

Do you remember Charlemagne? His name translates to Charles the Great. His leadership sparked the Carolingian Renaissance that breathed life into the Dark Ages of the 8th and 9th centuries. The transformational factor that contributed most to societal advance was not the fact that his conquests united most of western Europe, or that he was the first to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor, or that he standardized currency, or that he initiated large architectural projects. That is all true. But the greatest spark of renaissance was the establishment of universities. Education is foundational to societal prosperity. Learning is the gateway to better living.

This is why we find Jesus teaching! Matthew tells us that Jesus showed up in another dark age and was the light that had dawned on a people living in darkness (Matthew 4:16). And we find that a large part of Jesus' calendar was given to teaching (Matthew 4:23). The Sermon on the Mount and the other teaching discourses of Jesus are the stuff of renaissance. Jesus intends to enrich and transform our lives by teaching us. He wishes to spark spiritual renaissance. He desires for us to have abundant life, so he teaches us how

In part 1, we considered the first two of seven topics in the Sermon on the Mount. In part 2, we are considering the last 5.

1. Blessings (Matthew 5:1-16)
2. Law (Matthew 5:17-48)
3. Spiritual Practices (Matthew 6:1-18)
4. Value (Matthew 6:19-34)
5. Judgment (Matthew 7:1-6)
6. Generosity (Matthew 7:7-12)
7. Behavior (Matthew 7:13-27)

The main point is that *life in the kingdom is inside out*. In part 1, we saw the first two principles of the inside out life:

Inside Out Principle 1: The inside out life finds blessing in *promises* over *circumstances*!

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes *attitude* over *action*!

In part 2, we will consider 5 more principles of the inside out life. To get to all 5 points we will be moving fast. I have included several links for podcast episodes where I go into more depth on a particular thought. We will also be reading some lengthy sections of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is doing the teaching here. The added comments will simply help us process his teaching as it applies to the inside out life of the kingdom.

Spiritual Practices

This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:1-18 (ESV).

¹Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

²Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread, ¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

What's on the outside? On the outside of spiritual practices is the desire to be seen and rewarded by other people.

What's on the inside? On the inside of spiritual practices is the desire to be seen and rewarded by God.

Inside Out Principle 3: The inside out life craves the ***approval of God*** over the ***attention of people!***

In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus gives instruction on 3 spiritual practices: giving, praying, and fasting. He opens the teaching by saying, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” Then he teaches on each practice using a repeating pattern:

1. Don't be like hypocrites who do spiritual practices to be seen by people.
2. They have received their reward in full.
3. Practice them in secret.
4. The Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Do you see a connection between our audience and our reward? No matter our motive for doing spiritual practices there is always a reward. The truth that makes all the difference here is that the ***reward for spiritual practices comes from the one they are done for***. Let that sink in. We choose who we will receive our reward from when we choose whose attention we will seek.

It should grip us with caution when we hear Jesus say, "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward in full." This means, that's all there is. The reward of doing good to be seen by people is that they might see you, appreciate you, promote you, cheer you on, praise you, or respect you. It might be a large reward. The sobering truth is that the reward stops there. There is no value beyond that. Do you feel how sad this is? The sad end of hypocrisy is not that it doesn't have a reward but that the reward it gives is so disappointing. The depressing reality hits us when we get the reward and realize, that's all we get.

I once heard a star NFL running back tell his story. He worked his whole life to excel in sports, to win. He rose through the levels to become a professional, then an all-star, then a future Hall of Famer. Then he reached the top by winning the Super Bowl. That night he went back to his hotel and was hit by a wave of depression. He felt empty. It was not because he didn't get the reward, but that he got it and realized that was all there was.

The disappointing reward of the world is why we feel empty after a big success. It is why hypocritical spirituality always leaves us feeling hopeless. It is why we can feel so alone when we are relatively popular in our social network. It is why a highly compensated job without a God glorifying purpose erodes our self-worth. It is why your physical attractiveness can function in a way that leaves you feeling used and undesirable. It is why you can work like crazy and feel like you are not enough. It is why the dream house can feel so empty when we realize that it did not produce the dream household. The great disappointment is not when we don't get the reward but when we do and we realize that the reward was not enough.

The reward of the world is always better in anticipation than reality. In the kingdom the anticipation is great but the reality overdelivers.

