



**RELIGION RESTORED - Restored Relationship - Matthew 6:1-8, 14-18**  
**February 27- March 5**

**Main Idea:** Followers of Jesus worship God in genuineness, not as a show for others

**Look Back**

Last week you were challenged to confess ways that you are missing God's heart by focusing on religion over relationship. What did you learn from this? How are you changing your actions based on this challenge?

**Look Up (Wrestle with the passage itself)**

*Read Matthew 6:1-8, 14-18 together.*

When we read these words of Jesus condemning loud, showy, and public worship in giving, fasting, and prayers, it can seem a bit strange. But in the time of writing this Gospel, it was not uncommon for the religious leaders to do these things in public in front of everyone. People tried to "show" their righteousness by making sure everyone could witness it for themselves. But Jesus makes it clear that this is not what God wants.

**Discussion Question:** While we may not announce our giving with trumpets, we still struggle sometimes with making our righteousness public, to be admired by others. What are some ways today that we have a similar attitude today?

God wants us as genuine worshippers. He does not want us to be a Christian for anyone else. He wants us because we want him. The point of these passages is not to be legalistic. This isn't a law against public prayers or a decree that if anyone knows about any of your giving or prayers that you've sinned. Rather, it's a heart matter. If someone knows you give to the church, why do they know? Is it to make you look better in their eyes? If you pray out loud is it to edify your family and friends, or is it to look holy in their eyes?

It is far too easy to do things to be liked by others and rewarded by others. But Jesus wants us to do that which God sees and likes, and we are to let him reward us. We are not to be like the Scribes and Pharisees in this regard. As we read in John 12:42-43:

*“Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God.”*

**Discussion Question:** In what ways does fear of what others may think affect how we follow Jesus? Where do we struggle with these same points of contention? Name them together, both as a confession and as a learning opportunity.

### **Look Forward (Challenge to do something with it)**

**Discussion Question:** Focus on modern ways we struggle with similar issues. What is one concrete way we can focus on restoring relationships with each other and with God through the way we worship?

**Challenge:** Choose the one discipline that you are most strongly averse to (giving, prayer, fasting, etc.) and dig into the relationship behind it, always asking yourself why you are doing this thing.

**Prayer challenge:** Pray that God would purify our hearts to worship him with genuineness, and protect us from the desire to be seen as righteous in front of others.