



## SERMON ON THE MOUNT

### SERMON ON THE MOUNT WEEK 6: MATTHEW 6:1-18

#### Community Group Study Guide - Week of February 28, 2021

##### Introduction:

- List of examples of hypocrisy by politicians. Spiritual hypocrisy is the worst kind of hypocrisy that there is.
- When Jesus talks about hypocrisy, he's not talking about just a disconnect between what we say and do, but a greater one between what we do and what we really want to do.
- Jesus forces us to ask the question: What do we do with the gap between where we are in reality and the perfection that God calls us to (in Matthew 5:48)?
- Jesus teaches that true transformation happens when we actually acknowledge the gap to ourselves and God, and pursue repentance in the power of the Holy Spirit.

##### I. Hypocritical Mercy, Prayer, Fasting

- Instead of pleasing God with perfection we settle for pleasing the people around us.
- How do you know you're a hypocrite? You have a public prayer life, but not a personal prayer life. Fasting is hypocritical when it's done to impress people. Christian acts of mercy and charity are hypocritical when done to draw attention to one's self.
- Many people inside and outside of the church even understand their need for God's grace and their need for repentance, but are still driven by the fear that they'll lose the approval and acceptance of people in their life.
- Verse 5: Christ says not just to act like hypocrites, but to avoid "being" like them. He goes beyond issues of action to issues of identity. He speaks against people building their identity around how others view their righteousness.
- So what is hypocrisy? Pretending to meet the standards for righteousness (set by God) while failing to embrace that you're not meeting them at a heart level.

##### II. Authentic Mercy, Prayer, Fasting

- Many struggle to reconcile verses 3 and 4 with Matthew 5:14-16. The scriptures teach, on one hand, we're required to do good works so that people see them and glorify God, and, on the other hand, we are to practice our piety in private in order to prevent the temptation to be glorified for practicing it.
- Authentic prayer isn't repetitive or about the number of words, but more focused on continual conversation with the Lord. (verse 6, Psalm 27:7-9, Ecc. 5:2, Luke 18:1)
- Verses 9-15 give us a template for prayer. The Lord's Prayer teaches us how to pray, not exactly what we should pray. Key lessons from it are:
  - ✦ Before we focus on our needs in prayer we focus on God. Doing this recalibrates our thinking, and reminds us of who we are, who God is and what our real needs are.
  - ✦ We pray not just for our needs, but the needs of our whole church community.
  - ✦ We pray for God's DAILY practical provision for the community.
  - ✦ Verses 12-15 teach us that asking for forgiveness while not forgiving is the pinnacle of hypocrisy.
- Verses 17-18 teach us about proper fasting that Jesus expected of his followers. The point of fasting is to deny and humble oneself while approaching God for repentance, mercy, or blessing. Fasting is not for building up social capital and reputation within a community. Discipline in fasting with food often translates into discipline in other areas of life.

##### III. Motivation for Authenticity

- To figure out the right motivation for authenticity we have to identify the motivation for hypocrisy.
- Hypocrites are motivated by acceptance from others. Beneath this desire for acceptance from others, though, is the motivation to please oneself above God and all others.
- The remedy for hypocrisy is finding security, acceptance and approval in the love of God the Father. We know His love when we look at how He has loved us, when He gave his greatest treasure for us.
- Because Jesus died for our past, present and future sins, it does make sense to hide our sin. God forgives us for all of our sin and gives us power to live a transformed and transparent life of repentance.
- We're instructed to do private acts of mercy, to pray and to fast for the delight of the Father. His undivided attention is a great enough reward! Jesus did all of these things for the delight of the Father.
- Pharisees focus on the letter of the Law. Jesus calls us to focus on the heart of the Law. In order to follow Jesus we need to ask him to give us a new heart.

#### DISCUSSION GOALS

##### Head

To understand that hypocrisy arises in one's life when he or she fears the opinion of people more than the opinion of God.

##### Heart

To trust that our Heavenly Father sees our sacrifices and acts of worship and delights in them.

##### Hands

To lead quiet, pious lives, knowing that the Lord hears and sees all of our efforts to honor Him, give thanks to Him, feast on Him, and pray to Him.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

A **Membership 101** session will be held on **March 14 at 1PM**. Email [admin@mosaicboston.com](mailto:admin@mosaicboston.com) if you plan to attend.

Please go to <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/serve> to **sign up for a service team**.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

---

## **Read Matthew 6:1-18.**

1. Can someone take a minute or two to summarize the main points of the sermon?
2. In this section of scripture, Jesus expands the definition of hypocrisy beyond the existence of a disconnect between what a person says and does. How does he expand the definition?
3. How can a person identify that they are hypocrite when they (1) do acts of mercy, (2) pray and (3) fast?
4. In verse 5, Jesus warns against "being" like the Pharisees. How can a few acts of hypocrisy lead someone to take steps to build a new "false" identity?
5. Did this sermon convict you that you are acting as a hypocrite in any specific areas of your life or worship?
6. What is the remedy for hypocrisy when one identifies it in their life?
7. Why is it a consolation, or a source of comfort, for a Christian that their Father is aware of their acts of mercy, their prayers, and their fasts that are offered in secret?
8. The Lord's Prayer, in verses 9-13, doesn't tell us exactly how we should pray, but gives a pattern for how to pray. What elements of their prayer stand out to you? What elements do you plan to incorporate into your prayer life going forward?
9. Verses 9-15 teach that the pinnacle of hypocrisy is a recipient of forgiveness who does not forgive. How has thinking about God's forgiveness of your sin(s) helped you move toward having a more forgiving heart in a situation in your life?