

DISCIPLES LIVE FOR GOD'S GLORY

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

The actions of those who follow Jesus are done not for their own notoriety but rather so that they might grow in their faith and please the Father.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Matthew 6

+ **SETTING:**

As Jesus taught His disciples about the nature of the kingdom, He was pointing them to the reality that His kingdom was a different kind of kingdom than what they were expecting. While many wanted the physical kingdom, the overthrow of Rome and the liberation of the promised land, Jesus's message in the Sermon on the Mount offered a better kingdom—a heavenly kingdom that had come to change the way followers of Jesus live, reorienting their practices and purposes for doing their righteous deeds.

DAY 1

READ:

Matthew 6:1-15

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 6:1-4

NOTES

Oswald J. Smith, founding pastor of The People's Church in Toronto, Canada, recounted a moment when he learned how to give sacrificially. At the church's annual missions convention, the ushers went up and down the aisles, handing out envelopes to each congregant present. Suddenly, one of the ushers approached him and gave him an envelope. Written on it were the words, "In dependence upon God I will endeavor to give toward the missionary work of the church \$_____ during the coming year."

Smith was unfamiliar with the practice, and with a salary of \$25 per week during World War I, he had never given more than \$5 to missions at any one time previously. With nothing in the bank and without a cent to spare, he began to pray, asking the Lord to show him what to give for the coming year. He sensed the Lord was asking him to give \$50, a total of two weeks' salary to missions. Putting the amount on the front and signing his name on the envelope, he began to trust the Lord for an extra \$4 a month. And to his amazement, the Lord provided each and every month.

When the next year arrived, Smith had received more from the Lord, and he raised his gift to \$100 at the next missions conference. As a result of his desire to glorify the Lord, he was able to lead The People's Church to become a hub of generosity for missions.¹

This is the kind of giving that pleases the Lord—one that prays, seeks God, and trusts Him for more.

How can you grow in trusting the Lord to be generous to His work?

DAY 2

READ:

Matthew 6:1-18

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 6:9-10

NOTES

In an *Industry Week* article, CEO Art Byrne shared how he was aiming to cut machine set-up time in his plant from 14 to 10 minutes. When talking to engineers and plant supervisors, the advice that he received was that it could not be done. But by walking the plant floor, seeing the methods of production, and talking with those who were on the front line of the manufacturing, Byrne was able to get his team to reduce the set-up time of one of the units to six minutes. Instead of managing from the conference room or the board table, an intimate knowledge of the plant floor and what was going on enabled Byrne to get better results.²

When Christ Jesus came to earth, He did not come to walk the plant floor to see how we might be more productive. He came to rescue us from sin and death. He humbled Himself, glorified His Father, doing only what His Father said and told Him to do (John 5:19; 12:49), and He came and walked among us to fulfill all righteousness. Where we had failed and could not save ourselves, Christ came by leaving His throne of glory and doing all the righteous deeds that the Father has asked of us. And by going to the cross, Christ was able to take the punishment of sin for us so that we might be freed from our chains of sin and death.

By His humility, by His willingness to glorify His Father, Jesus came to us, not to get better results but to bring salvation.

In what ways does Christ's saving work enable you to serve others for the glory of God?

DAY 3

READ:

Matthew 6:5-15

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 6:9-15

NOTES

When the Lord's Prayer was banished from schools, many people were appalled that this practice had ceased. But for many school-aged children, the practice made very little difference in their lives. The daily repetition of a formulaic prayer could be recited without thought to what was being said and could be rushed through hurriedly in a mindless fashion.

While it is right to lament the public's loss of knowledge of the Lord's Prayer, it is also ironic that the context of this prayer is Jesus's condemnation of public prayer with meaningless repetition and heaping up thoughtless words. The Lord's Prayer is a beautiful expression of trust in God, but for many it has become nothing more than a public expression of piety that was repeated like a formula, with several phrases that can be said with an empty heart in a futile way.

The purpose of the prayer, Jesus says, is to instruct us on the method of secret prayer. We are to pray "like this." By using each phrase from His model prayer, Jesus gives us a tool to focus our thoughts and direct the form of our prayers. Beginning with God's glory and moving to our good, Jesus teaches us to pray not like the pagans do but with thoughtful words and God-glorifying motives.

How might you use the Lord's prayer to shape your personal prayer time?

