

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Family Matters
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Faith

Matthew 6:1-18

Well, when you think of excellence, a few things tend to come to mind. Maybe it's a show on Broadway like the best of the best. Maybe it is the artwork at the Louvre. It's the best of the best. Maybe it's a steak at 135 Prime. I mean we're talking the best of the best. Whenever you think about excellence a few things tend to come to mind, including high school football in a specific state. Because there's something in this state, man I don't know what they do, but they do it well. In fact, I got to take part in it because there's just something about Minnesota high-school football. I know...I know y'all think you've got something special here. But let me tell you this, here is high-school football.

In Texas, y'all might have thousands of people in the stands; we might have tens of people in the stands. Here in Texas, you might have multiple people from a specific team go D1. In Minnesota, we might have multiple people in the state go D1. It's a really big deal in Minnesota to play high-school football. And I played for the Eden Prairie Eagles.

Which is really one of three options of schools that could win state, because there's just not schools that were big enough. But we did want to win state each and every year, and if we wanted to win, we wanted to put in the work. Because there's a saying in football that games are won in the off-season. Games aren't won in the fall during practice in the fall. Games are won in the summer and in the spring and specifically games are won in the weight room.

And I wanted to be great at football and I wanted our team to be great at football. So during the summer I was in the weight room a lot. Like whenever the doors to the weight room were opened, I was there. Whenever we had uh in the wake or in the weight room, I was there, because I wanted to be great at football.

But as the summer went on man a lot of my guys, a lot of my friends were on the team and they were growing stronger and stronger and stronger and stronger. And they had muscles bulging out of places that I didn't even know they could. And I am like, man, why are they growing and I am not? What is the difference here? They on steroids, like do I need to tell the coach? What's...what's the problem here?

So, I just kind of examined my own workout routine. I was like man, what's going wrong with this? So here's what I would do whenever I would work out and go to our weight room. I'd walk in the doors and the first thing I would do is take a lap. I just want to make sure everyone's there. So I'll kind of examine the squat rack. I'd examine the clean station. I'd examine the

bench press. And I was the...the self-described minister of culture of our team. I took it seriously!

So when you're the minister of culture you want to make sure everyone's doing well. So...so I would frequently end up in deep discussion with someone. I'm trying to encourage them. Talking about their form and after you're done talking with someone for so long, your mouth gets dry. So then, I would go out and I'd go get a drink of water. And then I'd come back in ready to work out. And I'd go and wait in line for the squat rack. And as the line got shorter and shorter and shorter, that water that I just drank was just going through my body. So I had to go to the bathroom. So I'd go to the bathroom and I'd come back in ready to go. But then there were lines everywhere, except the calf raisers. So I would just go and I'd do the calf raiser a couple of times and by that time, it was time to go home. You see, that was my workout, and I didn't grow any stronger because I wasn't doing anything. You see the same principle is true for growing physically. As for growing spiritually, if you want to grow in your faith, you have to put in the work.

And the danger here in Waco, TX is that I think we can believe that as long as we're in the doors of the church, as long as we simply show up, I'm going to grow in my faith. As long as I'm around other strong believers then I'm going to become a strong believer in Jesus. But that's not true! If you want to grow in your faith – if you want to strengthen your faith – you have to put in the work. But my fear is that we aren't putting in the work. And why I care so much about this message, why I wanted to preach about this message, is I'm afraid that if Jesus were here with us today, He would use a phrase He used back in His day as well.

He'd look around at Waco, TX and He'd say, man I think there are a lot of whitewashed tombs. People who look great on the outside, man they know what to say. They know where to be. They know what do. They look alive on the outside, but on the inside they're dead and the only person who actually knows it, is them.

Maybe that's you man. Man you...you want to appear like you're going in your faith, but...but you know that right now your faith isn't being strengthened. It's withering. So today, as we finish up on our sermon series called Family Matters we've been talking about, matters that are important to our family. We wanted to close with this idea because this is going to be important for our church moving forward. We want to close with this idea a family is only as strong as each of its individual members. A family can only be as healthy as it possibly can be if each of us, individual members are healthy. And if we want to be a church who has deep thriving relationship with Jesus, then all of us need to have a deep thriving relationship with Jesus.

