

# Jesus's Teaching on Giving and Prayer | Matthew 6:1-8 | 11/27/16

- Introduction
  - Jesus proceeds to show us what He expects in regards to giving, prayer and fasting.
    - None of these were new concepts, the Jews had been practicing them for some time in their worship to God.
    - However, Jesus saw how it was being used and needed to tell them not only what it was to look like on the outside, but what the condition of the heart of the person performing them should be.
  - Jesus previously spoke of the scribes and the Pharisees and their faulty righteousness.
    - Matthew 5:20
      - “For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”
    - He will expand upon this and use them as examples of what “not” to do. Of what the heart should not look like.
  - The acts of giving, prayer and fasting are acts of worship unto God.
    - This is their purpose. They are done by the Christian as an act of worship and obedience to God.
    - However, the example given to the people by the scribes and Pharisees.
- **Read Matthew 6:1-8**
- Our reasons and the condition of our heart matter when we worship God through giving, prayer and fasting. | Matthew 6:1
  - **Read Matthew 6:1**
  - The first thing that Jesus says when He begins this discourse on giving, prayer and fasting is that He says we are not to practice our righteousness in front of people.
    - At first we may ponder at this because we think well I thought that it was good to give, pray and fast in public?
    - Are we to hid in our rooms and only pray there?
    - Do we need to 2<sup>nd</sup> guess praying at a public restaurant?
    - **This is what the atheists always tell us when we want to pray in public!**
  - Jesus however, isn't commanding us to be secret Christians who must hide our works. He is concerned with **“why”** we are doing them.
    - As we know as Christians there is much more to this because the verse must be taken within its context.
    - Jesus was referring to the hypocrites, the scribes and Pharisees in the manor in which they were doing these things.
      - **He was rebuking them.**
    - Jesus had already stated that we are to shine our lights, our Christian character upon the world.
      - Matthew 5:16
        - “In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they **may see your good works** and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
        - He desires for others to see our good works, so this cannot be a contradiction.
      - To shine our light before men is not to put everything that is “Christian” about us in a box or in the closet and hide it from the world.
      - It is letting it show in everything that we do, both in our actions and our speech.
    - The key in this verse is **“to be seen by them”**

- Jesus is not concerned with doing these acts of worship in public, but He is concerned if we are doing it “to be seen by them”.
  - In fact, Jesus repeats this throughout the rest of these verses:
    - Matthew 6:1 – “...to be seen by them...”
    - Matthew 6:2 – “...to be applauded by people...”
    - Matthew 6:5 – “...to be seen by people...”
    - Matthew 6:7 – “...they’ll be heard for their many words...”
    - Matthew 6:16 – “...so their fasting is obvious to people...”
  - The Pharisees sought self-righteousness, they did not seek to glorify God.
  - **Jesus is making it very clear that what is most important about these acts of worship, is not just the physical act, but it’s the condition of our heart and why we are doing it.**
    - The heart of the hypocrite was performing these acts to glorify themselves, to seek self-righteousness.
      - James 3:14-16
        - “But if you have bitter jealousy and **selfish ambition** in your hearts, **do not boast and be false to the truth**. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and **selfish ambition exist**, there will be disorder and every vile practice.
      - **Yes, this is possible even when doing “good” things that God has called us to do. If our hearts are not right.**
    - They sought honor from men, they desired their approval and glory to lift themselves.
    - Their hearts were not in the right place. They were full of selfishness and did not do this to bring glory to God.
  - Jesus desires our acts of service, our works to be done with a heart of humility and obedience.
    - Jesus wants our acts of worship to be done with a heart of humility, to do it out of love and meekness. Not because we want to benefit ourselves.
    - It is done to glorify God.
      - Psalms 51:17
        - “The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. God, You will not despise a broken and humbled heart.”
      - James 4:10
        - “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.”
      - James 3:13
        - “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”
    - **It is under these conditions that we give, pray and fast. We do it to glorify God and out of obedience.**
  - **Under what circumstances could we find ourselves with a self-righteous seeking attitude with our giving, praying and fasting?**
  - **How is that that we could still allow so much selfishness to take over something that is supposed to be an act of worship?**
- How to give | Matthew 6:2-4
  - **Read Matthew 6:2-4**
  - Do not sound your trumpet when you give.
    - Jesus saw the heart of the hypocrites, that when they gave they made sure that everyone knew what they were doing.

