

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: November 2, 2012

Gracious Heavenly Father, we come before you this day with great anticipation for what you might have for us from your Word. We thank you, Lord, that this is the day that we've never seen before, and one we'll never see again. May we use our time wisely to glorify you, and may your Holy Spirit guide us into all truth for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Matthew 6. While you're turning, I got a note from Tin, our brother, Tin, in Vietnam, the gentleman who we all helped get a new leg. He had his 65th birthday on November 1st. He reminded me that five years ago, or four years ago, it was his 61st birthday and he and I celebrated that in Nairobi Kenya when we got him his first new leg. He's now very excited about some things that have happened in the Tin Lanh Church. He will send us some pictures. They've done some remodeling. We've helped them in the past. As he basically summarized, he was concerned about the storm Sandy that hit the East Coast and wanted to know if any of us have been impacted by that.

He said that he and the brothers and sisters in the Tin Lanh Church have been praying for us in Pittsburgh because he didn't know of the potential damage that we might have incurred here with the storm. So I appreciate the fact that we have the body of Christ praying for just as much as we do pray for them.

He's doing well. He says he has a new heart. He had a new lease on life. He has a new spirit. And he thanks the Brave Men for his new leg. He is now employed as a walking tour guide in the city of Wei in South Vietnam. He's sort of the senior tour guide for this company, a French company based out of Paris, who sends French speaking persons to Wei. He speaks French also as well as English and certainly Vietnamese, so he's multilingual and it helps him in his work.

He's very, very grateful and sends his love and just wanted to know if we were safe because of the storm, so I appreciated that. He'll send some pictures of the church because they've just finished their remodeling, and I'll pass them on. Sig and I will do that when we get that.

As we're looking at Matthew 6, looking at the Sermon on the Mount, as we saw from Matthew 5, Jesus introduced the kingdom of God through a series of Beatitudes or beautiful attitudes—eight character qualities of the character of the citizen of the kingdom of God. We then talked about the witness of the person of the kingdom of God and the walk, the style of life as a citizen of the kingdom of God.

Then we moved into chapter 6, where we've studying the Lord's Prayer, the Disciple's Prayer. Basically, chapter 6 of Matthew has to do with worship. Worship in the sense of being, not being hypocrites in our worship. There have been four areas we've been examining in Matthew 6. We've been looking at our giving, and that would be in verses 2-4. We've been looking at our praying, which is verses 5-15. Next will be fasting, verses 16-18, and then wealth management, which would be verses 18-34. The whole context of Matthew 6 is right-spirited worship; spirit worship that is directed by the Holy Spirit as opposed to being full of hypocrisy.

Let me just give you a reason why hypocrisy is so damaging to the body of Christ. First of all, we need to remember that hypocrisy robs us of reality of our Christian living. The reason he deals with these four areas of giving, praying, fasting and managing your money is because the tendency for us as humans is to be hypocrites in the way we do that.

He gives us a couple of reasons why hypocrisy is such a cancer in the church. That is because, first of

all, it robs us of our Christian living. We substitute reputation for our character. We apply that in all four of those areas. In our giving, we do it for our reputation as opposed to a reflection of our gratitude and character. The same thing in our praying, same thing in our fasting, and the same thing in our wealth management.

Sometimes we even submit mere words for true prayer. Money for devotion of the heart and so forth. It's no wonder that Jesus really condemned and compared the Pharisees to tombs that were whitewashed on the outside, but filthy on the inside. You'll see that in Matthew 23.

One of the things we need to realize as we talk about these subjects and the act of worship in Matthew 6 is that dealing with hypocrisy so that we will not be hypocrites in the way that we live our lives. Second thing I think hypocrisy does, it not only robs us of our character, it also robs us of our spiritual rewards. Instead of our eternal approval of God, we receive the shallow approval of men. What you're doing is you're basically substituting the approval of this world for the approval of God. Hypocrisy, once again, robs us of our spiritual records and rewards.

Thirdly, I would say hypocrisy also robs us of our spiritual influence. The Pharisees were a negative influence in their society, yet they were known for their impeccable morality, but they had a great flaw in their religion, and that was they externalized everything, as we saw in John 3 with Nicodemus. Whenever they were touched, they were defiled and destroyed. It robs us of our spiritual influence.

The only way to really combat hypocrisy, I believe, is really to be honest with God in our own heart. We must never pray anything that we do not mean from the heart. Remember we talked about when the Scripture says you pray in Jesus' name, essentially you're evoking all the characteristics of the person whose name you're evoking. When you say, "I pray this in Jesus' name," you're not just saying a little appendage to make sure that God approves of your prayer. You're basically saying this, "This is a prayer that I know that Jesus would have prayed if he were in my shoes right now." You're basically saying my prayer is consistent with the character and nature and attributes of the person whose name I'm evoking. We are evoking the name of Christ. We're saying, "My prayer is consistent with what Jesus would pray if he were here."

