

# Sermon on the Mount 8 - Inductive Study Guide

## Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 6:1-18

## Let's first do an overview and place Mt 6 in context of the entire sermon...

### What is Jesus' main thrust in Matthew 6 as compared with Matthew 5?

The focus in Matthew 6 is on righteousness practiced in the context of religion or worship.

Matthew 5 began with a description of who the righteous really are (the "be attitudes"), and then focused on righteousness citizens of the kingdom of heaven are called to live out in interpersonal relationships, anger, adultery, divorce, truthfulness, revenge and love. Righteousness lived out according to the tenets of Jesus would be a righteousness that surpassed that of the scribes and Pharisees and would also act as salt and light in the world.

### What are the repeated or key words in Mt 6:1-18?

**Reward**, either positive or negative - 7 times

**Father**, God the Father - 9 times

**Contrasting phrases**: "When" and "but when" - 4 times and each identifies a new segment

### What are the main topics covered in Mt 6:2-18?

Giving, praying and fasting all relate to righteousness that was being practiced by the religious leaders before men for men's approval (self righteousness) but which Jesus instructs is to be practiced before God's eyes Alone and for His approval Alone.

### How do they relate to Jesus' introduction Mt 6:1?

Clearly Jesus warning to beware of practicing one's righteousness before men indicates that there were men doing just that. They would have no reward with the Father Who is in heaven. The question is "Why do you do what you do when you give, pray and fast?" What is your motive? Why is this important? Wrong motive means no reward from your Father. Paul reaffirmed this writing...

The Lord will come and will both bring to light (cause light to shine upon and so cause to be fully known by clearly revealing down to the smallest detail) the things hidden (krupto - gives us "crypt" = concealed, in secret where others cannot see! But God sees) in the darkness and **disclose** (make externally manifest to the senses and thus open to all making visible that which has been hidden) **the motives** (that which has been purposed and planned, the willful intention) **of men's hearts**; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1Cor 4:5)

**Note**: KJV (based on the Greek manuscript referred to as Textus Receptus) begins "that ye do not your alms before men". Young's Literal (also from Textus Receptus) has "your kindness not to do". The modern translations (based on another manuscript most Greek scholars feel is more accurate) has the word "righteousness" instead of "kindness".

"**Beware**" is a command (**present imperative**) which means to make it your habit of being on guard from practicing your righteousness before men. Beware (prosecho) is a word that always warns of danger. It is not a call simply to notice or sense something, but to be on guard against it because it is so harmful. The word conveys the idea of holding one's mind away from the temptation to be praised by men...

In Proverbs the wisest man of his day explained that as smelting brings forth impurities, praise from men helps him rid his heart of all motives that are base, insincere and non-God glorifying, writing that...

**The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold,**

**And a man is tested by the praise accorded him** (Proverbs 27:21)

You could title this lesson...

**"Beware of Practicing your Righteousness Before Men"**

and then subtitle it

**"Check Your Motives!"**

## GIVING

Matthew 6:2-4

## Let's look at the basic do's and don'ts of giving as taught by Jesus Mt 6:2-4:

### To whom should we give (show mercy toward)?

The poor, those in need.

**Note:** NASB (1977) version translates it "give alms" and NASB (1995) as "give to the poor". The Greek word is **eleemosune**, which describes mercifulness, compassion and is used in this context to describe giving money to the poor, to those in need, which is seen as act full of mercy. This word refers more to mercy in action. It is the outward expression of active compassion or mercifulness.

### How should we give?

Do not sound a trumpet. If you do you are a hypocrite.

Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (figure of speech - no one to know).

Giving is done in secret - Only your Father is to know.

### What is your motive not to be?

Seeking honor from men.

### What is the result of rightly motivated and performed giving?

Our Father will reward us

## New Testament Scriptures on giving...

### Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35: How did the early church deal with the poor?

All things in common (not communal living as some teach)

Shared as anyone had need - even selling assets if they had to - this was sacrificial giving

**Acts 4:32** They knew their possessions all belonged to God

**Acts 4:33** There was not a needy person among them (the wealthy would sell land or houses, bring it to the apostles who would distribute it)

Note: The Church was "born" about 30AD and early on there were none in need. The Roman historian Tacitus and Jewish historian Josephus both record that great famines occurred about 45-46AD during the reign of Claudius. Luke's record supports that even as the early church spread out from Jerusalem this mindset of giving to the needy continued even in the "church plants"...

And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means (those in Antioch, many of whom were Gentiles), each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren (most of whom were Jewish) living in Judea. (Acts 11:28-29)

**What and/or how much are you willing to sacrifice financially to meet the needs of others in the body of Christ?** (see James 2:15-16, 1John 3:17)

### Acts 2:44-45

44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common;

45 and they began **selling** (**imperfect tense** indicating that this was continuous past action - in other words it was not "communism" in which they sold everything at a point in time and pooled the proceeds into a common fund - Acts 2:46 also indicates they still owned their homes) their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

**Note:** Such sharing and meeting of the needs was a tradition in Israel especially during the feasts because the inns could not accommodate the influx into Jerusalem and people opened their homes and shared resources with those coming to the feasts. Many members of the early church were such pilgrims, saved while visiting Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost (one of the three required feasts for every Jewish male - Passover, Pentecost, Booths) and remained on in Jerusalem to be part of this the church God's Spirit had

just birthed. And so those who were born again shared and met the needs of the pilgrims. Of course there were also doubtless other believers native to Jerusalem who were simply living in a state of borderline poverty and thus in need of help. We in the modern era need to remember that there was no government funded social support system as we have in America.

