

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 9: "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 6-7)

- True disciples do right things for right reasons.
- True disciples follow the Savior's example of prayer.
- True disciples treat others kindly and fairly.
- True disciples serve God and do his will.

A study of this lesson will encourage us to become more dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy once spoke with the bishop of a ward whose youth had worked to earn money for an activity. The bishop asked Elder Bradford if he would help the youth get some recognition for what they had done. To the bishop's surprise, Elder Bradford said he would not. He said that he was glad that the young people had worked hard, but that it was not important that they receive public recognition for that work. When the youth decided to donate their money to the Church's general missionary fund instead of using it for the activity, they wanted to have their picture taken with Elder Bradford as they made the donation, and they wanted to have the picture and an article put into the newspaper. Again Elder Bradford surprised them by saying "no." He told the bishop: "You might consider helping your young people learn a higher law of recognition. Recognition from on high is silent. It is carefully and quietly recorded there. Let them feel the joy and gain the treasure in their heart and soul that come from silent, selfless service" (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 75).

One lesson we can learn from Elder Bradford's response to the youth is that we should do good things because we love God and want to please him, not because we want to receive recognition from other people. This is one of the characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

As we discuss the Sermon on the Mount, list the qualities of true discipleship taught by the Savior in this sermon and consider what you need to do to become a more dedicated and sincere disciple of Christ.



Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

NEXT WEEK:

#10 "Take My Yoke upon You, and Learn of Me" (Matthew 11:28-30; 12:1-13; Luke 7:36-50; 13:10-17)

True disciples do right things for right reasons. (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21)

Matt. 6:1-2, 5, 16 Jesus condemned some people for doing good things such as giving alms (giving to the poor), praying, and fasting. Why? Because they were doing these things for the wrong reasons. Jesus referred to these people as hypocrites—people who pretended to have certain qualities when they do not have them; people who try to appear righteous but are not.

Matt. 6:2, 5, 16 The reward for people who do good things to be seen by others is that they will be seen by others. To please God, we must purify our motives for serving and performing other good works.

Matt. 6:19-21 In this sermon, Jesus taught about what we should value most—“... treasures in heaven”. For two examples of heavenly treasures, see D&C 18:14-16 (salvation for our brothers & sisters); D&C 130:18-19 (knowledge and intelligence).

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” To determine what you treasure, evaluate the amount of time, money, and thought you devote to something. Think about the things you treasure and consider what these treasures say about where your heart is.

True disciples follow the Savior's example of prayer. (Matthew 6:7-13; 7:7-11)

Matt. 6:9-13 is known as the Lord's Prayer. Consider what it teaches us about how we to pray.

The Lord's Prayer shows Jesus' reverence and respect for Heavenly Father.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks commented on the kind of language we should use when we pray: *“The special language of prayer follows different forms in different languages, but the principle is always the same. We should address prayers to our*

Heavenly Father in words which speakers of that language associate with love and respect and reverence and closeness. ... Men and women who wish to show respect will take the time to learn the special language of prayer” (Ensign, May 1993, 16, 18).

Matt. 6:7 counsels us to avoid using “vain repetitions” when we pray.

Matt. 6:8 Heavenly Father knows what we need before we pray, but the practice of asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt. 7:7) is necessary for our spiritual progress.

Matt. 7:8 The Savior's promise that “every one that asketh receiveth” does not mean that we always receive what we ask for or at the time we ask for it or in the way we would like it. See 3 Nephi 18:20 for clarification of the promise. After all, God knows what is best for each of us.

True disciples treat others kindly and fairly. (Matthew 6:14-15; 7:1-6, 12)

The Savior commands us to forgive others, so ask yourself—“How can I become more forgiving?”

Matt. 7:1 The Joseph Smith Translation reads, “Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged; but judge righteous judgment”. Righteous judgment requires that we see clearly and we cannot do that while sins cloud our vision. Moroni 7:14-18 teaches us how to judge and avoid unrighteous judgment.

Matt. 7:4-5 Jesus said a person who unrighteously tries to correct others is a hypocrite; so judging unrighteously is a sign of hypocrisy.

Matt. 7:12 is often called the “Golden Rule” and following it can make us better disciples of Jesus Christ.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton described a meeting in which a group of Church members considered the question “How can you tell if someone is converted to Jesus Christ?”

“For forty-five minutes those in attendance made numerous suggestions in response to this question, and the leader carefully wrote down each answer on a large chalkboard. All of the comments were thoughtful and appropriate. But after a time, this great teacher erased everything he had written. Then, acknowledging that all of the comments had been worthwhile and appreciated, he taught a vital principle: ‘The best and most clear indicator that we are progressing spiritually and coming unto Christ

is the way we treat other people.’” Elder Ashton added: *“The way we treat the members of our families, our friends, those with whom we work each day is as important as are some of the more noticeable gospel principles we sometimes emphasize”* (Ensign, May 1992, 20).

The following story illustrates how the Prophet Joseph Smith taught one sister to look for the beam in her own eye when dealing with a personal offense:

A woman went to the Prophet Joseph Smith upset about some things another member of the Church had said about her. The Prophet told her that if what the man had said was untrue, she should ignore the matter, because

truth would survive but untruths would not. The woman felt the comments were untrue, but she was not satisfied with ignoring the matter. The Prophet then told *his way of handling such comments*: “When an enemy had told a scandalous story about him, which had often been done, before he rendered judgment he paused and let his mind run back

to the time and place and setting of the story to see if he had not by some unguarded word or act laid the block on which the story was built. If he found that he had done so, he said that in his heart he then forgave his enemy, and felt thankful that he had received warning of a weakness that he had not known he possessed.”

The Prophet told the sister that she should think carefully about whether she had unconsciously given the man any reason to say the things he did. After much thought, she decided she had, and she thanked the Prophet and left. (See Jesse W. Crosby, quoted in Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* [1974], 144.)

True disciples serve God and do his will. (Matthew 6:22-34; 7:13-29)

Matt. 6:24 teaches that it is impossible to serve both God and mammon, or worldliness? Blessings God promises to those who serve him are found in Matt. 6:25-33 and D&C 11:7.

Matt. 6:33 Jesus promised that if we “seek ... first the kingdom of God,” we will be given all other

things that we need. Many of us have gained a testimony of this promise.

Worldliness turns our loyalty and service away from God. Some ways in which we might be tempted to seek the things of the world before the things of God include waiting to pay tithing until after we buy the

things we need or want or deciding not to serve a mission because of a desire for worldly things.

Matt. 7:13-14 As Jesus neared the end of his sermon; he taught that entering the kingdom of heaven required one to enter at the strait gate and the narrow way.

Conclusion

It is vitally important to follow Jesus Christ. As you ponder the message of this lesson, consider what you need to do to become a better disciple of Christ.