So today what we're going to talk about is how to grow in your faith on your own. How you can put in the work to strengthen your faith. We're going to look at three things that will strengthen your faith. And the phrasing of that is important. These are three things that you can do that will strengthen your faith. What I'm not saying is these are three things that can save you. There's a difference because let me make it abundantly clear, you are saved by grace. Through faith, not by our own works that no one can boast. You're not saved because of what you do. You're saved because of what Jesus has done.

We're going to look at three things that can strengthen your faith because if you want to strengthen your faith, you do need to put in the work. And these things are going to feel like work. There are three things that we typically don't like to do and they're also three big things, like each one of these things could have their own sermon series. But I just want to touch on them as a starting point for you so that you might begin to implement them in your life. Because if you do these things, you will grow in your faith because while faith is not always a formula – it's not like a math problem that if you do this...this and this and this...you're gonna automatically have a great relationship with Jesus. Faith isn't a formula. There are patterns and typically the people that you know who have a deep thriving relationship with Jesus are probably people who are doing these three things. Because this is how Jesus has called us to live. Because this is what Jesus told us to do. That if you're gonna follow me, you're gonna be doing these three things.

So this morning we're gonna look at what he says. What he call us to do in Matthew 6. If you have your Bibles, open them up there, Matthew 6. And what we're picking up in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is widely regarded as the greatest sermon ever given. There's a large crowd of people who have been following Jesus around. So, Jesus climbed up on the side of the mountainside and he began to teach them about the Kingdom of God.

He began to say, hey if you're going to be a part of the people of God, if you're going to be a part of my kingdom, you're going to live in this way. If you want to follow me, you will follow me by doing these things. If you do these things you will grow in your faith and grown in your relationship with me. So we're picking up on the middle of the sermon, Matthew 6:1. This is what Jesus says, **“be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of other to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your father in heaven. So when you give to the need, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full, but when you give to the needy do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that you may be giving in secret. Then your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”**

So what Jesus is doing here so important for us today, what he's doing is he's trying to weed out the desire to appear like you're faithful. I mean how many of us struggle with that whether it's through our social media, whether it's through the people that we hang out with, whether it's through the things that we do, the things that we say. We want to appear like we're faithful, that's a social benefit here in Waco. But what Jesus is saying is I care far less about the appearance of your faithfulness than I do the actuality of your faithfulness. I don't want you to just appear faithful, I want you to actually be faithful. He's saying I care far less about your public displays of affection than I do your private displays of affection. I want people who are going to follow me behind the scenes because you may have heard it said before that...that character is what you do when no one is looking.

Such a great quote, 'character is what you do when no one is looking.' I also think that...that true faith is what you do when no one is looking. Man, what do you do, what do you say, what do

you believe when no one else is there. When you're home alone what do you do in the secret spaces of your heart? What do you do in the secret spaces of your life? Do you pursue Jesus there or do you not? What Jesus is saying is hey, if you want to follow me you will seek me out in the secret spaces and you will do these three things and the first one is this. First one is, point number one, giving in secret strengthens your faith. Giving in secret strengthens your faith.

1. Giving in Secret Strengthens Your Faith

You know, I've had people ask me before is it...is it uncomfortable and weird to talk about giving in my church. And my answer is, it's actually really...really not for me because I know there have been a lot of churches who have mishandled finances. Not just mishandled them but abused them. I've been at Harris Creek now for nine years. I, to the best of my ability, I think I know our heart here at Harris Creek and our heart is that your heart would be consumed by Jesus. That's all we care about. Our heart is that your heart would be consumed by Jesus and one of the main ways it will not be is if your heart is consumed by money. It's so easy for that to happen and if you want to know the state of your heart, just take a look at how you spend your money because you will spend your money on things that you love. That's not just my idea, that's Jesus' idea.

A couple verses in Matthew 6 he says this, **“where your treasures is there your heart will be also.”** You will spend your money on things that you care about. If you want to know what you care about just open up your credit card statement because you will spend your money on things that you love. But there's another principle that's true about your finances, about money. You can teach your heart to love things. Like the more you give towards something, the more you spend on something your heart will be drawn towards it. Because you won't just spend money on things that you love, you'll begin to love things that you start to spend your money on.