#### Acts 4:32-35

32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul (unity of these believers served as powerful testimony, cf John 13:35, 17:21); and not one of them (this attitude was characteristic of everyone inclusively) **claimed that anything belonging to him was his own** (they felt that what they owned was not their own but belonged to God); but all things were common property to them. (not that individuals did not own property but that what they owned they were willing to share as needed)

33 And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

34 For **there was not a needy person among them**, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales,

35 and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be **distributed to each, as any had need**.

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

(written about 56BC)

#### What was the "motivation" for giving?

Grace of God (2Cor 8:1)

#### What was the attitude of the Macedonia churches to giving?

**Attitude** toward giving:

Abundant joy,

Liberality (generosity)

In midst of affliction

Gave beyond their ability

Begged to participate in support,

2Cor 8:3 = voluntary (not under compulsion);

2Cor 8:10-11 = had the desire

#### What was their financial status?

Deep poverty

#### 2Cor 8:3: What are 3 elements of the Macedonian's giving?

1) According to their ability = proportional or based on what they had

2) Beyond their ability = sacrificial

3) Voluntarily = not out of compulsion

#### 2Cor 8:4: How did the Macedonian's view giving?

As a privilege

(NIV is easier to understand than NASB = "they urgently pleaded with us for the **privilege** of sharing in this service to the saints.")

#### 2Cor 8:5: What was a key to the generous giving of the Macedonians?

First (refers not to time but priority) gave themselves to the Lord and to us (2Cor 8:5)

Once you've truly surrendered your money is easier to relinquish

Generous giving follows personal dedication

**2Cor 8:7: What estimate did Paul make concerning giving, as compared with more the showy gifts such as faith, utterance, knowledge, earnestness and love?**

Giving was on the same level of importance

**2Cor 8:8: What principles does Paul teach about giving?**

It is not commanded

It is a test of the sincerity of our love

**J Vernon McGee** commenting on this verse writes that...

Paul is saying here that giving today is not by law, by rote, or by ritual. I know that there are good Bible expositors who say we are to give the tithe. Obviously, the tithe was basic back in the Old Testament. However, if you examine it very carefully, you will find that the people gave three tithes. One was actually for the support of the government, which would be what we call taxes today. So the "tithe" is not the basis on which Christians are to give. Paul says, "I speak not by commandment." He is not asking the Corinthians to give because it is a commandment. Paul gives two reasons why he is asking them to give. The first is "by occasion of the forwardness of others" (Ed note: NIV is easier to understand = "*I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.*")—which would be the example which the Macedonians had given. The second reason is to "prove the sincerity of your love." **It is still true today that the pocketbook is really the test of a man's love. It is the most sensitive area of a Christian.** ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#)) (Bolding added)

**2Cor 8:9 What is our example for giving with liberality and joy?**

Our Lord Jesus Christ - He was rich but became poor for us that we might become rich

**2Cor 8:12: What is the important principle about giving and specifically the giver? How does Paul quantify the giving?**

God is most concerned with the attitude of the **heart**, **not** the size of the gift

Whatever one has is the resource out of which they should give and this explains why there are no set amounts or percentages for giving anywhere stated in the NT

Believers do not need to go into debt to give, nor lower themselves to a poverty level. God never asks believers to impoverish themselves.

**2Cor 8:13-15: What is one purpose of giving to our brethren?**

The idea is that in the body of Christ some believers who have more than they need should help those who have far less than they need - this is **God's program for the relief** of want in the church. He quotes about manna Exodus 16:14 emphasizing equality

### **2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

1 Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you **the grace of God** (cf 2Cor 8:9) which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,

2 that in a great ordeal of affliction (how do most of react to trials? ordinarily we would tend to pull back in our giving, especially is they were financial trials) their abundance of joy and their **deep** (extremely deep) **poverty** (most severe type of economic deprivation that caused a person to become a beggar) overflowed in the wealth of their liberality (generosity, sincerity, the opposite of being double minded - point is that they were rich in their single-minded generosity).

3 For I testify that **according to their ability**, and **beyond their ability** (sacrificial) they gave of their own accord (they were not campaigned or coerced into doing this),

4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

5 and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

6 Consequently we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in

you this gracious work as well.

7 But just as you (referring to the church at Corinth) abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. (giving)

8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

9 For you know **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

10 And I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to **desire** to do it.

11 But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the **readiness to desire it**, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

12 For if the readiness is present (God is looking at the heart attitude), it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have.

13 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality--

14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, that there may be equality;

15 as it is written, "HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK (from Exodus 16:18 referring to the gathering of manna - some could gather more but each one received the same amount and if anyone tried to hoard manna, it bred worms! Exodus 16:24)."

## 2 Corinthians 9:5-15

### 2Cor 9:5: What does Paul explain about the giving?

Their gift should not be grudgingly given.

More accurately the gift should not be given with the attitude expressed by the Greek word *pleonexia*, which literally means "to have more" and is a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions.

**Note:** This verse is somewhat difficult to understand in the NAS, specifically the phrase "not affected by covetousness" and thus the NIV paraphrases it "*not as one grudgingly given*" which is close to the idea Paul intends.

