
MESSAGE SUMMARY

Jesus teaches you that following Him is not about performing your faith to gain the approval of others or earn your Heavenly Father's acceptance. Through giving, prayer, and fasting, He calls you to examine your motives and pursue a genuine relationship with Him. Because you already have your Heavenly Father's love and acceptance through Jesus Christ, you are free to stop performing and start growing in His grace. Rather than seeking recognition from people, you can live with a sincere heart, trusting that your Father sees you, knows you and loves you. As you rest in His grace, you can grow in authentic faith and live to glorify Him, not to earn His approval, but in response to the acceptance you already have in Christ.

MAIN POINTS

- 1. CHECK YOUR HEART — Giving (Matthew 6:1–4).** Wrong motive: Giving to gain recognition or praise. Jesus' correction: Give without seeking attention from others. Heart transformation: You give because you have received God's grace, not to earn His favor. Key truth: You don't give to earn God's approval; you give in response to His grace. (Acts 4:32–37; 2 Corinthians 9:7–8)
- 2. CHANGE YOUR AUDIENCE — Prayer (Matthew 6:5–8).** Wrong motive: Praying to impress others or appear spiritual. Jesus' correction: Pray sincerely to your Heavenly Father. Heart transformation: Prayer is a relationship built on trust, dependence, worship, and love. Key truth: You don't pray to earn God's attention; through Christ, you have access to your Father. (Romans 8:15–16; Philippians 4:6–7)
- 3. CHOOSE YOUR REWARD — Fasting (Matthew 6:16–18).** Wrong motive: Fasting to prove your spirituality or gain recognition. Jesus' correction: Fast for your Father, not for an audience. Heart transformation: Fasting helps you turn your attention toward God and grow in dependence on Him. Key truth: You don't fast to prove your worth; you fast to deepen your dependence on God. (Isaiah 58:6–9; Matthew 6:33)

Big Idea: Freedom begins when the performance ends.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Why does Jesus warn you about doing good things for the wrong reason?** *Possible answer:* God cares about both your actions and your heart. Even good works can become a way to feed your pride or gain people's praise. God calls you to serve from a sincere heart in response to His grace. Ask Him, and keep asking, to change your heart. (Matthew 6:1; 1 Samuel 16:7)
- 2. How do Matthew 5:16 and Matthew 6:1 fit together?** *Possible answer:* Jesus wants your good works to point people toward God, not toward yourself. The issue is not that people see your good works, but that you are seeking their praise or God's glory. You serve from the acceptance you already have in Christ. The difference is your motive, which is heart issue. (Matthew 5:16; Matthew 6:1)
- 3. Whose approval are you most tempted to seek, God's or people's? Why?** *Possible answer:* I can become focused on people's opinions because I want acceptance, respect, or recognition. Through Christ, I am already loved and accepted by my Heavenly Father, so I can walk in His grace rather than prove my worth to others. (Galatians 1:10; Matthew 6:4)
- 4. Where might you be doing something good but secretly hoping someone notices?** *Possible answer:* I may serve, give, pray, or help others while hoping they recognize what I have done. I can ask God to purify my motives and choose to serve out of love and gratitude rather than a need for recognition. (Colossians 3:23–24; Matthew 6:1–4)

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus is not calling you to perform better so God will accept you. He is calling you to experience a transformed heart as you grow in His grace. You cannot earn salvation through good works; you are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9). If you have never trusted Christ, repent of your sin and believe in Jesus as your Savior and Lord (Mark 1:15). If you already follow Christ, continue to repent of sinful motives, trust in His finished work, and grow in the grace He has already given you (1 John 1:9; 2 Peter 3:18). You don't obey to earn your Father's love; you obey because, through Christ, you have already received it. You are free to give, pray, serve, and live for God's glory out of a heart transformed by His grace (Ephesians 2:10).

