

# Matthew

The Gospel of

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

## LESSON SEVEN

### MATTHEW 6

#### Day 1



*Father, lead me by your Spirit today to understand, to love and to follow your word.*

- Read chapter 6
- Chapter 6 continues Jesus' sermon on the mount. Highlight, underline or circle the words and phrases that Jesus repeats throughout this part of his sermon. What stands out to you?
- What is one truth in today's passage that moves your heart to praise, thanksgiving, confession, action or love for God?

#### Day 2- Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

1. Verse 6:1 seems to contradict 5:16, but what is the motive behind *practicing your righteousness before other people*, in 6:1 that Jesus is warning about?

- What was the motive in 5:16?

Picture and Ponder: "...we are to show when tempted to hide, and hide when tempted to show."<sup>1</sup>

2. Jesus gives three examples of practicing righteousness in order to get human praise.

-When you \_\_\_\_\_... (v.2)

-When you \_\_\_\_\_...(v.5)

-When you \_\_\_\_\_... (v.16)

Scholar's Note: Three kinds of hypocrites-1. Someone who feigns goodness but is actually evil and knows he is being deceptive. 2. Someone who is carried away by their own acting and deceives themselves. Such pious hypocrites, though unaware of their own deceit, do not fool most onlookers.

3. A third kind of hypocrite deceives himself into thinking he is acting for the best interests of God and man and also deceives onlookers.<sup>2</sup>

For Discussion: What are the ways we can be hypocritical in our practices of praying, giving and fasting?

3. How can we tell that Jesus assumes we will give, pray and fast according to verses 3,6 and 17?

In what ways are you challenged by Jesus' assumption?

<p><u>Off the Beaten Path:</u> Read 2 Corinthians 8-9. What does giving that pleases God look like?</p>
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4. When you do things in order to gain praise from other people, what do you forfeit? Why?

Picture and Ponder: The theme of reward is especially prominent in this Sermon and is more prevalent in Matthew than any other NT book (with Revelation second).<sup>3</sup>

5. How are giving, praying and fasting each related to our relationship with God?

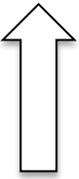


In chapter 6 Jesus is still explaining righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees—righteousness that reflects the heart of God and is only found in union with Jesus. He has moved from our relationships with others (5:21-48) to our relationship with God. Giving, praying and fasting are acts of worship and devotion to our heavenly Father. They become corrupted when we practice them with our eyes on others instead of God.

We are not really tempted to stand on the street corners and pray out loud or to rub ash on our faces and fast. But we *are* tempted to play a role, to fit into the Christian mold, to look good on the outside so that we fit in with our friends at church, when really all we are doing is trying to get praise for ourselves. When we do this we are forfeiting genuine relationship with God, the sweet fellowship and blessing of his presence, his provision and his blessing.

- ❖ Jesus says when you give, don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. Even if you give quietly or secretly, how is dwelling on what you give or congratulating yourself corrupting the act?
- ❖ "The Greek word for *room* into which we are to withdraw to pray (v.6) was used for the store-room where treasures might be kept."<sup>4</sup> What treasures have you found in prayer or what reward have you experienced from private prayer times?
- ❖ How is fasting humbling ourselves before God?

- ❖ When we want people to praise us who is it we really want to be worshipped?



Heavenly Father, help me to be so conscious of you that I forget myself. Forgive me for wanting to look good in the eyes of others rather than wanting to truly please you. May you be the true object of my worship and not myself.

Off the Beaten Path: There is so much to be said about fasting that is not the main point of what Jesus is saying here, but so worth it to explore! Fasting is a Christian discipline that is not widely practiced or understood. Look up all the references to fasting in the Bible using Bible Gateway. What are its spiritual purposes? (For a thorough discussion on fasting that focuses on the heart not technique, read John Piper's *A Hunger For God*.)

### **Day 3- Matthew 6:7-15**

6. First Jesus warned his followers not to be like religious hypocrites, now he warns not to be like Gentiles—pagans or people who are outside the family of God. How do they approach God according to verse 7 and 8?