Let me give you an example. I have never, ever, ever, ever in my life cared about lawns. I have never cared about yard work, ever! I've never noticed a yard that had like, dead grass. I've never noticed the yard that had weeds until two years ago when I bought my house. Because my wife and I we took thousands of dollars and we just gave it to the bank. And then we took thousands and thousands of dollars on in debt because we didn't have enough to pay for our house. Because we really wanted this house, so we spent thousands of dollars. Still every single month we're giving money to the bank so that we can own this house. And since we've put so much money in here's what I do for fun now. I mow my yard!

Like if you talked to me four years ago I would have been so disgusted and discouraged by myself, but I'm picking weeds, I'm mowing my yard, I'm watering my yard. And it's crazy I've turned into a full-on dad! But it's...it's really because man, I put so much money into this thing. I've put so much money in this house that I might call it mine. And since I've spent so much money on it, I care about it. And this is why we need to talk about generosity as a church because we want you to love Jesus and we want you to love the things that Jesus loves. And one of the ways you can grow your heart and grow your affections for those things is by giving towards the things that Jesus loves. But what does Jesus love if we're gonna grow in the things? If we're gonna grow in loving what he loves, we need to know what he loves. What does Jesus love? He

doesn't just say in Matthew 6 this isn't just a New Testament idea or an Old Testament idea, this is a Biblical idea.

But let's see if you can catch a theme. What does God love?

Deuteronomy 15:7, **"if anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward them."**

Proverbs 14:21, **"blessed is the one who is generous to the poor."**

Proverbs 14:31, **"whoever oppresses a poor man insults his maker. But he who is generous to the needy honors Him."**

Proverbs 21:13, **"whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered."**

1 John 3:17, **"but if anyone has the world's good and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"**

What's God saying over and over again? All throughout scripture he is saying, hey I care that you'd be generous and I care specifically that you'd be generous to the poor and the needy. Yet this week as we were writing this message, when it was coming together I was like man, huge red flag for me here. Huge red flag because I'm like what am I supposed to do? Just give my money away? Like is that just what I'm supposed to do? Because I think sometimes when you do that, when you just give your money away, it hurts more than it helps. And I do think that's true. I think that's true sometimes. When you just give your money away it hurts more than it helps, but I also think that many times that excuse is just that.

It's an excuse to hide behind. So that we don't actually have to be generous and we say things lie hey, I don't want to give thoughtlessly but then we end up not even giving strategically. We don't end up giving to mission Waco or Care Net or Harris Creek or any of our other partners here in Waco because we don't want to give thoughtlessly, but when we're not giving strategically, and if that's true man, I'm going to tell you that displays where your heart is at. Because your money is where your heart is and your heart might not be aligned with God. But if you're like man I do want to be aligned with God's heart. I do want to love him, I want to love the things that he loves, allow your money to direct your heart towards the things that he loves. Because the more you give towards something, the more you will care about something.

But the other thing Jesus says about generosity and giving in his passage is about the secrecy of it he says this is in verse three and four. He said, **"but when you give to the needy do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be in secret then your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."** You know this is a problem for me because I love my good deed to be...to be seen and noticed and applauded. In fact, if my wife Adalee could change one thing about me, it might be this.

There'll be times when she's gone at night. She's hanging out with a friend or whatever and then she'll come home and she'll look around and she'll be like, Nate thank you so much for doing the dishes. And just as a reflex I'll be like hey did you see that I took out the trash? Also,

I see, I mean she just can't stand that. But I'm like I just want you to see everything I've done. I did...I did this...this and this. Will you just see it? Can you see it? Can you see it?

What Jesus is saying is do not give so that you be seen by people. Give because you know you're seen by me, don't give out of obligation. Don't give because you'd be seen or noticed or because you feel like you have to. Generosity comes down to this. As believer in Jesus, we are generous because he's been generous to us. Don't give because we feel obligated to give because Jesus has generously given us his son give because Jesus has generously given us finances. Give because Jesus has generously given us eternal life. We give because he's generously given to us and when we do that it will draw our hearts closer to him. It's a principle of money. This is what Jesus is teaching us to do in the secret spaces of our heart. We're called to give because point number one, giving in secret strengthens your faith. Let's see what else we need to do. What's the second thing Jesus is calling us to do, to strengthen our faith.

