



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

A PRINCIPLE OF DISCIPLESHIP

NOTES

Introduction

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus introduces us to a very simple principle which every disciple must come to grips with. The ten verses Jesus devotes to it in Matthew 6:24-34 are worth our consideration.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

(Matthew 6:24-34)

Principle: Singlemindedness Toward God

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
(Matthew 6:24)

In this verse Jesus is communicating a spiritual fact: it is simply not possible for a person to successfully serve two masters. Tragically, many Christians spend most of their lives attempting to do what Jesus has already told them is impossible.

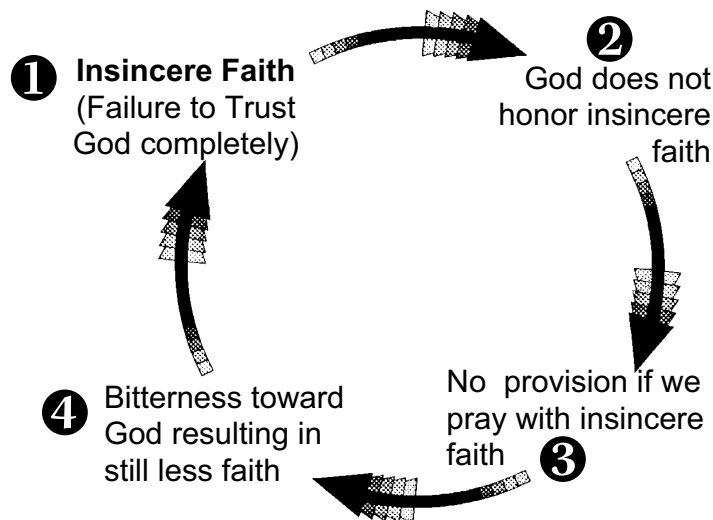
In the Greek this verse says “no one can be a slave to two masters.” If a person tries to take orders from two different authorities, there will certainly be strife and conflict in his heart. Almost always, he will find himself drawn to one and bitter toward the other.

Translating this principle to the Christian experience, we see there is an enduring struggle in our hearts to try to serve the two masters which Jesus identifies as God and mammon. The word mammon literally means “that in which one trusts.” In its original, common usage, it meant wealth, riches, and possessions. The natural inclination of the human heart is to trust in such material things—things which we can see and touch. However, Jesus is calling us to a different lifestyle—one where, living by faith rather than by sight, we trust in Him. Since the two ways of life are at two opposing ends of the spectrum, it is not possible to both trust Christ and money or possessions. If we attempt to do so, we will certainly find ourselves in tremendous conflict.

The conflict comes because God does not honor token *faith*. We may say that we trust God, but deep in our hearts we really don't think God will come through for us. In order to *save face* for God, we build up a little *nest egg* of financial security to help God out if He should prove unable to meet our needs.

It is not surprising that, if we do pray for God's provision with such an attitude, He will probably not answer our prayer. We are therefore reinforced in our misconception that God cannot meet our needs, and our faith in Him dwindles—forcing us to put more and more trust in mammon or money.

Consider the following illustration of how insincere faith works itself out in the life of a believer.



Of course, faith is a growing thing in the life of a believer. It is like a spiritual muscle which is strengthened through use. God does not expect a person to have giant-size faith overnight. In the beginning, a person may only have enough faith to trust God for small things; but if that person sincerely asks, believing in God's ability to provide, God will meet his need. Faith is strengthened and he will be able to trust God for larger needs. God is not so much concerned with the size of our faith as He is with its quality. It must be sincere and wholehearted—not half-hearted and insincere.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

(Matthew 17:19-20)

The apostle James described the insincere type of faith this way:

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

(James 1:8)

To sum this up, we could say a small and sincere faith in a great God is of far more value than a giant-size but insincere faith in the wrong thing.

Dissecting the Principle

In order to more completely understand the principle which Jesus is trying to communicate in Matthew 6, we will examine it point by point. Through a series of commands, examples, questions, facts, and problems, Jesus leads us to a practical application for our own lives.

