

## Matthew Chapter 6

Verses 1-18: Here Christ expands the thought of 5:20, showing how the Pharisees' righteousness was deficient by exposing their hypocrisy in the matters of giving to the poor (verses 1-4); prayer (verses 5-15); and fasting (verses 16-18). All of these acts are supposed to be worship rendered to God, never displays of self-righteousness to gain the admiration of others.

**Matthew 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."**

Jesus warns us not to give "alms before men" just to gain human recognition to ourselves. The one who does righteousness (or gives of his possessions), to the Lord before men merely "to be seen of them" has "no reward" from the Father in heaven.

True worship results from the desire to serve God, not men, since pleasing God is far more important than pleasing men. Loss of reward is incurred by gaining the reward of human recognition as an end in itself.

**Matthew 6:2 "Therefore when thou doest [thine] alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."**

"Hypocrites": This word had its origins in Greek theater, describing a character who wore a mask. The term, as used in the New Testament; normally described an unregenerate person who was self-deceived.

"They have their reward": Their reward is that they were seen by men, nothing more. God does not reward hypocrisy, but He does punish it (23:13-23).

Therefore, in all of our giving we are not to "sound a trumpet" before us in a hypocritical manner of gaining attention to ourselves. This metaphorical phrase means do not "publicize" your righteousness, for such performers are "hypocrites" (from the Greek, "play actor").

Thus, Jesus warns against acting like the hypocrites, whose aim is to win human praise.

**Matthew 6:3 "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:"**

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" means that one's giving of finances to the work of the Lord should be done so freely and spontaneously that his right hand cannot keep up with his left hand.

**Matthew 6:4 "That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."**

The real key to success in this kind of giving is found in the phrase “thy Father which seeth in secret ... shall reward” you. Giving by faith, out of a cheerful heart, depends on our total confidence in the fact that God does indeed see us and knows our needs. These verses certainly do not condemn public giving, but rather they speak against giving out of the wrong attitude and for the wrong motive.

Jesus was warning us that our doing must not be for a big show or to receive in return. When we help someone, it should not be for public acclamation. We should help, because there is a need, and not to benefit ourselves.

See a need and quietly take care of it. Don't run and put it the paper when you feed someone. God sees everything we do, but more than that, He sees the reason why we did it.

Verses 5-6: Praying, like giving, is to be done to the Lord, not to man. Jesus said that people “love to pray standing in the synagogues.” Both a time and place for prayer were customary in the ancient Jewish synagogue (Mark 11:25). Therefore, Jesus is not condemning the practice of public prayer, but rather the misuse of it.

Because of the statement “enter into thy closet,” some have suggested that all public prayer is wrong. This would be contrary to the rest of New Testament statements about prayer, commandments and restrictions regarding prayer, and examples of prayer meetings (Acts 12:12).

The principle here is that the believer should not make a show of his prayer nor of the answers he receives to prayer in such a way as to call unnecessary attention to himself.

**Matthew 6:5-6 "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites [are]: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."**

This Scripture does not mean not to pray in church. It just means don't pray, just so men can say, what a beautiful prayer you prayed. The most effective prayers are when we seek God by ourselves, having nothing to gain but fellowship with Him.

Everyone should have a place to go and pray to God alone. Prayer is just talking to God. The words we say are really unimportant. God knows the desires of our hearts before we say a word.

He just loves for us to come to Him to visit, with no ulterior motives. When we pray, we must be quite part of the time and let God speak to our spirit. God does not want us to ever be ashamed to pray. Just talk to God. He will listen and answer your prayer. Be sincere.

**Matthew 6:7 "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."**

“Vain repetitions”: Prayers are not to be merely recited, nor are our words to be repeated thoughtlessly, or as if they were automatic formulas. But this is not a prohibition against importunity.

Jesus warned that we “use not vain repetitions” (Greek *battalogo* denotes babbling or speaking without thinking). Such prayer was characteristic of the heathen. A good example of this is found in the ecstatic babblings of the false prophets in the Old Testament and in the prophets of Baal who confronted Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 King 18:26-29).

