

Chapter 9

SERMON ON THE MOUNT 4

MATTHEW 6 - PART 1

SECTION 1: MOTIVES (Matthew 6:1-8) Scripture List: Proverbs 4:23; I Corinthians 3:10, 12-14

- I. A motive is the inner drive, impulse, or intention that causes a person to behave or act in a certain way. People do nothing without a motive. Something has to overcome the inertia to cause the thought process, the expending of energy, paying the price, perhaps taking the risk, of a particular course of action.
 - A. In the investigation of a crime, the detective will most often look for a motive for the crime, “Who wanted this to happen? Who would benefit from this? Why?”
 - B. When we think about motives and motivation, we must consider “Why do people do what they do?” Good leaders are good motivators. To motivate someone you give them a sufficient reason to act in a particular way.
- II. There are all kinds of motives or reasons that people do what they do. Even in our Christian lives, we may have different or even mixed motives for the things we do.
 - A. In some or most cases we get our motives from our values. What we value is important to us and we are motivated to try to attain it. If we value material things, we work to attain material prosperity. If we value the opinions of a certain group of people we try to live and act in a way that they will approve. The bottom line is that we do what we want to do. If we want something badly enough we are motivated to try to attain or achieve it.
 - B. There can be right, wrong, and mixed motives for Christian service or spiritual activities. (1 Corinthians 13:3) Some mixed or wrong motives for Christian activities or service might be:
 - 1. **Self-righteousness.** I am a good person. This action or service proves it!
 - 2. **Guilt.** I feel guilty for my sins, or shortcomings and I am doing this action or service to pay for wrong; an attempt to “balance the books.”
 - 3. **Obligation.** As a Christian, I may feel obligated to do certain things, attend certain meetings, deny myself certain pleasures or benefits. This is the cross I must bear, I have to do this.
 - 4. **Dead works (Useless rituals).** I may feel that I must perform certain religious acts, involving prayers, symbolic acts, or participate in certain rituals in order to placate God’s wrath or earn God’s favor. This is a form of religious superstition.
 - 5. **Fear.** One may be motivated to act in a certain way or even to serve sacrificially because of fear of the consequences of failure to live up to certain standards. This often affects people who have been raised in a very harsh home environment or whose religious beliefs lean heavily towards legalism.

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 2 – Chapter 9– Sermon on the Mount 4

6. **Desire for recognition.** One may desire to be thought well of by others and therefore be willing to live and act in a certain way not to please God or to be in fellowship with God, but to be thought of as a nice person.
7. **Competition.** One may “live a holy life,” refrain from questionable activities, and serve sacrificially to simply feel better or holier than other people. We call this a “holier-than-thou” attitude. (Luke 18:9-14)

III. What Jesus had to say about motives for religious activity. (Matthew 6:1-18)

A. Concerning motives, Jesus used three examples of “religious activities;” actions and behavior approved by both God and man. Jesus addressed things that His listeners were doing - but He went to the heart of the matter - their motives.

1. Giving to meet the needs of others is a good thing to do. The Pharisees were givers. The Law of Moses, their standard for conduct, commanded it. They obeyed to the letter of the law, tithing even a tenth of their garden seeds to be technically correct, giving alms to the poor, but not out of love for the poor, but to satisfy themselves that they were righteous.
2. Prayer is communing with God and Jesus strongly advocated prayer to strengthen one’s fellowship with God. The Pharisees prayed. They prayed publicly, regularly, and religiously. But Jesus told them God didn’t hear their prayer, only men heard them pray. Jesus said to them, “Pray in secret - men don’t hear - God hears. Pray in public to be heard by people - men hear - God doesn’t.” The issue in prayer is “Why are you doing that?” Praying in private can also be empty if the motive is self-righteous pride. Prayer that involves repetition of certain phrases; long prayers; prayers made up of fancy words; even blessing the food at mealtimes can become meaningless if done with a wrong motive.
3. Fasting (afflicting the soul), self-denial - going without food as a spiritual discipline is a good thing to do. It shows that one is willing to sacrifice physical satisfaction for a spiritual purpose. Fasting should produce humility and quietness of spirit. But Jesus told of the Pharisee who boasted, “I fast twice in the week (And I’m proud of it!)” This is false humility - pride in disguise.