He says this in verse five, **“and when you pray do not be like the hypocrites for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you they have received their reward in full. But when you pray go into your room, close the door and pray to your father who was unseen when your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”**

Now I'm sure this has never happened to you, but there are times when we pray together as a staff, which you need to know we do pray together as staff for our church frequently throughout the week. And there are times when we pray together as a staff and we've got some really good prayer prayers on our church staff, like Drew Greenway. Man, he hits it out of the ballpark every single time. So we'll have great prayer after great prayer after great prayer and the whole time I'm just thinking man, what can I say that would make my prayer a great prayer. Have you ever had that happen to you? I'm just thinking man, what can I say that would get an amen out of somebody. What can I say that would be impressive? This is what Jesus is talking about here.

He's saying, hey when you pray are you praying to people or are you praying to me? Because prayer is not so you be seen or heard or noticed, prayer is that you might be connected to me. Because point number two, prayer in secret will strengthen your faith.

2. Prayer in Secret will Strengthen your Faith

Prayer and in secret will strengthen your faith. In this week, I took a very unofficial poll of our staff. This is not entirely accurate, but what polls are really accurate? So I took an unofficial poll and uh asked people, hey, how many...what percent of people in our church do you think got an A this week in prayer. The answer was two percent. Multiple people on our staff said, yeah I think...I think it's two percent. Which I will say and I say this to no excitement. I say this out of embarrassment and I said before I think I'd give myself a C when it comes to prayer.

But this is a problem. Like if that's anywhere close to true, if two percent of our church are getting an A when it comes to prayer, that's a problem. Because if you've been around Harris Creek for a while you might know our core values or if you're new let me just tell you what our

core values are. We are to be authentic Biblical, community-centered, devoted, grace-filled, missional, innovative and I can't remember the last one. But I know it's important. Oh, it's right. It's prayerful. It's prayerful. And if that's one of our eight core values and only two percent of our church is doing it well, that's not a core value. That a...that's a fringe value.

Like do we really care about this? And if we really do care about this I think we do want to grow in our prayer life. So this week as I was writing it, I was like man I want to give some tips and tricks to the body so that they might be able to prayer better. So I was listing off things that you all could do that would help you grow in the way that you pray. So I was like, okay they can get in their car, they can turn off the music and then they can pray there or they can set an alarm on their phone. And then whenever that alarm goes off they can pray...when that alarm goes off. And as I was writing down these little tips and tricks, I'm like, Nate what are you doing?

Jesus told them how to pray. Look what he says. He says this, **“but when you pray go into your room, close the door and pray to your father who is unseen.”**

So this week if you want to pray, go to your room, close the door and pray to your father who is unseen. How many of us did that this week? If you want to grow in your relationship with Jesus you got to spend time doing this. Get with Jesus by yourself away from the phone, away from the TV, away from other people around you. Go to your room, to go your room, close the door and pray to your father who is unseen. Because I think there's a lot of people here who you've told yourself man, I'm just not good at prayer. Just not good at prayer, I don't think that's true.

Well I may not know you. I don't think that's true. I don't think you're not good at prayer. What I think is more true is that you're not good at making time and space for prayer. That's where the problem arises. Because you've tried to pray before but you, you've prayed, well there's a hot mean in front of you and you're hungry. Or you've tried to pray before but you're praying in bed, as you're about to fall asleep. Or you've tried to pray before but it's when you're making dinner and there's TV on in the background. You've tried to pray around a bunch of distractions and distractions will be lethal to your prayer life. Because if you want to learn to how to pray, go to your room and get alone. If you don't have a room by your own...by yourself, man get in your car. Get alone, close the door and spend time talking to your heavenly father.

But if your honest reaction is, and honesty will be helpful here, if your honest reaction is I don't really want to do that. Like I've been there before, like I just...I don't really want to do that. My heart isn't drawn towards that. That's important to notice. If that's where you're at right now, those are your feeling and emotions, that's important. Because something's true, when you love someone, you're going to want to talk to them.