**Matthew 6:8 "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."**

Prayer is not man's attempt to change the will of God. Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance to answer, but laying hold of His willingness to help. Prayer in the life of the true believer is an act of total confidence and assurance in the plan and purpose of God. The following sample prayer is given to the disciples as an example of a suitable prayer.

This prayer, often called the “Lord's Prayer,” is in reality a disciple's prayer. In no way does the prayer itself embody all of Christ's teaching about prayer and having just warned against vain repetition, He did not intend for this particular prayer to be merely recited with empty meaninglessness.

In these verses above, Jesus was saying, talk to God, don't memorize a prayer and say it every time. Tell God what is in your heart. Tell Him you love Him and need His help.

Probably, the most famous prayer in all the world is the prayer Jesus taught them to pray here. Most people misunderstand what he was saying. We all memorize this prayer, and say it without having the vaguest idea what it meant.

If you will notice in verse 9, Jesus said "After this manner therefore pray ye." He did not say, pray this prayer. He was showing the disciples and us as well, the way to get results from our prayers.

**Matthew 6:9 "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."**

“After this manner”: The prayer is a model, not merely a liturgy. It is notable for its brevity, simplicity, and comprehensiveness. On the 6 petitions, 3 are direct to God (verses 9-10), and 3 toward human needs (verses 11-13).

The beginning phrase, “Our Father,” is completely uncommon to the prayers of the Old Testament. The two major elements of the prayer are adoration and petition. “Hallowed be thy name” addresses the attention of the prayer toward God and reverence for His name and His person. Hallowed (Greek *hagiozo*) means to be held in reverence and holy awe.

The Father is the first person of the Trinity. With only one exception (John 17:3), Jesus always spoke of God as the Father. The Scriptures identify the fatherhood of God in five areas: He is the Father of Creation (James 1:17), a protective Father emphasizing His defense of the poor and oppressed (Psalm 68:5), and a redemptive Father when we become the children of God (John 1:13; Rom. 8:15).

Just as physical fathers provide many benefits, so our heavenly Father also provides a number of spiritual benefits. Christians may have fellowship with (1 John 1:3), access to (verses 9, 32), guidance by (Psalm 119:9; 2 Tim 3:17), protection by (John 10:29), and an inheritance from (Rom. 8:17), the Father.

Just because God is the Father of all, because He is the Father of Creation, does not mean that everyone will go to heaven. A person must be born of God (John 1:13), to become a son of God (John 1:12). Then God becomes a redemptive Father.

**Matthew 6:10 "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven."**

The phrase "Thy kingdom come" refers to the eschatological nature of this prayer. Notice that the kingdom is to be prayed for implying that it has not arrived. The kingdom represents the full and effective reign of God through the mediatorial office of the Messiah.

The recognition of "Thy will be done" emphasizes the idea that prayer is to bring about the conformity of the will of the believer to the will of God. Prayer is an act of spiritual expression that brings us into conformity to the very nature and purpose of God. All prayer, first of all, willingly submits to God's purposes, plans and glory.

God is not just Supreme Ruler of heaven, but of this earth as well. We must say as Jesus said, "not my will but thine". We should be looking forward to God's kingdom being set up on this earth.

**Matthew 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread."**

The section of petitions begins with the request to "give us this day our daily bread." Bread (Greek artoa) may be applied to the provision of food in general. The term daily (Greek epiousios), denotes "indispensable." The concept of daily provision of bread fits perfectly with the Old Testament example of the daily provision of manna to the Israelites while they were wandering in the wilderness (Exodus 16:14-15).

God will take care of our needs one day at a time. The Bible says take no thought for tomorrow. Live each day one day at a time.

**Matthew 6:12 "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."**

"Forgive us our debts" refers to sins, which are our moral and spiritual debts to God's righteousness. The request for forgiveness of sin is made here by the believer. In order to be saved one need not necessarily name all of his sins, but he must confess that he is a sinner.

