

L E A D E R G U I D E

SERMON

ON THE

MOUNT

PART TWO





GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS STUDY

We don't want this curriculum to be just another study that you do, we want it to positively impact your life and your walk with Christ. The goal is that you finish this study a different person than when you began. To that end, you'll find three sections in this book:

SERMON NOTES: The sermons each week will serve as your introduction to each topic, therefore faithfully and actively listening to the sermons is vitally important. Use this space to write down any notes that will help you remember the material covered. Jot down any quotes or thoughts that were meaningful to you and any questions that may come up during the sermon.

PERSONAL STUDY: You need to be in the Word yourself outside of your group time. To help you do this, we've provided space for you to record H.E.A.R. journals. The H.E.A.R. journaling method is a way to read the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. We'll walk through the H.E.A.R. method in detail on the following page.

GROUP STUDY: The group study is where you will take a closer look at the week's passage from a different perspective. This is the time to share any insights you gleaned from the sermon and the time you spent in personal study completing the H.E.A.R. journal. It is recommended that you listen to the sermon and complete the H.E.A.R. journal before you attend the group discussion so that you will be most equipped to contribute to the discussion, which will provide the most benefit for everyone.

Above and beyond all the advice given here, the most important thing that you can do to maximize the effect of this study in your life is to pray for God to enlighten you to the teachings of Jesus and to give you the wisdom and strength to be faithful and obedient to everything you learn. Rely upon the Holy Spirit to make this study relevant and powerful in your life and you will undoubtedly be changed.

H . E . A . R .

HIGHLIGHT - After reading the passage of Scripture, highlight each verse that speaks to you by copying it in the space provided. Write out the passage along with the name of the book and the chapter and verse numbers. If you want to, give the passage a short title to describe it.

EXPLAIN - At this stage you will explain what the text means. By asking some simple questions, with the help of God's Spirit, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Why was this written?

To whom was it originally written?

How does it fit with the verses before and after it?

Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?

What is He intending to communicate through this text?

APPLY - This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, answer a series of questions to uncover the significance of these verses to you personally, questions like:

How can this help me?

What does this mean today?

What would the application of this verse look like in my life?

What does this mean to me?

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. You may write a call to action. You may describe how you will be different because of what God has said to you through His Word. You may indicate what you are going to do because of what you have learned. You may respond by writing out a prayer to God. For example, you may ask God to help you to be more loving, or to give you a desire to be more generous in your giving. Keep in mind that this is your response to what you have just read.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you."

[Matthew 7:7]

SERMON

ON THE

MOUNT

- ONE.** Giving to the Needy
- TWO.** Prayer
- THREE.** The Lord's Prayer
- FOUR.** Fasting
- FIVE.** Lay Up Treasures
- SIX.** Do Not Be Anxious

ONE

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

[MATTHEW 6:2-4]

PERSONAL

STUDY

[MATTHEW 6:2-4]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP

STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: If we do good works desiring to receive approval from others, then we receive no approval from God.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.



Read **MATTHEW 5:16** and consider: Is there any contradiction between what Jesus says here and what Jesus is saying now?

The astute reader will notice that previously Jesus said that His followers should “let [their] light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). We are to live our lives on display for all to see. But here Jesus says that we shouldn’t do that. There is one key difference between these two directives, however.

What is the difference in the works done by those in 5:16 and those in 6:1?

The good works done in 5:16 were done in a way that others would glorify God as a result. The works Jesus’ references in 6:1 are done to be seen by others. What authenticates our good works is the motive behind them.

Why would God reject the good works done by those described in 6:1?

God takes no pleasure in His people seeking glory for themselves. Our lives as Christians are devoted to furthering the fame of God’s name, not our own. We seek to make much of God, not ourselves.

This is why we were created and this is why God has saved us. So, it makes sense that if God gives us a mission to make much of Him and instead we start seeking to develop our own reputation, then God would not be pleased and we should expect to receive no reward from Him.

Who are the people in 6:1 trying to please?

It appears at first as though those who do their good works in order to be seen by men are trying to please men rather than God. But this isn't exactly the case. Anybody who is truly honest with themselves will admit that the reason they seek the applause of others is not to please others, but to please themselves. We want others to think more highly of us. We want them to think we are more generous than other people, that we serve in the church and community more than others, that we know the Bible better than others. Our real desire is not to please others, but ourselves.

This is the question that we must keep in mind going forward: are we trying to please ourselves or are we trying to please God?

Think about the issue of giving to the needy. Is this something that comes easy for you? Why or why not?