Command: Do Not Be Anxious

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Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

(Matthew 6:25)

Jesus is not saying here that we should be irresponsible or unconcerned about the things of life or the needs of the future. On the contrary, the Bible tells us in many places we are to plan carefully, save, and invest for the future.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

(Proverbs 6:6-8)

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

(Proverbs 6:10-11)

Anxiety vs. Provision

We are also to be prudent in providing for the physical needs of our families.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

(1 Timothy 5:8)

However, we are not to become anxious or fearful about these things. The Greek says we are not to have “anxious thoughts” or “worry” about the needs of life. When our everyday needs like food and clothing begin to preoccupy us and cause fearful responses in our hearts, we become double-minded rather than single-minded toward God. If we have our attention focused upon Him, we can be assured that He will provide for us.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

(Philippians 4:6)

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:19)

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

(1 Peter 5:7)

If there is a question in your mind as to whom you are really trusting, there is a simple test which will quickly answer it. Simply evaluate yourself—your actions and reactions—when your funds are running low. If you are trusting self and your bank account, you will find your mind and heart full of apprehension, fear, and worry. If you are trusting Christ, your mind and heart will be at peace in the confidence that He will provide.

Example: Behold the Birds

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

(Matthew 6:26)

In this example Jesus tries to illustrate for us the message that we have no cause for worry or anxiety.

When was the last time you fed the birds? Occasionally, it is fun to feed them and watch them eat. However, if the birds were dependent upon humans for their food, most of them would have starved to death years ago. Yet, when was the last time you found a bird who had died of malnutrition? Starvation does not seem to be a leading cause of death among the bird populations of the world. Why is this? It is because God is deeply concerned about each one of them and feeds them Himself. He's been doing this consistently and regularly since He created birds.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

(Matthew 10:29)

Imagine the intimate concern of the Creator God for these the smallest and most common of His creatures!

Question: Who is of More Value?

Are ye not much better than they?

(Matthew 6:26)

The answer to this question is obvious. As much as God loves and cares for the birds, He is even more concerned about you. In Romans we are reminded that even when we are in sin or rebellion to God, He keeps extending His love to us.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:8)

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

(Matthew 10:30-31)

God is so aware and sensitive to us that He even takes note of the number of hairs that come out when we wash our hair (which for some of us is considerably more than others).

Question: Does Worry Help?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment?

(Matthew 6:27-28)

No matter how much you worry and fret about your height, it will never change. Worry can turn your hair gray and take years off your life span, but it won't help what you were worrying about.

There was once a man who maintained that worry certainly did help because 95% of all the things he worried about didn't happen. However, this fictitious statement further illustrates the futility of anxious thoughts and fears. Many of the things that so preoccupy us, either never change or never happen.

Worrying not only is futile concerning things that cannot be changed, such as our height or stature, it is also useless in providing the everyday needs of life. No one ever got the needed clothing or money to buy it by becoming anxious over it.

Example: Consider the Flowers

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

(Matthew 6:28-29)

In His first example Jesus drew from the animal world to prove His point. Now He reaches down into the world of plants. Flowers are not even animals, yet the whole world stands in awe of God's provision for them. He has dressed them in such splendour that even royalty cannot compare with their magnificence.

Question: Will He Not Clothe You?

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

(Matthew 6:30)

God has been demonstrating from the very beginning of time that He is not only able to clothe the earth, he is able to clothe people as well. After Adam and Eve sinned we read:

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

(Genesis 3:21)

God is concerned with our clothing needs as I discovered in my Christian life. After becoming a Christian, I became so excited about giving money to missions that I became a bit overzealous and overcommitted in my pledges. My clothes were becoming a bit shabby, especially my white shirts which I wore for church. Because of my pledges, I did not have enough money to buy new ones. Having discovered this passage in Matthew, I brought my need for white shirts to God in prayer but said nothing to anyone else.

One weekend shortly thereafter I went home to visit my parents. My mother informed me that my dad had just purchased six white shirts for himself which did not fit him comfortably. She said he would like to give half of the shirts to me. Since my father always bought the best quality shirts, I found myself not with the cheapest shirts available (which I probably would have bought for myself) but with some extremely nice white shirts.

This was only my first experience in trusting God for clothes. Many times over the years I have seen Him provide exactly what I needed to be clothed, not shabbily, but very adequately. He really does care for our needs in this area, and as we trust Him and experience His provision, we grow in faith.

