

Session 3 – Why Does God Care About Our Motives?

Matthew 6:1–15

Understanding mercy, forgiveness, and the heart behind our actions.



A Common Struggle

Everyone experiences moments when they are hurt by others. When we are hurt, our response reveals what is happening in our hearts.

Sometimes it happens through:

- betrayal
- dishonesty
- rejection
- unfair treatment
- words that wound deeply

When that happens, a natural question arises:

How should followers of Jesus respond when they have been hurt?



Jesus and the Heart

“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:1

Jesus begins by addressing something deeper than behavior.

He focuses on the **motives of the heart**.

- Faith can become something we perform for others.
- But the life of the Kingdom is lived **before God**.



Spiritual Life and Motives

Jesus now speaks about three spiritual practices:

- giving
- prayer
- fasting

Each time He contrasts two possibilities:

- **doing these things to impress people or**
- **doing them from a sincere heart before God.**

God cares deeply about the motives behind our actions.



The Example of Prayer

5 “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.”

Matthew 6:5

Jesus is not condemning prayer.

- He is addressing **spiritual performance**.

Prayer is meant to be conversation with God, not a way to gain attention.



Prayer as Relationship

6 But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

Jesus invites His followers into something deeply personal.

Prayer is not a performance.

It is a relationship with the Father.



The Prayer Jesus Teaches

Jesus then provides a model prayer for His followers.

- This prayer reveals the heart of life in God's Kingdom:
 - honoring God
 - trusting God's provision
 - seeking God's will
 - practicing forgiveness

This prayer will be explored more deeply in a later study.

But one part of the prayer carries a powerful challenge.



Forgive Us Our Debts

12 “and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”

Matthew 6:12

Jesus connects two things:

Receiving forgiveness from God and Extending forgiveness to others.

Forgiveness is central to life in the Kingdom.



Why Forgiveness Matters

¹⁴ “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Matthew 6:14-15

This like many of Jesus’ teachings may feel difficult

But Jesus is revealing something profound.

People who have truly received God's mercy begin to extend mercy to others.



Why This Is So Hard

Forgiving others can feel impossible when the hurt is deep.

But Jesus reminds us that:

- Every person stands before God in need of mercy.
- The forgiveness we extend to others flows from the grace we have received.



Key Insight

In the Kingdom of God:

**Mercy received
becomes
mercy given.**

People who truly understand God's mercy begin to reflect that mercy toward others.

People who understand this stay deeply dependent on God's own mercy and forgiveness to them.



People who understand how deeply they have been forgiven by God begin to live differently toward others.

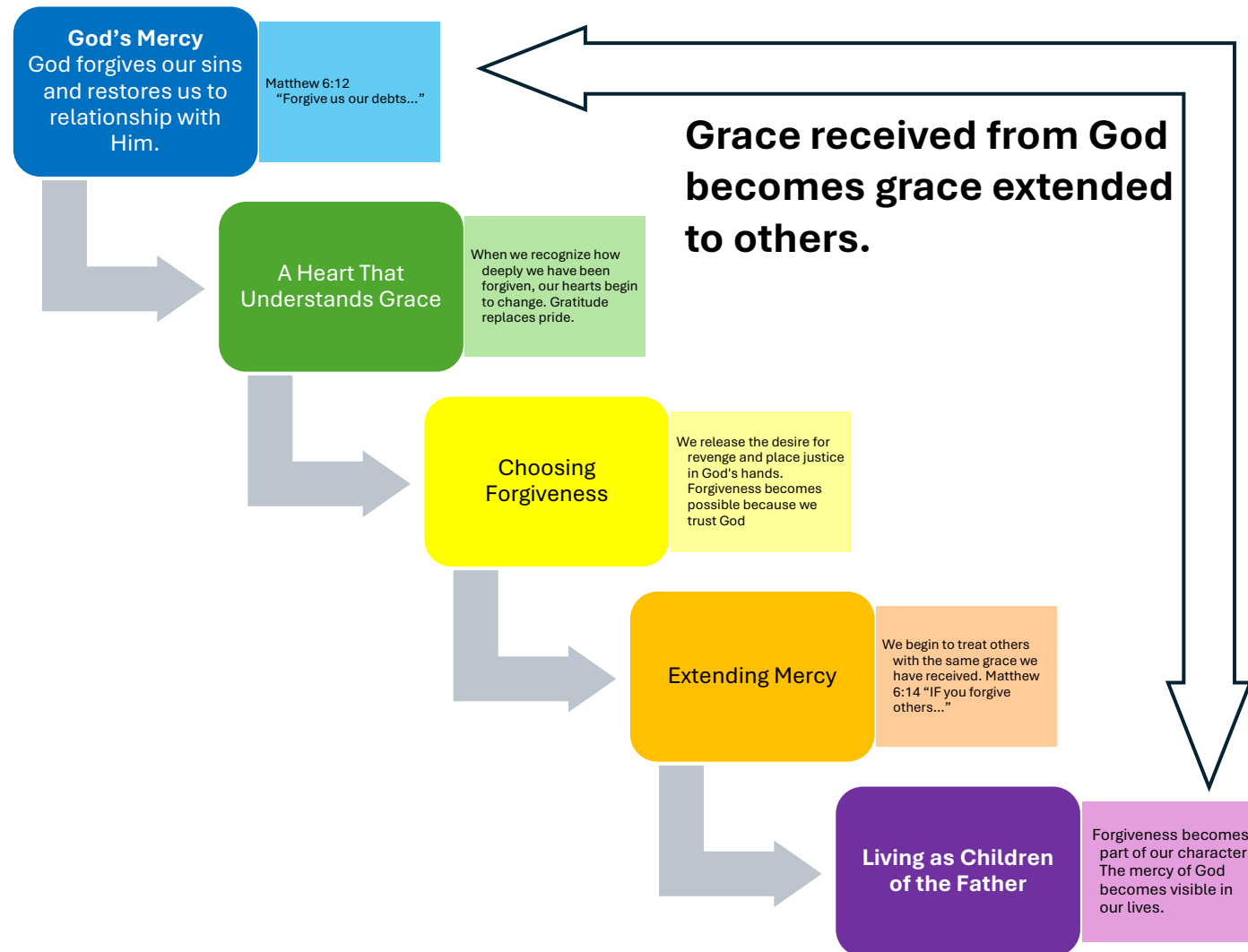


Forgiveness becomes part of the **transformation of the heart.**



Mercy Received → Mercy Given

Forgiveness flows from the mercy we receive from God.



What Forgiveness Produces

When forgiveness begins to shape our lives:

- bitterness gives way to healing
- anger softens into compassion
- broken relationships have the possibility of restoration

Forgiveness reflects the heart of God.



The Character of God

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself as:

- merciful
- patient
- slow to anger
- rich in love

When we forgive others, we reflect the character of our Father.



Where Jesus Goes Next

After addressing spiritual practices and forgiveness, Jesus turns to another issue that shapes the human heart:

Our relationship with money and security.

Matthew 6:19–34 explores questions like:

- Where do we store our treasure?
- What do we trust for security?
- How do we overcome anxiety?



Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think forgiveness is often so difficult for people?
2. What does Jesus teach about the connection between receiving and giving forgiveness?
3. How can forgiveness bring healing to relationships?
4. What might it look like to entrust justice to God?



Key Takeaway

When we have been hurt, the natural instinct is to hold onto anger or seek revenge.

But Jesus invites His followers into a different way.

Because we have received mercy from God, we are called to live as **people of mercy.**

Forgiveness becomes part of the life of those who belong to the Kingdom of God.