B. Giving, prayer, and fasting are all good things to do:

1. **Giving is an action that touches others.** It allows one to be a blessing. God’s Word promises that giving will be rewarded; “Give and it shall be given unto you...” But if you do it to impress others, you negate the full benefit. If we do it to make an impression on others, make a good one, because that’s all we get. “They have their reward in full.”
2. **Prayer is an action that touches God.** Jesus made it clear that God hears sincere prayers. But if we do it to be heard by others, God may not hear and respond. Jesus said a hypocrite is only praying to or about himself. James tells us wrongly motivated prayers go unanswered. (Luke 18:11; James 4:3)
3. **Fasting is an action of self-discipline.** It is important that we be self-

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 2 – Chapter 9– Sermon on the Mount 4

disciplined. But our fasting must be spirit-motivated to have spiritual benefit. Fasting to lose weight produces a reward - weight loss. Jesus said, "If you're fasting to be seen by men, make it good. That's all you get!"

- IV. When we do our religious or even charitable acts from wrong motives, we will not receive any lasting benefit. If we don't act "as unto the Lord," the act does not count with Him; there is no eternal reward, it produces no growth.
- A. **Wrong motives waste energy.** If we did it from wrong motives, we'll just have to do it again with a right motive. Self-effort is a hard way to go.
 - B. **Wrong motives produce bondage to the opinions of others.** Fear of man. "What will they think?," "What will they say?," "How do I look?," "How did it sound?," "Did I come across well?"
 - C. **Wrong motives rob faith.** When we give, pray, or fast from right motives, it is a faith-releasing act that produces lasting benefit. When we act from wrong motives, faith is not part of the equation. (John 5:44)
 - D. **Wrong motives withhold blessing and short circuit prayer.** Because God looks at the heart and sees the motive in our prayer, if we are praying only out of selfish desires, the prayer will not produce a result. *"You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives."* (James 4:3)
 - E. **Wrong motives weaken the church** through divided efforts, conflict and competition. (Galatians 5:15)
- V. The right motive for any religious or spiritual activity is love - love for God (shows itself in our desire for fellowship with Him and obedience to Him) and love for our fellow man (shows itself in a desire to be a blessing to others). God's love always does the right thing for the right reason. (1 Corinthians 13)
- A. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave..."* (John 3:16-18)
 - B. *"If you love me, you will obey what I command."* (John 14:15)
 - C. *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."* (John 13:34)
- VI. How can I strengthen this area of my life and make sure I am acting from right motives?
- A. Examine your heart. Motives are from the heart. Ask, "Why am I really doing this?" Be honest with God, with others, and with yourself.
 - B. In prayer, ask God to reveal to you your heart and motives. (Psalm 139:23)
 - C. Allow the purifying fire of God's Word and God's Spirit to "clean up your act" by purifying the motives of your heart.

SECTION 2: PRAYER (Matthew 6:5-13) (See Luke 11:2-4) Scripture list: Mark 14:38; Luke

*Foundation for Christian Service copyright © 2000 by Jim and Jean Stephens
Resource Ministries International www.resourceminstries.org*

18:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

- I. Jesus was not only a man of prayer, He taught His disciples to pray to the Father as He did. Why is prayer so important for the believer?
 - A. Prayer has been defined as “An audible expression of faith in God’s power and ability to perform what He has promised.” Prayer is an expression of man’s dependence on God for all things. What reverence is to real worship, dependence is to prayer.
 - B. Prayer is the expression of our realization of our need and dependency on God. God knows we need Him in every area of our lives. The important thing is for us to realize that and come to Him in prayer daily.
- II. The prayer Jesus gave in response to His disciples’ request, “Lord, teach us to pray,” can be used as a pattern after which to develop our own practice of prayer. The emphasis here is not on reciting a prayer from memory, but allowing this to be a pattern of simplicity and sincerity. (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4)

