

# Rossville Church of Christ

# Doorpost Devo



May 21, 2023



## Encouragement from God's Word

### **Matthew 6:1-6 Disciples Seek the Reward of Their Father**

Everyone loves to be praised by others. Everyone wants to be admired. Everyone wants to be respected. It is so normal, in fact, that we often fail to recognize how much we are driven and shaped by the desire to please others. While it is not wrong to be honored for the good that we do, loving such praise and seeking it is deeply dangerous and intoxicating. It is so easy for our motives to be slowly corrupted and warped.

### Scripture Plan: Read

Mon, Tues, Wed.:

Exodus 34:1-9 Each Night

Thurs., Fri., Sat.:

Lamentations 3:19-26 Each Night

### Devo Plan

1. Mon.--Read and Pray Together
2. Tues.--Read, Pray, Ask Questions, and Discuss
3. Wed.--Read, Pray, and Think about how to Apply
4. Thurs.-Sat.--Repeat steps 1-3 with New Passage
5. Sunday--Pray and Reflect on What was Learned in Worship and Class

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## Discussion Questions

Exodus 34:1-9

Discussion Question #1: What is God like? How does He describe Himself? What does this mean for us?

Discussion #2: How does Moses respond to God's revelation of Himself? How should we respond?

Discussion #3: How do we see these traits of God in our own lives? Describe some ways we can see God's steadfast love in our lives.

Lamentations 3:19-26

Discussion #1: Why is the writer so upset here? In our darkest moments, what should we remember?

Discussion #2: What does it mean that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases? What does steadfast love look like?

Discussion #3: What does it mean to wait on the Lord? What might this look like?

## Apply and Obey

To obey what God says, this upcoming week I will...

I will share what I learned with...

## Prayer Points

- Lord, Thank You--for your creative and unique design that reveals your love for us.
- Lord, We Praise You--that you are worthy of all our love and adoration.
- Lord, Help Us--to love you with everything we are and to display that love to our neighbors and in the unity we have as a church family

Our desire to do good becomes a desire to be seen as good. The goal of love shifts into an aim of wanting to appear loving. So, our efforts to do right become shallow, superficial, and devoid of power because God has been stripped from the center of our motivations and affections. When this happens, we place ourselves at the center.

Jesus warns about the dangers of such attitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. He teaches His disciples must beware of the tantalizing temptation to practice righteousness before others to be seen and praised by men. Consider his words in Matthew 6:1-6:

**“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”**

Disciples of Jesus make a special effort and discipline to practice righteousness in secret. This is no contradiction to Jesus’ instruction earlier in the sermon to “let your light so shine.” Jesus does not mean here that we never do anything good in front of other people. The underlying motives make the difference. When Jesus talks about letting our lights shine, it is for the purpose of the Father receiving glory from others. That means there is a way to be loving, obedient, and righteous in such a manner to point to and reflect the goodness of God rather than exalting ourselves. In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches His followers that we must discipline ourselves to practice righteousness in secret, so that our good works are not hypocritical and vain. If we only pray when others are watching, we are not shining the light of the Father. We are being disingenuous. If we only give when there is an audience, our giving is selfish rather than reflective of the generous heart of God.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9

There is a deep tragedy in the kind of hypocritical behavior of showy righteousness that Jesus depicts in Matthew 6. Not only is it self-promoting and dishonest, it is a way of life depleted of true joy and reward. The idea of reward is central in Jesus' teaching here. He warns that if a person's giving, prayer, and fasting are motivated by the desire to be praised and seen, they will surely receive their reward. This is interesting language from Jesus. He is warning about this kind of behavior, but he says they will be rewarded. His point is that we receive what we pursue. If momentary and fleeting praise from others is the goal, that purpose will be achieved. Yet, it is a shallow, passing victory.

In contrast, Jesus reminds His disciples that if they are motivated by love and desire to please the Father, the Father who sees in secret will reward those who do right. And what is the reward of the Father? It is the greatest gift of all: the Father Himself. Giving ought to be motivated by a heart that wants to know and reflect the generosity of the abundantly generous Father above. Prayer should be fueled by a deep longing to be in relationship with the loving Father who hears His children. Fasting should be provoked by a desire to be fully dependent on God as the source of true sustenance and blessing. And when God is the source and aim of our desires and affections, God is eager to give the gift of Himself. He delights to reward His children with more of Him. Giving is about God. Prayer is about God. Fasting is about God. All of life is about God. The more we focus on pleasing Him, loving Him, seeking Him, and honoring Him, the more we will receive Him as the most valuable reward and treasure. Vain praise from others will begin to pale in comparison to the deep riches of God's presence and pleasure.

The danger in seeking honor from men is not only that it dishonors God but also it deprives us of ultimate satisfaction in God and His glory. When this occurs, the practice of righteousness and spiritual discipline becomes shallow, ritualistic, hypocritical, and divorced of purpose. Jesus wants more for His followers. He wants more joy, more life, and more love than what can be offered by the fickle affections of men. God wants to draw us deeper into Himself. He wants us to eagerly seek Him in secret. He wants us to delight in His presence even when no one else is watching. He wants us to live our lives before Him as an offering pleasing to Him. And when we do that by faith and trusting in His grace, He is faithful to abundantly reward His children.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9