

Study Guide

Matthew 6:1-18

Jesus' main concern in this section is obviously to warn us against seeking attention from others when doing acts of righteousness, to keep them 'unseen' (see 6:1,2,5,16). Yet in Matt. 5:16 Jesus told us to "let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Is Jesus contradicting himself? Why or why not?

Giving (vv. 2-4), praying (vv. 5-15) and fasting (vv. 16-18) are the three examples of 'acts of righteousness' that Jesus addresses here. Each section begins with the words "when you..." implying Jesus' disciples were already regularly doing these things. Do Christians today need to do all three things too? Why or why not?

Prayer is obviously the largest and the central section of this passage, in fact the Lord's Prayer (vv. 9-13) stands at the center of the entire Sermon on the Mount (116 Greek lines before it and 114 after it). What does this say about the relationship between prayer and everything else Jesus asks of His disciples (e.g. all the commands in chapter 5)?

Many commentators have noted that the first half of the Lord's Prayer pays attention only to what is important to God ("you," "your," "your"). Our needs ("us," "us," "us," "us") are left to the end. How might this observation change the way you pray?

All the verbs in the Lord's Prayer are third person imperatives (i.e. 'polite commands') directed toward God (i.e. "God, *you* do it). Our role in bringing these things to pass is clearly secondary. Read through the Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase, discussing the meaning of each and paying special attention to God's role in bringing it about.

The Lord's Prayer is not just a set of words to say, it is also a model of how to pray, what the content of our prayer should be about. Pray through the Lord's prayer and 'unpack' each phrase in your own words and in such a way that your personal requests and the stirrings of the Spirit within you 'fit' inside what Jesus taught us to pray.