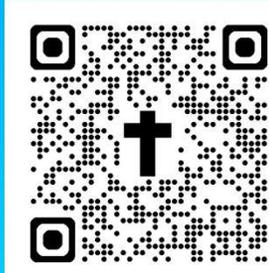


# Matthew 6

## Bible Study

By Gary Eugene Howell



### Verse 1

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:1.

Explain to your group that the word “men” is not referring only to males, but rather to

mankind, (i.e. people).

**Discussion:** How can someone tell if their motivation is to glorify God or to be noticed by others?

How do we balance letting our “light shine before men” (Matthew 5:16) with avoiding the hypocrisy described here in Matthew 6:1?

### Verses 2-4

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:2-4.

**Discussion:** What does Jesus mean by “sounding a trumpet” when giving to the needy?

Why does Jesus call those who seek public praise for giving, hypocrites?

What do you think Jesus means by “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”? Is Jesus speaking literally, or is this a figure of speech about our inner motives?

How does knowing that God sees in secret effect the way we approach giving?

### Verses 5-8

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:5-8.

**Discussion:** What exactly is Jesus warning against in these verses? Does He mean that all public prayer is wrong, or that only prayers offered in a private room with the door shut are valid? How can we tell the difference between sincere public prayer and hypocritical prayer?

How can finding a “secret place” to pray strengthen our personal relationship with God?

It is always good to spend unhurried time at the feet of Jesus. Having an organized prayer list and setting aside quality time in prayer with Jesus should be our desire and goal. But does a longer prayer automatically make it more spiritual? Is eloquent language or the use of fancy words

necessary for God to hear us? What do these verses teach us about the kind of prayers God truly values?"

### **Verses 9-13**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:9-13.

**Discussion:** What are we asking when we pray for God's will to be done?

Do you think Jesus intended us to pray these exact words regularly, or to use this as a framework for our own prayers? How might this prayer serve as a "template" for structuring our personal prayer life?

What would it look like for you personally to operate your life with a dependence on God from day to day?

### **Verses 14-15**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:14-15.

**Observation:** Through faith in Jesus Christ, all our sins are forgiven. Therefore, these verses cannot be interpreted to mean that we earn God's forgiveness by the good deed of forgiving others. Instead, Jesus highlights the link between receiving God's forgiveness and extending that forgiveness to others. We are the light of Christ.

**Discussion:** How does God's forgiveness toward us serve as the model for how we should forgive others?

What steps can we take to move toward forgiveness when our emotions resist it?

### **Verses 16-18**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:16-18.

**Discussion:** What does it mean that those who seek attention from people have "already received their reward"?

Why are some believers today tempted to show off their spiritual practices?

How can we keep our spiritual disciplines focused on our relationship with God instead of human approval?

### **Verses 19-21**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:19-21.

**Disclosure:** Since verse 20 emphasizes that what we do in this life can store up treasures in heaven and because the greatest work Jesus calls us to do in this life is sharing the gospel, the

author of this study believes that storing up “treasures in heaven” most likely refers to eternal friendships.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20)

The eternal outcome of our obedience is that more souls will enter heaven. This author believes that when we ourselves arrive there, those whom we helped lead to Christ may come and find us and say, “Thank you—because of what you did, I came to know Jesus as my Savior.” From that moment onward, and for all eternity, they will be our dearest friends. These eternal friendships will be a far greater treasure than any material possession we could purchase in this present life.

**Discussion:** Instead of spending our money on every new thing that catches our eye, imagine the eternal impact if we prioritized financially supporting those who are actively spreading the gospel. Jesus warns us to not store up treasures that moth and rust destroy or that thieves can steal. Instead, we are called to store up eternal treasures by investing into the work of spreading the gospel.

How many different ways can you think of to financially support the spreading of the gospel? If your group needs ideas, consider these:

- Supporting missionaries
- Support the printing of Bibles in foreign languages
- Providing scholarships for Bible school or seminary students
- Giving to gospel-centered nonprofits and charities
- Helping to fund church planting efforts
- Supporting prison ministries and hospital ministries
- Investing in Christian radio and other Christian media publications
- And most importantly, tithing to your local church

Why was St. Francis of Assisi incorrect when he said, “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.”? If your study group struggles with this question, here is the answer:

- People can not read your mind. A silent witness can be misunderstood. For example, if a successful middle-aged man shows kindness toward a young, attractive female, what might she assume his intentions are?
- The gospel is a message, not merely a lifestyle.
- Jesus and the apostles always preached with words.
- There may be circumstances in which sharing the gospel begins with building a relationship, but at some point, we need to tell them about Jesus.

- The Bible explicitly commands us to speak.
  - “Go and make disciples... teaching them...” (Matthew 28:19–20).
  - “Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have” (1 Peter 3:15).
  - “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

### Verses 22-23

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:22-23.