You see, that really deals with the whole issue of why he taught us the Disciple's Prayer. He's dealing with hypocrisy. He's saying, "Don't do it like the hypocrites do. They stand on the street corners and they pray long phrases, using fancy words to call attention to themselves." That's the role of the hypocrite. Even in our prayer life, you see there is a tendency for us to be hypocritical. I don't know how often you've experienced it, but if you've been in prayer meetings, how sometimes people just go on and on and on and on. Now I'm not saying there's anything wrong with length. It's just the quality of that. Sometimes we just have to be careful about our or own prayer life.

As we go through this Disciple's Prayer and we come to the end of it today, I'd like us to look at the very last petition that we're looking at in the Lord's Prayer, and that is the one dealing with temptation. If you'll open your Bibles and go back to the Lord's Prayer notes you have. The very sixth petition concerns our temptations. We saw last week that the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, the Disciple's Prayer, dealt with the forgiveness of our sins. We talked about forgiveness of sins is not something that we do a tit-for-tat. In other words, if you forgive me, I'll forgive you. That's not the issue at all. We're talking about you forgive because you know you have been forgiven.

How can I not forgive this person this time when Christ has forgiven me all the time? How can I not forgive this person for such a small offense to me when Christ has forgiven me with such a big offense to him? The real issue the degree of how quickly you and I are able to forgive is really a reflection of how we understand our own forgiveness.

The real moniker here is that we forgive because we have been forgiven. That does not mean that you eliminate people's consequences of their choices. I'm not saying that. There's a difference between the consequences of what somebody does and our forgiveness. You can forgive them, we can forgive them, but their consequences may still need to be lived out. So don't confuse the idea of "I forgive you" means you're removing the consequences. "I forgive my step-children for what they do that are offensive to our family," but they still have to suffer the consequences. That has nothing to do with forgiveness. It's just that I don't condemn them anymore, but they have to realize there are consequences to their choices. Make sure we don't merge those things together. That would be erroneous for us to say that forgiveness means you eliminate the consequences.

Now we take a look at this last petition, and this is "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." This phrase in the Scripture here is a figure of speech that expresses something by negating the contrary. In other words, you might say something like, "He's not a bad singer." So what are you really saying? He's a good singer. But you're using this phrase, you're using this figure of speech by saying you're taking the negative by really affirming the positive. Another thing you might say is "Not just a few." That means what? Many. Not a few guys showed up. Well, a whole bunch of guys showed up. That's what you see here. You see this figure of speech is negating...it's stating something that is positive by negating the contrary.

Take a look John 6:37. It means that he will keep us. "All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out." Basically, what we're seeing in John 6:37 means that he will always keep us. He will not cast you out, which means he will what? He will keep us. There's the same figure of speech. You'll see that numerous times in the Scripture. You're affirming the positive by negating the opposite side of it.

We have to understand in the context of this, that this means that to lead us into his righteousness is really what he is saying. "Lead us not into temptation" is basically saying lead us into righteousness. Do not lead us into temptation. You're basically saying, "Father, lead us into righteousness." That's the prayer of this petition number six. In other words, we'll be protected from the evil things of this world, and therefore, become more involved in righteousness, and we will be delivered from the evil one. The whole point here is to guide us into all truth, to lead us into righteousness.

It's important that we understand that God does not tempt us. God does not tempt. He might test, he might try us, but he does not tempt us. We are tempted by our own desires. That's what you see in Romans 5, 6 and 7, where Paul says, "I'm tempted by the sin in my members." We can't say that, "God tempted me" When you say, "Lead us not into temptation," it is not suggesting at all that God is the tempter. He doesn't tempt us. What we're saying, basically here is lead us into righteousness. It's just using a figure of speech by negating the opposite and saying you're really affirming the positive. This prayer really is saying, "Lord, lead us into righteousness, and do that by protecting us, because we need your grace, we need your sovereign providence to protect us from the very things that are going to tempt us."

Where do our temptations come from? They come from our senses. It's what Paul teaches us in Romans 7, "Sin is in my members." While we have this desire to do the very good thing that we do, evil is always present. The senses are really the means by which we are tempted. Through our eyes is what we see. Like Job said, "I made a covenant with my eyes." You and I have to guard our eyes because we will be tempted through what we see. The same thing by what we take into our mouth, what we hear, what we touch, what we feel. You see, it's through the senses that we have to be careful.

