

Virtual Bible Class with Rubel Shelly

“Purity of Heart” - Matthew 6:1-15

Here are some review and discussion questions that might help you pursue ideas highlighted in the video segments that discuss this section of the Sermon on the Mount...

Unit 1 – “Virtue Signaling”

1. Would you agree that Matthew 5:20 is something of a “key” to the Sermon on the Mount? What do you understand Jesus to mean about a type of righteousness that “exceeds” or “surpasses” that of the scribes and Pharisees?
2. Does the distinction between *quantitative* and *qualitative* righteousness help? Put that distinction in your own words.
3. Can you think of other biblical texts that focus on having a pure motive behind one’s “good deeds” in his or her spiritual life? Among others that come to mind, be sure to read and think about 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.
4. Do you know the term “virtue signaling”? It has been used quite a bit of late. Define the term in your own words.
5. How do the case studies in the *Book of Acts* about the behaviors of Barnabas (4:32-37) and Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) relate to Jesus’ teaching about purity of heart?

Unit 2 – “Transactional Righteousness”

1. Dallas Willard used to warn against “transactional” righteousness – doing something for the sake of getting a desired personal benefit. How does that idea relate to what we often refer to as “legalism”? Jesus’ words about those who “have received their reward in full”?
2. Must charity be “secret” in order for it to be a righteous action God will honor? Explain these words: “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”
3. What is *hyperbole*? Jesus appears to have loved the power of hyperbole in his teaching ministry. In addition to Matthew 6:3, read these examples: Matt 5:29-30; 7:3-5; 19:24; Luke 14:26. Can you add two or three other instances of this figure of speech from the Gospels?
4. Rubel shared a personal family story related to charity. Can you recall a similar instance of this sort of quiet kindness in the life of someone you know?
5. Can you think of social settings that tempt us to do our acts of charity and kindness with the desire for others to see and notice them?

Unit 3 – The Prophetic Tradition

1. Read two texts that show how Jesus stands in the Jewish prophetic tradition about the relationship of *religious observances* to *purity of heart*: Isaiah 1:10-17 and Amos 5:21-24.
2. The video speaks less about prayer than charity and fasting only because prayer tends to be discussed more often than the others. What is the most helpful thing you remember being taught about The Lord's Prayer? How has it helped your own prayer life?
3. Rubel outlined an approach to The Lord's Prayer that he ran across a long time ago. How did he relate the following words to the prayer: intimacy, reverence, submission, dependence, penitence, watchfulness?
4. What is the customary meaning of the term "fasting"? Is it a practice that has been emphasized in your spiritual history? To what degree do you find fasting helpful?
5. In the prophetic tradition, Isaiah seems to challenge people of his time who fasted without value. What was his counter-explanation about the fasting Yahweh desired to see? Why is this an important idea to think about in relation to self-denial?