For example a couple years ago when my wife and I we were dating, she worked at Cannacuck one summer. It's a camp in Branson, Missouri and she worked there for three months. And which was great. I was excited about it except for this one thing. She got to use her phone one day out of the week. That was it! The other six days we couldn't talk at all! So there was one day we could talk and I got one phone call. I felt like I was in prison all summer long. So on this one phone call, we talked for about an hour and it was miserable because the other six days I was like I just want to talk to her. I want to know what she's doing. I want to make sure she's

not talking to some other shirtless guys at Cannuck. Like, that was my fear. And that one-day was the best day all week because she assured me, Nate I still love you, I still care for you. And we got to talk to each other.

Now what if I told you this week you had to have the same thing in your relationship with God? You could only talk to him for one day this week for one hour. You get one phone call. How much would it affect your life? Like would that change anything about your prayer life? If not, man can I just urge you to spend time talking to your father this week. Because here's what I've learned about prayer; that the more you do it the longer you do it, the more comfortable you get and the more you do it, the longer you do it, the more your heart aligns with him.

Because Jesus is right when he says this, that point number two; prayer in secret will strengthen your faith. Prayer in secret will strengthen your faith. Okay, let's see what the third thing is. That Jesus has called us to do...he's called us to give. He's called us to pray. What else are we supposed to do as believers in Jesus? Verse 16 he says this, **"When you fast do not look somber as the hypocrites do for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you they have received their reward in full. But when you fast put oil on your head and wash your face so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your father who is unseen. And your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."**

You know if I had to guess that we're not very good at making time and space for prayer. I would guess we're really not good at making time and space for fasting because when you think about fasting, I mean it's just really enjoyable. Like if my options are to eat lunch or to not eat lunch, I'm always going to choose to eat lunch. Which is why, and again I don't say this out of excitement I say this out of embarrassment, prior to this week I could not tell you the last time I had fasted. Because I just did not want to. But this week when we landed on this topic on Monday, I decided man; I have to fast this week in order to teach this message. And so I decided on Monday that I was going to fast this week.

But I woke up on Tuesday and didn't feel like it. And I woke up on Wednesday and just, I don't know, I felt hungry. So I felt like I needed to fast. Then I woke up on Thursday and I didn't fast. Then I woke up on Friday and I didn't fast. I woke up on Saturday and I was like okay, I'm either doing this or I'm not. So on Saturday, I decided to fast. Yesterday. I'm doing exactly what Jesus told me not to do. I'm telling all of you guys, but I'm doing this to help you. I promise I'm not bragging. And here's what I learned about fasting. It was the most important thing I did in my walk with Jesus this week. Truly, I'm not just saying that to make a point, it was the most important thing I did in my walk with Jesus this week.

And I wish Jesus was wrong here, but I was like man, he's right...again. Fasting is important to your faith. I'm going to tell you a couple things that I learned. But what's important before I tell you those things we go to notice the words that Jesus says here. He says, when you fast. He doesn't say if you fast. He doesn't say hey, if you're really-really feeling spiritually mature this is how you fast. He doesn't say for the Navy Seals of the believers this is how you fast. He says, when you fast. Even though fasting feels like a way fringe idea, he's saying this is

something that's supposed to be normal to us as believers. Fasting should be normative because point number three, fasting in secret strengthens your faith. Fasting in secret strengthens your faith.

3. Fasting in Secret Strengthens Your Faith

And when I think about fasting, my excuse has always been like, man I'm always a different person when I'm not eating something. Like that's why the Snickers commercials are so true. Have you ever seen those? Like you're not hungry. It's true! What they're saying is hey; we want you to feel more like yourself. We want you to feel more like you, so eat something. Eat a Snickers so that you might feel more like yourself. You know if I think Jesus were here with us today, I think his slogan for fasting might be the same thing. I think he might say hey, you're not you when you're hungry because you end up having to do things that you don't normally have to do. You end up having to feel dependent in a way that you don't normally have to feel dependent. You end up having to fight your desires when you normally don't have to fight your desires. And as believers in Jesus, people who know the depths of our sin and depths of our depravity we don't want to be more like ourselves. We want to be more like Jesus. And fasting is a way for us to do that. Because fasting is one of the most counter cultural things we can do. It really is.