We probably all share at least one hesitation towards giving: we don't want to be taken advantage of. How do we know that the person requesting help is going to use what we give them for its stated purpose? The important thing to note here, however, is that nowhere does Jesus address concern over what the recipients of our giving do with their gifts. Jesus is only concerned with the motive behind His followers' giving, not the intentions of the one receiving. Jesus assumes that His followers will be giving to the needy ("when you give to the needy..."), so He doesn't make an argument here to convince people to give. We need to be careful about being overcritical and suspicious about those in need, or we may find that our caution may actually be disobedience.

And giving to the needy isn't only limited to financial assistance. We may be wary of giving money, but we shouldn't be wary of giving of our time and expertise to assist others.

On the other hand, we all probably share at least one motive for giving to the needy and it's one that we discussed earlier: we want to be thought well of by those we are helping and by those who may become aware of the help that we've offered.

What is the reward that Jesus says is received by those who give to the needy for their own praise?

When we give to the poor expecting to receive praise from man, we will receive it, but that's all we will receive. When we drop large checks into the offering plate expecting to impress others, we will be thought of as more generous, but that's it. When we offer our possessions to the less fortunate and publicly share our gratitude to be able to be the hands and feet of Jesus, others will consider us as selfless, but that's all. When the motive behind our giving is self-gratification, then our "righteousness" becomes nothing more than a publicity stunt. We will certainly receive the publicity that we are seeking, but nothing more.

How does Jesus say that we must give? What do you think He means when He says that our left hand shouldn't know what our right hand is doing?

In one sense, Jesus is saying that our giving should be so private that not even our own hands are aware of what the other is doing. Of course, this is hyperbole, but like other instances, Jesus usually saves exaggeration for treating the most serious of issues. (Think back to Jesus' prescription for fighting lust).

In another sense, in saying that our right hand should be unaware of what our left hand is doing, Jesus is alluding to the idea that our generosity should become almost an unconscious act of our will. This interpretation lines up more closely with the theme of motive that Jesus has been treating. When we get into the habit of only trying to please God rather than ourselves, then over time generosity will become an impulsive response to any need that we see. If we seldom commit acts of generosity, then when we do give the temptation to broadcast it to the world will be great. But if giving to the needy becomes a routine habit, then there will be less of a desire to make it known; giving has become normal to us—it has become a part of who we are.

Read **2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-5**. What preceded the Corinthian's giving to Paul?

We can achieve Jesus' goal of private, God-motivated giving when we do as the Corinthians, who first gave themselves to the Lord, then they gave their money and resources for the Lord's work. When we commit our hearts, desires, and devotion to the Lord, we do so believing that only He can truly satisfy our desires. When we give to the needy in secret and refuse to make a show of our generosity, then we are acknowledging to God that we are not satisfied with the praise of man, but are seeking the reward that only He can provide—true satisfaction and joy in becoming more like Him.



Think to the last time you gave to the needy. What was your motive behind that act? Did you receive the reward you were seeking? Did it satisfy you?

Do you believe this principle of motive and reward applies to tithing? Why or why not? (See **MALACHI 3:10** for discussion of reward)

Are you aware of any needs that need to be met? What can you do to help meet those needs? How can you do it in a way that is faithful to Jesus' teaching here?

TWO

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

[MATTHEW 6:5-8]

PERSONAL

STUDY

[MATTHEW 6:5-8]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP

STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: Genuine prayer is simple and is offered to God alone without any selfish regard for those who may be listening.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.



Have you set aside a certain time when you pray? What does your prayer life look like?

Jesus begins this portion of his sermon by making an assumption: He says, “when you pray.” He made this same assumption in the previous topic He discussed, “when you give to the needy.” Jesus assumes that prayer and giving are to be common works in the lives of His followers. But how many of us are truly given to prayer?



Read the following verses on prayer:

EPHESIANS 6:18 - We should pray in many ways at many times.

JAMES 5:13 - We should pray when we are in trouble.

MATTHEW 5:44 - We should pray for our enemies.

MATTHEW 26:41 - We should pray in order to fight temptation.

PROVERBS 15:8 - We should pray to please God.

COLOSSIANS 4:2 - We should be devoted to prayer.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17 - We should pray continually, without ceasing.

These few verses are only a small portion of what the Bible has to say about prayer, but these few passages alone are enough to convince us that prayer should hold a prominent place in the Christian life. Jesus was right to assume that we should all be already involved in the discipline of prayer.