We were given the senses to enjoy life. That's why this prayer is so important. We say, "Lord, forgive

us our sins, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who have sinned against us, and lead us into righteousness.” Notice the consequence of forgiving somebody and asking to be forgiven, and the next thing is an expression of righteousness? The way that Lord has phrased this in “lead us not into temptation,” he’s basically saying, “and lead us into righteousness by protecting us from the things that tempt us.” We have a responsibility in ourselves not to be tempted of those things that we take in through our senses, and realize that life was given for us to enjoy, but we have a responsibility. We have a responsibility not to put ourselves in a position to have the temptation come through the natural senses of our human body.

As we conclude the Lord’s Prayer, the Disciple’s Prayer, let’s just take a quick review of this. If you want to take a look at your notes. The whole purpose of prayer, really, is to glorify God. That’s the whole purpose of this prayer. Remember, the prayer is in the context of the major theme of Matthew 6, which is hypocrisy. In other words, you’re saying here’s the manner in how you should pray. Don’t be like the hypocrites. Here are the things you pray. Don’t be like the hypocrites. Be careful of your own hypocrisy when you pray. Be careful about the words you use. Make sure that it’s a reflection of your heart. What is true motive of your prayer? The true motive of our prayer is not to get God to do something; it is to give God glory. The whole purpose of prayer is to glorify God. It is to lift up his name and to exalt his holiness. Prayer is to really be focused on God, not focused on us.

How many times, when you go into a prayer session, do you always hear people starting with what we want? Now there’s nothing wrong with that, because we’ve already seen that in one of the petitions, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Not only does he provide our spiritual needs, but also our physical ones, our temporal ones. The real point is this—how often times when we go into prayer do we really focus on us? The prayer, Jesus is saying is don’t be like the hypocrites, because that’s what they focused on. They focused on themselves. Really, the way to pray is to focus on God, and here’s the manner in how you pray. Here’s the methodology of your prayer. And here are the matters which you should pray about in those six petitions he just gave us.

The whole point of the summary is God has really designed us to really focus on him in our prayer life, and what a great privilege we have to be able to pray to him, pray with him, pray for him and for his glory. The whole purpose of prayer is to glorify God, not to meet our needs. Our needs will be met as we do glorify God, but the whole purpose don’t be like the hypocrites. Don’t focus on yourself.

I trust the next time that you’re in a prayer session with people in your church, that yes, you may certainly pray for your own needs, but just think. Really, the focus of the prayer is designed to glorify God. How can I focus on him? That means one of the things we ought to be doing is, when you focus on God, what’s one of the first responses we should have?

Audience Member: Gratitude.

Gratitude. Exactly. Thank you. That’s why the Scripture says, “In all things give thanks” in your supplications, in your prayer. In all things give thanks. What does that focus on? It focuses more on God than it does ourselves. That’s the whole purpose of our prayer.

One of the things we always try to stress here, brothers, in our Friday men’s group, is what am I going to do about what I just learned? Let’s take a look at your notes for a moment. Let’s just do a quick summary of this. The addressee was to our Father, describes our relationship with him, the wonderful, loving relationship we have as part of the family of God. It signifies a special relationship with God. It signifies the oneness we have with God. It really signifies the transcendence of God’s glory and his majesty. When you use the word “Father,” we just need to be very, very aware that’s a critical word because “Our Father,” this is a family prayer, just not individual prayer.

Let's take a look at the first petition. I'm going to ask you this question. What are you going to do about what you just learned about praying not like the hypocrites, but praying in a manner that glorifies God? Let's take a look at the first petition, and let's just think. If there's something you'd like to share with us, a response of what you're going to do about what you've just learned. What are you going to do about when you learned the phrase, "Hallowed be Thy Name"? How's that going to impact your prayer? You see, that's what you need to ask yourself. I understand that I'm to hallow his name. How's that going to change the way that I pray? What am I going to do about what I just learned?

Audience Member: *I believe that [UNCLEAR] Christ, the keyword Christ's ministry is compassion, and "Hallowed be Thy Name" draws us to him and what he has done for us [UNCLEAR] compassionate to others as I have been to you.*

Okay. It's setting apart who he is in his character. It's hallowing his name. It means to sanctify, to make holy, or to consider holy as we treat something as holy, we treat God's name as holy. What does that say about your disposition and your motive of prayer?