- They wanted everyone to see how righteous and generous they were when they would give to the poor.
- They sought and desired for others to commend them for their good works as their sole reason for giving.
- **They didn't do it out of compassion and love, but instead out of selfish ambition.**
- With giving Christians, must be careful not to find themselves in a similar predicament.
  - It is quite natural that we are thankful and appreciative to others when they give to others.
    - We see this happen all the time if someone provided food and clothing to those in need, or when someone donates to the church.
    - We see the generosity and we cannot help but to appreciate what that person has done.
    - There is nothing at all wrong with this, it is completely normal and to be expected.
  - However, when the giver seeks this appreciation and is only doing it for this reason is where the problem arises.
    - We see the recognition that people bestow upon those who give and help others, we are drawn to want the same for us.
    - **So unfortunately, you have many Christians who give purely for worldly praise.**
      - While the recipient may truly be appreciative of what they received, the giver's motives are purely selfish.
    - Examples:
      - Church member makes a large donation because they want the congregation to see how generous or "wealthy" they are.
      - Someone who donates only because they will have their name put on a wall or on a building.
      - It could be the Christian who always has too voice how often they give or the work that they did for others, seeking their praise.
      - **What are some other examples of self-righteous seeking giving?**
- The wisdom of giving in secret
  - Jesus contrasts this self-righteous seeking giving with that of complete secrecy.
    - Jesus says that instead of blowing your trumpet because of your giving instead to give in secret. In fact, so secret that your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing.
    - This is completely the opposite of the actions of the hypocrites and of worldly thinking.
      - **While you naturally would want to seek praise from others, you should suppress it.**
  - Giving in secret shows the true condition of the heart.
    - A giver with the right heart would give even if nobody else would ever see or hear about their giving.
      - **This is why Jesus says to give in secret, because there is no question about your true intentions or motives.**
      - If you give in secret, you cannot be giving purely for self-righteousness and to be glorified by others.
        - The only one who knows that you gave is God.

- A Christian wanting to examine themselves to see if their giving is with a pure and humble or heart that of self-righteousness needs to simply see if they would still give if completely anonymous.
      - **In contrast if you cannot give unless others know what you did, then you need to re-evaluate your heart.**
  - The giver with the right heart condition, understand that the praise and blessings that God provides from our giving is far greater than any appreciation the world may give.
    - **While the worldly giver gives because they receive glory from others, the one who gives with the true and humble heart gives to receive glory from God.**
    - The only one that matters that knows of our giving is God, and Jesus promises us that when we give in secret He knows.
    - This is the glory that the Christian must seek when we give, not that of the world.
  - **Do you think that to give in secret helps shield the Christian from giving with the wrong motives?**
  - **Is it hard to resist wanting to receive the natural joy we feel when being praised by others?**
- How to pray | Matthew 6:5-14
  - **Read Matthew 6:5-14**
  - Jesus again gives another example of how important it is for our hearts to be in the right place especially in prayer.
    - The hypocrites would pray publically in front of large crowds. However, their intentions were once again for self-righteousness.
    - They wanted the praise of the world for their apparent holiness.
  - Prayer is a conversation with God, not with the world.
    - These Pharisees seemed to lack the understanding of the purpose of prayer.
    - Prayer is used to speak to God, it is not something that is used to make yourself look good in front of others.
      - While we of course will pray together as a body, it is directed only at God.
    - But the Pharisee's seemed to think that their prayer needed an audience, so that they could sound very "holy" and eloquent. For others to regard them with reverence.
  - Prayer is intentional and your words do matter as they should come from your heart.
    - Matthew 6:7
      - "and 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."
    - Prayer is a conversation that we have with God that involves the heart.
      - If our prayer is just to sound pleasing and to look good in front of others, then our heart certainly isn't in the right place.
      - Our heart is where the real us is, it is what must be speaking when we pray.
    - Our words do matter to God.
      - Unlike the Pharisees who would use empty phrases that might sound impressive from those listening, had no value at all to the one who they were supposedly intended for.
      - If we pray to God and just speak meaningless statements, or we just go through the motions of saying something but have no real substance behind it, we can be as these Pharisees.

- Our prayers don't have to be eloquent, they just need to be real.
        - **When we pray, it does not have to be eloquent, it does not have to sound impressive, it simply must be from our heart and be real.**
        - If we pray in a small group seeking to "sound holy" then our prayers are not any better than the Pharisees.
          - We don't need to sound like a professional prayer.
        - Our prayers regardless of how they sound must truly come from the heart.
  - The wisdom of praying in secret
    - Jesus contrasts the self-righteous seeking prayers of the Pharisees by telling us to pray in secret.
      - To be sure this does not mean that we cannot ever pray in public, but Jesus is speaking to something that is very important to the Christian.
    - Just as to give in secret shows your true intentions, so does praying in secret.
      - If you only pray to put on a show, then there is no reason for you to pray alone or in secret.
      - But if you pray in secret where no one can hear you, then you truly believe that God is hearing them.
    - To pray in secret makes certain that that we are truly focused and removed from distractions.
      - There are many other reasons why praying in secret is important in the life of a Christian.
      - Jesus showed us this example by praying alone on many occasions.
        - Luke 5:16
          - "Yet He often withdrew to deserted places and prayed"
        - Mark 1:35
          - "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He got up, went out, and made His way to a deserted place. And He was praying there.
        - Matthew 14:23
          - "After dismissing the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone."
        - Luke 6:12
          - "During those days He went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God."
      - If we pray in secret, we remove ourselves from the worldly distractions and we completely focus on God.
        - This allows us to forget the momentary things of life and just spend time speaking with our heavenly Father.
        - Jesus did this and so there is obviously a great benefit in doing this.
    - This does not prohibit praying as a group.
      - Acts 1:14
        - "All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."
- **Does praying in secret allow you to have a closer conversation with God?**
- **How would you describe what your prayer "in secret" looks like?**