Inside Out Principle 3: The inside out life craves the ***approval of God*** over the ***attention of people!***

The point of practicing our good deeds in secret is not to hid them from people but to do them for God. In chapter 5, Jesus said to let our light shine so that people might see our good deeds. But it didn't stop there. The result of seeing our good deeds is that they give glory to our Father

(Matthew 5:16). It is alright if they see you when what they see gives God glory. Avoidance of being seen by people is not the goal, approval of God is.

Spirituality is not meant to be flashy. If you live an inside out life people will see a difference, but they may never see the thing behind the difference. Jesus is teaching a code of a different kingdom and this stuff is only seen by that King. Nobody else is really going to know if you are pure in heart, or if you pray daily, or if you love your enemies, or if you think lustful thoughts, or if you give a regular tithe, but God does.

Luke lists a short version of the beatitudes (Luke 6:20-22). Then he lists some negative beatitudes (Luke 6:24-26). It begins like this. ²⁴ But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. If you seek earthly reward, you will probably find it! But that is all the reward you will get.

I invite you to do a self-audit of your motives for spiritual practices. Why are you giving, coming to church, serving, teaching, singing, reading your Bible, praying, reading that book, going to the men's group, or telling your friend that you will pray for them? Why? If you can find in you any motive to be seen by people you know that you will probably get that reward, and that is all you will get. No other good will come from it. Is that reward worth it? But oh, our God knows how to give rewards.

Inside Out Principle 3: The inside out life craves the *approval of God* over the *attention of people!*

For more on this thought listen to this podcast episode, Stop praying to get attention!

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2043226/12087507-stop-praying-to-get-attention>

Value

We are going to bundle the next several sections under the concept of value. There is a theme here.

This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19-34 (ESV). Listen for the truths about value.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

²⁵ Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

What's on the outside? The external appearance of value features the treasures and possessions that we can see now.

What's on the inside? The inner estimation of value treasures those things that will last.

Inside Out Principle 4: The inside out life values the *eternal* over the *immediate*!

Values shape our future self. In verse 19-21 value is featured in treasures on earth and treasures in heaven. We are given the incredible insight that our heart follows our treasure. Our life is shaped most by the things we value most. I call this "formation by affection". We become like what we love. It matters what you desire because your life moves in the direction of your deepest desires.

When the attraction of treasure on earth is the strongest pull on us we must recognize that our strongest desires are not always our deepest desires. The temptation surrounding the treasures of earth may make the desire strong but by faith we can trust that our deeper desire is for treasure that will last.

For more on this thought listen to this podcast episode, We Become Like the Thing We Love.

<https://palmersdachurch.podbean.com/e/we-become-like-the-things-we-love/>

In verse 22-23 we are taught something similar in the concept of the eye being the lamp of the body. It is what we look at, what we fixate on, what we value, that fills our whole being.

For more on this thought listen to this podcast episode, The Eye is the Lamp of the Body.

<https://speaklord.buzzsprout.com/2043226/11596548-the-eye-is-the-lamp-of-the-body>

Inside Out Principle 4: The inside out life values the *eternal* over the *immediate*!

Opposing values fight for supremacy. They are not content to share your affections. In verse 24 we see that no one can serve both God and money. As the value we place on things that are not God increases, our perceived value of God decreases. It has the power to become a master over us and to lead us to have such low value for God that we hate his rule over us.

Inside Out Principle 4: The inside out life values the *eternal* over the *immediate*!

There is a relationship between value and worry. In Matthew 6:25-34 we see that worry thrives in distorted ideas of value. Worry loses its power as we see value more from God's perspective.

We will always worry when we value the immediate more than the eternal. As our value for material things goes up, our worry does too. As our value for eternal things goes up, our worry goes down. Listen again to verse 31-33.

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

There is another relationship between worry and value. The more we believe that God values us the less we worry. In verse 26 Jesus asks, "Are you not of more value than they?" He loves you. He knows what you need. He will take care of you. Don't measure your value by what you feel in the immediate but by the enduring love that God has for you. Estimate your value from the perspective of eternity, not the moment of your failure.

Inside Out Principle 4: The Inside out life values the *eternal* over the *immediate*!

Judgment

This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 7:1-6 (ESV).

Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

⁶ Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

What's on the outside? On the outside are the visible faults of others that trigger us to judge them.

What's on the inside? On the inside are the hidden faults of our own. That could trigger us to pursue personal growth.

Inside Out Principle 5: The inside out life chooses *growth* over *judgment*!