So just as Jesus did not try to convince His listeners that they should be giving, He also doesn't try to convince His listeners that they should be praying. Jesus understands both activities to be a given. Instead, Jesus is attempting to correct the motive behind our praying.

What is the motive behind the hypocrites' praying that Jesus addresses in v. 5?

In the context that Jesus was speaking into, public prayers were offered at the temple meetings. At several times during the day, coinciding with the daily sacrifices and rituals, devout Jews would be expected to appear at the temple to pray. If you found yourself outside the temple at these certain times, then you were to stop what you were doing, face the temple, and join in prayer wherever you were. (This is something that is still practiced by Muslims today).

The hypocrites were very faithful in engaging in prayer, Jesus says that they "love to stand and pray" (v. 5). The act of prayer itself is not what Jesus is attacking. Jesus condemns not their behavior, but their motive: "that they may be seen by others." The hypocrites saw prayer as an opportunity to boost the crowd's perception of them. Instead of speaking to God, they were speaking to men.

Understanding the charge Jesus brought on the hypocrites, examine yourself. Can you really be too hard on them? How can some of our prayers fall under this category today?

If we are honest, we are probably all painfully aware of our own tendency to fluff up our prayers for the sake of those hearing. Who here cannot identify with the rush that is felt whenever you are asked to pray publicly? There is an anxiousness to not sound simple or ingenuous in our prayers. Too often we fall into the same trap as the Gentiles, heaping up empty phrases, thinking that our prayers will be heard just because we use fancy words or eloquent speech. But the heart behind this kind of praying is not to try and impress the Lord, as if that were even possible, but to impress man. Anybody who has had to pray publicly knows this is true.

But probably most us are terrified at the thought of praying publicly. The good news is that public praying is not some rite of passage that all Christians must fulfill. In fact, Jesus is arguing here that it is much better to pray quietly and alone rather than to pray before a crowd. When we take the time to commune with God in prayer, and we do so free from distraction and outside influence, we are more genuine and honest with God.

Read **ECCLESIASTES 5:1-3**.

What reason does the writer give to let our words be few before the Lord?

If we think about it and are honest, we understand how silly it is to flavor our prayers with clichés and popular sentiments. We are praying to God who is in heaven and who “knows what we need before we ask” (v. 8). It is foolish to try and inform an all-knowing Creator of our situations and desires through vain repetition and redundant words. We need not try to convince God of our sincerity by attempting to sway Him with fancy speech. God knows our hearts; therefore, Jesus says that we should pray to God quietly and in secret.

According to verse 1, what should be our main goal for coming before the Lord in prayer?

It is much better to come before God in prayer with a desire to hear from Him, rather than to make Him hear from us. One word from the Lord can calm our spirit, enlighten our minds, refresh our soul, and direct our steps; but a thousand words from our mouths will drown out the still small voice that He so often speaks to us in (1 Kings 19:12).

What other benefits are there to praying to God quietly and secretly (alone)?

When we are alone before God, we have no one around us to impress. In isolation, we are faced with the penetrating truth that the omniscient God knows our deepest longings and our biggest shortcomings, therefore we do not have to argue our desires with Him and we do not have to defend ourselves, we are simply left to sit before Him, rest in His grace, and then we are able to utter a pure request to God.

Last week we saw how giving frequently allows generosity to become a part of who we are and over time we grow indifferent to the need for fanfare. The same is true for prayer. If we spend the time laboring in silent isolation before the Lord in prayer, then if the time comes for us to pray publicly, there will be no fear because our prayers will be the overflow of that labor, and God will be glorified in a simple prayer directed towards Him rather than men.



Do you pray more frequently and fervently in public or in private?

Do you make an earnest attempt to be alone with God in prayer every day?

What can you do to free up time in your schedule to make room for quiet, secret prayer?

THREE

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"

[MATTHEW 6:9-13]

PERSONAL

STUDY

[MATTHEW 6:9-13]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP

STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: The Lord's prayer is a helpful model to show us the priorities we should have in our prayers.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.

First, notice that this model prayer that Jesus puts forth is Him showing us how we should pray, not what we should pray. It is certainly not wrong to recite this prayer, but Jesus' intention is not to give us the exact words to pray, but to give us an example for us to model our prayers after. Also, we do not have to follow this model prayer every single time we pray. This is not a rigid method that we aren't allowed to deviate from, this is only an example of an appropriate prayer to offer to God.