DAY 4

READ:

Matthew 6:1-18

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 6:5-6

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Secrecy at its best teaches love and humility before God and others. And that love and humility encourages us to see our associates in the best possible light, even to the point of our hoping they will do better and appear better than us. It actually becomes possible for us to ‘do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than ourselves,’ as Philippians 2:3 advises.”³

—Dallas Willard (1935–2013)

In today’s world of social media self-promotion, branding yourself has become the new fad. Whereas in days gone by people had to seek you out, social media offers you the ability to put yourself forward—your book, your speaking engagement, your political agenda, your product. While we live in a world of marketing and the competition for recognition is important, the danger to the spiritual life is very real. Does it really matter if I post a picture of my Bible with my coffee? Why don’t I share a story about spending time with my kids and how they latched onto some spiritual truth with a cute saying?

While social media has extended our relationships and brought people closer to us, it has also brought the added temptation to put our righteousness online to be seen by others. A simple photo might look harmless, but suddenly our “righteousness” is on display for all to see.

By practicing our righteousness in private, outside of the watching eye of anyone else, we practice the humble, quiet reverence that does not seek our own promotion. Instead, the noise of our souls is quieted, the temptation to exalt ourselves is removed, and the aim of our lives is redirected: to enjoy God and glorify Him forever. In that place we find our happiness, the blessed life, and the joy of the Lord, who loves us more than we could ever imagine.

What are some ways you are tempted to do your righteous acts to be seen by others?

DAY 5

READ:

Matthew 6:1-18

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 6:17-18

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #86: DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a process that takes place both formally and informally to effect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens everywhere, in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ is something that requires our whole life, not just the mind. Formal discipleship refers to periods of instruction. We make disciples through our words and actions, providing verbal instruction from God's Word and non-verbal examples through our lives (Acts 20:17-24).

For many people, the practice of fasting is connected with certain seasons, such as Lent (the forty days preceding Easter), or with other religious groups (such as Muslims during Ramadan). But for many Christians, the practice of fasting is not usually discussed or practiced in their churches today and can cause them to feel uncomfortable.

To go without food in a world where we are told that we should always have what we want, when we want it, and how we want it is to be countercultural. Because of the false idea that having much is to be blessed, many people do not see the spiritual benefit of going without. To fast seems more like something a medieval monk would practice, not a busy twenty-first-century Christian.

Jesus, however, says that this is a practice we should embrace: "When you fast" assumes that we are fasting. To fast is to feel the physical hunger that reminds us of a spiritual hunger for God, His Word, and His will. It is to confess that we need God more than we need anything else.

When we fast, we are seeking to draw near to God through humble contrition (James 4:8,10). And as we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. As the London pastor Charles Spurgeon would confess about his church's practice to corporately fast: "Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has Heaven's gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central Glory."⁴

How might you practice a fast in the coming month?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"If only our hidden life with God is in order and there is within us a secret place of prayer and spiritual discipline and struggle! By this secret stillness and by this alone will God calculate the value and consequence of our life when the hour of reckoning and recompense comes."⁵

—Helmut Thielicke (1908–1986)

POINT 1: Jesus's disciples give secretly
(Matthew 6:1-4).

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? How does Christ's example enable us to live for God's glory alone?

Jesus told His _____ not to be hypocrites in giving merely for others to _____.

? From Day 1: How can you grow in trusting the Lord to be generous to His work?

POINT 2: Jesus's disciples pray sincerely
(Matthew 6:5-15).

Jesus tells His disciples to pray _____ as the Father already knows their _____.

Jesus gives His disciples a _____ of _____ to focus their prayers.

? What changes might we experience by beginning with a focus on God in our prayers?

POINT 3: Jesus's disciples fast humbly
(Matthew 6:16-18).

Jesus tells His disciples not to _____ in obvious ways to seek their own _____ .

? **What are some ways people seek to draw attention to their righteous deeds today?**

Jesus continues telling His disciples that fasting, like other spiritual _____ , should be done humbly and not _____ .

? **How might you grow in the discipline of fasting?**

MY RESPONSE

Because we have come to recognize the world's rewards as fleeting and unfulfilling, we seek to live each day in view of eternity, joyfully sacrificing what is temporary for that which is eternal.

- **HEAD:** How does Christ's sacrificial death free you from living for yourself?
- **HEART:** How can you rejoice in the freedom that Christ brings to your soul?
- **HANDS:** What sacrifice can you make for someone else this week to point them to Christ for God's glory?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"O, how easy it is to do religious things if other people are watching! Preaching, praying, attending church, reading the Bible, acts of kindness and charity—they all take on a certain pleasantness of the ego if we know that others will find out about them and think well of us. It is a deadly addiction for esteem that we have."⁶

—John Piper