

What does Jesus say we should do if we are fasting?

Perhaps this month you can try a fast for a day. It really helps you focus on God, it reminds you to be thankful for your daily bread, and you can even use the money you save to help support a shelter or our own People's Pantry.

*Thank God for the certainty of His reward. Thank Him that he is a loving Father! Ask Him to help you focus on Him, and not on the approval of others for your acts of faith.*

## Friday

Read Matthew 23:1-12. How is Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees in these verses similar to the passage from the Sermon on the Mount we've been studying this week?

What are the common themes?

This is an Old Testament theme too! In 1 Samuel, the prophet Samuel confronts King Saul, who had just performed all sorts of very public religious ceremonies and sacrifices — but Saul apparently tried to use these religious acts as a cover-up for his sin. Read Samuel's scathing rebuke to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22.

How is Samuel's theme similar to Christ's in Matthew 6 and Matthew 23?

In what way have you tried to use religious acts as a cover for your hidden unrighteousness, or to win favor from people?

*Ask God today to help your faith be totally authentic, from the inside out! Thank Him for His love for you!*

## Saturday

Please read Matthew 6:4, 6:6 and 6:18. What common phrase do you see in these verses? How does this encourage you today?

*Please be sure you've finished this week's devotions and polish up on the memory verse! Thank God that He is a loving Father who will reward what you do, even if no one else sees!*

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." *Matthew 6:1*

## Today's Big Idea:

Live for an \_\_\_\_\_

## How do I know if I'm being a hypocrite?

### 1. Do I live for \_\_\_\_\_ ?

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, 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 your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." *Matthew 6:2-4*

### 2. Do I live for \_\_\_\_\_ ?

"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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." *Matthew 6:5-6*

### What keeps my prayers authentic?

- Keep it \_\_\_\_\_  
"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." *Matthew 6:7-8*
- Keep it \_\_\_\_\_  
"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*
- Keep it \_\_\_\_\_  
"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." *Matthew 6:14-15*

### 3. Do I live for \_\_\_\_\_ ?

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, 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 men 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.” *Matthew 6:16-18*

### How do I live for an audience of One?

\_\_\_\_\_!  
“...your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” *Matthew 6:4, 6, 18*

## Daily Meditations

*Take a few minutes every day to read Scripture, pray, and answer some thought-provoking questions pertaining to this week's topic.*

### Monday

Please read Matthew 6:1. When you think about living for an audience of One, how does that make you feel? What would that look like in your life?

When are you most tempted to slip into the performance mentality?

What's the danger of this mentality? If people are going to church and reading the Bible, who cares what their motives are?

*Thank God today for His unconditional love. Ask the Lord today to keep your faith authentic and motivated by pure love and devotion to Christ!*

### Tuesday

Read Matthew 6:2-4. Why do you think Jesus chose the example of giving as an area where we need to be aware of our religious performance?

What was wrong with the way the hypocrites were giving, according to Jesus? What was their motive in giving?

How does this motive tend to sway our decision about what ministry we will give to?

How does Jesus say we should give?

continued 

What does the Bible say about the subject of giving in 1 Corinthians 13:3 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-10? Write the principles from these verses here:

*Thank God today for the financial blessings He has provided for you. Ask God to help you to be a cheerful giver, motivated by love for God and others and not by honor from men. Thank Him for His gifts to us: Of life, and of salvation by grace alone!*

### Wednesday

Read Matthew 6:5-15, focusing on verses 5–8. It seems we are especially susceptible to performance when it comes to prayer. I know I can slip into this so easily — I've even accidentally ended phone messages with, “In Jesus' name, Amen!” How have you changed your prayers because you were thinking of what others in the room might think of you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ The words I use
- \_\_\_\_\_ The length of time I pray
- \_\_\_\_\_ What I pray about
- \_\_\_\_\_ The tone of voice I use
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using prayer as a way to communicate information to listeners
- \_\_\_\_\_ My posture when I pray
- \_\_\_\_\_ All of the above!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

I especially like verse 7: “babbling” is such an easy trap to fall into! What is Christ saying about the way we should pray in this verse?

Why should we pray in this way?

*Today pray in simplicity and honesty to your loving Father! Ask Him to help you truly speak with Him as a loving God, and not to use prayer as a performance. And be sure to take time to just listen to His voice, too!*

### Thursday

Read Matthew 6:16-18. In Jesus' day, the Pharisees would make sure everyone knew when they were going on a fast — a special diet, or abstaining from food altogether, for religious purposes. Why do you think they wanted everyone to know?

How did they make sure people knew they were making these sacrifices?

Have you ever exaggerated your sacrifices for Christ, the way the Pharisees over-emphasized their pain? How?

over 



Memory Verse

“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” *Matthew 6:1 (NIV)*