

The Sermon on the Mount: An Audience of One

Matthew 6:1-18

📖 Matthew 6:1 (NIV) “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

When you **give**, don't **draw attention to yourself**.

📖 Matthew 6:2–4 (NIV) “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

📖 Hebrews 6:10 (NIV) “God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”

When you **pray**, don't **talk to people, talk to God**.

📖 Matthew 6:5–8 (NIV) “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

📖 Matthew 6:9–13 (NIV) “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

📖 Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV) “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

When you **fast**, don't **act different than you normally would**.

📖 Matthew 6:16–18 (NIV) “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

6 Rewards of Fasting

1. Fasting will **strengthen your prayers**. (Joel 2:12, Jer 29:13)

📖 Joel 2:12 (NIV) “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

📖 Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV) “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

2. **Fasting will help subdue the flesh.** (Romans 8:5)

📖 Romans 8:5 (ESV) “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”

3. **Fasting will stay the judgment of God.** (Jonah 3:5, 10)

📖 Jonah 3:5, 10 (NIV) “The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. . . .¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.”

4. **Fasting will stop the enemies of God.** (2 Chron 20:3-4, 29)

📖 2 Chronicles 20:3–4, 29 (NIV) “Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. ⁴ The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek Him. . . .²⁹ The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.”

5. **Fasting will reveal your calling.** (Acts 13:2)

📖 Acts 13:2 (NLT) “One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.’”

6. **Fasting will smash strongholds.** (Isaiah 58:6)

📖 Isaiah 58:6 (NLT) “No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people”

Digging Deeper—What are some less obvious examples of “needy” situations? In what way do you give to those in need? Is God calling you to do more? How can we inspire others to give without drawing attention to our giving? What do you like best about Jesus’s prayer? Why? How does His prayer compare to the way you normally pray? Are your prayers powerful? Have you ever fasted for spiritual reasons? If you have, what was the reason? Did you see any evidence that your fasting made a difference? Do rewards in heaven matter to you?