Because we live in a society, we live in a culture that tells you that; your feelings, your emotions, your urges are king. If you feel a certain way, you are a certain way. If you feel like doing something you are you. You go ahead and do that certain something. If you feel hungry, go ahead and eat. If you feel lazy, skip your workout and go watch Netflix. If you feel lustful, go ahead and watch porn. Do whatever you feel like doing. And fasting allows us to swim upstream from the current of our culture. And fasting allows ourselves to remind ourselves that our desires, our emotions; our feelings are not kind because Jesus is. And we don't need to be Abu, we don't need to be obedient to every urge, every desire, every craving that we have. We need to be obedient to everything that he's called us to do. Which is why fasting is one of the great ways to overcome sin in your life.

Because when you fast you're teaching your body a skill that you might not already have. If you're teaching yourself that you don't have to do whatever you want to do whenever you want to do it. Another gift of fasting is that it makes you uncomfortable. While I love America, I do. One of the dangers of America is that we're so wealthy that we can just live in tremendous comfort where things are accessible, affordable, enjoyable and we can live so comfortably that we never really have any need. And when you live that way, you begin to believe the lie that this is home. You begin to believe the lie that this whole thing isn't going to end. And we aren't going to end up in one of two places when we die. So when we fast it makes us uncomfortable and it reminds us when those feelings of hunger comes in. It's a reminder that I want to be more hungry for the presence of Jesus than I am for anything here on Earth.

When those feelings of hunger come on, it's a reminder that I want to hunger and thirst for righteousness. More than I want to hunger for anything here. When those feelings of hunger come on, it allows you to pray. So if you're struggling with prayer, man fasting is one of the

best things you can do. Because when you get hungry, it moves you towards prayers. And this is really the secret sauce of fasting. This is what I learned and I think this is going to be helpful to you. This is the secret sauce of fasting. When you pair prayer and fasting, because of prayer, is connecting with God fasting is all about disconnecting from this world.

So think about that when you pair those two things together. A great disconnection from this world, you're gonna have a stronger faith. Like that's just how it works. When you have a greater connection with God and a greater disconnection from the world you're bound to have a greater relationship with Jesus. This is what fasting and prayer will do for your walk with Jesus. But fasting is not just about food. You can fast from a number of different things that would affect your life. You can fast from Instagram, Netflix, soda but I do think that most of the time those things are cop-outs.

I do think those things because we really don't want to give up food. So I mean, I would prompt you, I would urge you if you do want to fast I would say, hey don't just start with Instagram. I'd say start with food because you'll notice it. But I'll also say man; I know we got a lot of people here who do have a complicated relationship with food. Food has in something that's easy to you. You maybe have struggled with disordered eating; maybe you've got body image. Those things that come up in your mind and in your heart. Maybe you've got health things going on. I would say man don't give up food. It would not be best for you. Give up something else that you would notice. Give up soda, give up Instagram, give up Netflix, and give up something that you would notice in your life so that when it's gone it would prompt you to be closer to Jesus. Because fasting will disconnect you from this world when you pray.

When you pair it with prayer, it will give you a greater connection with Jesus. Because point number three, fasting in secret will strengthen your faith. So this is a lot. If you're like, Nate you want me to give, pray and fast? I would tell you, no I don't Jesus does. These are my opinions. These are Harris Creek's opinions. This is what Jesus has called us to do. If you noticed I said this about fasting, but he said this about all three of these things. He says when you give, when you pray, when you fast these things are to be normative to us as believers.

But these three things are big things. And you might, may not start doing these three things this week. So I would encourage you to do one of them this week. Pick one of them and if you're wondering which one you should do, man I'll help you. Which one you want to do the least, pick that one. And tell your life group about it. You don't need to say, hey I'm fasting today. I think that'd be the wrong thing. But you should say hey, I'm going to fast this week will you ask me about it later? Hey, I'm going to give this week will you ask me about it later? Allow people to hold you accountable because this is important stuff. Because when we do these things behind the scenes, we'll begin to see the results, because the same principle is true for growing physically in strength as growing spiritually in strength.