There are six petitions in this prayer. Fittingly, the first three concern God directly: His name, His kingdom, and His will. Jesus is teaching us that God's glory should be the issue of first priority in our prayers. Then comes the following three petitions which concern us: our daily provision, our sins, and our temptations. By covering these three, Jesus is encouraging us to bring both our spiritual needs and physical needs before God. We will examine each of these petitions briefly.



HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME - "To hallow" means "to sanctify", to make holy, or to consider holy. By praying this to God, we are asking God to move in us and those around us in a way that causes us to revere and glorify Him.

CONSIDER: Is God's name hallowed in every area of your life? What do you need to surrender to Him for the sake of His glory?

Spend a couple minutes writing down a prayer in your own words for God's name to be hallowed.

YOUR KINGDOM COME - This is not a prayer that God would extend His sovereign rule over everything, because God is already sovereign over everything. Instead, this phrase is a request for God to build His kingdom through the salvation of sinners. In other words, we are praying for God to build His church.

Notice the implication behind this prayer, though. How does God build His church and save sinners? "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"

(ROMANS 10:13-14). If we are asking God to save sinners, then by default we are asking God to use us in accomplishing this mission.

CONSIDER: Is there anybody that you can think of now that you need to share the Gospel with? What steps do you need to take to be more comfortable sharing the Gospel?

Spend a couple minutes writing down a prayer in your own words asking God to save sinners and to use you in that task.

YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN - This request is like the one before, but there is an important distinction. God's will is carried out perfectly in heaven, however it is not so on the earth. The most obvious proof of this is the reality of sin on the earth.

To pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven is, in effect, to pray for anything that obstructs God's will to be removed. We are praying for the holiness of His creation.

We just previously prayed for God's salvific grace to extend to more and more people when we prayed "Your kingdom come." Now we are praying that those **WHOM GOD SAVES, AND THOSE HE HAS ALREADY SAVED**, will give themselves wholly to obedience to God's will.

CONSIDER: What areas of your life are you not being obedient in? Is there some action you feel you need to take? Or something that you need to repent of and stop doing?

Spend a couple minutes writing down a prayer in your own words asking God to reveal to you how you can better conform your life to His will.

These are the first three petitions, showing that the Christian's priorities should be God's glory, God's reign, and God's will. Then we can turn our attention to ourselves and others.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD - Here we ask for God to give us what we need to get through the day. We admonish God as our benevolent provider. This isn't a complicated prayer, only that God would provide us our necessities: food, water, clothing, etc. "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." (**1 TIMOTHY 6:8**).

CONSIDER: Are you content with what you have? Or do you have an unhealthy desire for more? Do you trust God to give you what you need?

Spend a couple minutes writing down a prayer in your own words asking God to provide for you today.

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS - We ask God to forgive us, this pertains to our spiritual relationship with God. Then we address our forgiveness of those who've sinned against us, relating to our spiritual relationship with others. Essentially, we are asking God to remove any sin that separates us from Himself and from others.

CONSIDER: Are there any sins you need to ask God to forgive you for? Are you harboring any bitterness towards anyone else or withholding forgiveness?

Spend a couple minutes writing down a prayer in your own words asking God to forgive you for your sins and to help you forgive others.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL - The Lord's model prayer closes with a plea for God to preserve the relationship that we just asked Him to strengthen. We are asking the Lord to give us the strength to be steadfast in our pursuit of holiness..

CONSIDER: Have you grown weary in your pursuit of God? What in your life do you think may be contributing to that weariness? What will you do to remove any stumbling block in your walk with the Lord?

Spend a couple minutes writing down a prayer in your own words asking God to help you fight against temptation and to keep you from sin.

FOUR

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

[MATTHEW 6:16-18]

PERSONAL

STUDY

[MATTHEW 6:16-18]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP

STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: Fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Like other spiritual disciplines, fasting that is motivated by a desire for God will be rewarded by God with a deeper relationship with Him.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.



What is fasting? What experiences have you had with fasting?

Is it safe to assume that the second question was largely answered by crickets? Fasting is a discipline that is not spoken of much in the church today and seems to have lost its place of prominence in the Christian life. There is a tendency to view fasting as something extreme and only for the “super spiritual.” But just like the previous disciplines of prayer and giving to the needy, Jesus assumes that fasting is to be a common practice in the Christian’s life: “when you fast...” (v. 16). Although, do not think that by “common” our fasting should be “regular.” Instead, by considering fasting to be “common”, we should understand fasting to be “expected.”?

Also, do not consider what Jesus says to be a command to fast. Nowhere in the Bible are New Testament Christians required to fast.