DAILY DEVOTIONS

MONDAY — CHECK YOUR HEART

Key Verse: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.” (Matthew 6:1)

Read: Matthew 6:1–4; Ephesians 2:8–9

Reflection: our Heavenly Father's love is not a prize you earn through good behavior. As you grow in His grace, ask Him to transform your motives so that your good works flow from gratitude and love rather than a desire for recognition.

Application Question: Where are you most tempted to seek recognition for something you do for God? *Possible Answer:* I may want others to notice my service, generosity, or sacrifice. I can surrender that desire to God and choose to serve because I love Him and am grateful for His grace.

Prayer Response: Father, search my heart and reveal where I seek recognition from others. Help me remember that I am saved by Your grace, not my performance, and teach me to serve You from a heart of gratitude. In Jesus' name, Amen.

TUESDAY — CHANGE YOUR AUDIENCE

Key Verse: “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father.” (Matthew 6:6)

Read: Matthew 6:5–8; Romans 8:15–16

Reflection: You don't have to find impressive words or prove how spiritual you are when you pray. You can come to your Father with confidence because, through Christ, you are already welcomed into His presence.

Application Question: What could you change about your prayer life to focus more on your relationship with God than on how you sound? *Possible Answer:* I can spend time alone with God, speak honestly about my struggles, and listen to His Word rather than worry about saying the perfect words. I want prayer to deepen my trust in Him.

Prayer Response: Father, thank You that through Jesus I can come to You as Your child. Help me stop treating prayer as a performance and grow in a genuine relationship with You. Teach me to trust You with every part of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY — LIVE FROM GOD'S ACCEPTANCE

Key Verse: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

Read: Romans 8:1, 15–16; Colossians 3:23–24

Reflection: You don't need to prove your worth to God or people when your identity is rooted in Christ. As you grow in His grace, you become freer to love, serve, and obey without depending on recognition to feel valuable.

Application Question: Where do you need to stop trying to prove your worth and start resting in your identity in Christ? *Possible Answer:* I may try to prove myself through my work, service, or the approval of others. I can remember that I belong to Christ and let His grace shape how I live rather than allowing other people's opinions to define me and my life.

Prayer Response: Father, thank You that my identity is secure in Jesus. Help me stop measuring my worth by recognition, success, or the opinions of others. Teach me to live confidently in Your grace and faithfully serve You from a grateful heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THURSDAY — CHOOSE YOUR REWARD

Key Verse: “And your Father, who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:18)

Read: Matthew 6:16–18; Matthew 6:33

Reflection: Your spiritual life is not a contest in which you must prove that you are more devoted than someone else. You already have God's love through Christ, so you can practice spiritual disciplines with humility and a desire to know Him more deeply.

Application Question: What spiritual practice could help you grow in dependence on God without seeking recognition from others? *Possible Answer:* I could set aside quiet time for prayer, read Scripture consistently, give privately, or consider fasting with a sincere heart. My purpose would be to draw closer to God, not to prove my spirituality.

Prayer Response: Father, forgive me for the times I have focused more on looking spiritual than on growing closer to You. Help me practice spiritual disciplines with humility, knowing that Your love is a gift of grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FRIDAY — FREEDOM FROM PERFORMANCE

Key Verse: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

Read: Psalm 51:10–12; Matthew 6:1–18; 2 Peter 3:18

Reflection: Take time today to ask God to reveal where you are still seeking approval from people or trying to prove yourself to Him. Then rest in His grace and choose one hidden spiritual practice that will help you grow in your relationship with Him.

Application Question: What is one healthy and hidden practice you will begin this week to grow closer to God? *Possible Answer:* I will set aside time for private prayer and Scripture reading each day. I will do this not to earn God's approval, but because I already belong to Him through Christ and want to know Him more deeply.

Prayer Response: Father, create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Help me repent of my desire to impress people and teach me to walk in your grace. Thank You that my salvation is not something I have to earn, but a gift of Your grace through Jesus. Help me live from that freedom every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.