

July 5/6, 2025
"The Pretenders"
Pastor Jeff Manion



SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2025 Focus: 50 Key Truths

Each Friday, explore a key truth about our Christian faith and how we can live in light of this truth.

Day 1 [Matthew 7:24-27](#) | Taking Jesus Seriously

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Matthew 7:24

Jesus's popularity skyrockets. People travel for miles, bringing the sick and curious. They form a diverse audience that includes religious leaders, fishermen, tax collectors and everyday families. Some begin to believe he's the long-awaited Messiah. Others simply hope to witness a miracle. So, as the crowd presses in, Jesus sits on a mountaintop and begins to teach. He delivers his core teaching in what is now known as the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5-7](#)). His teaching cuts through religious tradition and reveals God's heart for how people should treat one another and approach him. As Jesus concludes his sermon, he promises that all who put his words into practice will have a solid life that withstands life's storms. He warns that ignoring his words will have disastrous consequences.

Jesus's promise and warning are for us, too. His teachings aren't burdensome rules to follow but an invitation into the abundant life God designed us for. Taking Jesus's words seriously results in a life built on a strong foundation that withstands life's inevitable storms. Over the next few weeks, we will examine various sections of Jesus's core teaching. We will study his challenge about anger and what it means to love our enemies. This week, we discuss our motives—why we do the things we do and for whom we do them. A solid, abundant life is on the line.

TODAY: Listen to or read the entire Sermon on the Mount, [Matthew 5-7](#). Ask God to open your heart to Jesus's core teaching. Note any verses that stand out to you and ask God to help you live them out this week.

Day 2 [Matthew 6:1-18](#) | Motive

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. Matthew 6:1

In Jesus's day, religious leaders position themselves prominently in synagogues and on busy street corners, ensuring maximum visibility for their prayers, fasting and giving. Jesus warns against doing the right things for the wrong reasons. He repeats the pattern of action, motive and reward. Jesus is not telling people to avoid doing things in public. Earlier in his sermon, he said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" ([Matthew 5:16](#)). Rather, it's about their hearts. Doing things for honor or recognition from other people isn't God's way. They are to act for an audience of one—their heavenly Father.

We can easily misunderstand the intent of this teaching in [Matthew 6](#). It's not about doing things only secretly or anonymously. It's all about our motive. This teaching frees us from the exhausting cycle of seeking human approval and invites us into the joy of living for our Father's pleasure alone. As we live out our faith and engage

in spiritual practices such as giving, praying, serving, fasting or leading, we glorify God and point others to him. As we grow in faith, we will notice ourselves thinking less and less about what others think or say and instead focus on our Father's love and approval.

TODAY: Use [Psalm 139:23-24](#) as a prayer. Ask God to reveal your motives and lead you to live his way: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Day 3 [Matthew 6:1-18](#) | Reward

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:3-4

The people crowding around Jesus are concerned about what their community thinks of them. Righteous living brought real rewards and honor. Being seen as generous or devout could open doors to better marriages, business partnerships and positions of influence. But Jesus says an even greater reward awaits. Living for the Father, not for the people around them, brings eternal rewards. Rewards are not just about life after death, but a quality of life with God and others that starts here and now.

The same reward awaits us. We can easily get caught in a cycle of doing the right things for the sake of people's approval. We can chase temporary rewards of applause, achievement or recognition in our careers, social circles or even church involvement. The true reward is a relationship with God himself. Through faith in Jesus's life, death and resurrection, we can have a restored friendship with the Father. He desires to give us a full and rich life in all we do. That rewarding life starts now. It doesn't mean all our problems go away. However, we can experience his strength, peace, power and presence in every circumstance.

TODAY: Reflect on the rewards you chase. In your journal or mobile device, write down one to two things you are chasing. Then, listen to Ada Bible Worship sing "[Be Thou My Vision](#)." As they sing, ask God to deepen your relationship with him and to help you see Jesus as your greatest reward.

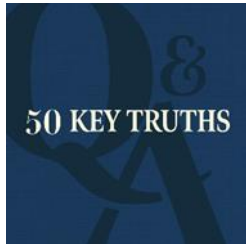
Day 4 [Matthew 6:1-17](#) | Hypocrite

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. Matthew 6:16

In ancient Greek and Roman theater, *hypocrites* wear elaborate masks to transform into different characters, hiding their true identities behind carefully crafted facades. Theater audiences know the performance isn't real. Jesus uses the term *hypocrites* to expose the religious performances happening in everyday life. People put on a mask of prayer or fasting to present themselves as righteous and holy. They put on a mask of generosity, but it's all just a show. Jesus goes after their hearts. God cares about who they are at their core. He doesn't want just their outward action. He desires their heart and whole lives.

It's human nature to want to be noticed. We all have a God-given desire to be known, seen and loved. The problem arises when we pursue that longing in ways that are separate from God. Social media poses a common temptation for us today. We can curate an online persona, creating a version of ourselves that isn't real. We put on masks for all to see and approve. Jesus calls us to something deeper. He challenges us first to check our hearts and focus on our vertical relationship with the Father before engaging in our horizontal relationships with others.

TODAY: Before entering conversations, meetings or posting anything online today, start with your vertical relationship with God. Pray a simple prayer inviting your heavenly Father to be part of every activity. Something like: "Father, thank you for seeing and loving me. Help me to live for your glory alone in this activity. Amen."



Day 5 [Romans 3:21-24](#) | Question 26: How Are We Saved?

Question: How are we saved?

Answer: We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by our own works.

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:21-22

Paul declares the revolutionary truth that salvation comes apart from human effort or law-keeping. The righteousness God requires cannot be earned through good deeds, religious activities or moral behavior. Instead, God provides his righteousness as a gift to all who believe in Jesus Christ. This righteousness is given "freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" ([Romans 3:24](#)). Grace means receiving a blessing you don't deserve. Jesus became "the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" ([1 John 2:2](#)), doing what sinful people could never do.

Faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior is the only way to receive Jesus's sacrifice and have our sins forgiven. We are unable to earn salvation. We receive eternal salvation only as we place our complete trust in Jesus. True faith results in more than just believing truths about Jesus. True faith leads us to act on what we believe and trust him completely with our lives. We must commit our lives to him by turning from our sin and humbly turning toward God, receiving his forgiveness and following him. When we truly trust Christ, we move from perishing to eternal life, justified freely by God's grace.

TODAY: Examine your understanding of salvation. Are you trusting in your good works or Christ's payment for your sins? If you rely on anything other than Jesus for salvation, turn to him in faith today. If you already trust Christ, thank God for his grace and consider how knowledge of God's grace might encourage someone struggling with guilt or trying to earn God's favor. Learn more about salvation by grace through faith in our We Believe document [HERE](#).