

Small Group Study Guide

Authentic Spirituality

Series: God's Stump Speech

Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18

From Sunday March 14, 2021

Take a moment to pray for the Lord to still your mind, as well as direct your thoughts, conversation and response to the study.

Appetizer:

Question: Have you ever heard of the Instagram account, "Preacher's Sneakers"? Is there anything inherently wrong with pastor's having nice kicks? What do you think these preachers are aiming for with their footwear?

Main Course:

Have someone read Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18

These passages follow along the same theme, and are only broken up by the Lord's Prayer, which will be dealt with next week.

In these passages, Jesus adopts a pattern of communication.

He starts with mentioning a spiritual activity
-Giving, Prayer, Fasting

moves to talking about how NOT to practice
-to be honoured by others

contrasting that with inauthentic people
-"hypocrites"

And where reward comes from
-Our Father who sees

Finally, Jesus talks about alternative ways of practicing spiritual activities:

-Give secretly, Pray privately, Fast unassumingly.

In a nutshell, Jesus is talking about our motivations and intentions when it comes to how we live out our spiritual lives.

Discussion: Do you think the Christian community in North America has an authenticity problem? Why or why not? Have you ever been tempted to practice spirituality as a way to impress others? What was that experience like?

One of the difficulties of practicing a spirituality with God as our primary audience is that we live in a self-focused culture. The temptation to be something we're not is fierce.

Jeff mentioned three ways that we can address our need for finding the approval of others when it comes to our spirituality.

1. Practice the spiritual discipline of secrecy.
Question: Has anyone experienced love and support from an anonymous source. Tell the group about it.

2. Allow the inner voice of your motivations to speak.

Question: If our public life does not live up with our private life, we're living a lie. Our intentions and motivations are misplaced. What are some ways that we can listen to that inner voice that is challenging our motivations?

3. Guard the Pedestals of your life.

Discussion: All of us have people that we hold in high regard. What happens to us when one of our heroes falls? Proves to be imperfect? What is the typical societal response to these heroes? How do you think that everyday people like you and I can help our heroes in being spiritual authentic?

Dessert:

When it comes to our character, let God be our publicist.

1. Take a moment to commit to something that you can do this week "for the glory of God and not for others." You can do this as a couple if you are married, or individually. Here's the key: Don't tell anyone!

2. Seek to be a mentor, or an accountability partner for someone. You don't have to be perfect; you just have to be authentic. Write an encouraging note to a young leader in your circle of influence, telling them that you are praying for them, for who they are

when no one is looking, or when they are away from the crowd.

Take a moment to pray for one another, that we would all resist the temptation to living a public spirituality that does not line up well with our private spirituality, and that we would embrace a Jesus way of seeking the pleasure of God.