

Living for the Audience of One Matthew 6:1-18

I. There is a what, a how, and a why to everything that we do.

- A. The “what” is the practice itself.
 - 1. Jesus speaks about three spiritual disciplines.
 - (a) Giving to the needy, prayer and fasting.
 - (b) He says “when” you do these things, not if.
 - (c) So, he intends that his followers will give, pray and fast.
 - (d) Therefore, we know that these are good practices.
- B. The “how” is about the way that you do it.
 - 1. “Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness to be seen by men.”
 - (a) If you do, you have received your reward in full.
 - (b) So, you will not receive a reward from God.
 - 2. Jesus says to do these things privately.
 - (a) Your heavenly Father sees you.
 - (b) He will reward you.
- C. The “why” gets to the heart of the matter, motives.
 - 1. Those who want to be seen have received their reward.
 - (a) What is the reward they are seeking?
 - (b) They want the approval of people.
 - (c) They want to be perceived as more spiritual than others.
 - (d) They are looking for public recognition.
 - (e) They want to be esteemed, looked up to.

II. Spiritual disciplines are meant to draw us closer to God.

- A. When we give, pray, and fast we are acknowledging God.
 - 1. Giving to the needy.
 - (a) We acknowledge that God has been generous to us.
 - (b) God has taken care of us and he will continue to do so.
 - 2. Praying
 - (a) We acknowledge our need for relationship.
 - (b) We acknowledge the power of God.
 - 3. Fasting
 - (a) We acknowledge that connection with God is a priority even over our physical needs.
 - 4. In these practices, we are acknowledging dependency.
 - (a) That God is the giver of all good things.
 - (b) We are yielding to God whose ways are best.
 - (c) We are expressing faith or trust in God.
 - 5. These practices are meant to move us away from self-orientation.
 - (a) In self-orientation, we make ourselves the center of all.
 - (b) These practices are meant to move us to a God-orientation.
 - (c) A God-oriented perspective puts God at the center of all.

6. But they don’t move us away for self-orientation if we have the wrong motives.

III. The “why” question gets to the heart of the matter.

- A. “Why” is about motives.
 - 1. Why do we do “acts of righteousness” to be seen?
 - (a) We are looking for recognition.
 - (b) We want to be perceived as someone to be admired.
 - (c) On a deeper level, we want to be loved.
- B. But this is hypocrisy.
 - 1. We are doing “spiritual” things in order to be seen as spiritual.
 - (a) But, instead of God’s glory, we are seeking glory for us.
 - (b) Instead of being ways to love God, we are seeking love for ourselves.
 - (c) We want to look like we’re all for God, but we’re all for us.
 - 2. It is also idolatry.
 - (a) We are seeking horizontally, what we can only find vertically.
- C. Jesus said, “Be careful” not to do these things to be seen.
 - 1. Why do we have to be careful? Because it can be subtle.
 - (a) Why do you do what you do?
 - (b) Check your heart, your motives.
 - (c) Don’t stop doing good. But do it for God, not for self.
 - (d) Make it between God and you. Do it privately.
 - 2. An important distinction.
 - (a) This is not a reason or excuse not to pray in public.
 - (b) Jesus also said, “where two or more are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them.”
 - (c) Prayer gatherings are good.
 - (d) But don’t try to impress people with your prayers.
 - (e) Don’t refrain from praying because you’re afraid that you can’t pray like someone else. Just talk to God.
- D. Wrong motives usually point to false beliefs.
 - 1. Through faith in Christ we are forgiven, adopted, accepted.
 - 2. We are significant, made in his image for a purpose.
 - (a) We have a new identity. We are the children of God.
 - (b) We represent God in the world.
 - 3. We are secure!
 - (a) God loves us with an everlasting love!
 - 4. When we truly believe these things, we don’t need human approval or recognition. We don’t need to impress anyone.
 - 5. Jesus says we will be rewarded.
 - (a) But if we seek recognition now, we already have our reward.