**John MacArthur** explains that this phrase is more literally...

translated "**covetousness**," or "**greed**," (and) denotes a grasping to get more and keep it at the expense of others. This attitude emphasizes selfishness and pride, which can have a very detrimental effect on giving, and is natural for unbelievers but should not be for professed believers (MacArthur, J. J. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). Nashville: Word Pub) (Bolding added)

### 2Cor 9:6: What is God's "mathematical" principle regarding giving?

Sow sparingly, reap sparingly

Sow bountifully, reap bountifully

### 2Cor 9:7 What is the attitude God desires in the giver?

Not grudgingly or under compulsion

God loves a cheerful giver

Giving is not based on demands of others, or according to any arbitrary standards or set amounts

**Note:** *cheerful* = hīlaros > gives us English "hilarious" = denotes a happy, glad or cheerful state of mind and not one overcome with laughter or mirth, or one humorously affected)

### 2Cor 9:8 What does God promise to those who learn the grace of giving? (Note: Paul is continuing his describe the

## cheerful giver)

God will supply the cheerful giver with enough to meet his own needs and enough to give for every good deed.

**Note:** As regularly as the resources of the cheerful giver are taxed by his generous giving, they are replenished by divine grace) born of dependence on an all-sufficient God.

### 2Cor 9:9-11: What does the Scripture promise to the generous giver?

1) The act of giving (from the heart, not to please men but God Alone) will yield rewards in this life and the one to come!

(NIV "As it is written: "He [referring to the giver] has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever")

2) God Himself will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness

3) You will be enriched so that you can give even more generously

### 2 Corinthians 9:12: What will be the result of giving to the recipients in Jerusalem?

As their needs are supplied they joyfully give thanks to God

### 2 Corinthians 9:13-14: What will the generosity of the Corinthians result in?

The saints in Jerusalem will give God glory for their generosity proves the Corinthians are obedient to the gospel

The Jerusalem saints will pray for the Corinthians

The basis of genuine giving is emphasized once again - the surpassing grace of God (in the Corinthians)

### 2 Corinthians 9:15: What should be the prayer of every saint? What's the Source of every good gift?

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (Of course ultimately our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ)

#### 2 Corinthians 9:5-15

1 For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;

2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.

3 But I have sent the brethren, that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;

4 lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to speak of you) should be put to shame by this confidence.

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness.

6 Now this I say, he who **sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly**; and he who **sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully**.

7 Let each one do just **as he has purposed** (premeditated, predetermined plan of action that is done from the heart voluntarily, but not impulsively) **in his heart; not grudgingly** (with sadness: grief, heaviness or sorrow) **or under compulsion**; (necessity or constraint from external pressure and coercion rather than based on willingness) for God loves a cheerful giver. (Giving should result from inward resolve, not from impulsive or casual decision. Once the amount to be given has been determined, says Paul, the gift should be given cheerfully)

8 And God is able to make **all grace** (not refer to spiritual graces, but to money and material needs) abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

9 as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER (from Ps 112:9)."

10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness (cf Isaiah 55:10, Hosea 10:12);

11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

12 For the ministry of this service (the entire collection project was a spiritual, worshipful enterprise that was primarily being offered to God to glorify Him) is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints (the believers in need in Jerusalem), but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. (the believers in Jerusalem will joyfully express their thanksgiving to God)

13 Because of the **proof** (the collection also provided an important opportunity for the Corinthians to test the genuineness of their faith) given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ (Obedient submission to God's Word is always evidence of a true confession of Christ as Lord and Savior), and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,

14 while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

## **1 Corinthians 9:6-14**

### **1 Corinthians 9:6-14: What is the main point in this segment about who we are to give to and why?**

Paul and Barnabas had a right to expect material help from the Corinthians

They did not take it so there would be no hindrance to the gospel

Those who proclaim the gospel have right to get their living from this work

#### **1 Corinthians 9:6-14**

6 Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?

7 Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?

9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

10 Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?

12 If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar?

14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

## **Galatians 6:6-10**

### **Galatians 6:6-10: Who should we give to?**

Those who teach us the Word of God

#### **Galatians 6:6-10**

6 And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the



## Philippians 4:15-19

### Philippians 4:15-19: Why was Paul excited for the Philippians to give to his ministry?

Not for himself but their profit

He assured them God would supply their needs according to His riches in glory in Christ

**Philippians 4:15-19:** (see notes Philippians 4:14-18, Philippians 4:19)

15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

18 But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

19 And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

## Summary of principles of giving

Mt 6:2-3 Give to the poor, those in need

Mt 6:2 Give unostentatiously, not to be recognized or honored by men

Mt 6:3 Don't let anyone know (left hand <> right hand)

Mt 6:4 Giving is to be in such a way as much as possible that only our Father knows

Mt 6:4 Our Father will reward us for giving

Acts 2:44-45, 4:33 Willingness to share and sacrifice if necessary to meet needs of poor

Acts 4:32 Acknowledgement that all our possessions belong to God

2Cor 8:1 Motivation is grace of God

2Cor 8:2 Attitude of joy

2Cor 8:2 Spirit of liberality or generosity

2Cor 8:3 Voluntary (free will); sacrificial

2Cor 8:10-11 A desire to give

2Cor 8:4 Considered a privilege

2Cor 8:5 Generous giving follows personal dedication

2Cor 8:7 Paul elevated giving to the level of other more "showy" gifts

2Cor 8:8 Giving is not commanded

2Cor 8:8 Giving is a test of the sincerity of one's love for Jesus and His church

2Cor 8:9 Our example of giving = Jesus rich became poor that we might become rich

2Cor 8:12 God concerned with attitude of heart not size of gift (no set % in NT, no debt)

2Cor 8:13-15 Giving to brethren (haves to have nots) is God's relief program

2Cor 9:5 Do not give grudgingly or with a desire to acquire (so that giving is a pain!)

2Cor 9:6 You will reap according to how you sow

2Cor 9:7 Don't give grudgingly or under compulsion, but cheerfully

2Cor 9:8 God will supply giver with enough to meet his needs and to give for every good deed.

2Cor 9:9-11 Giving from heart will yield rewards in this life and one to come!