But at the same time, the Bible presents fasting as a profitable discipline that benefits the Christian in certain situations. We can read the following verses to determine what some of those situations are:



What situations do the following verses show that fasting is helpful?

ACTS 13:1-3 - Fasting is helpful when we need to make important decisions and we need clarity from God.

MARK 9:20-29¹ - Fasting is a helpful tool in spiritual warfare.

MATTHEW 4:1-3 - Fasting is helpful to resist temptation to sin.

EZRA 8:21 - Fasting is helpful when you are faced with a difficult task.

So we can see that fasting is beneficial whenever we need special insight from the Lord, when we are engaging in intense spiritual warfare, when we need strength to resist temptation, or when we are in the midst of difficult seasons. From these verses we can begin to derive a definition of fasting: **FASTING IS ABSTAINING FROM FOOD FOR SPIRITUAL PURPOSES**. Granted, there are health benefits to fasting, but the Scriptures prescribe fasting as a means of achieving spiritual benefits.

The bible has examples of different kinds of fasts. There is the regular fast, which is abstaining from all food and drink, except for water (**2 CHRONICLES 20:3; EZRA 8:21**). There is a partial fast, which is what Daniel engaged in when he “ate no choice food; and no meat or wine” (**DANIEL 10:2-3**). Daniel didn’t abstain from all food, only “choice food.” Then there is the absolute fast, which is abstaining from all food and drink, including water (**ESTHER 4:16**). You can also fast from a certain activity as a means of removing distraction from your relationship with the Lord (**EXODUS 19:15; 1 CORINTHIANS 7:5**). This is a great way to fast for those who cannot abstain from food for health reasons, such as diabetics.

What is the point behind fasting? Is fasting an end in itself? Do we fast just to fast?

The point is, fasting is a way for us to increase our reliance upon God by denying ourselves basic sustenance, or by carving out unhealthy habits that distract us from fellowship with Him. The pain of hunger is one that is hard to ignore, and with each stomach growl there is a reminder of what we are pursuing: more of God. Therefore, it’s important to spend wisely the time that we would normally be eating or enjoying a certain activity. We should fill that void with something that draws us closer to God, or else our fasting is pointless. Maybe it’s reading Scripture or praying; or perhaps it’s engaging in some artistic/creative activity—whatever draws you closer to God. “Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (**MATTHEW 4:4**). When we rely more on God, we hear from Him more clearly and He works in us more strongly. Fasting increases our faith.

1. In some translations, “and fasting” is omitted from verse 29. However, the clearest manuscripts include it. And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.”

Think again about our discussions on prayer and giving and what we learned about what our heart should be in these matters. What is the key factor that provides validity to our fasting?

Motivation is what determines the effectiveness of our fasting. Jesus denounces the hypocrite's fasting for the same reason He denounced their praying and giving. The hypocrites were fasting so that they "may be seen by others" (v. 16). Their reason for fasting was not to receive spiritual benefits, but to receive physical benefits—accolade and prestige amongst the religious; surely "they have received their reward."

Read **LUKE 18:12-14**. Which of these two men went home justified before God?

Without the right motivation, our fasting is rendered ineffective and is reduced to nothing more than religious ritual. We do not fast to achieve a greater standing before God, we fast so that God will have a greater standing in our lives.

This is something that is important to understand about not only fasting, but all spiritual discipline. If you'll notice, each discipline that Jesus has addressed—giving, prayer, and fasting—He has provided the motivation we should have.

For each discipline, what does Jesus say is the outcome of its genuine practice?

Jesus tells us that no matter our motivation for engaging in the spiritual disciplines, we will be rewarded. If our motivation is the praise of man, we will certainly receive it. But if our motivation is to serve and commune with God, then we will receive a reward from the Father.

Is it wrong to pursue God for a reward? Or is the pursuit of Him enough?

It may sound holy and pious to say "I serve God for the sake of serving Him alone. I need no reward!" But that's not as biblical of a position as you may think.

Read **HEBREWS 11:6** - What is necessary to draw near to God?

Read **HEBREWS 11:26** - What allowed Moses to endure his suffering?

Read **HEBREWS 12:2** - What was Jesus' motivation for humbling himself and enduring the cross?

Moses, Jesus, and anybody else who would draw near to God, all have the same motivation. There is a reward coming to us that we will receive. The apostle Paul rejoiced to Timothy that because of his faithful service to God "there is laid up for [him] the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will award to [him]" (2 Timothy 4:8). Jesus tells us that our faithful participation in the spiritual disciplines of giving, prayer, and fasting will result in us receiving a reward from the Father.