But this week as I was putting this message I was talking about how much I disliked working out in high school. I realized man I still don't really like working out now. And I was convicted by that so I went and did something about it. Recently I joined Hot Works. It's a hot yoga studio here in Woodway. Me and the Woodway moms have an absolute blast. And for what it's worth,

I don't do yoga. I just like cycle in 130-degree heat. It's fantastic. And I wanted to show you how much it works. So this week I took before and after picture. This was on Monday on the left. I was so embarrassed. Doing this it was like the worst moment of my life. The picture on the left, this was on Monday and then I skipped Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday but then I worked out again on Friday. That was the after picture. Look at that. And I show these pictures for two reasons.

Well, the first reason is if ten of y'all sign up and say my name, I'll get a year free of Hot Works. It's true! The second reason I wanted to show that. The second reason I want to show that is there's no difference. There's not a single change because I worked out twice and because I hardly did anything. There's hardly any growth because if you want to grow it's going to take effort and it's going to take time. And yet we can get so excited about prayer. We can get so excited about fasting. We get so excited about being generous. We're like I'm gonna pray this week.

You know, Monday morning hits and we pray then Tuesday morning hits and we pray and Wednesday morning we're like man, I just don't feel a difference. That's happened to me before. Friends' transformation is not a quick fix. You don't see change spiritually or physically overnight. A lot of times it just takes time. There's a pastor named Eugene Peterson says, "the goal of the Christian life is to have a long obedience in the same direction. A long obedience in the same direction that each and every day we'd wake up and choose to be obedient."

It would be obedient today. We'd be obedient tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day and the next day when you pair a lot of time together. You'll see life change because God work in those places in your life when you put in the work in the secret spaces of your heart.

And friends, we wanted to close with this message on this sermon series called Family Matters because this is true; the sign of health for our church will not be in the size of our crowds. You know it's really exciting to have a packed house in there sometimes. People in the lobby, that's really exciting. Like you tell people that, I've told people that, and they're like wow that's really-really impressive. But what I think is more exciting to God is not the times that we spend in prayer together here, although he is excited about it although it is a big deal, I think he's more excited about the times when no one else is around.

You're home alone, you've closed the door to your room and you spend time talking to Jesus. We're excited about the time when you've told yourself that you're going to fast and no one else is home and you can eat. No one would know the difference and you should still choose to go without. I think that's what he gets excited about. I think he gets excited about not the times when we give, so we could be seen or noticed but we just give because we feel that he's been generous. To us, he gets excited when we seek him out in the secret spaces of your heart. And this is what we care about at Harris Creek. We don't want to be a church who's obedient Sunday through Sunday. And we don't want to be a church who's faithfully following Jesus when the crowd does.

We want to be a church who faithfully follows Jesus when there's no crowd around at all. Because we want to be people who have a true faith that we pursue Jesus when no one is looking. Because this is what he's called us to do. That we'd seek him out in the secret spaces of our heart, that we give in secret, that we pray in secret, that we would fast in secret, that we put in the work not to be saved but because we're saved. And when we do that, man Jesus has promised us that when we seek him out in this secret space, he will strengthen your faith. Let me pray that it would be true of us today.

Father, thank you for the challenge of your word that when we open your word it's not just things that we want to hear, things that are easy to hear but the things that we need to hear. Father I know that I'm first in line and not doing these things great, I just pray that all of us today, your Holy Spirit would be at work and that you'd prompt us to be generous because you've been generous to us. That you'd prompt us to pray and talk to you because you've saved us that you'd prompt us to fast and go without because you've given us more than we could ever ask or imagine. And Father, we do want to know you more. I know there have been times in my life as well when I want to appear faithful, but God we know that you don't care about the appearances of our faithfulness. You care about the actuality of our faithfulness. I pray that every single person here in this room and in this church would be a person who doesn't just appear faithful, but who's actually faithful. That when the doors are closed and nobody's home we'd be seen on our knees pursuing you. There would be people who don't just pursue him, pursue you because there's some social benefit, but because we want to because our heart desire is to know you more and to love you more and to trust you more. So Father, give us the strength to do these things this week. You've said before that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Father, make our spirit willing to do things that make us uncomfortable. Would we be a generous people, a prayerful people, of people that would fast because we know that when we do these things in secret you will strengthen our faith. So Father, thank you so much for what you're doing in this church. Thank you that you're alive. Thank you that you're with us. Thank you that you're for us. It's in the powerful name of Jesus that we pray, Amen.