Problem: "O You of Little Faith"

This is the heart of the problem. In the Greek the phrase "little faith" really means "of puny persuasions." We have the right answer in our minds, but we lack the conviction to really believe it in our hearts. We

listen to Satan who is telling us that we must trust ourselves and our own monetary resources. We try to help God out financially rather than trusting Him. When we do this, we don't help at all, but rather hinder God's working. We find ourselves caught between the commands of two masters—one of whom is telling us to trust self and money and the Other who is telling us to rest in Him. If we try to obey both masters, we find ourselves caught in the love-hate relationship Jesus described earlier.

Faith Pleases God

The Scriptures remind us how important faith is:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

(Hebrews 11:6)

According to this passage (and the entire rest of the Bible) there is only one way to please God—by the demonstration of our faith. Faith is simply trusting God to do what He has promised. Our puny persuasion is strengthened as we trust God and stand strong.

Faith is Sometimes Tested

The Apostle Paul was one who had determined to stand strong in his faith no matter how grim the situation seemed to be. And in Paul's life there were some very grim testings.

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

(2 Corinthians 11:24-27)

However, through it all Paul said:

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

(2 Timothy 1:12)

Paul's absolute confidence kept him trusting God. This is the kind of faith that pleases God and causes us to remain firm and single-hearted in God.

Command Restated: No Anxious Thought

*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
(Matthew 6:31)*

In verse 25 Jesus stated the principle. Now on the basis of His logic and examples concerning the birds and flowers, He draws the conclusion again: *Therefore don't worry or be anxious about food, drink, or clothing.*

Jesus wants us to be absolutely certain that God both *can* and *will* provide the things we need. Though He doesn't actually use the phrase "sovereignty of God," this is exactly what Jesus is teaching. We need to be anchored in the conviction that God will take care of the temporal as He promised in order to be able to give ourselves to the eternal.

Fact: God Sees All Our Needs

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

(Matthew 6:32)

There are some people who probably have a right to worry—those who have no Heavenly Father (the Gentiles). They had to work and slave to provide all their own needs in their own human energy. But Jesus reminds us that we not only have a loving father, we also have one who is aware of our smallest needs, even before we are. Nothing is overlooked with God or takes Him by surprise. Therefore, we can rest and be assured that in His time He will provide; and He is *never* late.

Application: Kingdom of God First

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

(Matthew 6:33)

Jesus says on the basis of all these things, there is only one conclusion or application to make. We must put His Kingdom and His righteousness first and leave the rest to Him.

In the very first session of our course we said there are only three things that last forever.

- **GOD**
- **PEOPLE**
- **HIS WORD**

If we are to give ourselves in exchange for eternal things, we must invest in these three areas. Notice how three external qualities are mentioned in Matthew 6:33.

• **GOD**—God’s Kingdom (His authority on earth) is what we must put as top priority in our lives. First, He must reign in our hearts as supreme Lord of all areas of our own personal lives.

• **PEOPLE**—The Kingdom of God is made up of all people who have crowned Him Lord of their lives. In seeking first His Kingdom, we must not only honor Him as Lord personally, we must work to win others to Christ and extend the power of God over more and more people. World rulers think of kingdoms in terms of real estate. Jesus’ kingdom is people.

• **WORD**—The righteousness of God is found in the Word of God. In this book God expresses His great unchangeable truths.

The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

(Psalms 19:9)

Seek Ye First	
The Kingdom of God	His Righteousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Lordship to Christ • Extension of His reign over People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Word of God

Jesus says if we will give ourselves to these three things and make them first priorities in our lives, he will provide the mammon or material things. Since God promises to provide the mammon, there is no need to serve the mammon. We can be single-minded and can set our hearts on God.

Command Restated: No Anxiety About Tomorrow

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

(Matthew 6:34)

Finally Jesus restates His command, this time in bite-size pieces. God does not expect or request us to be anxious about tomorrow, but simply to trust Him for today and its needs. When tomorrow becomes today, we will have a new supply of grace to meet the needs it contains.

*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not. (23) They are new every
morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

Lamentations 3:22-23

By learning to trust Jesus one step at a time, we can rejoice in the present and relax about the future. We will find it unnecessary to serve two masters because our Master meets all our needs.