SLIGO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Discipleship 301

Session 1: *The Audience of One*

Matthew 6:1

"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."

Matthew 6:2-4 *Giving to the Needy*

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Matthew 6:5,6 *Prayer*

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **6** But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Matthew 6:16-18 *Fasting*

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **17** But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, **18** so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Summary:

There is something inside every one of us that wants credit for what we do. We want our sacrifice, big or small, to be noticed, acknowledged. But Jesus is pointing us here to a higher motivation, to a greater reward. He is pointing us to the same close relationship he had with his Father. While this teaching is an indictment on legalism, it is also an invitation to intimacy with God. Imagine if Jesus only did the good works that would have pleased the people around him? His whole mission and purpose would have been destroyed and our salvation would have been out the window. But because of his close relationship with his Father, he lived to please Him and not the crowds around him. When you love someone, you take delight in doing things just for them, no matter what others think. Jesus is saying that it can be the same for us. We can have an intimate relationship with our Father and enjoy His love and approval. This frees us from the stress of trying to please others and win their affection. It frees us from the fickle emotions of humanity, that rise and fall on the winds of fads and trends. It frees us to be loved and valued by the One true Love and to do all the good things that we were destined to do in Him. The highest joy comes when we live for the audience of One.

Quotes:

"I live before the audience of One—before others I have nothing to gain, nothing to lose, nothing to prove." —Os Guinness

"The flesh whines against service but screams against hidden service. It strains and pulls for honor and recognition. It will devise subtle, religiously acceptable means to call attention to the service rendered. If we stoutly refuse to give in to this lust of the flesh, we crucify it. Every time we crucify the flesh, we crucify our pride and arrogance." —Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

"In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. He waits with unwearied love to hear the confessions of the wayward and to accept their penitence. He watches for some return of gratitude from us, as the mother watches for the smile of recognition from her beloved child. He invites us to take our trials to His sympathy, our sorrows to His love, our wounds to His healing, our weakness to His strength, our emptiness to His fullness —Ellen White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*

Discussion Questions:

Does our motivation matter to God?

Why do you think Jesus wants us to keep our giving, praying and fasting in secret?

How would your life be different if we followed this teaching?

Is Jesus saying it is wrong to acknowledge someone's generosity? Should church's stop giving plaques, awards, and recognition for donations or service?

Jesus mentions three spiritual practices—giving, praying and fasting. How important are these practices to our spiritual life?

Homework:

Your **practice** for this week is to set aside a minimum of 15 minutes each day to reflect on the following Scripture.

Day 1: Reflect on Matthew 6:2-4. Ask God to show you how you can quietly give to someone in need today?

Day 2: Reflect on Matthew 6:5,6. How does this teaching change or encourage your prayers?

Day 3: Reflect on Matthew 6:16-18. What does this teach about fasting?

Day 4: Reflect on Matthew 6:1. Could you do better at living for the audience of One?

Day 5: Reflect on all the verses this week. What is God saying to you from all these verses? What is the most important thing He is saying to you? How can you put this into practice in your life?