**Interpretation:** These verses can be interpreted as a metaphor about generosity or stinginess. For example, imagine someone who notices a person in need but refuses to help because they would rather save their money for a new boat. That stinginess can lead to the whole body being filled with darkness.

On the other hand, when we notice the needs of others and we’re willing to give, share or to take the time out of our schedule to help. We will be filled with light. We are the light of Christ.

The way in which we see the world around us, often determines if we are full of light or full of darkness. If we go around, all the time, seeing everything as negative; if we spend our time complaining about everything and criticizing everyone, we will be full of darkness. However, if we choose to see the good things in life, to be kind and patient with people and to give thanks to the Lord in all circumstances, our whole body will be full of light.

Rejoice at all times. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

**Discussion:** If we choose to see the world through a lens of gratitude and thankfulness, how can this change the way we experience daily life?

In what ways can kindness and patience toward others bring more light into the world?

Why does generosity fill us with light? / How does stinginess darken a person’s life?

How does a negative, critical attitude affect our spiritual walk with Christ?

### Verse 24

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:24.

**Discussion:** Why is it impossible to serve both God and money?

What are some signs that a person might be relying upon their money rather than God?

What might it look like to serve God with our finances?

How does faith in Christ affect the way we make decisions about spending our money?

**Verses 25-34**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 6:25-34.

**Imagery:** Picture God sitting on a park bench feeding pigeons, then turning to you and saying, “You are far more valuable to Me than these birds.”

**Discussion:** Can you trust God’s Word enough to believe that He is truly your provider?

This truth does not mean we are free to sit on the couch all day watching TV. From the beginning, God’s will has been that we work. Labor was part of Adam’s punishment after the fall:

“Cursed is the ground because of you; through toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.”  
(Genesis 3:17b)

So how do we balance these two truths? On one hand, we must work in order to eat. On the other hand, God assures us that we are more valuable than the birds He feeds and that he will provide for us. How do these verses align with each other?

**Observation:** Jesus gives the advice that we should “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”.

**Discussion:** Seeking God’s kingdom first can be understood both as a matter of priorities as well as a matter of the sequence of one’s daily schedule. Many successful people emphasize doing the most important things first each day.

Jesus points out in verse 32 that the Gentiles spend their days chasing after material needs. But what if the **first** thing you did each morning, before going to work or taking care of your responsibilities, was to spend a few minutes at the feet of Jesus, praying and reading His Word?

# Free Bible Study Resources for Bible Study Leaders

By Gary Eugene Howell

[garyeugenehowell.com](http://garyeugenehowell.com)

**Dear Bible study leader:** Here are a few tips on how to conduct a good Bible study that will foster spiritual growth in those attending.

**First:** Prepare for your Bible study by spending quality time in prayer in the days or week ahead of the study. Seek not to rely upon your own strengths and abilities, but instead rely upon the Lord.

**Second:** Begin your group bible study by taking prayer requests. If you have less than 25 people in your group, be bold by asking every individual, by name, what they would like prayer for. Then ask the group members to pray for one another. (You can ask, “who would like to pray for John?” or you can ask that everyone pray for the person on their left), however you choose to organize it is fine. Make sure you take notes on what people are asking prayer for. Then, before you begin the group prayer, ask if anyone needs a reminder of who and what they are praying for. If your group spends the whole hour praying and you never get to discuss the bible study, that’s perfectly fine.

**Third:** Don’t turn your Bible study into a sermon. Your attendees can hear a sermon on Sunday. Instead, aim to be the one who speaks the least during the session. When you ask the group a question, be comfortable with several seconds of silence while people gather their thoughts. If no one responds after a long pause, try rephrasing the question and ask it again in a different way. Then give everyone time to reflect and respond.

**Fourth:** Many Bible study sessions end up being shallow. This often happens when the leader asks simple questions that require only one- or two-word answers. Your goal, however, is to guide your attendees deeper into God’s Word. Lead the group in examining the context and meaning of the passage being studied. Then move on to application; but remember, the Bible is not a self-help book for behavior modification. It is the story of Jesus; what He has done for us, what He is doing in us, and how He saves us.

**Fifth:** Hopefully, two or three attendees will help carry the discussion; those who are eager to talk about the Word of God. However, be prepared in advance for the possibility that one person may try to dominate the conversation. If someone performs a five-to-six-minute monologue without allowing others to contribute, you’ll need to find a kind and respectful way to gently redirect the discussion and keep the conversations balanced.

**Sixth:** It’s perfectly okay if you don’t get to all the questions presented in this bible study. If you ask the first question and your group spends the remainder of the hour discussing it, your job is done. You had a successful bible study. Don’t be concerned that you didn’t get to the rest of the questions. The goal is for people to have had their faith encouraged.