

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sermon on the Mount – Session 3

Why Does God Care About Our Motives?

Matthew 6:1–15

SESSION FOCUS

Jesus teaches that life in God’s Kingdom is shaped from the inside out. In this session, we explore why God cares deeply about the *motives of the heart*, especially when it comes to spiritual practices and forgiveness. This study invites us to reflect on why we do what we do—and how receiving God’s mercy transforms the way we treat others.

OPENING REFLECTION

Think about a time when someone hurt you—through words, actions, or betrayal.

- How did you respond initially?
 - What emotions surfaced most strongly?
 - Looking back, what do you think that response revealed about what was happening in your heart?
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SCRIPTURE READING

Read **Matthew 6:1–15** slowly.

As you read, notice how often Jesus speaks about what is *seen* versus what is *hidden*, and how He connects our relationship with God to our relationships with others.

KEY IDEA

Jesus teaches that God is not impressed by spiritual performance. He desires hearts that are sincere, humble, and shaped by mercy.

PART 1: HURT AND THE HEART

(Matthew 6:1)

Everyone experiences pain caused by others—betrayal, rejection, dishonesty, or deeply hurtful words. Jesus begins this section of teaching by addressing something deeper than outward behavior.

Reflection Questions



1. Why do moments of hurt often reveal what is really happening in our hearts?
2. What are some common ways people protect themselves after being hurt?
3. How does Jesus' focus on the heart challenge the way we usually think about "right behavior"?

Personal Notes:

PART 2: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND MOTIVES

(Matthew 6:1–6)

Jesus speaks about giving, prayer, and fasting. In each case, He contrasts two motives:

- Doing these things to be noticed by others
- Doing them sincerely before God

Reflection Questions 4. Why do you think it can be tempting to seek approval from others for spiritual actions? 5. How can good practices slowly turn into performances? 6. What does it mean to live your spiritual life "before God" rather than before people?

Personal Notes:

PART 3: PRAYER AS RELATIONSHIP

(Matthew 6:5–6)

Jesus makes it clear that prayer is not meant to impress anyone. Prayer is personal, honest, and rooted in relationship with the Father.

Reflection Questions 7. How does thinking of prayer as a relationship change the way you approach it? 8. What fears or distractions sometimes keep prayer from being honest and personal? 9. What might change if you truly believed God already sees and knows you?

Personal Notes:

PART 4: FORGIVENESS AND MERCY

(Matthew 6:12, 14–15)

In the prayer Jesus teaches, forgiveness is central. He connects receiving forgiveness from God with extending forgiveness to others.

Reflection Questions 10. Why do you think forgiveness is often so difficult, especially when the hurt is deep? 11. How does remembering God's mercy toward you affect your willingness to forgive others? 12. What does it mean to entrust justice to God rather than holding onto revenge?



Personal Notes:

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few quiet moments to reflect honestly.

- Is there someone you are struggling to forgive?
- Are there spiritual habits in your life that have become more about routine or appearance than relationship?
- Where might God be inviting you to examine your motives more closely?

Personal Response:

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask God to help you receive His mercy fully and to let that mercy shape your heart, your motives, and your relationships. Pray for the courage to forgive and the humility to live your faith before God rather than others.

OPTIONAL TAKE-HOME PRACTICE

This week:

- Re-read **Matthew 6:1–15**
 - Choose **one area** (prayer, forgiveness, or motives) to reflect on daily
 - Ask God each day: *“What is shaping my heart?”*
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FINAL THOUGHT

In the Kingdom of God, **mercy received becomes mercy given.**

When our hearts are transformed by God’s grace, our lives begin to reflect His mercy to others.

