

Text: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

Introduction (6:1)

Neither seeking the approval of others or ourselves will result in lives that bear the fruit of righteousness. Only seeking the approval of the One Who made us can do that!

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- What might we learn by reading directly from Matt. 5:48 into 6:1?
- How can we reconcile Matthew 5:16 which tells us to live in such a way that the world can see our good deeds with today's text which seems to say not to? What is the real issue Jesus is addressing?
- Why would the world's advice for how to cure our addiction to approval by giving yourself validation never produce the fruit of righteousness that Jesus calls for? How is His advice different?
- What are some of the ways that you might be tempted at times to do things in order to be seen (as important) by others?
- In Jesus' day Pharisees wanted to be seen as holy. What are some other things that people today might want to be seen as? How do we set out to achieve these things? (What is our version of blowing our horns?)
- Explain from Isaiah 58 why fasting is not merely something we do before God, but also an act of justice if it is to be acceptable to God.

I. When you do compassionate giving... (6:2-4)

A. When you give to the needy (2)

- i. "Do not announce it with trumpets... to be honored by others!"
 - a) Did people *really* blow trumpets to publicly announce their giving, or was Jesus *caricaturing* their behavior to humorously expose their motivations?
 - b) Could it be a literal throwing of money into the trumpet shaped receptacle in such a way as to make loud noises to draw attention?
 - c) Disciples must not do their giving in order to be honored by others.

- B. Disciples compassionately give to the needy, without any desire to be seen and known by others... not even our other hand!

II. When you pray... (6:5-6)

- A. Prayer done properly is an act of justice.

- B. It is not uncommon for prayer to become a means of gathering respect and admiration from others.

- C. Those in Matthew's audience live in something the size of a walk in closet, so having a "storeroom" was out of the question.

III. When you fast... (6:16-18)

- A. Do not look somber...
 - i. There are ways we can subtly and not so subtly let people know we are fasting.

ii. Jesus's Use of Humor

"Laughing is our way to humility. Perhaps the way to puncture pride without wounding the personality is to laugh at ourselves. Humility is very tricky—it easily turns into another form of pride. But taking ourselves less seriously can keep our humility true." — Satirist and minister, Ryan Ahlgrim

- B. But you "put oil on your head and wash your face...".
 - i. A list of rules won't do.

ii. David Augsburger talks about three different kinds of spirituality that people practice.

- a) The spirituality that is "really about me, about my growth, [and] fulfillment."

- b) Then there's the spirituality that is about more than me... it is about me before God, discovering how I fit into the grand scheme of things.

"Too often it's about the self and a god of the self's own creation."

- c) "I am of no more worth than any other; instead I must view the other as showing me the face of God." He speaks of how we also "image God in return, but in the reciprocity of seeing both myself and the other as equally loved and prized, there is more than a nudge toward humility."

- iii. We are called to have a personal relationship with God, but it may be better to say that we are called to personally have a relationship with God and His people. (Isaiah 58:3-7)