Tom: *Well, for me, it slows me down. When I turn to pray, I have all these lists of things [UNCLEAR] have accomplished. [UNCLEAR] my Heavenly Father, I just kind of stop and go wait a minute. I need to think, "What do you want?" and not what do I want.*

That's a good point, Tom. "Hallowed be Thy Name" will slow us down. In other words, we won't be so quick to think that God's a heavenly gopher, that he's to go for this and he's to go for that, when we realize that I'm to hallow his name. How is my prayer that I'm going to pray at this very moment, how is it going to glorify, how is it going to sanctify, how is it going to make holy God's name? You see, that begins the focus of our prayer. How am I going to make God's name more holy through my prayer? Not like the hypocrites, but I'm going to do it in the means that hallow his name.

We go to the second one, "your kingdom come." What does that tell us we ought to pray about? What are you going to do about the phrase, "your kingdom come"? That's our battle cry.

Bill: *[UNCLEAR] situation that not only our country is in, but our world is in. To me, it seems like as long as I can remember, it's become more and more vile. I heard one person say, using these words, "thy kingdom come—nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."*

Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. That's a good phrase. Thy Kingdom come. That really is our battle cry, isn't it, for citizens of the kingdom? We want his kingdom to come. Notice the next phrase, "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." What is that implying to us? What's that teaching us about ourselves? Where do we want to kingdom to begin? In us. You see, I want the kingdom to come, but it's got to start inside of me. The kingdom of God is at hand. We want it to start inside ourselves before we take it to the world.

Next, the fourth petition is, "give us this day our daily bread." What does that imply to us? Remember what we learned about that? That that phrase, "give us this day our daily bread," if you say it at night, it means the next 24 hours. If you say it in the morning, it means the current day. It literally means, that phrase, biblically, when you say, "give us this day our daily bread," it really literally means to the day that is coming. Give us to the day that is coming our daily provisions. What is it implying to us and what we need to do?

Ted: *Not worry about the weeks ahead, but just accept what God's given, trusting he'll continue to give it every day.*

Amen! It means...

Ted: *The manna will appear in the morning.*

Absolutely. It means you just trust the day. You know, we worry so much about the what if's and the how comes and the why for's, worrying about God's grace for next week when something happens. God's grace comes at the moment of application, not at the time of contemplation. That's a very good reminder to just take one day at a time, be faithful when you can and trust the great providence and sovereignty of God.

Then we go to "forgive us our sins as we have been forgiven," "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." What does that remind us of?

Audience Member: *To be forgiving.*

Audience Member: *That we are sinful in nature and that we will need to ask for forgiveness so we're not separate from God's holiness.*

We need to ask forgiveness so we will not be separated from God's holiness. It also reminds us of how much have I been forgiven. You notice that, "forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are indebted to us," "forgive us our trespasses as those who trespass against us." You see, it's a reminder of this—how much have I been forgiven. How much have I been forgiven? The great exposure that this particular phrase of the Lord's Prayer as for us is it exposes our understanding of God's redemptive plan in our life. The whole plan of redemption is you have been forgiven. It reminds us there's now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. It means you have peace with God. And why is it you have peace with God? It's because of the whole plan of redemption. That God has done something for us that we could not do for ourselves. It's all wrapped up in that little phrase, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," because it means I have been forgiven. What a great mercy that is. That ought to prompt us to be grateful and give thanks right away.

Audience Member: *I had the opportunity Monday night in the Bible study that I teach, in Matthew 18:22-26 covers this, and it came out as I study [UNCLEAR] the first man that was forgiven owed 52 million dollars in today's money and he tried to beat up the other guy who owed him [UNCLEAR]. What a difference and what you just said, how much God has forgiven us.*

That's the point of that whole parable is how much have you been forgiven. Sometimes, you know, what exposes me more than anything else is how quickly I'm unwilling to forgive. Take a look at the other side of the coin—how unwilling I am to forgive. That says more about me than it does the person who offended. It's basically saying this, "Bruce, you really don't understand how much you've been forgiven." That's doesn't mean it's automatic and easy. I'm not saying that. There's human emotion involved. I'm not saying that. Sometimes forgiveness is very difficult, but you can't worry about the offense; you have to worry about the fact of how much have you been forgiven. It really calls our attention to God's mercy, his love for us, his forgiveness of us. That's where the focus needs to be. That is not easy all the time. Sometimes when I am so slow in wanting to forgive, wanting to forgive, it just reminds me, "Bruce, don't worry about the offense. Go back and just remind yourself how much have you been forgiven." That's what this is really about.

Dan: *The forgiveness, certainly, the [UNCLEAR] comes to mind one of the parables. It's also something as simple as someone that steps in front of you in line at the store, and everything that*

happens in between those two. But what about, do we necessarily have to let a person know that they've been forgiven. Does that almost become a little bit selfish when you try to confront someone and say you're forgiven? Is it really just more an action in your heart?