-Jesus is not against long prayers or even repetition, but against what kind of phrases?

-Why does Jesus not want us to be like them, using their method of praying? How do you think it makes God feel?

-What is it usually saying about our heart when we resort to this kind of approach?

-What does *heaping up empty phrases* look like in your prayer life?

### **The Lord's Prayer**

7. Beginning in verse 9 Jesus gives his disciples a model of how to pray. *Our Father* shows the personal nature of the kind of praying Jesus wants for his followers. What are all the connotations of the word *Father*?

-What is the significance of the word *Our*?

Picture and Ponder: "Unfortunately, many modern Christians find it very difficult to delight in the privilege of addressing the Sovereign of the universe as "Father" because they have lost the heritage that emphasizes God's transcendence."<sup>5</sup>

8. *In heaven* isn't calling attention to where God is, but to his power and authority as creator and ruler over all things. What difference does this make for us in how we approach our Father?

Scholar's Note: "God's *name* is God himself as he is in himself and has revealed himself."<sup>6</sup> "In the ancient world a person's name bespoke the very essence of the person..."<sup>7</sup>

9. *Hallowed be your name*. To pray that God's name would be hallowed, is to pray that God would be treated as holy or set apart. Why is this important to pray for the world and your life?

-Write an example of how you can pray with this thought in mind.

10. When we pray *your kingdom come*, (v. 10a) what we are actually asking is revealed in the very next line. What does it mean to pray *your kingdom come*, according to verse 10b?

For Discussion: What part do we have in God's will being fulfilled on earth?



The first half of Jesus' prayer model focuses on worship of God and his priorities in the world— his name, his kingdom and his will.

- ❖ How do your prayer priorities align with Jesus' model— is his kingdom given priority or your kingdom, his will or your will?
  
- ❖ How can we practically incorporate Jesus model prayer into our prayers? What ways could you pray specifically for God's will to be done on earth and for God to be treated as holy in light of current events?

Picture and Ponder: "The three petitions which Jesus puts upon our lips are beautifully comprehensive. They cover, in principle, all our human need—material (daily bread), spiritual (forgiveness of sins) and moral (deliverance from evil). What we are doing whenever we pray this prayer is to express our dependence upon God in every area of our human life."<sup>8</sup>

Digging Deeper: *Lead us not into temptation.* The word *temptation* in Jesus' prayer can mean either a test/trial or a temptation. In trying to understand what Jesus means it is helpful to go to other parts of the Bible to see what he doesn't mean. From what these following verses teach about temptation and testing, what are we **not** asking when we pray *lead us not into temptation/testing*?

*James 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*



Light is shed on what Jesus means by *lead us not into temptation*, when we look at the flip side of his request—*deliver us from evil*, which we should understand as *deliver us from the evil one*. The devil is the evil one who does all he can to get us to sin, and only God can deliver us from him. On our own we are doomed to fall. So when we follow Jesus' prayer and ask that we not be lead into temptation or testing we are asking that...

God will help us not to yield to Satan, but to endure.

God would not let us fail him in our times of testing and trial, but that we would be strengthened in our faith.

God would not let us become ensnared by the devil, but resist him, firm in our faith.

God would keep us from stumbling, and we would be presented blameless before him.

How important this aspect of prayer is for our spiritual health! The devil is a roaring lion looking for someone to devour! (1 Pet. 5:8) We need God's deliverance from him! His deliverance usually comes through resisting the devil (1 Pet.5:9), (Ja. 4:7), fleeing from sin (1 Tim. 6:11, 1 Cor. 3:18) and taking the escape routes that God gives us (1 Cor. 10:13). These deliverances are hard and require God's strength and help through prayer.

- ❖ How does asking *lead us not into temptation* show the proper attitude we should have toward ourselves and sin?
  
- ❖ Being aware of our weaknesses and sinful inclinations helps us in the battle against sin. Do you cry out to God to help you with these tendencies before you sin or only afterwards? How will you incorporate this aspect of prayer into your prayer life?

