

Pleasing God

Read Matthew 6:1-18

"Look what I did, Daddy!" the child squeals, delighted that her father notices and approves. Children love praise—especially from their parents. Our heavenly Father understands this. In fact, He encourages us to seek His praise and gives it to us freely. However, God also knows how desperately we seek to impress others. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents personal godliness as life in God's family—a life in which there can be no true substitute for our Father's praise.

1. Why do you think children are especially responsive to praise?
2. Read Matthew 6:1-18. God is called our Father ten times in this passage. How does our relationship with the Father provide the context for understanding Matthew 6:1-18?
3. How does Matthew 6:1 relate to what Jesus says in Matthew 6:2-18?
4. In Matthew 6:2, Jesus describes how hypocrites in His day gave to the needy. In what ways can our giving be hypocritical today?

What kind of giving pleases God, and why (Matthew 6:3-4)?

5. In what ways do hypocrites love to pray today (Matthew 6:5)?

6. In contrast to hypocrites and pagans, what does the Father desire from us, and why (Matthew 6:6-8)?

7. In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus teaches us how to pray. What do we learn about prayer and about our Father in heaven?

8. In what ways do your prayers need to become more balanced?

9. In what sense does our forgiveness from God depend on our forgiving others (Matthew 6:14-15)?

10. In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus assumes we will fast. Why and how should a Christian fast today?

11. Jesus mentions earthly and heavenly rewards seven times in this passage. Why this emphasis?

12. How has this passage helped you to better understand life in God's family?