That's a good question. I think it all depends upon your motive. You have to examine it yourself. If you're doing it to show off, then you're like the hypocrites. He said don't do that. You have to ask what's my motive for letting them know? Is it going to be edifying/encouraging to them? Or is it something I want to show off the fact that I'm very spiritual because I know how much I've been forgiven. I can't answer that for you. But I do think it's a very valid question, Dan. It's a great question. You have to examine yourself. What is my motive in wanting to let them know they're forgiven? That's the whole point of hypocrisy, and I can't answer that for you. But it's a great question.

Audience Member: *I think you touched on it earlier, but I think it needs to be tied in...I worry about the concept of forgiveness and how people talk about it in society now [UNCLEAR], "I told you you're forgiven, now everything's okay." That's not what you said earlier...[UNCLEAR]...consequences, I mean part of the consequences, in some cases, may mean I need to not be around that person. We need to not interact...*

That may be.

Audience Member: *...and other things that need to happen. I think see forgiveness as, "Oh, no, everything's okay and we're back to where we were." We've just lost that, because [UNCLEAR]...*

Yeah, forgiveness does not mean it never happened. Forgiveness doesn't mean it never happened. It's just that you're not holding condemnation toward that person who did it to you.

Audience Member: *Bruce, often times, I think, today, [UNCLEAR] mindful, mindful of what's going on somewhere else as well as right here, [UNCLEAR]. I don't call the shots. Like you said, we need to go through whatever it is that [UNCLEAR] go ahead and go through with the stuff so that I can see...so I think it's just being mindful of where Christ may be in somebody else's life as well as your own and that's pretty tough [UNCLEAR].*

Yeah, it is. Remember, we are not given the ministry of being a motive checker. That's not a ministry we've been given. We cannot check another person's motives. The only motives you can check are whose?

Audience Member: *Your own.*

Your own. That's the whole point of Matthew 6. You've got to check your own area, your own motives in these areas.

Audience Member: *A while back, I was given a book, I think it was called A Hole In The Gospel. In that book, it stated about, "Lord, give me a heart, the heart of God." I'm not sure I got that part right out of the book. It's been awhile since I visited that. And that comes back to mindful. We need the heart of God...*

Amen. That's right. Thank you.

Audience Member: *So many times I hear people say, that they read the Lord's Prayer and they ask for forgiveness a they have been forgiven, and then I hear that same person say, "I forgive others, but I don't forget." That's something I said, "Well, then you're really not forgiving. Forgiving is you have to*

let it go.” I hear that so many times.

There’s a difference between forgiving and forgetting. I’ll tell you what. I can describe every offense anybody’s ever given to me. I still remember it, and I can give you every detail for what they’ve done. I’ve forgiven them. I’ve forgiven them, but that doesn’t mean that memory has been erased from me. You can’t equate forgiveness with forgetting. It may be that the Lord may have you remember that situation for a reason that only he knows for you, to help purify yourself so that you will not do that to somebody else or for your own edification. You can’t equate forgiveness with forgetting. If you say that, “I haven’t forgiven that person because I haven’t forgotten it,” I think it’s an erroneous thought. Bishop Rogers, do you want to help me with this? {LAUGHTER}

What I’m trying to say is...let me just give you an illustration. A friend of mine, when I was with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, his wife was nearly raped. The assailant shot her. Her life was spared. The assailant was caught. She went to the trial and sat through the trial for the six or seven weeks of the trial, and I went with them several times. She went up after he was sentenced to life imprisonment, and she said, “I forgive you. I want you to know that I will not hold this against you. I have forgiven you.” Now she and her husband went to visit that man in prison about two or three times a year over the next several years. He had to suffer the consequence. Now did she ever forget that event? No. That event was always in her mind, but it was on that she was constantly, she realized, “I’m not going to hold event against him.” But did she forget the event? No. She could sit down and describe exactly what happened. The fact that...I think you have to be sensitive to say, if I’ve forgotten it, it means I’ve forgiven them. I’m not sure that’s correct.

Bishop Rogers: *I think when people say, “I forgive them, but I won’t forget,” they’re really threatening to fall back into an unforgiving attitude.*

That’s correct.

Bishop Rogers: *It’s really a threat. It’s not really saying that you can take things out of your mind, and that may not be profitable.*

You may remember it, but you don’t hold it against them. That’s the issue. You don’t use it as a threat against them, nor do you say that you have totally eradicated the thought.