11. Verses 14-15 explain a little further verse 12. These verses are not saying that we earn forgiveness by forgiving others, but that forgiving others reveals something about us. How does forgiving other's sin against us show that we understand God's forgiveness?



Jesus calls his followers to forgive others. He gives no qualifiers or limits except to say that if you refuse to forgive others then you don't know the forgiveness of God. But forgiving someone who has hurt you is difficult, and depending on the circumstances can seem downright impossible. Forgiveness is a sacrifice and sacrifice by its very nature is hard. But with God all things are possible and his Spirit empowers believers to do what is impossible to do in our own natural self. It hurts. It takes time. It takes trust. But can you really look Jesus in the face and say that his death was not enough to cover the sin that you can't forgive?

❖ Colossian 3:12-13 says, *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

Because it is common in our daily lives and relationships to have complaints against each other, God tells us to bear with and forgive one another. This is part of the rhythm of the Christian's life. We absorb the perceived slight or offense and with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, we bear with and forgive. How willing are you to bear with and forgive the inevitable offenses that come with life together? Remind yourself often that you are chosen, holy, beloved and forgiven and ask God to help you put on his character.

❖ If you are struggling to forgive a grievous offense, step out in faith and obedience. Trust God to work in your heart and bring healing. Consider talking with a trusted believer who can help you walk through this journey.

❖ What does refusing to forgive say about your heart?

## Day 4- Matthew 6:19-24

In 6:1-18 Jesus focuses on our spiritual relationship with God— our devotion to God and how it is expressed. In vs.19-34 he turns to earthly matters and human needs, but his message is the same in both areas because the two cannot be separated from each other—exalting God and prioritizing his kingdom, versus exalting self and prioritizing worldly concerns.

12. How do verses 19-20 compare and contrast earthly treasures to heavenly treasures?

Digging Deeper: Other translations of verse 19, say, *store up treasures, or collect for yourself treasures*. How do these translations and the verse below help us understand how we should view our possessions, how much is too much, what some warning signs are that we might be storing up treasures on earth?

*Luke 12:15 And [Jesus] said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*

*1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

*1 Timothy 6:17-19 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

Scholar's Note: ""Heart" (καρδία) is the whole being, referring to "the inner person, the seat of understanding, knowledge, and will."<sup>9</sup>

13. What is the relationship between treasures and the heart according to verse 21?

-What are the implications of this truth?

For Discussion: How do we lay up treasures in heaven?

14. An eye and a lamp enable us to see. If you see things well (healthy eye v.22), with clear vision, you see things as they really are in the light of God's truth. If the eye is bad, you cannot see things clearly, you may not even see things at all— you live in the dark (v.23). But what if you don't even know you have poor vision and you think this is just what things look like? (v.23b) This metaphor about vision is wedged between choosing treasure on earth or in heaven (vs. 19-21), and serving God or money (v. 24). How would you explain how these choices relate to seeing things clearly? What in these two bookends would cloud our vision? How does what we set our eyes on make a difference in our vision?

For Discussion: Why is the love of money incompatible with devotion to God?



In the first part of chapter 6, Jesus is calling his followers to be distinct from the hypocrisy of the religious, and in this last part he is calling us to be distinct from the materialism of the world. He is calling us to declare our priorities—heaven or earth, light or darkness, God or money. In each case, kingdom priorities are completely opposite of worldly priorities. Jesus is calling his followers to swim against the tide, to live counter-culturally.

- ❖ Our actual priorities are revealed in what we spend our time, money, energy, and thoughts on. Sometimes our *actual* priorities don't match what we *want* our priorities to be. Spend some time talking to God about this, ask him what changes need to be made in order to align with his priorities and then ask him to work in you *both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil.2:13)*.

## Day 5- Matthew 6:25-34

15. The *therefore* in verse 25 informs us that what Jesus is about to say next is in light of what he has just said. So, if we listen to Jesus and set our hearts on things above (vs.19-24) what should we be done with, according to verse 25?