2Cor 9:9-11 God will supply seed for sowing and increase harvest of righteousness

2Cor 9:9-11 God will enrich you so that you can give even more generously

2 Cor 9:12 Recipients will (or should) joyfully give thanks and glory to God

2 Cor 9:14 Basis of giving is surpassing grace of God

2 Cor 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift

1 Cor 9:6-14: Those who proclaim gospel have right to get living from

Gal 6:6-10 We should give to those who teach the Word of God

Phil 4 Giving is for profit of giver, God supplies all our needs when we give

## PRAYER

Matthew 6:5-15

### Let's first look at the principles of prayer in Mt 6:5-15...

**Mt 6:5: How are we not to pray? What is your motive for praying in the presence of others? In Spanish one might ask "Que es su purpasa?" What is your purpose? Why are you doing what you are doing?**

Like hypocrites - actors - who stand and pray in synagogues and street corners

To be seen by men

**Who are the hypocrites (the actors hiding behind masks so that one can't see who they really are within, in their heart) in the context of the time of Jesus' message and how does this relate to Mt 5:20?**

The hypocrites were the scribes and the Pharisees

Jesus explains how their practice of righteousness was to be surpassed

**Note:** Jesus was not saying that if one gives, prays or fasts in a way that surpassed the scribes and Pharisees, that they would gain heaven. His point is that those who possess that surpassing righteousness by faith are the ones who will put it into practice in those ways He is advocating. An unsaved person could not practice the righteousness Jesus is describing.

**Mt 6:5: What's the reward for hypocritical praying?**

That men see you...that is the full reward

The praise of men instead of the smile of the Father

**Luke 18:11** is the perfect example

"The Pharisee stood and was praying thus **to himself** (note who he is praying to!), 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer.

**Mt 6:6: Where should we pray? Who do we pray to? What result?**

Go into inner room, shut door, pray to your Father Who is in secret

Your Father will repay you - If our real motive is to get through to God, He will hear and answer.

**Note:** Jesus is not prohibiting public prayer which He Himself exercised. His point is not where but why...what is your motive in your public praying? Is it so men will hear you or God?

**Mt 6:7: How should we **not** pray?**

Do not use meaningless repetition - stock words, empty phrases

No ritualistic praying

Mindless repetition (not from the heart) - this principle could apply to some modern worship songs which are in the form of a prayer and which repeat a chorus over and over and over

God is not impressed by our multiplication of words but desires sincere expressions from the heart.

### **Who prays that way and why?**

Gentiles (pagans or heathens) - the unsaved pray this way

Pagans pray this way because they think their deity will hear them if they pile up words!

### **Mt 6:8 Why don't we need to make meaningless repetition? Does this mean we cannot repeat prayer requests?**

Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him

Jesus is not forbidding repetition of requests, but of repetition of words repeated thoughtlessly or as if they were a formula for successful prayer. What Jesus condemns is the spirit of distrust and fear of idol worshiping pagans which causes them to babble on and on to be certain their so called gods are sufficiently appeased or completely informed.

### **Why pray if your Father knows what you need?**

We acknowledge our need.

We express our trust, humility and dependence on our Father for everything

In this way we communicate with Him (communion).

We don't come like a battering ram to break down the door of God's treasure house

We come as children who are greatly loved by their Father and Who desires to give them perfect gifts (not their greeds but their needs)

In a profoundly mysterious way, God also does things in answer to prayer that He would not have done otherwise (see James 4:2).

## **Matthew 6:9-14**

### **"The Lord's Prayer"**

#### **Mt 6:9-14: Let's look at Jesus' instructions to counter the meaningless prayers like pagans...**

**Note:** The Lord Jesus gave many other commands to pray (Matthew 7:7-11; 9:38; 17:20; 18:19,20; 21:21,22; 26:41; Luke 18:1,7; John 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,24) and all of these give further instruction on the vital subject of how believers should pray. This would make a worthwhile devotional study. Below are some other resources...

[Lord Teach Me To Pray...in 28 Days](#) by Kay Arthur

[Lord Teach Us to Pray](#): online devotional based on Kay Arthur's book

**A Prayer for Fullness** by Wayne Barber (exposition of [Ephesians 3:14-21](#))

[Power Through Prayer](#) by [E. M. Bounds](#)

[Torrey's Topic on "Prayer"](#) over 150 Scriptures (read each text in its context to maximize proper interpretation and fruitful application). As a suggestion you might consider going through these Scriptures devotionally each morning and keep a diary of observations on the text. Then as you pray these Scriptures back to your Father Who is in heaven, you could keep a record of His faithfulness in answering.

#### **How do you know this was not actually the "Lord's Prayer", a prayer He prayed?**

Mt 6:12 answers that question. Jesus had no need for forgiveness of debts, for He had none!

### What does the phrase "*in this way*" imply?

That this prayer was never meant to be a ritualistic, rote prayer for regular recital but rather a guide for praying *"in this way"* or *"after this manner"*. The problem with prayer by rote memory is that this kind of prayer becomes *"meaningless repetition."*

Jesus told the people listening to His teaching to *"pray in this way,"* in the context of just having stated not to use **meaningless repetition**. So clearly Jesus is presenting a **pattern** for our prayers, not the only words to use in prayer. The "Lord's Prayer" was never intended to be used as a repetitious petition, but as the guide to how His followers should pray.

So often it has unfortunately been turned into a ritualistic recital that we mouth but do not genuinely pray from our heart. Such **dead formalism** is the very practice Jesus is warning them to beware of practicing! That is not to say that one could or should never pray this prayer...the question one must always address when praying this prayer is...

