

Foundations Bible Study – Sermon on the Mount
Lesson 3

Scripture Reading:

- **Matthew 6:1-18**

Lesson

In the first half of the sixth chapter Jesus seems to be stuck on the hypocrites. What exactly is a hypocrite? Is it someone who says one thing and does another, well that sounds like a father, mother, preacher, teacher, doctor, etc. The thing about hypocrites is that they are always someone else, never me or definitely not you. Right... right.....

We all do things we do not intend or desire to do, with our time, with our money, with our words; we fail to live up to Christian expectations. We fail to live up to our talk. Can you “talk the talk”? I sure can.

Jesus addresses three very important areas of our spirituality in chapter six. Maybe we get a glimpse into Christ’s priorities. Why does Jesus address these issues here together in the Sermon on the Mount? Maybe it is because Jesus feels these parts of our spiritual life are very important, maybe even, the most important ways we connect with God and others. I may not like that, you may not like that either. But it seems: fasting, prayer and giving are three of the most important parts of our spiritual lives, because Christ spoke of them often and here in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus first tells us what not to do when praying, fasting and giving, then he shares how we should be involved with these acts of worship and communion with God. I think there are two main points made here by Christ. First, that our attitudes when involved with acts of worship and spirituality are most important. Why pray, why fast, why give, why worship on Sunday, why be a part of the church, why help, why study? My attitude and motivations are at the core of my connecting to God and Christ. To have the mind of Christ, to live in the will of God takes a humble, loving attitude. My motives must be pure and my attitude stay holy, if not, the actions I am engaging in are meaningless. Even in the best of times, my heart and soul are the most important parts of my spirituality.

Secondly Christ is strongly saying that spiritual acts of worship are to be much more private than public. It serves no Godly purpose to give or fast or pray in front of others to show-off our piety. We have all seen this happen, times when giving or praying becomes a place to brag and boast. Jesus says simply and quite plainly that the rewards are over when we do these things for others to see. No, blessing or spiritual growth will occur in our lives if we just show-off our praying, fasting and giving. So pray in the closet, fast without showing it, give as

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much as you can without anyone ever knowing, then God in heaven will reward and remember your acts of worship.

So I think what Jesus is saying to us all is “Walk the Walk” and then.... Shhhh. God sees all and knows our hearts, which is all that matters.

Postscript: Verses 14 & 15 are what we shared about during the last Bible Study. These words of Christ still amaze me. They seem hard to swallow and even harder to live at times.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Folks say the church is full of hypocrites, what do they mean? Are they right?
2. Where is your favorite place to pray?
3. Is giving a private act if we pass the plate?
4. Verses 14 & 15 what do you think?