Imagine if you could take back every judgmental moment of your life and replace it with a step toward personal growth. What if the very impulse to think critically of others became a trigger for positive change in your own life. Jesus brings up the hypocrisy theme again in this passage (Matthew 6:2, 6:5, 6:16, 7:5). Because it is so easy to slip into hypocrisy when we start focusing on the faults of others. This is the first way that we are called to choose growth over judgment; use the energy you would have spent judging others for personal growth.

There is another way that we are called to growth over judgment. See, verse 5 says “first” and “then”. The first step is to take the log out of your own eye. That step gets all the attention. What about the “then”? If we limit this principle to our own growth we miss half of the teaching.

Jesus didn't say to not remove the speck but he tells us the proper way for removing it, “then you will see clearly to remove the speck...”. There is a place for helping others grow by removing the speck. Don't come with judgment. Don't come in hypocrisy. Come with love for a fellow sinner. It all hinges on the heart you approach your brother with; judgmentalism or love.

Judging others only results in us being judged. But when we do the humble work of addressing our own faults we gain the opportunity to help others with theirs. The best way to help others overcome is to be overcomers ourselves who choose growth over judgment.

Verse 6 has always seemed a bit out of place to me. But I think it fits in this way, don't attempt the work of removing specs with someone who is not ready to receive it or they will trample the love you offer and then attack you. We get ourselves ready by removing the logs from our eyes. They also must be ready by being willing to let us help with the speck.

Inside Out Principle 5: The inside out life chooses *growth* over *judgment*!

Generosity

Listen for generosity in the teachings of Matthew 7:7-12.

⁷ Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹² So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

What's on the outside? On the outside, we ask for things based on what we deserve and we treat others based on what they deserve.

What's on the inside? On the inside, God gives to us based on what we desire and he calls us to treat people the way we desire to be treated.

Inside Out Principle 6: The inside out life gives and receives what is *desired* over what is *deserved*!

Verse 12 is the Golden Rule. You have probably heard it before but you might not have considered what it means in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. That is the trouble with the verses that get quoted often, we know the one line but not the flow of the teaching. It comes right after the “ask”, “seek”, “knock” section. This is rich. Follow the flow of thought.

We receive from God based on our desires. Desire is at the root of the invitation to “ask”, “seek”, and “knock”. Verse 11 labels us as “evil”. So we know we don’t deserve the good things we ask for. But God loves us like a parent loves a child, only way more. So he gives to us based on our desire not on what we deserve. Praise God. And praise God also for sometimes not giving us what we desire because he knows that it wouldn’t be good for us. Getting what is desired over what is deserved is rooted in the generosity of God.

Now, the Golden Rule, “do to others what you would have them do to you”. Treat others based on what they desire not on what they deserve. The Golden Rule flows out of the generosity of God. Our privilege of having our desires met and of meeting the desires of those around us are rooted in the generosity of God. The Golden Rule is not about reciprocity but about generosity.

We don’t know exactly what others would desire so we use a reasonably accurate rule, give them what we would desire. But the goal is not that they get what you want but that you give what they want. There are some points where the Golden Rule breaks down. Some people have strange desires, that should not be used as a standard for treating others. Maybe you really enjoyed your bootcamp experience and you thrive when people scream in your face. Don’t apply the Golden Rule. Or maybe you’re single and looking for somebody and in a public setting you see someone who is incredibly attractive. You think, I would like for them to walk over to me, sweep me off my feet, profess their love for me and kiss me. Don’t apply the Golden Rule. Just because you wish they would do it to you doesn’t always mean you should do it to them. The point is not to insist that others want to be treated the way you do but to use your own desire as a reference point for how they will likely desire to be treated.

Desire is powerful. In the kingdom it goes to the next level. Think back to the beatitudes when Jesus says, “blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled”. It is the hunger that triggers the filling. It doesn’t work like this anywhere else but the kingdom.

When we are hungry for physical bread, the reality of hunger is not enough to supply the food. We can't just be hungry, we have to eat to satisfy the hunger. In the kingdom our holy desire is enough. God is so eager to give righteousness, or any other good thing we desire, that he only waits for our desire to permit it and it is given. You don't have to earn "righteousness money" and go to the "righteousness grocery store" and cook a "righteousness meal" in order to be filled. You just have to be hungry for it. The ultimate reason why we don't have righteousness is that we don't want it. It is not given because we deserve it but because we desire it.