What do you think the reward is?

Scripture doesn't clearly say what the reward is, but it's possible to make some observations. Moses "looked ahead to the reward", which was probably God's promise to him that he would enter the Promised Land. He would be in the presence of God. Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before Him", which in John 17, Christ's joy is described as the unity and love between He and the Father. He knew on the other side of the cross was perfect fellowship with God. The hypocritical Pharisees give, pray, and fast in order to be seen by men, and this is the exact reward they receive.

All of this taken into consideration, it's safe to say that our motivation determines our reward. If we draw near to God desiring to grow closer to Him, and not desiring anything else, that's what we will receive. If we deny our flesh its sinful desires and come to God for sanctification, He will reward us so. We must not secularize the issue and limit God's rewards to merely material possessions. The reward for holiness is holiness itself. More holiness, means more of God.

"WHOM DO I HAVE IN HEAVEN BUT YOU? AND THERE IS NOTHING ON EARTH THAT I DESIRE BESIDES YOU. MY HEART AND MY FLESH MAY FAIL, BUT GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART AND MY PORTION FOREVER."

[PSALM 73:25-26]



Is there a situation in your life right now that God may be using to call you to fast?

Do you have a biblical, God-centered motivation for participating in the spiritual disciplines of giving, prayer, and fasting?

Which of these three disciplines do you need to be more earnest in?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Fasting for Beginners

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/fasting-for-beginners>

A Hunger For God, by John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/books/a-hunger-for-god>

The Daniel Fast

www.daniel-fast.com

FIVE

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

[MATTHEW 6:19-24]

PERSONAL

STUDY

[MATTHEW 6:19-24]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP

STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: The Kingdom citizen does not divide his or her loyalty between God and this world, but serves the Lord alone.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.



What do you value and appreciate in your life?



Read **DEUTERONOMY 7:9**, **JOSHUA 24:15**, and **MARK 8:34-35**.

What do these verses teach us about loyalty?

The verse in Deuteronomy shows us that our loyalty to God is based in His loyalty to us. God's loyalty to us is based upon His own desire to uphold the oaths that He has made, despite what we do. Truly, "even when we are faithless, God is faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). Joshua reflected this same kind of loyalty when he famously resolved that no matter what everyone else did, his house would serve the Lord. But loyalty to God does not consist of merely acknowledging our loyalty to Him, there must be actions that accompany our words. This is what Christ was getting at when He said that whoever would follow Him must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him. Martin Luther said that "the true loyalty of the soldier is tested where the battle is hardest." Following Christ requires much sacrifice and difficulty. What Jesus is teaching us in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount is that we must maintain an unswerving loyalty to the **KING OF THE KINGDOM, AND DOING THAT MEANS THAT WE VALUE THE SAME THINGS HE VALUES**. He uses three metaphors to get this point across.

Read verses 19-21. What are the “treasures” that Jesus could be referring to?

In Jesus’ day, and uncannily like our own, ornate garments and clothes were a sign of status and wealth. You were judged by what you wore. Wealth was also determined in the more common measurement of precious metals: gold, silver, etc. If you didn’t have fancy clothes or lots of gold-plated possessions, you were still thought of as wealthy if you owned land. In an agricultural society, owning land meant you owned the crops that grew on the land, which made you a very wealthy and valuable person.

But moths show no discretion for what fabrics they destroy. They just as quickly consume a thin sack cloth as they do the most ornately designed purple robe. And precious metals are not immune to rust, corrosion, and impurities. Neither can trust be put into your land, for the moths can consume your crops and the elements can rust and destroy your supplies and equipment. You’ll be left with nothing but dirt. Even what possessions you have that can’t be ruined or eaten can be stolen by thieves.

What is the most secure possession that you have?

By discouraging His followers to “lay up for themselves treasures on earth,” Jesus is referring to any valuable which can be lost in one way or another. There doesn’t seem to be anything on this earth we can obtain that can’t in some way be taken from us. Jesus is pointing out the folly of considering as supremely valuable that which is not eternal. Instead, we are to “lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven” (v. 20). There is no destruction in heaven, no loss, no thievery, and no decay. It is apparent that this kind of teaching goes completely against what the world considers valuable.

Why is it important to pursue treasure in heaven rather than on the earth?