The parallel passage in Luke 11:4 uses a word that means "sins," so that in context, spiritual debts are intended. Sinners are debtors to God for their violation of His laws. This request is the heart of the prayer; it is what Jesus stressed in the words that immediately follow the prayer (verses 14:15; Mark 11:25).

We all want the first part of verse 12, but few want the last. We must forgive to get forgiveness.

Verses 13-15: "Lead us not into temptation" is a plea for the providential help of God in our daily confrontation with the temptation of sin. God does not tempt us to do evil, but we are tempted of our own lusts (James 1:13-14). However, God does test us in order to give us the opportunity to prove our faithfulness to Him. He never desires to lead us into evil itself.

Therefore, if we resist the Devil, we are promised that he will flee from us. The prayer closes with a doxology of praise: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen," which is a liturgical ending similar to (1 Chronicles 29:11). Though omitted in some manuscripts, these words constitute a fitting and climactic affirmation of faith.

**Matthew 6:13 "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."**

"And lead us not into temptation" (Luke 22:40). God does not tempt men (James 1:13), but He will subject them to trails that may expose them to Satan's assaults, as in the case of Job and Peter (Luke 22:31-32). This petition reflects the believing one's desire to avoid the dangers of sin altogether.

God knows what one's need is before one asks (verse 8), and He promises that no one will be subjected to testing beyond what can be endured. He also promises a way of escape – often through endurance (1 Cor. 10:13). But still, the proper attitude for the believer is the one expressed in this petition.

Our lusts cause us to be tempted. We should ask each day to let the blood of Jesus wash over our minds and our beings so the devil cannot attack us in these areas. God will deliver us from evil, but we must realize our need for His help and use it.

Just as the prayer begins with praise and recognition of God for what He is, it ends with praise and recognition. "Amen" means so be it.

**Matthew 6:14-15 "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:" "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."**

"Neither will your Father forgive your trespasses": This is not to suggest that God will withdraw justification from those who have already received the free pardon He extends to all believers. Forgiveness in that sense, a permanent and complete acquittal from the guilt and ultimate penalty of sin, belongs to all who are in Christ (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1; Eph. 1:7).

Yet, Scripture also teaches that God chastens His children who disobey (Heb. 12:5-7). Believers are to confess their sins in order to obtain a day-to-day cleansing (1 John 1:9). This sort of forgiveness is a simple washing from the worldly defilements of sin, not a repeat of the wholesales cleansing from sin's corruption that comes with justification.

It is like a washing of the feet rather than a bath (John 13:10). Forgiveness in this latter sense is what God threatens to withhold from Christians who refuse to forgive others (18:23-35).

All through the Bible we see statements like the one above. "Judge not, that ye not be judged" Etc.

Verses 16-17: "When ye fast": This indicates that fasting is assumed to be a normal part of one's spiritual life (1 Cor. 7:5). Fasting is associated with sadness (9:14-15), prayer (17:21), charity (Isaiah 58:3-6), and seeking the Lord's will (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23).

**Matthew 6:16 "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."**

"When ye fast" is a reference both to fasting prescribed under the Mosaic Law in connection with the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29) and the voluntary fast of that day. The Pharisees added two fast days, Monday and Thursday of each week, as a case of public display and piety. The Pharisees regarded the practice of fasting as meritorious, and appeared in the synagogues negligently attired.

Their sad disfigurement of face and the wearing of mourning garb gave them an opportunity to exhibit their superior ascetic sanctity before the people. The phrase "disfigure their faces" literally denotes covering their faces and is a figurative expression for mournful gestures and neglected appearance of those wanting to call attention to themselves.

Verses 17-18: This passage is not to be taken as a command against fasting but rather against the misuse of the spiritual exercise of fasting. Fasting that requires spectators is mere acting. Though Jesus Himself instituted no fast for His disciples, voluntary fasting does appear in the early churches (Acts 13:2).