Inside Out Principle 6: The inside out life gives and receives what is *desired* over what is *deserved*!

Behavior (Matthew 7:13-27)

Jesus concludes his teaching with the call to right behavior. In Matthew 7:13-27, listen for behavior in words like "do", "put into practice" and "bear fruit".

¹³ Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

²¹ Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" ²³ And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."

²⁴ Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

What's on the outside? On the outside, we show that we are good students by listening.

What's on the inside? On the inside we prove that we are good students by internalizing what we listen to and reproducing it on the test.

Inside Out Principle 7: The inside out life is revealed in the *application* of the *information*!

Hearing is information. Behavior is application. Those who apply what is learned find the narrow gate. Prophets show what is on the inside by application, behavior, or good fruit. It is not those who say “Lord, Lord” who enter the kingdom but those who do the will of the Father. The house that stands is not the one who simply hears but the one who acts on what has been heard.

This is not a contradiction of principle 2 (the inside out life prioritizes *attitude* over *action*!). It is a teaching of the action that should flow from the right attitude. It is the outer works that flow from the inner faith. The inner person is the foundation. The behavior reveals what is on the inside. If you turned the sheep inside out, you would find it is really a wolf. How do we know? By the behavior that their life produces.

For success in life, application of learning is required. There is a Muppet Christmas movie my family loves called Emmet Otter Jug band Christmas. There is a group of hooligans in a rock band. They sing a song with some great lyrics. One of the lines says, “We don’t wish to learn but we hate what we don’t understand.” We are sometimes that way. We have resistance to learning. And that always ends in frustration when we don’t understand. It ends in broken lives and missed opportunities. Every great principle that might guide our life must be learned and applied.

Don’t mistake inspiration with application or insight for change. Just because you read the book doesn’t guarantee that you will live any different. There are great benefits to our information age but the house falls down if it is built on information with no application.

I listened to a stimulating interview of Andy Crouch on the Rule of Life Podcastⁱ. Andy has researched and written on the intersection of faith and technology. He makes the case that our use of modern technology reflects an ancient and unholy desire; *we want to change things without being changed*. He makes a distinction between instruments and devices. Instruments must be used with skill. We must become someone who can play them. Devices require no change in me. I can push the button and music plays, food is ordered, packages appear on my doorstep and filters enhance my appearance. He argues that this desire to make change happen without being changed is the appeal of magic, the basic promise of all false religion, and the very temptation that led Adam and Eve to take a bite of the forbidden fruit. If I just cast the spell it will disappear. If I just make the sacrifice the gods will send rain. There is no need for a transforming relationship with the god. If I just bite the fruit, I will gain knowledge. There is no need for slow character development. In the kingdom we must be changed to bring change. We must make application of the information to get results. Knowledge, insight, and inspiration must be applied in our behavior to bring about change. But increasingly, since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, our culture has been shaped by the mentality of the device. And the common belief is that we don’t need to be changed to bring about change. Jesus calls us to not just hear the wisdom of the kingdom but to be changed by putting it into practice.

I have read 8 books on discipline in the past year. I have a real interest in growing as a disciplined person. And these books have been inspiring. I have learned about people who have done some incredible things. I have learned some transformational principles. But reading those books does nothing to get me to bed on time or out of bed on time. It doesn't make me more fit or better with how I use my time. I sometimes think it does because I know all these great things. But what makes me more disciplined is practicing what I have learned.

So recently, I enrolled in a course. I had already read the book twice. But in the course I am able to go deeper in the learning process. I watch the author speak on the subject. I have access to a study guide. I have regular coaching calls with the instructor. The first time I heard the book it was great information. As I slow down and go through the course it is becoming application. Jesus is inviting each of us to enroll in his course. He wants these principles of kingdom living to take root in our identity and be seen in our habits. He wants to schedule those coaching calls where you will grow in your application of the principles. Enroll in God's inside out course for kingdom living.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls us to live inside out. Each of us have a way of life. It might be good or bad, intentional or unintentional, but there is a way you do life. The crazy truth is, the way you live is perfectly designed for the outcomes you are getting. The fruit of our life is not random. It flows from our actions and attitudes. To change the results we must change the system. This is what Jesus calls us to. He is teaching us the principles of kingdom living that get kingdom results. Are you ready to embrace kingdom living?

Life in the Kingdom is Inside out.

ⁱ <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/luminary-interview-andy-crouch/id1646299048?i=1000584495528>