-37. How does God sometimes use less-than-secret giving?

iii. Then read Acts 5:1-11. How does this event reinforce what Jesus is teaching us in the focal passage?

6. ***Thursday****:*

a. Pray the Lord's Prayer, paying particular attention to verse 11. Why should we in America consider the implications of this request in the prayer?

b. Read and meditate on Matthew 6:5-6.

c. Again, the assumption is that a disciple will pray, but what consideration does Jesus introduce about where we pray?

i. Do you think Jesus is seriously instructing us to limit our prayers to when we are in private in a closed room (a closet), or is He again using hyperbole to make His point?

ii. What makes words spoken as "prayer" hypocritical? Who is someone who is praying in such a manner actually addressing with their prayer?

iii. While we certainly do not want to be judging someone else's prayers, what indication might we see in our own that points to hypocrisy or wrong motives?

d. How do you feel about the final sentence in verse 6?

i. Should we pray expecting (to get) a reward (consider Matthew 21:22, Mark 11:24, John 16:24, and 1 John 3:22)?

ii. How does James explain the limitation in James 4:3, and how does it relate directly to what Jesus is teaching?

7. ***Friday:***

a. Start by praying the Lord's Prayer, today focusing on verse 12. Why do you think Jesus used debt instead of sin, and how should it influence our life and actions (consider Matthew 6:14-15)?

b. Read Matthew 6:7-15.

c. Once again, the assumption is that we will be praying, but when Jesus addresses how we pray, what is the key message?

i. Why do you think He changes from using "hypocrites" as the negative in the example to using "Gentiles"?

ii. In the Church age, when there is "neither Jew nor Gentile" (Galatians 3:28 (NIV)), what would be the equivalent of "Gentile"? Where would we hear them heaping up empty phrases?

iii. Why are many words not necessary (compare with Matthew 6:32)? If we were doing what Paul commanded in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, why would "many words" actually be impossible?

iv. There is a frequently used phrase that came out of World War II: "God has all eternity to hear the split-second prayer of a pilot as his plane crashes in flames." Do you agree, and how does the quotation relate to what Jesus is saying?

d. Read Luke 18:9-14. What prayer will God always hear and answer?

8. ***Saturday:***

a. Pray the Lord's Prayer again, emphasizing the sentence in verse 13. (If you learned the Lord's Prayer from the King James Bible, you probably expect it to continue with "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.") It makes a beautiful ending, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with including it – the prayer is a model.) How does 1 Corinthians 10:13 assure us that this request is answered?

b. Read Matthew 6:16-18.

c. Once more, we find out that it is expected that we will fast. How are we not to act while doing so?

i. Why do you think that fasting is the least practiced in our age of the three examples Jesus presents?

ii. Why is fasting particularly difficult to do in secret?

iii. While most of the Biblical instruction about fasting is in the Old Testament, how does Jesus, with these 3 verses, remind us that it is still an important part of our Spiritual practices?

9. **Application:** The fundamental lesson Jesus is teaching us in this passage follows from that of our previous weeks in the Sermon on the Mount. Our motives, as an indicator of our hearts' desires, matter more than our actions. Even the best (greatest) act is spiritually meaningless if we do it for the wrong (selfish) reason. But in the midst of showing examples, Jesus provides the Lord's Model Prayer ("model" because He is teaching us how to pray, not praying Himself – for that, consider Matthew 26:36-42 and John 17). Including it in this teaching passage reminds us that our motive (and sincerity) matters as we pray. Rather than seeing this prayer as a Christian incantation said by rote memory at specific times, we should consider each word carefully and ask ourselves whether we are truly prepared to make such statements/requests to the Sovereign Lord of the universe.

10. **Pray**: During the past week, Somalia was highlighted as the Operation World prayer country for several days. As Africa's most failed state, having existed for over 20 years without a government until recently, they desperately need prayer. The extremely negative prejudice against Christianity means that the few Somali believers especially need our prayers. In addition to the 15 million Somalis (99.99% Muslim), please pray for these unreached people groups:

a. Bajuni: 14,000 Muslims with few, if any, followers of Christ

b. Dabarre: 100% Muslim; the 34,000 have little hope of hearing about Jesus.

c. Madhiban: One of the original inhabitants of Somalia; all 9,000 are animists worshipping the spirit of snakes and animals.

d. Tunni: Another 100% Muslim people group with 42,000 souls needing Christ.