



Sermons of the Savior

Matthew 6:16-18

Lesson 12

This lesson begins with the words *Moreover, when you fast*. Jesus' goal was not to get His followers to *fast*; it was assumed that followers of God *fast* – just as followers of God *do charitable deeds* and *pray* (Matthew 6:1-8). Such is not necessarily the case in our day. Shouldn't it be? Let's approach these words of Jesus with hearts that want to do all that He calls us to do and do it with an attitude that makes Him smile.

OBSERVATION: Read Matthew 6:16-18

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text.
Key Words: *Father, fast/fasting, hypocrites* (and any words that refer to them), and *secret*
3. The contrasting word *but* is used two times in these verses. Mark the word as a key word. Choose one and record what is being contrasted.

CONSIDER THESE THINGS:

1. What is the hungriest you have ever been in your life?
2. What are some of the physical symptoms of *fasting*?
3. What are some reasons (wrong and right) that people *fast*?

PERFORMING CHARITABLE DEEDS AND PRAYING: Read Matthew 6:1-8

1. Matthew 6:16-18 is a continuation of Jesus' warnings to *take heed* that began in Matthew 6:1. What are we not to do when we *do charitable deeds* or *pray*?
 - a. What are we to do when we *do charitable deeds* or *pray*?

1.) Why?

Challenge: Review Lesson 6 of your homework. Share something that challenged you or ministered to you from that lesson.

2. Doing *charitable deeds* and *praying* are both very good things that please the heart of God. When do they not please His heart?
3. We can fall prey to thinking it is the size of the *deed* or the words of the *prayer* that impress God. After reading Matthew 6:1-8, explain what God is really looking for in our *deeds* and *prayers*.
 - a. How does this encourage you?

HYPOCRITES: Read Matthew 6:16

1. Jesus warns us *not to be like the hypocrites*. Using Matthew 6:16, what do we learn about the way *hypocrites fast*?
 - a. What are some ways we can *appear to men to be fasting*?

2. God has much to say about improper *fasting*. Read Isaiah 58:1-5 nlt.

"Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Tell my people Israel of their sins! ²Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to hear my laws. You would almost think this was a righteous nation that would never abandon its God. They love to make a show of coming to me and asking me to take action on their behalf. ³'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have done much penance, and you don't even notice it!' "I will tell you why! It's because you are living for yourselves even while you are fasting. You keep right on oppressing your workers. ⁴What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. ⁵You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like a blade of grass in the wind. You dress in sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?"

- a. Make a list of what the people were doing right.

- 1.) Why were their "right" actions "wrong"?

- 2.) Using your own words, summarize God's lament over His people.

3. What does Zechariah 7:5 teach us about God's heart for our *fasting*?

- a. Considering this, what can we conclude is one of God's purposes for *fasting*?

MISPLACED REWARDS: Read Matthew 6:16

1. Concentrate on the last four words of Matthew 6:16. What are they?

- a. What *reward* do you think these *hypocrites* were looking for?

- 1.) Define the word *hypocrite*.

- a.) How does the definition of a *hypocrite* help you to understand the goal of a *hypocrite*?

- b.) Why is it important to determine the goal of our actions?

FASTING - HOW? Read Matthew 6:17,18

1. What instructions for proper, God pleasing, *fasting* does Jesus give in these two verses?
 - a. What would be an example of *anointing your head* today?

2. What is the purpose of *anointing your head* and *washing your face*? verse 18
 - a. Reflect upon the message *anointing their heads* portrayed by recording the words of Ecclesiastes 9:7,8.

 - b. God's people often *fast* in the midst of trials. Why do you think God would have us *anoint our heads* symbolizing joy during hard times?
 - 1.) Why is choosing joy in sadness **not** hypocritical?

3. Contrast the goal of the *hypocrite* during fasting and the goal that we should have. What is the difference?

4. Read the following verses and record other actions which accompany *fasting*:
2 Samuel 1:12

Nehemiah 9:1-2

Daniel 9:3
 - a. Considering these verses, what should be our attitude when we *fast*?

5. Notice, Scripture does not tell us what to refrain from when we *fast*. It does not tell us how long to *fast*. Why do you think God does not instruct us in these areas?

FASTING - WHY? Read Matthew 6:18

1. We heartily agree that *doing charitable deeds* and *praying* are good things, encouraged by and approved by the Lord for all of those who belong to Him. However, *fasting* is often not perceived as a significant part of a believer's life. What is the promise for *fasting to your Father*?
 - a. What does the fact that our *Father sees* and *rewards fasting* say to you?

 - b. How does this help to answer the question - *Why fast*?

2. There are many examples of *fasting* in the Bible. Choose a few of the verses below and record when or why God's people fasted. Reading the surrounding verses will greatly aid your understanding. (Challenge: choose them all! ☺)

Old Testament:

Judges 20:26

2 Samuel 1:12

2 Samuel 12:16

2 Chronicles 20:3

Ezra 8:21

Esther 4:16

Jonah 3:5

New Testament:

Acts 10:30

Acts 13:2

Acts 14:23

- a. What did you learn about *fasting* from these verses?

REVIEW: Read Matthew 6:6-18

1. What has this lesson taught you about:

fasting to appear to men

God seeing and rewarding *fasting*

how to *fast*

why we *fast*

2. What question(s) did this lesson answer for you regarding *fasting*?

3. In what way(s) did this lesson renew your interest in or your commitment to *fasting*?

*"Now, therefore," says the LORD,
"Turn to Me with all your heart,
With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."
So rend your heart, and not your garments;
Return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and of great kindness;
And He relents from doing harm.
- Joel 2:12-13*

Observation Worksheet

Matthew 6:16-18

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.