"Am I praying it truly from my heart and not in a rote manner as if I were reciting a memory verse?"

Certainly, from the heart, this is a valid, effective prayer. As discussed below it is even more effectively used as a guideline for praying.

### Where do we see intercession (prayer for others) in this prayer guide?

Use of the plural pronouns **"Our Father"**... "give **us** our daily bread", etc

**Note:** This is not a "I, me, my, mine" type of prayer in any way!

### How many petitions does Jesus give? What is significant about the order?

Six petitions

First 3 directed to God

Last 3 toward human needs (Mt 6:11-13)

Note the brevity of this prayer. Prayers can be longer but the point is that they do not have to be long to be effective and pleasing to our Father.

### What are Jesus' general guidelines for prayer? As an aside are these just suggestions or are they commanded?

In Mt 6:9 **"pray"** is which is a command from our Lord that we make this model for prayer be the habit of our (prayer) life.

**1) Mt 6:9 Pray to the Father, in heaven, with focus on His Name**- hallowed, holy, set apart. Begin with praise and worship of the Father. In context we praise Him because He is **perfect** (Mt 5:48), our perfect Father (and many of us have had earthly fathers far removed from "perfection" and are in need of a wonderful perfect Father. We praise Him because He **sees** what is done in secret, that he even **rewards** our righteous giving, praying and fasting, that He **knows what we need** even before we ask, and that **He forgives** us as we forgive others.

**2) Mt 6:10 Pray for the Father's kingdom** - we pray for advancement of God's cause (in one sense this prayer is for the return of our Lord and His millennial kingdom on earth when He reigns in righteousness)

**3) Mt 6:10 Pray for the Father's will to be done**- we willingly submit to and desire to see performed God's will which is good, and acceptable and perfect (notes Romans 12:2).

**4) Mt 6:11 Pray for our daily needs (physical but also spiritual food)** -note God's interests are given priority (first 3 petitions are toward God)

**5) Mt 6:12 Ask for forgiveness of our debts** (spiritual debts, sin creating a debt to God for violation of His Law, the "wages of sin are death", the parallel passage in Luke 11:4 uses "sins"), in the context of a willingness to forgive others their debts against us.

**6) Mt 6:13 Pray we will not be led into temptation** (cf Luke 22:40) or testing but will be delivered from evil (to be kept from sin) or the evil one (Satan) - God Himself will not tempt anyone to evil but He does allow us to be tested and tried. This petition expresses a healthy distrust of our own ability to resist temptations or to stand up under trial and acknowledges complete dependence on the Lord for preservation.

**Mt 6:13** Praise for God's kingdom, power and glory

**Mt 6:14-15: What is the "heart" of the prayer that Jesus emphasizes by providing further explanation?**

Forgiveness - if we do forgive others, our Father will forgive us, but He will not forgive us if we refuse to forgive others.

**Note:** Forgiveness with the Father depends on forgiveness among the members of the family of God. This is the forgiveness that affects fellowship within the family of God, not the forgiveness that leads to salvation. Refusal to forgive and be reconciled to other humans is sin which bars us from God's forgiveness. Prayer is agreement with God and must be in agreement with His character. To refuse to forgive is to violate God's claim that vengeance is His alone (Ro 12:19).

#### **Luke 11:1-4: How does this parallel prayer help one understand the purpose of the prayer in Mt 6:9-13?**

Jesus did not repeat the exact wording and the obvious conclusion is that neither prayer was ever intended by Jesus to be repetitively prayed using exactly the words in Mt 6:9-13. This emphasizes that it is a **model prayer** or **pattern of prayer**.

**Hendriksen** nicely summarizes the structure of this **model prayer** noting that...

The comprehensive or universe-embracing nature of these petitions appears from the fact that they bear reference not only to God's glory, etc. (first three petitions), but also to our needs (last three); not only to our physical needs (fourth petition), but also to our spiritual (fifth and sixth); not only to our present need (fourth petition), but also to our need with reference to the past (fifth), and even to our future need (sixth). Finally, in this prayer the worshiper carries to the throne of grace the burdens that are not only his own but also his brothers' ("our," "us"). All of this is included in the six brief requests. This is indeed the perfect pattern for our prayers! ([Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew Grand Rapids: Baker Book House](#))

In **Luke 11:4** Jesus says "**sins**" which helps understand "**debts**" in Mt 6:12.

#### **Luke 11:1-4:**

1 And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.

3 'Give us each day our daily bread.

4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'"

**Note:** Many scholars believe that the Lord's Prayer was given to the disciples as a list of index sentences. In the days of our Lord, the rabbis would give the people a collection of brief sentences, each of which suggested a subject for prayer. These index sentences or subjects for prayer would then be used to lead the disciples into topics that needed to be covered in prayer. Assuming this to be the case in Matthew 6, let's look at the Lord's Prayer and see what topics it covers.

### **Let's look at parallel Scriptures for each petition in Jesus' "Model For Prayer"**

#### **1) "Our Father, Who is in heaven, hallowed be Thy name"**

**John 1:12-13: How does this passage relate to the Lord's prayer? Who is entitled to pray this prayer?**

Only believers can call God "Father" because we are His children having received Jesus as Savior and believed in His Name (Jesus means "Jehovah saves")

#### **John 1:12-13:**

11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

**Note:** One often hears someone begin a prayer with "*Dear Jesus...*" Although that is certainly not heretical, in fairness and in a desire to pray as Jesus teaches, it should be emphasized that Scripture **never** instructs believers to pray to the Lord Jesus Christ or to the Holy Spirit. The Bible is our only guidebook for Scripturally sound praying and supersedes the experience or traditional practices of men, whether pastors or laymen. What we do observe is that the entire Godhead is integrally involved in the prayers of the saints. The **Holy**

**Spirit** leads and initiates our prayers. The **Father** is the One to Whom all of our prayers are directed or addressed. And finally, all of our prayers ascend to the Father's throne only through the Great High Priesthood of our **Lord Jesus Christ** a truth which explains why we always end our prayer with a phrase like *"in the Name of Jesus"*.