The injunction to "anoint thine head" relates to the ancient custom of anointing one's head when going to a feast. In other words, Jesus was saying that when we fast we are to do so secretly to the Lord, while outwardly maintaining the appearance of joy and triumph, which is the end result of true fasting.

**Matthew 6:17-18 "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;" "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."**

Fasting involves more than giving up food for a day or two. A fast is a solemn time of separation from worldly things of all kinds. For a fast to be effective, it must be a fast that God encouraged you to do for some specific prayer request to be answered.

The time that would ordinarily be watching TV or fixing lunch, or 1,000 other little things, should be spent studying your Bible and praying. During a fast, God is your source.

Many types of illness require fasting. When the disciples came to Jesus and asked why they could not heal someone, Jesus said, this type comes out by prayer and fasting.

When you fast, it is a serious time with God and Him alone. We fast to show sincerity. God will honor a fast, if we are sincerely seeking. You may fast one meal, one day, two days, three days, or as long as you have agreed with God you will fast. It is better to promise less.

You must follow through, until God releases you. God does not like to play games. Some people drink juice during a fast, but a true fast is a total abstinence. Pray before you begin. Sometimes a preacher will call a fast for a church, but usually it is an individual thing.

Don't brag to others about a fast. Just separate yourself for a season, pray and fast. It gets wonderful results.

Verses 19-21: The attention of the believer is directed toward "treasures in heaven." This term "treasures" implies the addition or accumulation of things. The two kinds of treasures are conditioned by their place (either on earth or in heaven). The concept of laying up treasures in heaven is not pictured as one of meritorious benefits but rather of rewards for faithful service, as is illustrated elsewhere in the teaching of Jesus.

**Matthew 6:19-20 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:" "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:"**

"Treasures": Don't amass earthly wealth. Jesus commends the use of financial assets for purposes which are heavenly and eternal.

**Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."**

We have seen in the past, the stock market dropping drastically causing many people to lose their life's savings. Some cannot cope with the loss of worldly goods, and have resorted to suicide.

The sad thing is that you cannot end it all. We are eternal beings, and will spend an eternity somewhere. When we end our lives, there is some question where that eternity will be. Really, God does not care if you are poor or rich. God does not want us to put money ahead of Him, or His people.

The sin of having money occurs, when we see someone in need, and will not help them. Love of money is a sin. Whenever you help God's people here on earth, you are laying up treasures for heaven.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

This is what God would have you to do, if He has endowed you with wealth. Be quick to distribute to those in need. Be content with what you have, whether it be much, or little. Help everyone you can, as often as you can.

In heaven there are no thieves. Your heart and pocket book are usually in the same place. Put God first and all other things will fall in place.

## **Matthew Chapter 6 Questions**

1. When you do alms, you can lose your reward if you do what?
2. What do the hypocrites do?
3. What is said about the right and left hand?
4. If you do alms in secret, what will God do?
5. For what reason should we help someone?
6. God sees what we do, but more than that, what does He see?
7. When we pray, where should we pray?
8. The most effective prayers are what?
9. What is prayer?
10. We are told not to use vain repetitions when we pray. What do the heathen believe?
11. What is the most famous prayer?
12. What was Jesus telling the disciples and us about prayer?
13. What is the first thing we should do in prayer?
14. How should we speak to God?
15. God is supreme ruler of where?
16. How does God take care of our needs?
17. How should we live our lives?
18. How can we be forgiven?
19. What causes us to be tempted?
20. How should prayer end?
21. What does "amen" mean?
22. Who is spoken of as having a sad countenance when fasting?
23. What two things should we do, so as not to appear to be fasting?
24. What is a fast, besides giving up food?
25. What must we do for God to honor our fast?
26. Some drink juice fasting, but a true fast is what?



27. Sometimes a preacher calls a fast for the church, but it is usually what?
28. What can happen to treasures on earth?
29. Where should we lay up treasures?
30. God does not care whether you are rich or poor, what does God care about?
31. What must a rich person be quick to do?