Jesus teaches us this as a matter of preserving our loyalty to Him. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This is a universal principle that affects all of mankind. What we treasure governs our lives. What we set our eyes and hearts upon, that is what we will pursue. Just as we can’t set our eyes upon Cleveland and expect to end up safe and sound in Cincinnati, so we also can’t fix our eyes upon the riches of this world and expect to be found secure in Christ; the two are polar opposites. Jesus is after our hearts, but He cannot speak to a heart that is laying atop a pile of gold locked behind a vault somewhere.

Let's be clear, though. Jesus is not condemning wealth, just as He is not condemning clothes or possessions. He is not prohibiting possessions, but the love of possessions. We can regard money, clothes, and land as exactly what they are: money, clothes, and land. But Jesus forbids us from considering these as our ultimate treasure. It is not money, but the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evils (1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus is calling His followers to forsake earthly possessions as our treasure and to consider Him and His kingdom as supremely valuable. .

Read verses 22-23. What does this mean in the context?

This one is a little more difficult to understand, but the previous illustration of travelling to Cincinnati while directed towards Cleveland helps us to understand this. Jesus says the eye is the lamp of the body, meaning that it provides light and clarity. If our eyes are healthy and working as they should, they will be fixed on Christ and His Kingdom, and our whole bodies will be properly enlightened and aligned toward that goal. But if our eye is bad, meaning that it is not working properly and is not gazing upon the light, then like a bulb that's burnt its filament, it cannot illuminate the way for us and we are left in darkness.

What are some examples of what the world would have us look to for enlightenment and guidance? How are these misleading?

Jesus Christ is the "light that has come into the world" (John 3:19). If we "fix our eyes upon Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), then the path will be illuminated and we will be able to "run the race set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). Again, Jesus is teaching us how to remain loyal to Him and the Kingdom. We will be successful if we train our eyes to look upon Christ for guidance rather than the darkness of this world.

Read verse 24. Does the world agree with this? How might the world try to convince you that you can serve two masters?

Although it's been true throughout history, it's especially prevalent today. Those in the world will try and convince us that with a little bit of compromise and diplomacy, we can serve two masters. We can be loyal to God and still put ourselves at the forefront of our pursuits. We can uphold Kingdom values and offer unwavering support to the sexual revolution that's going on around us. We can do our church thing on Sunday after doing our club thing on Saturday.

These examples are somewhat extreme and are easy to point out and reject as wrong. But what truly plagues the church are the more subtle idols in our lives. These idols are subtler because they seem to be justified by biblical values. Do you derive belonging and acceptance from your family rather than God? Do you determine your standing in the church and community by how many ministry projects you participate in rather than the identity that you have in Christ? Family and ministry work are both noble pursuits, but they are not our ultimate pursuits. We do not serve our families, churches, and communities as our masters. To make them such robs God of His central place of authority in our lives.

Yet, the world will still tell us that splitting our devotion between God and Man (or God and Self) is not only doable, but is noble and honorable. It is what is expected of us.

What problems might arise if our hearts are given to two different pursuits?

Jesus makes clear here that if we place anything else alongside God, we diminish our devotion to Him. What is eternally important and worthy of praise is squeezed out in favor of vain, transient pursuits that will not benefit us at all in the life to come. Divided loyalties are strongly denounced in Scripture. James rebukes this saying, “you adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). Jesus uses similar language, saying “whoever would come to me must hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even himself—or else he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Elsewhere, Jesus insists that parents and family should be honored (Mark 7:9-13). So, Jesus and James are not advocating hatred of the world (John 17:15), but instead they are advocating for an allegiance that is directed to God first and foremost above everything else.

Are your eyes healthy and fixated on the right thing—that is, the King and His glory? If not, what will you do to correct this?



What is there in your life that demands your loyalty other than God?

What will you do to remove that temptation from your life?

How can we as a group encourage one another to regard Christ as the supreme treasure of our lives?

SIX

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, not about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

[MATTHEW 6:25-34]

PERSONAL

STUDY

[MATTHEW 6:25-34]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP

STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: There is some anxiety that is good, but most anxiety is a sign that we do not trust the Lord and His care for us.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.



In what ways are worry and anxiety a bad thing? In what ways are worry and anxiety a good thing?

On the one hand, there is a sense in which worry can be good. The Christian should have a concern for certain things like their own walk with the Lord, but especially a concern for others. The apostle Paul faced the “daily pressure of [his] anxiety for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28). He was concerned and worried about them, afraid that they would fall away from the truth that he labored so long to teach them. This is a good kind of worry and one that we should all have to some extent.

Do you have any good worries or concerns?

