



Study Guide: Matthew – Chapter 6

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Matthew Chapter 6 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 6 is a pivotal portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, focusing on the inner life of the believer and how genuine righteousness differs from external show. This chapter contributes to the book's flow by moving from ethical instructions about interpersonal conduct to the heart's attitude before God. Readers should watch for Jesus' emphasis on sincerity in religious practices such as giving, prayer, and fasting, as well as His teaching on trust in God's provision. The chapter challenges superficial religiosity and invites a deep, authentic relationship with God.

Context

Matthew 6 is situated within the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7), where Jesus addresses His disciples and the gathered crowds on the kingdom ethics that characterize life under God's reign. The immediate literary context includes teachings on the fulfillment of the Law and the call to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Historically, Jesus speaks within first-century Jewish culture, where public religious acts were common and often performed for social recognition. The key speaker is Jesus Himself, teaching on a mountainside near the Sea of Galilee, providing covenantal renewal by interpreting the Law's heart in light of the coming kingdom.

Outline

The chapter begins with a warning against practicing righteousness to be seen by others, setting the tone for authentic spirituality. It then addresses three specific religious disciplines: giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting, each contrasted between hypocritical display and secret devotion. The Lord's Prayer is presented as a model of intimate communication with God. Following this, Jesus teaches about storing treasures in heaven rather than on earth, emphasizing eternal values. The chapter concludes with an exhortation not to worry about material needs but to seek first God's kingdom and



righteousness, trusting in His provision.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–4: Jesus warns against performing acts of righteousness, such as giving, to gain human praise. True generosity is done in secret, with the Father who sees in secret rewarding openly. This contrasts external approval with divine recognition.

Verses 5–15: Jesus addresses prayer, condemning public, ostentatious praying designed to impress others. Instead, He instructs to pray privately and sincerely. The Lord’s Prayer is given as a concise, comprehensive pattern emphasizing God’s holiness, kingdom, provision, forgiveness, and deliverance from evil.

Verses 16–18: Fasting is similarly cautioned against as a public display. Genuine fasting is done discreetly, with the Father’s approval, avoiding the appearance of suffering to elicit sympathy.

Verses 19–24: Jesus shifts to teaching on treasures, contrasting earthly treasures that decay or can be stolen with heavenly treasures that are eternal. The heart follows the treasure, and a divided loyalty between God and wealth is impossible.

Verses 25–34: The chapter closes with an exhortation not to worry about daily needs such as food and clothing. Jesus points to God’s care for creation as evidence of His provision for humans. Believers are called to seek first the kingdom and righteousness, trusting that all necessities will be provided. The future is not to be feared but embraced with faith.

Key Themes

A primary theme is the contrast between external religiosity and internal sincerity. Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of performing religious acts for human approval and calls for secret devotion that pleases God. Another theme is the orientation of the heart, shown in the teaching about treasures and single-minded loyalty to God rather than wealth. Trust in God’s providence is also central, encouraging believers to relinquish anxiety over material needs and prioritize the kingdom. The chapter underscores the intimate relationship between God and the believer, especially through prayer, highlighting dependence and forgiveness.

Cross-References



Jesus' warning against hypocrisy in giving, prayer, and fasting echoes Isaiah 58, which critiques empty religious rituals without justice and mercy. The Lord's Prayer parallels Luke 11:2-4, reinforcing its foundational role in Christian prayer life. The teaching on treasures aligns with Luke 12:33-34 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19, which also contrast earthly wealth with heavenly reward. The call to not worry recalls Philippians 4:6-7, where Paul encourages prayer over anxiety. Finally, the emphasis on seeking God's kingdom first connects with Revelation 21:1-4, pointing to the ultimate fulfillment of God's reign.

Application

Modern disciples are challenged to examine the motives behind their spiritual disciplines, ensuring that acts of charity, prayer, and fasting are expressions of genuine faith rather than performance. The call to secrecy in these practices invites believers to cultivate a private, intimate relationship with God that is not dependent on social approval. The teaching on treasures encourages a reorientation of values, prompting reflection on where one's heart truly lies and fostering generosity and detachment from materialism. Trusting God's provision challenges contemporary anxieties about security and encourages a lifestyle of faith that prioritizes the kingdom above all. Practically, this means embracing prayer as a daily conversation with God, practicing generosity discreetly, and resisting worry through confident dependence on God's care.

Summary

Matthew 6 calls believers to authentic righteousness that flows from the heart rather than public approval. Through teachings on giving, prayer, fasting, treasures, and worry, Jesus reveals the kingdom ethic of sincere devotion, single-hearted loyalty, and trust in God's providence. This chapter invites a transformation of the inner life, urging disciples to seek God's kingdom first and live in confident dependence on Him, embodying the true spirit of the Law in the age of the kingdom.