#### **Romans 8:14-17: How do you know if you are in the family of God and can call God "Father"?**

We are led by the Spirit

We don't have a spirit of slavery which causes us to fear God

The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

Suffering for the sake of His Name is one of the marks of a genuine believer

##### **Romans 8:14-17:**

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

#### **Psalms 100:4: How should we enter into God's presence?**

Here **thanksgiving** is added to praise as the way to come into His presence in prayer.

Blessing His Name

**Psalms 100:4:** Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name.

#### **Exodus 33:18-19: What was Moses' greatest desire and should likewise be ours?**

To see God's glory manifest

##### **Exodus 33:18-19**

18 Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!"

19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

#### **Proverbs 18:10: Why does the prayer begin with focus on God's Name? Remember that a Name stands for everything a person is and was how God revealed Himself in the OT (See study on the Names of God **Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary**)**

His Name is like a strong tower

His Names describe His attributes which hold us safely when we are in need

##### **Proverbs 18:10:**

The name of the LORD is a strong tower;

The righteous runs into it and is safe.

**Beloved, do you begin your prayers by focusing on the Father, by exalting His Name and by praising and thanking Him? If you do or do not, how might this affect the remainder of your prayer time?**

## **2) "Your kingdom come"**

**Matthew 5:3** What did we learn about the Kingdom of heaven?

The kingdom is already the present possession of the poor in heart. Thus in that sense, the Kingdom has already come. And yet as we see below we are still to be seeking His Kingdom even though we have already entered at the time of salvation ("the poor in spirit").

### **1 Corinthians 6:9-11: Who is in the Kingdom? Who would even desire His kingdom to come or to be advanced?**

Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven - those with a righteousness that surpasses the scribes and Pharisees because the unrighteous will not inherit God's Kingdom

Some are deceived thinking they belong to the kingdom but they do not

All members of the Kingdom are former sinners who have been declared righteous (Justified), they have been washed (with the "water of the Word") and sanctified (set apart at the time of their reception of Jesus as Lord and Savior, made holy or set apart from the world and unto God for His kingdom work, one aspect of which is prayer for His Kingdom to come)

#### **1 Corinthians 6:9-11:**

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

### **Acts 26:18: How did sinners gain entry into the Kingdom of Heaven?**

The Gospel ("washing with the water of the Word") was spoken to them

God's Spirit supernaturally opened their spiritually blind eyes

They were given a new heart and desire to turn from darkness to light

From the dominion (power he rightfully had been given over unsaved sinners) to God (Father)

God granted those who turned forgiveness of sins and an inheritance (Kingdom)

They were sanctified (set apart) the moment they placed their faith in Jesus Christ

**Acts 26:18:** (Jesus sending Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles) to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me (Jesus).'

### **Matthew 6:33: What do children of the heavenly Father, those who now belong to the Kingdom of Heaven do, one part of which includes prayer? What is the priority?**

Seeking first (priority) His Kingdom and His righteousness.

In this model prayer we see the focus begins with the Father and then moves to His Kingdom. We are continually to give His eternal Kingdom priority over anything and everything on this earth which is passing away.

**Matthew 6:33:** "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

### **3) "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."**

#### **1 John 5:14-15: Why is it important to know the will of God when we pray?**

So that we might pray according to His will, for in this way we know He hears us and that we have the requests we have asked from Him.

Knowing God's will is a key to answered prayer. Note that to pray according to God's will is to pray in accord with what He would want, not what we would desire or insist that He do for us. We must take time to discern the will of God which is good and acceptable and perfect (Ro 12:2), which is found most accurately in the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance God's Word and thus will help us discern His Will.

But you still may be asking "I ask in His will and did not get the answer I asked for." **J Vernon McGee** explains what "praying in His will" means...

If we are in fellowship with Him, if we are not regarding sin in our lives, and if there are no other hindrances to prayer in our lives, **we are not going to pray selfishly**. When we are walking in fellowship with Him, when we are following Him, we can have the confidence that He will hear what we ask and answer our prayer. We are not to come to Him with mistrust or in a begging attitude, but we are to come with boldness to ask that **God's will** be done. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#)) (Bolding added)

#### **1 John 5:14-15:**

14 And this is the confidence (means in essence freedom to speak or boldness of speech) which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know (present tense) that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (We may not see the answer to a prayer immediately, but we have inner confidence that God has answered)

#### **John 9:31: What will hinder our prayers for His will to be done?**

Doing God's will (obedience) is crucial for effective prayer.

**John 9:31:** "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.

#### **Luke 22:42: Who is our example of praying for the will of the Father to be done? When we don't know God's will in a given circumstance, what should we pray?**

Jesus is clearly our example.

We should always pray that God's will be done, not ours.

**Luke 22:42:** saying, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done."

#### **4) "Give us this day our daily bread."**

##### **What is the shift in emphasis? For who?**

From God to our needs

For self and others ("us") which indicates it is intercessory

##### **What do we learn about our praying from the following?**

Lu 11:5-10 - Persistence

Mt 21:22 - Faith

Jn 15:7 - Abide in Jesus, knowing and being obedient to His Word

Jn 15:16 - Ask in Jesus' Name

Ja 4:1-3 - Ask with unselfish, God honoring motives

#### **Luke 11:5-10**

5 And He said to them, "Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';

7 and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'

8 "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

9 "And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.

