

FIRM FOUNDATIONS

Study #10 (Updated 8-11-17)

Matt. 6:1-18 (NIV)

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² 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 others. Truly I tell you, 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.

⁵ 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 others. Truly I tell you, 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. ⁹ 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 And 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.’

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶ When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, 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 others 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.”

Q: Jesus starts this section with a warning He doesn't use very often... “Be careful.” He doesn't warn us this way about murder, drunkenness, or even blasphemy. Why is being charitable, praying, and fasting so dangerous?

- Murder, drunkenness, and blasphemy are easy to see, but hypocrisy and worldliness can sneak up on us and compromise our motives!
- Charity, praying, and fasting are things we could be doing just to draw attention to ourselves so that people think we are good Christians, when really all we want is people's praise.

Side note: Jesus warns us to “be careful” of “yeast” in reference to three groups of people: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod.

- The yeast of the Pharisees is **hypocrisy** (**Luke 12:1**).
 - Hypocrisy is acting like something you are not.
- The yeast of the Sadducees (**Matt. 16:6-12**) was **worldliness**.
 - The Sadducees were the aristocrats, the wealthy, and the persons of rank from the priesthood.
- The yeast of Herod is most likely **procrastination** (**Mark 8:15**).
 - Herod liked talking to John the Baptist (**Mark 6:20**), but never responded. Eventually he killed John (**Mark 6:26-28**).
- **We are to be on our guard, and alert to these influences (hypocrisy, worldliness, and procrastination) because they can spread rapidly in the church like yeast does in dough!**

Q: Jesus warns, “Be careful not to practice your righteousness before men”; but in **Matt. 5:16, Jesus told us to let our light shine before men. Is there a contradiction here?**

- No! Jesus is talking about motive. There is a difference between wanting to be **righteous** before the Lord, and wanting to be **seen as righteous** before men.
- When we do righteous acts, we can sometimes be praised and noticed for it.
 - It feels good to be noticed and praised, which can cause us to do what we do **in order to be noticed and praised**.
- Some Christians act more righteous when there is a likelihood of people finding out and respecting them for it.
- **WARNING:** If you do things so people will notice, then their noticing is the only reward you will receive!
 - If you are truly motivated to do something by your love for God and your desire to please Him, God will reward that!

Q: Does Jesus want us to pray “The Lord’s Prayer”?

- Jesus said this is **how** you should pray, not **what** you should pray.

Q: What should we learn about prayer from the Lord’s Prayer?

1. We should start our prayers by reminding ourselves who it is we are talking to!
 - a. God is our Father. He protects us and provides for us, and He’s in charge!
 - b. God is not our big buddy in the sky. He is not a genie who grants wishes if we are good enough. And He is not an angry giant waiting to punish.
 - c. God is the most powerful being in the universe. Yet, we have become part of His family through Jesus, and He allows us to approach Him as His children.
2. “Hallowed by Your Name” means “May Your Holy Name be honored.”
 - a. **We are never to address Him casually!**
3. Our top priority – the first thing we should be asking Him for – is His Kingdom coming to this earth, and His will being done here like it is in Heaven.
4. We should ask God to keep His promise to meet our needs, while we put His Kingdom and His righteousness above everything else (**Matt. 6:33**).
5. We should ask God for forgiveness of our sins against Him, which He granted to us on the condition that we would forgive others who sin against us (**Matt. 6:14-15, 18:21-35**).
6. We should end our prayers by asking God to keep us away from temptation and away from Satan’s schemes.
 - a. Too many times, Christians fall into Satan’s traps, and give in to temptation by foolishly going into places and situations where they are weak.

What About You?

Q: How do you feel when nobody notices or praises you for your charity, your prayer life, or your fasting?

- Would you be more interested in doing these things if people noticed and gave you lots of praise?

Q: How are you guarding yourself against the Leaven of the Pharisees (Hypocrisy)?

Q: How are you guarding yourself against the Leaven of the Sadducees (Worldliness)?

Q: How are you guarding yourself against the Leaven of Herod (Procrastination)?

Q: Do your prayers look like the Lord's Prayer?

- Which part of the Lord's Prayer is the most natural for you, or is usually part of your prayers?
- Which part of the Lord's Prayer is the most unnatural for you, or usually isn't a part of your prayers?