

Table Group Discussion Guide

Series: The Spacious Life | Title: "What Do We Do With Our Words?" | October 18, 2026

*Please respect each other by keeping confidential what someone else has shared during the group time. This helps to keep the environment a safe place to show our wounds and find healing.

Looking Back (5-10 minutes)

Last week's practice: before saying yes to anything, try *let me pray about it, and I'll get back to you* — and then actually do both. We were practicing **faithfulness**, one of the nine things Paul says in Galatians 5:22–23 that the Spirit grows in a person: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**.

1. Did anybody ask you for something this week? What did you say — and did you go back?

Getting Started (15 minutes)

Years ago Jeff prayed out loud for the first time, and afterward a sweet older lady told him it was a beautiful prayer. He said thank you. She looked horrified and said: give God the glory.

2. What's a moment when something about your faith got complimented and you didn't know what to do with it? Or — if that's never happened — what's a compliment you've gotten that you secretly enjoyed more than you should have?

Three things that pull us toward performing: the desire for **validation** (I want somebody to approve), the desire for **admiration** (I want somebody impressed), and the desire to **belong** (I don't want anyone to know I'm new at this).

3. Which one is yours?

Getting Into the Word (25 minutes)

Scripture: **Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18, Hebrews 11:6**

Read **Matthew 6:1–6** and **16–18**. Notice what Jesus does not say. He doesn't say stop giving, praying, or fasting. He doesn't say take it private either — three chapters earlier he said let your light shine so people can see. The Greek word behind *hypocrite* is **stage actor**. Somebody in a costume, playing a part. So the trap isn't spiritual practices. It's spiritual performance.

4. Two people can do the exact same thing for completely different reasons. Where in your life would somebody watching not be able to tell which one you are? Be specific about the practice, not the motive — the motive is the part you're figuring out.

Jesus' answer is the secret place — shut the door, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. But here's the catch: you can perform for God in there too. You can sit down for your devotional time and still be putting on a show.

5. When you picture God watching you pray — what's on his face? Bored? Disappointed? Tapping his foot? Answer honestly, not "correctly."

Going Deeper with Each Other (25 minutes) *If your group has more than eight people, split into circles of three or four for these questions and come back together to pray.

Three times in this passage Jesus says the same thing: your Father who sees in secret will reward you. He sees. He sees. He sees. Not a critic in the front row — a parent on the sideline at a kids' soccer game, where half the team is picking grass and the parents are losing their minds anyway. They're not watching a performance. They're watching somebody they love.

6. Is that a hard picture for you to believe — that God looks at you like that? What in your story makes it hard? A parent, a coach, a teacher, a church?

Henri Nouwen said the spiritual life is one where you more and more hear a voice saying: I love you not because you do good things, not because you have a lot of things, not because people speak well about you, not because you're so exciting or have so many talents... I love you because I love you, because I love you.

7. Finish this sentence out loud: I think God loves me more when I... Whatever comes to mind first — say that one. That's the thing you've been performing for.

Pray for Each Other (10 minutes) *Before you start: some of us have been following Jesus for a long time, some are newer at it, and some are still figuring out what they believe. All of that is welcome at this table. Nobody has to pray out loud, and nobody has to agree with something they haven't decided on yet.

Come back together as a whole group. Go around once. For each person, the rest of the group says their first name out loud, followed by:

“[Name], your Father sees you. And he's not watching a performance.”

Let the person receive it without deflecting — just thank you. Go all the way around before anyone prays anything else. Then close by praying for whatever came up tonight.

One Thing to Carry into the Week

This week we're practicing **joy**. (Galatians 5:22)

Pick one practice. Just one. Pray, give, or fast. And make it small. Embarrassingly small. Thirty seconds of prayer. A dollar. Skip one meal. Then do it where nobody can see it. Nobody. Don't post it. Don't mention it. Don't work it into a conversation on Sunday. And see what happens when the only one watching is the one who already loves you.