Audience Member: *I guess if someone says that, I could use your terminology to say, “Well, that’s fine, but why, I can’t answer the question, but why is the motive that you’re not forgetting.”*

Yes.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR]...the motive is because it’s just human nature to remember [UNCLEAR] from your mind. That’s fine, but if your motive is that one day you’re going to hold against the person...but I can’t answer that question [UNCLEAR].*

That’s it. That’s a good summary. I think Bishop Rogers just summarized it well.

Bishop Rogers: *I was just going to say, when we say I forgive somebody, and we’re saying that means I will not hold that against you, that means the relationship can continue.*

Correct.

Bishop Rogers: *It doesn’t mean that there are no consequences in that relationship.*

That's correct. That's the point I'm trying to...there's a difference between forgiveness and consequences. The man still went to jail, but she forgave him. But she said you still have to go to jail. They had a relationship. She went to visit him, she and her husband went to visit him over the next several years. But I'm sure that she had never forgotten that; it's just that she had purposed in her heart never to hold it against him. That's the real issue of the motive.

***Ted:** Not to jump too far ahead on the Lord's Prayer, but it seems like every single clause is contrary to the natural man.*

Yes, it is, isn't it.

***Ted:** Every single... "Our Father," well, I'd rather not have a Father looking over my shoulder. To accomplish any of these things, it takes a supernatural act for God to change our hearts in those things. I'm struck by the impossibility of this in terms of our natural ability.*

We have to realize...that's a great point, Ted. We have to realize that the Gospel is not human. It's not human; it's supernatural. It's something that God gives us that's supernatural. It has its origin someplace other than us. Don't try to humanize the Gospel by bringing the Gospel down to a human level. We want to take people up to God's level through the proclamation of biblical truth. It's the same thing here in the prayer. Our prayer, you see, here is, this is a supernatural prayer. This is not something that is human, per se, because he's saying this is the manner of how you should pray. He's talking about your motive.

You have to understand the whole issue of the Disciple's Prayer in the bigger context of Matthew 6, which hypocrisy. He's basically saying analyze yourself. How do you pray? What's your motive for praying? Here's the way you should have the right motives, and don't be like the hypocrites. He's basically saying, "Praying like this is not normal. Praying like this is not humanly generated. This is something that's lead by the spirit. And here are the checkpoints and the prayer that's going to help you recognize that.

When we pray in this manner, that's why it's not natural to want to glorify God. It is natural to pray for yourself when you're in a foxhole. You know, when the bullets are flying, you don't necessarily want to say, "Lord, I want you to be glorified." {LAUGHTER} That's not your normal tendency. But yet, he's saying don't be like the hypocrites. You're going to get your reward. It's going to be the reward of the approval of the world, or are you going to get the reward of the approval of God himself? So that's a very critical point for us.

***Bob:** I just wanted the mention, when you think about this thing of forgiveness, if you wrong me, and I forgive you, well, if you wrong me and I do nothing, then there are no consequences, nothing happens, there's nothing positive about that experience. If you wrong me and I forgive you, then maybe I feel better about it. Maybe I glorify God, but importantly, it's [UNCLEAR] the recipient, the person that tends to say, "Well, I did something that was wrong. Why would that guy forgive me? Why would he do that?" That's unnatural. That's unusual. And maybe he will benefit from the fact that I forgave him. There will be a consequence on the recipient's end rather than the guy that [UNCLEAR].*

It could be way of...that can be a ministry to that person who would ask the question, "How do you have the ability to do that, to forgive me when I've done that to you?" That's very, very possible to happen. That could be our being salt and light. That's giving away to somebody else what God has given you. When you forgive, what are you doing? You're giving away to someone else what God has given you. That's why it's so critical that you and I understand the depth and magnitude and glory of his forgiving us, because the degree to which we understand that will be the degree to which we give it

away. The degree to which you give it away is the degree to which we're involved in ministry. Ministry is giving away to someone else what God has given you. Forgiveness is one of those things.

Audience Member: *When you think about like the wages of sin is death, we have an account for our sins that we've created on our own. When Christ forgave us, he no longer holds us accountable for those. When we have found forgiveness in Christ, we're not held accountable, because he's washed those away, and then he's, "I cast them as far as the East is to the West." In a sense, he doesn't remember our sins anymore, but you know, so he erases that account, and so in the same manner, I think we need to forgive others and not hold them accountable for that wrong that's been done to us.*

I think it's a great point. As Bishop Rogers said, the real critical ingredient here, in my judgment, is this—the relationship can continue. That's going to be the power of ministry is, how can he treat me like that after what I've done, and yet, it's almost as if it never happened, but forgiveness was there. So it really maintains the relationship. I think that's a critical point to realize when you forgive someone.