16. Why is it unnecessary for believers to worry about the essentials of life according to verses 26-27, 32?

17. In verse 30 we discover a clue as to what allows or even feeds our anxieties. What is it?



*God you are an attentive, loving and generous Father, forgive me for my anxieties that declare you are not those things. Help me not to be characterized by little faith, but to trust you completely.*

Picture and Ponder: "Prudent provision for the future is right; wearing, corroding, self-tormenting anxiety is wrong."<sup>10</sup>

18. Why can we put God's priorities above what we need according to verse 33?

-What does it take to seek God's kingdom first? (Look back to verse 30.)

19. Jesus is not telling us that there is nothing to worry about, he is telling us that we are not to worry about worrisome things. What is pretty much guaranteed in verse 34?

-How do we look at this in light of Jesus' teaching?



"Jesus took it for granted that all human beings are seekers."<sup>11</sup> To seek after something implies ardency or passion. It is to go in search or quest of or to pursue. In Jesus' day the pursuit of food, drink and clothing was more difficult than it is for most of us living in America. Most of us don't worry about having enough food to eat, or clothing to wear; yet Jesus' admonition is still just as relevant for us today. The anxious pursuit of security and the passionate pursuit of comfort and pleasure is what life without God looks like. When Jesus says the "Gentiles seek after these things", *Gentiles* means people who don't have God as their Father. As kingdom people who serve the Eternal King we have more worthy pursuits to be preoccupied with. Life with God is consumed with a passionate pursuit of kingdom concerns.

- ❖ Health, finances, work, relatives, children (or lack of), marriages (or lack of), all provide numerous opportunities for worry and anxiety and rob us of the energy and motivation to seek God's kingdom. What are you anxious about? Commit these anxious thoughts into God's hands in faith.

Take him up on his promise in Philippians 4:6-7

*...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

- ❖ What would people say you are passionate about? God has given each of us different talents, gifts and interests and the freedom to pursue these with the right perspective and priority. How can you use something you are passionate about for God's glory?

- ❖ What is one way you can seek God's kingdom first in the circumstances you are facing right now?
  
- ❖ To seek God's righteousness is not, in this context, to seek the right standing with God that is received when we are credited with Jesus' own righteousness (justification). Here it means to pursue a life that looks like Jesus. To obey his teaching to live and love God's way. How will you seek his righteousness today?

Picture and Ponder: Reflect on this poem called *Only One Life* by C. T. Studd

*Two little lines I heard one day,  
Traveling along life's busy way;  
Bringing conviction to my heart,  
And from my mind would not depart;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one,  
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;  
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,  
And stand before His Judgement seat;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, the still small voice,  
Gently pleads for a better choice  
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,  
And to God's holy will to cleave;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, a few brief years,  
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;  
Each with its days I must fulfill,  
living for self or in His will;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*When this bright world would tempt me  
sore,  
When Satan would a victory score;  
When self would seek to have its way,  
Then help me Lord with joy to say;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Give me Father, a purpose deep,  
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;  
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,  
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Oh let my love with fervor burn,  
And from the world now let me turn;  
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,  
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one,  
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";  
And when at last I'll hear the call,  
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Father forgive me for so often putting my priorities above yours. Help me to put your priorities first in every circumstance that comes my way today and let your righteous ways be my guiding example in all my relationships and interactions. Thank you for your Spirit that lives within me enabling me to live for you.*

One Thing: Look back over this week's study. Pick one thing that God impressed on you, convicted you about, or something new that you learned and write it here. How will this truth impact the way you think and act?

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce, A.B. as quoted in Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p. 127

<sup>2</sup> Expositor's Commentary Copyright © 1998-2018 Olive Tree Bible Software

<sup>3</sup> Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Location 5826). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

<sup>4</sup> Tasker, R.V.G. as quoted in Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p. 134

<sup>5</sup> Expositor's Commentary Copyright © 1998-2018 Olive Tree Bible Software

<sup>6</sup> Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p. 147

<sup>7</sup> Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Location 6017). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

<sup>8</sup> Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p.150

<sup>9</sup> Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 6411-6412). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

<sup>10</sup> Ryle, J.C. as quoted in Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p.163

<sup>11</sup> Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p.160