On the other hand, there is a sense in which worry is bad. Most of our worry falls under this category. This is the kind of anxiety that signifies a deeper problem of distrust and unbelief.



Read **MATTHEW 13:3-9** and then read the explanation of the seed that fell among the thorns in **MATTHEW 13:22**. What caused this seed to die?

How might “the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth” cause our relationship with God to be strained?

Most of our worries betray that we have a lack of confidence in God. And in this passage Jesus is trying to show us that we should have all the confidence in the world in God. Prior to this discourse on anxiety, Jesus spoke clearly and strongly that wealth and money and earthly possessions are not the Kingdom citizen’s primary concerns. This may be easy for somebody who is already wealthy to accept, but the weight of the responsibility of provision hovers much more strongly over the one who has a wife and children to feed and clothe and he’s just been laid off. What Jesus has to say to the man who is wealthy is the same as what He says to the man who has nothing, only it’s packaged differently. To the wealthy man, Jesus says, “You cannot give in to the temptation to place your trust in money.” To the poor man, Jesus says, “You cannot give in to the temptation to withdraw your trust from the Lord.” Just as earthly possessions can become an idol, so can earthly needs. Both idols are propped up by a lack of trust in the Lord.

Thinking about the illustrations Jesus gives of the birds and the lilies, what is it about God’s disposition towards us that should cause us not to worry?

Jesus is trying to show us that God is not concerned with providing for us based on our work ethic, but based on our inherent value as children of God and citizens of His kingdom. (“Are you not of more value than they?”). Our citizenship and lineage is something that cannot be taken away from us and God’s goodness is something that never changes. To be constantly concerned about our earthly needs is to show a lack of trust in our Heavenly Father.

But remember, in the entire Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been unpacking for us what the values, principles, and lifestyle of a Kingdom citizen looks like. With that in mind...

Read verses 31-32. What is another reason that Jesus gives as to why we shouldn't worry?

Remember at the end of Matthew chapter 5, Jesus tells us we should love our enemies and not only our friends, because even pagans and sinners do that. We're no different than they if we love only those who love us. Jesus is making the same argument here. The distinctiveness of the Kingdom citizen is seen in the unswerving confidence that he maintains in his King despite his circumstances. When we frantically scurry about saying 'What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?'; then our worries look a lot like the worries of the world. It looks as though we are pursuing the same things they are, but our goal is not to flourish in this present world, "we are seeking a city that is yet to come" (Hebrews 13:14). Although we are citizens of a Kingdom with a King who knows everything we need, our constant worrying advertises something entirely different.

How can we go about fighting against anxiety and worry?

Jesus gives us the answer: "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (v. 33). We fulfill our duty as kingdom citizens: to live a life consistent with Kingdom values, seeking to establish and increase the reign of the Lord in this world; and God fulfills His duty as not only a benevolent King, but a good Father to His children, to provide us with everything that we need. Trade in your evil worries and concerns for good worries and concerns. Concern yourself with something greater than your next meal. But understand this promise comes with limitations, of which we'll quote D.A. Carson at length:

(1) This promise is to the children of God, not to all men indiscriminately. This is made clear by the contrast between Jesus' disciples and pagans in 6:31f, as well as by the condition in 6:33a itself: Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

(2) Jesus promises that necessities will be provided (in context, food, drink, and clothes are specified), not luxuries. Many Christians in the West would think it very hard indeed if they had to live at subsistence level, for they have long since come to take as necessities things which others would assess as luxuries. God in His lavish mercy often gives much more than the essentials; but He here pledges himself only to the latter.

(3) I think the major exception to this pledge occurs when Christians are suffering for righteousness' sake. Some are martyred by starvation and by exposure. The overwhelming importance of the kingdom may require self-sacrifice even to this ultimate degree.²

Do you have any other Scriptures that you turn to when you are tempted with undue worry and anxiety?

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 - Prayer and thanksgiving are essential in overcoming anxiety.

1 PETER 5:6-7 - Humble submission to the loving sovereignty of God will ease our worry.

MATTHEW 6:34 - We take life one day at a time, relying upon His renewed mercies (Lamentations 3:22-23)



Is there anything good that you are concerned with right now? How can we as a group come alongside you and help?

What bad worries and concerns do you have? Which specific promise from the Lord can you rely on to overcome that anxiety?

Is there anything you specifically can do to help alleviate somebody else's anxiety and concerns?

FBCnl exists to **glorify God** by **working together**
to **make disciples** who **change the world**.



 **FIRST** BAPTIST
CHURCH
NEW LEBANON