Take a look at Romans 8:1. Paul writes, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Now notice, it doesn't mean that we are not worthy of condemnation. It just means he's not going to hold us in condemnation, because of the sacrificial work of Christ. The reason that occurs...go back to Romans 5:1. I want you to see the correlation here. Romans 8:1 is sort of a summary statement of Romans 5. Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) You see how that flows. Chapter 8:1 is a continuation of chapter 5:1. It's the fruit of justification by faith alone. You see, one of the consequences of that. You're no longer condemned because you've been justified.

You see, what Paul is talking about is the benefits and the glory and the implications of being justified by faith alone, and he said one of those is this, "You're no longer condemned, because you've been justified." God declares you as sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient. He gives you the righteousness of Christ. You get an alien righteousness, and therefore, you have peace with God. You see, the very first implication and product or consequence of justification is peace with God. That peace with God means this—you're no longer condemned. You're no longer condemned because you're in Christ Jesus.

Notice both of those phrases, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and then, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." It's because we are now married to a new relationship. We're no longer in Adam, we're in Christ. As a result of that, you have peace with God, and therefore, you're no longer condemned. It's because you have peace with God. Why do you have peace with God? It's because you've been justified. You've been justified.

Audience Member: *He also says that through the law of the spirit of life, you have been set free, and you're not bound by the law of sin death, which comes back to the prayer. It's a faith-based prayer that helps us live a life of faith. That shows us how to live, and we can keep getting deeper and deeper as we go [UNCLEAR].*

The important thing about the Disciple's Prayer, just in summary, is you have to check the motives of your prayer. That's the context of Matthew 6. What's your motive in your giving? Don't be like the hypocrites. What's your motive in your praying? Don't be like the hypocrites. What's the motive in your fasting?

Now there's nothing wrong with fasting. Denying yourself food or water is a not a fast in itself. The fast is to develop a more intimate, personal, loving, committed relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the reason you fast. The removal of the foods is a just a means of saying, "I'm going to deny myself some things temporally, now, that's going to allow me to focus on other things." The fast is not the denial of the food itself. There's nothing wrong with fasting. The real question is what's the motive of my fast? Am I doing this as the hypocrites did? They took something that was wonderfully spiritual and they humanized it by making it a position of showing off who they were in their spirituality. They really became hypocrites. That's why fasting is one of the things in which Jesus talks about in the Sermon on the Mount, is you don't do that as the hypocrites do, because they took something that was a spiritual discipline and they lowered it and it became a way of demonstrating their own reputation. They made it something that was a showmanship thing as opposed to something that was very personal. A fast is something that's very, very personal.

You have to be led by the Holy Spirit to lead you into a fast. Remember the purpose of the fast is not to deny yourself. It's to acquire something. It's to acquire a deeper, living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The fast is not giving up of the food or the water. That's not the fast. All you're doing that is putting yourself so that you're going to focus more on your relationship with the Lord. It's really the focus on the Lord is issue of the fast. Don't be like the hypocrites who took something that was a spiritual discipline and they made it something that called attention to themselves. Be careful of the hypocrisy.

***Audience Member:** I just wanted to ask. Another thing [UNCLEAR], maybe we need to have discernment when we look somebody that has wronged us as being a Christian a brother, and maybe respond to that person a little bit differently than we would somebody that's not in Christ.*

Here again, we just don't know that. Remember, we're not motive checkers. It's not our job to go around and see if somebody has a big "E" on their t-shirt. Are they part of the elect? That's not for us to determine. That's not for us to do. You don't go lift up, "You got an 'E' or not? If you're an 'E,' I'm going to treat you this way; if you're not, I'm going to treat you another way." We don't do that. You see, it's not our motive to do that. We just have to take responsibility for ourselves.

This whole issue of prayer, giving or whatever it may be, we need to make sure that no voluntary act of spiritual discipline is ever to become an occasion for self-promotion. That's the whole issue. Never take an act of self-discipline, such as fasting, and turn it into an attitude of self-promotion. That's what we're dealing with.

***Audience Member:** Isn't one of the motives for forgiveness kind of self-serving, is to relieve the burdens of yourself to be able to not carry that baggage anymore? I mean, is that a self-serving motive [UNCLEAR] with that? That's the only way that I can't forgive somebody sometimes is to say I don't want to carry this around anymore.*

I think it's a consequence, but it's not the reason. It's a consequence of. The reason you're forgiving is why?