10 "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.



## **Matthew 21:22**

"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

## **John 15:7**

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.

## **John 15:16;**

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.

## **James 4:1-3**

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

## **5) "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."**

**What do we learn about our the effect of praying for forgiveness from the following?**

1Jo 1:9 - We must specifically confess all our sins (cf Ps 66:18)

Pr 28:13 - If we have unconfessed and unforsaken unforgiveness we will not prosper

Mt 6:14-15 - We must forgive to be forgiven (not an issue of salvation but fellowship - see below) Forgiveness is also a vital part of being in the will of God. If one is unwilling to forgive, then that one is not within God's will for asking anything in prayer.

## **1 John 1:9**

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## **Proverbs 28:13**

13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

## **Matthew 6:14-15**

14 "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 "But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

**Note:** Do not misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. He is not saying you will lose your salvation.

**John MacArthur** explains it as follows...

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 (cf. 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 wholesale cleansing from sin's corruption that comes with justification. It is like a washing of the feet rather than a bath (cf. John 13:10). Forgiveness in this latter sense is what God threatens to withhold from Christians who refuse to forgive others (cf. Mt 18:23-35). (MacArthur, J. J. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). Nashville: Word Pub)

## **6) "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil."**

**What do the following teach about temptation?**

Ja 1:13-14: God Himself does not lead us into temptation. Our flesh entices and carries us away.

1Cor 10:13: God will not allow us to be tempted or tested more than we can handle but will provide the way of escape that we might endure

Mt 26:40-41: We need to pray this because of our weakness of our flesh

**Note:** The way this Jesus phrases this petition might suggest that God is the blame for temptation which is not the case as shown in the Scriptures for study. However God will subject us to trials that may expose us to Satan's fiery missiles. What the petitioner is doing is asking God to protect him or her from falling when the temptation comes.

#### **James 1:13-14**

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

#### **1 Corinthians 10:13**

13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

#### **Matthew 26:40-41**

40 And He came to the disciples and found<sup>^</sup> them sleeping, and said<sup>^</sup> to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?

41 "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

### **7) "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."**

Eternal glory belongs to God Alone and will be our prayer in heaven.

**Note:** This model prayer begins and ends with praise. The focus in the whole prayer is on God and this is critical to remember in prayer - it is about God, not us.

**Romans 11:36:** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

**Daniel 7:14:** "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

#### **Revelation 4:8-11**

8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."

## **FASTING**

**Matthew 6:16-18**

### **What is fasting?**

The Bible defines fasting as a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes. It is Christian, for fasting by a non-Christian has no eternal value since the discipline's motives and purposes are to be God-centered. Fasting is voluntary in the sense that it is not to be coerced. Fasting is more than just the ultimate crash diet for the body, it is abstinence from food for spiritual

purposes.

### What principles for fasting are given in Matthew 6:16-18?

Don't fast like a hypocrite, putting on a gloomy face to impress men - that's your entire reward!

When you fast take care of your appearance so men don't know you are fasting - then your Father will repay you. Notice that Jesus says "when you fast" not "if you fast" indicating it is expected by our Lord. However, He does not command fasting. Thus fasting is a choice we each must make. It is a voluntary spiritual discipline.

**Note:** As with other the preceding two spiritual disciplines, fasting is **directed toward our Father** and the praise of men. When we fast, we must not do anything that will draw attention to our appearance or our hunger or our dedication. Fasting is between an individual and his God. It is interesting that fasting is mentioned in Scripture more times than even something as important as baptism (about 77 times for fasting to 75 for baptism). Most believers have been baptized but how many have ever fasted?

### Isaiah 58:3-12: What do you learn about fasting?

v3 Their fasting was reflecting wrong heart attitude - fasting and sin are not compatible. They were trying to manipulate God.

v4 Their Fasting was ending in quarreling and strife

**Isaiah admonished Israel for their fasting.** They were doing what Jesus said not to do in Matthew 6. It was not for God that they were fasting, but for themselves. The Lord told Israel through Isaiah that if they would do what is right and then fast and call on Him, then He would answer them.

### According to Isaiah 58:6-7, what is the fast God chooses?

The type of fasting that pleases God is not giving up food but giving up wickedness, oppression, enslavement, and binding of other people. Fasting was to encourage a person to respond positively to God's commands. No religious observance has value for Jehovah that is not supported by a godly, law-abiding life, and compassion towards those in need.

In the Old Testament only one fast was commanded-the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31). Only after the fall of Jerusalem were fast days instituted (Zech. 7:3, 5; 8:19). Ironically as God declares in Isaiah 58, there were many specific commands were not being followed.

### What will happen if they fast with the right motives and actions?

The Lord would bless them with **light, healing, righteousness, protection** from trouble, and **answered prayer** (Isa 58:8-9).

## Isaiah 58:3-12

### This is how Israel saw their fasting...

3 'Why have we **fasted** and Thou dost not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and Thou dost not notice? ('We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? This was the root problem - their heart attitude was not right. They were trying to manipulate God with these external acts of piety. They said in essence "We have done much penance, and you don't even notice it!" )

**J. Alec Motyer** comments...Put bluntly, however, the religion which is exposed here rests on Canaanite rather than Yahwistic principles. The essence of Canaanite religion was to put the gods under pressure to perform their functions (hence, for example, what we would call orgiastic rites designed to stimulate Baal to acts of fertility). This is the spirit which Isaiah 58:3 reveals. They act as if they were a nation that does what is right (Isaiah 58:2), but the motive is to pressure the Lord into response, and hence the dismay (Isaiah 58:3) that so much afflictive piety has attracted no divine attention! The essence of Israelite religion, however, is response. Not doing things to influence the Lord but doing them to obey him; not works looking for reward but faith acting in obedience. ([Motyer, J. A. The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary . Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press](#))

### In contrast this is how God saw their fasting...

Behold, on the day of your **fast** you find your desire, and drive hard all your workers. ([Motyer](#) says "they were

using a fast day as if it were a bank holiday—rather as nowadays Sunday has become a second Saturday in each week. What was a day off for the employer was an 'exploitation' or 'oppression' of his staff.")

