

Home Groups | Week of February 14, 2016
Sermon on the Mount | Matthew 6:1-18

Ice Breaker Question:

With Valentine's Day being this past Sunday, how did you show or receive love this week?

In your home groups, love can be actions of love or grace towards anyone, not just romantic love.

Read and discuss this week's scripture [Matthew 6:1-18].

1. Jesus tells his followers to let their light shine – so that others may see their good deeds (Matt. 5:16), and then in this passage tells his followers to practice prayer and giving privately. Is there a contradiction? Why or why not?
2. Jesus tells his followers that those who do things very publicly (praying, fasting, giving) get their reward in public – the applause of others. Those who do those acts in secret receive their reward from God the Father. What do you think the reward from God looks like?
3. Why does Jesus make his example of prayer (The Lord's Prayer) so simple? Do you find prayer easy or difficult? How do you pray?
4. From what you have studied in the Sermon on the Mount, what do you understand it to mean when Jesus says, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven?"
5. Matthew 6:12 says, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." What is the relationship between forgiving others and being forgiven yourself?
6. Have you ever fasted from food? If you have, what was your experience? If not, why not?

Homework:

Close your group this week by praying the Lord's Prayer. Make the Lord's Prayer part of your daily prayers this week and report back to your group what that was like.

Prayer:

Keep the following prayer requests from our church family in mind as you close:

- > Prayers of healing for Harry Milli, Phil Carr, Hadley Lehr, and Cheryl Gates.
- > Prayers of comfort for Amy Miller in the death of her brother and the Hopwood family in the death of Eric's mother.

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Reminders for your group:

Congregational Gathering & Dinner | Sunday, February 21 | 5-7 pm | ZPC Gym & Sanctuary | **RSVP by Monday!**
Chili Cook-Off and Movie Night | Saturday, February 27 | 5:30-8:30 pm | Gym & Sanctuary

[Leader's Notes]

Humans are complicated. Sometimes we do things because we want to please God, or do the right thing, or because our parents taught us to do it that way. Sometimes we do things because we don't want to be embarrassed, or to fit in, or secretly we want some affirmation from others. Jesus challenges us to follow him, giving instruction in our giving, praying, and fasting, with the right motives – to honor him instead of bringing attention to ourselves.

[Question 1] There is a tension but not a contradiction. God calls us to be a witness through the way that we live. But our motives must not be to honor ourselves but to honor God. If we give money or pray in a certain way to gain attention, our motives are off track.

[Question 2] We might look at the Fruit of the Spirit. If we are living in God's Spirit, we have joy, peace, patience, self-control – and contentment in the fact that we belong to God – not wanting the approval of others.

[Question 3] Jesus says not to "heap up empty phrases" or to use many words. Our prayer should be heartfelt, simple, to the point, and private. This simple prayer for daily needs seems to cover almost all areas of our lives. Let each person answer how they pray.

[Question 4] Jesus is developing a new community of his followers to help God's kingdom on earth look more like the one in heaven. According to the Sermon on the Mount, we need to be salt and light, love our enemies, seek God's righteousness first, and seek to honor God, not to draw attention to ourselves. When we follow Jesus' commands, our world should look more like God's kingdom here on earth.

[Question 5] Jesus ties being forgiven to offering forgiveness. He does it elsewhere as well. Perhaps we need to have an attitude of forgiveness and grace to others in order to be able to receive grace and forgiveness ourselves.

[Question 6] Many Christians have not fasted or find it difficult. You might explore why people fast now and what they get out of it. Fasting is typically accompanied by prayer and is for finding God's guidance for a decision, to draw closer to God by giving up something, or to find spiritual strength during trials.