***Audience Member:** Because you're forgiven.*

Because you've been forgiven by Christ! That's it. No other reason. You've got to come back to the very basics. It's really quite simple. I am forgiving because I know I have been forgiven. I forgive because I've been forgiven in Christ Jesus. Now one of the consequences of that, one of the glorious rewards of that, if you want to call it, one of the beautiful ingredients of that is, it takes the burden off of me. But I don't do it to have the burden lifted. I do it because I've been forgiven, and the burden is relieved. Very good.

Audience Member: *I just had a question of, the Bible says to pray without ceasing, so in that respect, what should be the frequency of our prayer and the frequency of praying this Lord's Prayer/Disciple's Prayer?*

I have no idea.

Sig: *Without ceasing.*

There you go. I can't be your Holy Spirit. All I'm saying is that it really means this. You need to be in a prayerful, trustful, submissive mindset all your life. Moment by moment I have a trustful, submissive attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ in my life. He's involved in everything that I do. So I'm mindful of Christ being involved in everything I do. Sometimes I have a season of prayer; sometimes it's just a quick one. Sometimes driving through the Ft. Pitt Tunnel, I say, "Lord, give me the right spirit." {LAUGHTER} That's praying without ceasing.

I don't mean to be facetious here, but I really can't tell you what that means. All I'm saying is prayer without ceasing means that you're in a constant, trustful, submissive attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the way that you begin to live, and you're mindful of that. That will lead you into when you need to pray. You trust the Holy Spirit to guide you when you do that. How often do you pray the Lord's Prayer? Well, you pray the Lord's Prayer whenever you want to pray the Lord's Prayer. But remember this. It is not the reciting of those words that is the issue. It's the spirit behind it. It's the reason behind it. It's the petitions behind it. It's the manner of prayer. It's the motive of your prayer. It is the whole issue of the glorifying of God. That's when you want to pray. Good question.

Sig: *Bruce, I thought it was curious, as we go through the summary, that we stop at forgiveness...not stop, but the longest discussion has been about forgiveness. I really don't want you to talk about fasting, at least I didn't, I wanted to talk about forgiveness because I realize, in my life, that my battle has always been my father, my humanly father, and that's what brought me Christ, someone shared with me who God is as my Father. But if I could have gotten forgiveness from my dad, or understood his forgiveness, the consequences would have almost been honor to stand up to the consequences and do them and go through them, but that tension of not being forgiven and not really knowing it, you know what I mean, but knowing that God has forgiven me, is huge. It's everything. It's the whole ballgame. But that, not [UNCLEAR], not knowing that my dad forgave me. That's bothered me my whole life.*

I understand. That's a very deep, human emotion, and very legitimate. The issue for us really is to realize that's not something I can control. I can't control the forgiveness of another person. I can only control myself. I can only manage myself. The way that I manage myself is how much do I know that I've been forgiven in Christ? Colossians tells us, "Forgive as you've been forgiven in Christ Jesus." "A new commandment I give you," in John 13, "that you love one another," based upon how you feel. It doesn't say that. "You love one another based upon the fact that I loved you." You see, that's...why do you love somebody? It's because you know you've been loved. Why do forgive somebody? Because you know you've been forgiven. The consequences will take care of themselves. The freedom and the liberation comes as a result of that, but it's not the motive for doing it. The motive for doing it is I just know that that's what God's given me.

Tom: *I think the answer, also, on the question of how often do you do the Lord's Prayer, [UNCLEAR] how often do you pray depends on your world view of who's in control. God is in control and you should be acknowledging his control all the time, and the way you do that is through prayer.*

Absolutely. Prayer is one of the disciplines. The thing we have to be careful of is not taking a very good spiritual discipline and making it something for self-promotion. That's what we have to be careful of.

That's the whole spirit of Matthew 6 in those four areas—giving, praying, fasting and wealth management. You've got to make sure you don't take a good spiritual discipline and make it something for self-promotion. That's what the hypocrites do. That's why we have to check our own motives. You can't do that for anybody else but yourself. You've got to just examine yourself. May God be pleased to help us examine ourselves that we might live a life that's more glorifying for him.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the conviction that you bring through your Word. We pray, Lord, that you would bring us into practical conformity to the Word of God, and Father, that you'd be pleased to expose to us the fallacy of our own hypocritical motives, not that we check other people's motives, but that we examine ourselves. Father, may we do this in an attitude of gratitude because we know this; that we have peace with God, we have peace with you because you have justified us by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And as a result of that, Father, remind us again that there is no condemnation. Yes, do we deserve it? Absolutely. But you paid for it and you loved us enough to send your Son to be the propitiation for our sins. As a result of that, Father, we now have something to give away to other people that they don't have, and that is the grace and the mercy of a loving Father, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!! Thank you, men. We'll see you next week.