4 "Behold, you **fast** for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. (This is the outcome or result of their fast! Fighting, not fellowship with God! [Motyer](#) adds "What was intended to influence God obviously brought out the worst in the human spirit, for one can easily imagine the edginess which would result if a basically unspiritual family spent the day together in increasing hunger!")

You do not **fast** like you do today to make your voice heard on high

5 "Is it a **fast like this which I choose**, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed, and for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? (The point is that Israel was **fasting for outward show**, which is what Jesus warned against in Mt 6:16-18. ) Will you call this **afast**, even an acceptable day to the LORD? (This is all external but is not acceptable to God Who looks at the heart)

#### This is the "fast" God desired..

6 "Is this not the **fast which I choose**, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? (the kind of fasting I want calls you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned and to stop oppressing those who work for you. Treat them fairly and give them what they earn)

7 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

#### The promised benefits of a carrying out the "fast" God chose...

8 "Then (when you fast like God has just described, a fast that includes positive social benefits He describes) your (**First promised benefit of right fasting**) **light will break out** like the dawn, and (**Second promise**) your **recovery will speedily spring forth**; and (**Third promise**) your **righteousness will go before you**. The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

9 "(**Fourth promise**) Then you will call, and **the LORD will answer**; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' (God would hear their prayers - there would be free-flowing fellowship between man and God) (**Now God returns to the proper use of the fast day**) If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

10 And if you give yourself to the hungry, (alleviate hunger instead of going hungry!) and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will become like midday.

11 (**Promised benefits similar to those in verses 8-9**) "And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

12 "And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins. You will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

**When we fast like Israel did in Isaiah 58, the question is "Are we seeking God because He is God or are we trying to manipulate Him with the fasting?" Why are you fasting. It's a good question to ask ourselves when we fast.**

#### **Fasting: Reason for, frequency of or things accompanying**

##### **2Chr 20:3:**

Occasion: Enemy invasion of Judah was imminent

National fast, proclaimed by the king

Associated with seeking the LORD (prayer) for His help in time of danger

##### **Ezra 8:21-23**

Occasion: Exiles returning from Babylon to Jerusalem (dangerous trip)

Corporate fast proclaimed by leader

Associated with humbling one's self and seeking God (associated with prayer - entreaty)

Seeking God for safe journey

For sake of God's testimony that God would protect - God's honor at stake

#### **Psalm 35:13**

Individual fast

Associated with sackcloth and humbling

Associated with prayer for one's **enemies** when they were sick! (as if they were his friends)

**Have you ever fasted for your enemies?!**

#### **Daniel 10:2-3**

Individual fast

Extended fast (3 months),

Associated with mourning over future great tribulation for Israel (Daniel 10:1)

Partial (not a complete food and water) fast

#### **Jonah 3:5-10**

Belief in God associated with fast

Outward symbol of inward contrition and humbling

Associated with calling on God earnestly (Jonah 3:8)

#### **Joel 2:12-13**

Occasion: Impending Judgment

Associated with repentance

Fasting, weeping, and mourning would give evidence of sincerity of the repentance.

#### **Zechariah 7:5**

Fast can be for self not God (self-deception - check motive).

These fasts were their idea not God's (they had set up fast days but not for God - ritual instead of reality)

#### **Matthew 9:14-15**

Fasting because of mourning - waiting Jesus' return.

**Have you every fasted waiting for your Bridegroom to return?**

**Every believer should be waiting for Him!**

#### **Acts 13:2-3**

Associated with prayer

To discern God's will for leaders (Barnabas and Saul)

#### **Acts 14:23**

Associated with prayer

Associated with selecting elders

Fasting is associated with seeking the Lord in prayer for guidance or protection, either a personal fast or a called fast for a group of God's people. There is mourning associated with fasting. Deep mourning might produce an involuntary fast because of lack of

interest in eating.

**2 Chronicles 20:3** And Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD; and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4 So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD.

#### **Ezra 8:21-23**

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.

22 For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him."

23 So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty.

**Psalms 35:13** But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.

#### **Daniel 10:2-3**

2 In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.

3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all, until the entire three weeks were completed.

#### **Jonah 3:5-10**

5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes.

7 And he issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water.

8 "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.

9 "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?"

10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

#### **Joel 2:12-13**

12 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping, and mourning;

13 And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting of evil.

#### **Zechariah 7:5**

5 "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?'

#### **Matthew 9:14-15**

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

15 And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

#### **Acts 13:2-3**

2 And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas

and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

**Acts 14:23**

23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**How many people do you know who regularly practice fasting?** (Not that they are boasting about it but that they acknowledge this as something they do from time to time).

**How many sermons have you ever heard on fasting?**

**Have you ever fasted?**

**What prevents you from fasting?**

**What situations in your own life could be impacted by fasting and prayer?** (God's guidance, help, etc)

With all three spiritual disciplines note that Jesus does not say **if** you do these things, but **when** you do these things. Although we are not commanded to fast, it should be a normal part of the believer's life, part of one's practice of righteousness.