

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Matthew 6:1–18 | March 8, 2026

In this message from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses three spiritual disciplines — giving, prayer, and fasting — as windows into the heart. His central challenge is this: are we pursuing God, or are we performing for an audience? True righteousness flows from a heart that genuinely hungers and thirsts for God Himself.

**Key Verse:** "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them..." --  
Matthew 6:1

## Discussion Questions

### Question 1 — The Heart Behind the Act

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them..." —  
Matthew 6:1

Jesus doesn't condemn public acts of generosity or worship — he condemns doing them in order to be seen. He calls this theatrical Christianity. What's the difference between letting your light shine (Matthew 5:16) and performing for others? How do you tell the difference in your own heart?

### Question 2 — Secret Giving

"Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret." — Matthew 6:3–4

The sermon noted that Jesus was addressing giving done to gain recognition — a plaque on the wall, a public announcement, or even a good feeling about ourselves. What motivates your giving? Is there a form of giving you practice quietly that nobody knows about? What keeps you doing it?

### Question 3 — Learning to Pray

"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name..." — Matthew 6:9

Jesus gave a pattern: first honoring God's holiness and kingdom, then bringing our daily needs. How does putting God first in prayer change the way you approach your own requests? Which part of the Lord's Prayer do you find hardest to pray sincerely?

### Question 4 — Forgiveness and Being Forgiven

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." — Matthew 6:12

Jesus returns to the topic of forgiveness immediately after the prayer. He links the forgiveness we receive from God to the forgiveness we extend to others. Is there someone in your life you are struggling to forgive? What would it look like to bring that before God in prayer this week?

### Question 5 — Fasting and Dependence

"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret." — Matthew 6:17–18

Fasting is described as a way of acknowledging utter dependence on God — turning our attention toward Him and asking Him to intervene. Have you ever fasted? What was that experience like? What might God be calling us to pursue through prayer and fasting?

### Question 6 — Pursuing God, Not a Performance

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." — Psalm 42:1

The sermon drew from Psalm 42 to describe the right posture of the heart: a genuine thirst for God Himself — not approval, not recognition, not even the spiritual benefits He provides. Do you experience a longing for God? What tends to crowd it out? What practices help you cultivate it?