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

- A. ***Our Father in heaven.*** Prayer begins with an acknowledgment of who He is and who we are in relationship to Him. He is our Father in heaven. We come to him on the basis of His love for us as a Father. We come reverently and respectfully but boldly. (Matthew 7:11; Hebrews 11:6)
- B. ***Hallowed be your name.*** Prayer continues with an attitude of worship. We not only acknowledge Him as our Father, but we acknowledge Him as a Holy God who is worthy of our praise and our adoration. We give Him praise for who He is, thanks for what He has done, gratefulness for being part of His family. (Psalm 36:5-7, 106:1-5, 111; 1 Chronicles 16:12-25, 29:10-13; 2 Chronicles 6:14-15; Acts 4:23-30; Ephesians 3:14-21)
- C. ***Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*** We pray for the fulfillment of His plans and purposes. We pray for His authority and rule. We acknowledge our submission to His authority in our own lives. We commit to God and His will in this world. This also includes intercession for the needs of others. (Matthew 9:38; Luke 22:42; Ephesians 1:15-23; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 1:1)
- D. ***Give us today our daily bread.*** Petition for my needs. We request His divine provision of our immediate and practical needs. We are praying for “daily bread,” not for wealth, not for everything we ever expect to need, but for today’s needs. We acknowledge that we will be praying tomorrow and each day for that day’s needs. These are specific requests for specific needs. Day by day communion with God, day by day provision from God. (Philippians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 John 5:14-15)
- E. ***Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (14 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.) Confession of sin. We acknowledge our failures and shortcomings. With confession of sin there is the blessing of a clear line to God. There is nothing to stand in the way of relationship with Him. Guilt is released and the burden of it is lifted. Forgiveness from God is linked with forgiveness to others. (Psalm 19:12-13, 32:1-8, 51, 66:18-19; Matthew 6:14-15; 1 John 1:9)

F. ***And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*** Asking God for His guidance and protection. Again this is an acknowledgment of total dependence on Him. We do not know the way without Him. We are aware of the danger of falling into sin or being attacked or misled by Satan and we ask God to guide and protect us.

III. Praying the Word and Will of God. Prayer according to God's stated purpose as revealed in scripture does produce powerful results. (Psalm 68:28; Isaiah 62:6-7; Ezekiel 36:36-38; Daniel 9:2-4; 1 John 5:14-15)

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

SECTION 3: FORGIVENESS (Matthew 6:14-15) Scripture List: Matthew 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:35-37; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13

I. Jesus clearly linked our ability to receive forgiveness from God to our willingness to forgive others.

A. Forgiveness is total unconditional pardon to an offender. This means not merely getting over the anger or hurt, but releasing an offender from judgment. Forgiveness is actual pardon for actual trespasses and offences which have not been repaid through retribution or restitution.

B. Forgiveness must be initiated and take place in the heart, mind, and will of the offended party without regard to the actions and attitudes of the offender. You must not make forgiveness conditional upon the other person coming to you and begging forgiveness or making restitution for the offence.

C. What about forgiving and forgetting? Forgiveness is an act of the will. Forgetting is a process of time. You may not forget the incident immediately, but you must forgive until you get to the place where you can remember it without emotion.

II. Jesus said offences, hurts, and trespasses are unavoidable in our relationships with other people. We are all imperfect people and we will all at times sin against God and against other people. Most often those we hurt or offend are those who are closest to us in relationship. The fact that there are offences and trespasses is the whole basis for forgiveness. (Matthew 18:7; Luke 17:1)

A. Jesus said that offences which cause hurt bring us into an attitude of judgment of the person who hurt us. We pass judgment on the other person when we hold unforgiveness against them for what they have done to us.

B. When we hold unforgiveness against another person, we are judging them guilty and deserving of punishment. We sometimes pronounce our own judgment on others. We sometimes demand God's punishment on the person. We sometimes demand that others join us in our crusade of judgment on the person.

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 2 – Chapter 9– Sermon on the Mount 4

C. Real forgiveness is releasing others from all judgment, ours and God's, when we are the offended party. This forgiveness does not begin with our emotions but with our will.

III. Some practical questions about forgiving and forgiveness:

A. Who do we forgive? Everyone that offends us. (Matthew 6:14-15)

B. How often do we forgive? No limit (Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:4)

C. What if they don't repent and ask forgiveness?

1. That is not the deciding factor. If they do come to us and repent and ask forgiveness then the relationship can be restored. This is an ideal situation.

