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I think it is safe to say that within evangelical “Christianity” most churches only teach about two of these five aspects of discipleship. Most churches teach about prayer. And, it has become popular recently in churches to teach about giving to the needy.

The most neglected practice of evangelicals would be fasting. When is the last time you heard a sermon or a lesson on fasting? Also, the Christian perspective toward money and material possessions is rarely discussed. Some churches stress the need for a single-minded focus on God’s kingdom and his righteousness, but I wouldn’t say the majority of evangelical churches make this their focus.

Yet, Jesus did not distinguish between these actions and attitudes in his sermon. He expected his followers to practice giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting. He also expected his disciples to show the proper caution toward money, possessions, and things, and to have a singular focus on his kingdom and righteousness. This demonstrates how modern “Christianity” has gotten away from following the teachings of Jesus. We must be careful to continue to explore the teachings of Jesus and practice what he taught.

These five expectations of Matthew 6 are “kingdom” expectations. Jesus meant for them to be practiced by his followers in the first century and in the twenty-first century. Although we live in a different culture from first-century disciples, our hearts should be the same as first-century disciples. In this way, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world just like they were. Jesus expects us to be different from the world and different from other religious people. He expects his community to be unique.

Jesus doesn’t want us to play church. He doesn’t want us to be another denomination that looks nothing like the church of the Bible. He calls us to be his “kingdom” people and to live distinctly and differently from the world and from denominational churches. How can we do that? By practicing these three acts and two attitudes.

In this article, we will focus on action one. Why? Because I’m attempting to answer the question—What does Jesus have to say about giving to the needy? (If you want a more detailed discussion of prayer and fasting, please see my book, *The Way of the Heart of Jesus, The Inward Journey*.)

Let’s begin with Matthew 6:1-4 (NIV):

Verse 1 is an important verse because it prefaces everything that follows concerning giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting. Jesus says we must practice our righteousness not to be seen by others. Instead, there should be a distinct attribute of anonymity when we give, fast, or pray. poor kids

What is our secret life like? What do we do in secret?

What we do in secret is revealing. Do we shop in secret, not wishing to reveal to our spouses what we are spending our money on? Do we eat in secret, now wanting others to know the decadent calories we are consuming? Do we log onto the computer in secret, not wanting our spouse to know what we are viewing on the Internet? Do we drink in secret? Do we binge in secret?

Editor’s note: Please visit www.DisciplesToday.org for the entire story, this version was edited for space.

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INTERNATIONAL & LOCAL NEWS BULLETIN

To Inspire, Inform, Unify and Grow the International Churches of Christ

DT DISCIPLES TODAY

WWW.DISCIPLESTODAY.ORG • ISSUE 634 • NOVEMBER 26, 2017

When You Give to the Needy

Dr. G. Steve Kinnard, New York, NY, USA

A Study Of Matthew 6

Introduction: We find ourselves at the beginning of the holiday season. First we commemorate Thanksgiving, where we focus on our blessings. Then we celebrate Christmas, where we rejoice that God sent his Son into the world. During this season of the year, our minds are often drawn to people who are less fortunate than us. That’s a good thing. But, as disciples of Jesus, healing the hurts of people ought not be a seasonal activity. It ought to be a daily mindset.

What does Jesus have to say about giving to the needy? There are many places to turn in the gospels to answer this question. One place to turn is the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. Some would look at Matthew 6:1-4 and stop there. Jesus does teach directly on the disciple’s obligation to give to the needy in these verses. However, in Matthew 6:19-34 Jesus continues his thoughts on giving to the needy by helping us with our attitude about money, possessions, and things, and by teaching us what our focus in life should be—God’s kingdom and his righteousness. So it is best to consider these passages together, which is what I will do in this series of articles.

In his sermon, Jesus begins to define his community. He defines what it means to be his follower, his disciple. So, if you claim to be a disciple of Jesus, you need to know his sermon through and through, from the “Blessed are” in 5:3 to the “with a great crash” in 7:27.

What has happened up to this point in the Sermon on the Mount? In chapter 5, Jesus listed the beatitudes, compared his community with salt and light, and then redefined the law by saying, “You have heard it was said to people long ago ... but now I say to you ...”

In chapter 6, Jesus moves to a new topic—What does it mean to be a part of Jesus’ kingdom? Jesus focuses on three actions and two attitudes.

What are the three actions? Giving to the needy, Prayer & Fasting

What are the two attitudes?

- An attitude of caution toward money, possessions, and things.
- An attitude of single-minded focus on God’s kingdom and his righteousness.



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Maria McHargue, Boston, MA, USA — Monday, 20 November 2017

The date November 10, 2015, is imprinted in my memory. I forget a lot of things but not this one. I remember the day I had spinal surgery. The quickly planned surgery changed the course of my life. The first...

• Seattle Singles NYE Conference

Ashley Connors, Seattle, WA, USA — Monday, 20 November 2017

Join the Seattle singles ministry for another unforgettable New Year’s weekend! Our goal is for singles everywhere to come away from this conference ready to kick off 2018 R O O T E D in Christ! We’ll have plenty of fellowship, lessons & sharing, service...

• One Surprising Reason Why Churches Stagnate

Christian Ray Flores, Austin, TX, USA — Friday, 17 November 2017

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• Phnom Penh Church Celebrates its 25th Anniversary

MJ Cheng, Phnom Penh, Cambodia — Wednesday, 15 November 2017

Phnom Penh Church of Christ celebrated its 25th anniversary on November 9-12, 2017 under with the theme The UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM! The Lord brought brothers and sisters from the USA, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and...

• UPCOMING EVENTS

Ring in 2018! New Year’s Eve Party

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania USA

December 31, 2017

Spring Leadership Meetings

Orlando, Florida USA

March 19-23, 2018

International Campus

Ministry Conference

Cincinnati, Ohio USA

July 5-8, 2018

2018 NE US Christian Conference

Providence, Rhode Island USA

July 20-22, 2018

International Singles Conference

Phoenix, Arizona USA

August 30 - September 3, 2018

Central American Conference

Panama City , Panama

October 5 - 7, 2018

2020 World Discipleship Summit

Orlando, Florida USA

July 2-5, 2020

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