2. However, we must offer forgiveness whether they elect to receive it or not. If we do not forgive, then we are holding them in the prison of our unforgiveness. As long as we hold them in unforgiveness, we too are held prisoner. We will never be free from the offender or the offence until we forgive and release.

3. But what about the offender? Don't they need to be taught a lesson? God in His mercy is best able to determine what is best for the person.

D. How do we forgive? We know that it is right and necessary to forgive. We decide to forgive as an act of our will. We declare forgiveness in prayer to God, we speak it out as a commitment, and we speak it to the person if appropriate and possible.

E. Is there any way I can avoid having to forgive? (Proverbs 19:11)

1. Don't be easily offended. Learn to be less sensitive to slights, offences, and petty violations of your rights.

2. Understand the other person, give him a break, walk a mile in his shoes.

IV. Unwillingness to forgive others for their hurts and offences against us is dangerous. We simply cannot afford not to forgive. Here are some of the dangerous results of unforgiveness: (James 2:13)

A. **Unforgiveness is progressive.** What begins as hurt or anger over an offence will escalate if we do not forgive. Anger escalates into resentment. Resentment escalates into bitterness. Bitterness is like a cancer of the soul and can eat away at a person until it destroys them.

B. **Unforgiveness causes us to live with accumulating guilt.** If we do not forgive others for their sins and offences against us, we do not receive God's forgiveness, cleansing, and release from sins we have committed.

C. **Unforgiveness produces stunted, limited growth in the person who will not forgive.** Limited growth leads to limited joy, limited blessing, limited peace, and limited ministry. We will never fulfill our purpose and potential with unforgiveness in our hearts against others.

- D. **Unforgiveness makes our world progressively smaller.** Each offence that remains unforgiven leads to a damaged or broken relationship. Then we begin to require others to join us in our isolation from the person who offended us. This forces people to choose between us and the other and they will eventually break away from the small circle we have formed. We progressively isolate ourselves not only from the offender, but from others who were our friends and support.
 - E. **Unforgiveness causes us to live in a prison of our own making.** When we hold someone in the prison of our unforgiveness and judgment, we become like a jailer who has to spend all his time focusing his attention on the prison cell and the person who is held there. We actually tie ourselves to the person and to the point in the past where they hurt us. The only way we can be free is to release them from our judgment by forgiving them.
 - F. **Unforgiveness eventually develops into bitterness, which is like a cancer of the soul.** The cancer of bitterness will grow and eat away at our character, our personality, our faith, and even our health. We become negative, critical, and accusatory.
- V. The key in forgiveness is mercy. We accept that God’s mercy toward us allowed Him to forgive us of our sins and offences against Him. We purpose to show mercy to those who have sinned against us. (Luke 6:36)
- A. This is not a matter of pretending it didn’t happen or making excuses for the person who hurt us, but recognizing the offence and fault and showing mercy.
 - B. God’s mercy preserves each of us; both before rebirth and after. We are guilty, we sinned. He didn’t minimize our sin or say it didn’t really matter. He acknowledged it and then forgave us and released us from the consequences of our sin.
 - C. The mercy of God moved Jesus to defend, redeem, lay down His life for the very ones that offended and hurt Him. While we were sinners (enemies) Christ died for us.
 - D. When we allow God’s mercy and grace to flow through us to those who have offended or hurt us, we then can love them, pray for them, forgive them, and release them from judgment.

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 9 Sermon on the Mount 4: Matthew 6 - Part 1

1. Jesus made it clear that it is possible to do right things for wrong reasons. Why does this happen? What are the results of doing right things for wrong reasons? Can you think of some ways we can be sure that we are doing the right things and that we are doing them for the right

reasons?

2. When we are hurt or offended and we become angry, we should forgive the person who has hurt us. If we don't forgive, our anger turns to resentment, and if we still don't forgive our resentment turns to bitterness. How can we manage to forgive quickly and protect ourselves from the consequences of resentment and bitterness? Is unforgiveness against others sin? Why do you think so?