

Sermon on the Mount, Part 5: Quit Being a Showoff!

For Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 of this series, see [Sermon on the Mount, Part 1: The Beatitudes](#), [Sermon on the Mount, Part 2: Salt and Light](#), [Sermon on the Mount Part 3: Dealing with Anger](#), and [Sermon on the Mount, Part 4: Love Your Enemies](#) under the Bible Studies tab at www.ChooseJesusToday.com.

Jesus continued his sermon on the mount, and he turned his attention to true righteousness and what it looks like in everyday life. Here, Jesus emphasized the importance of having the right motivation in giving, in prayer, and in fasting and not being a hypocritical showoff. Jesus chided the Pharisees for giving, praying, and fasting for the purpose of being seen and admired by others rather than for the purpose of living righteously. Jesus does not want us to be like the Pharisees, who were insincere in their worship and practiced it to receive praise from others rather than to worship the Lord. True righteousness comes from within, and we need to examine our motives to see if we are worshiping the Lord with sincerity and truth.

Giving

Matthew 6:1-4, covers Jesus' teaching about giving with the right attitude and motive:

Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Here, Christ is telling us that if we give simply to receive the praise and approval of others, then that is all we will get. In his "Wiersbe Bible Commentary", Dr. Wiersbe explains, "If we give with the wrong motive, we rob ourselves of

blessing and reward and rob God of glory, even though the money we share might help a needy person.” It is a good thing to help people, and Jesus expects us to help the needy, whether it involves giving our time or helping financially. In other words, if we give to show off in front of others, God will not be glorified and we will not be blessed. The Pharisees had a terrible habit of blowing trumpets and going to great lengths to announce their charitable acts to the public so that the people would admire them. They told everyone every time they did one small thing to help someone. Aside from fact that they were not glorifying God, they were also arrogant and obnoxious. They defiled their good deeds and should have just kept their money.

Jesus is not saying that we have to give anonymously. What Jesus is saying, however, is that we should not become a bragging showoff when it comes to doing things to help others. Perform acts of kindness quietly as much as possible. Let it be between you and the person you are helping. There is no need to go tell all your family, friends, co-workers, classmates, and neighbors that you bought groceries for a needy family. If the recipient wants to tell people how you blessed them that is fine. You do not need to broadcast it. Do good deeds quietly and with the right motive and see how the Lord will bless you for it!

Prayer

Jesus left guidelines for us to have a powerful prayer life. Those guidelines are found in Matthew 6:5-15 and are typically called The Lord’s Prayer. We have covered this lesson in detail in the Bible Study “Teach Me to Pray: the Lord’s Prayer Applied.” You are encouraged to review that lesson. A few points regarding the right motive and attitude toward prayer are worth repeating, however.

Jesus, again, warns us against being a show off; this time concerning our prayer life. Some people love to “play church” where they show up every Sunday, sing the loudest, and pray with the most dramatics all for the purpose of being seen and admired. This is not the kind of prayer God wants. In fact, Jesus called these type of people “hypocrites” because they use prayer as an act of self-glorification rather than as an act of worship. People who pray in this manner will not be rewarded by the Lord; the admiration (or in some cases, amusement) of people is all that their prayers will accomplish. Jesus also warned that it is wrong if the only time that we pray is when we are in public and others are watching. We should

have an active prayer life in private. The term translated “closet” means “private chamber” or “private place”. Cultivating a consistent private prayer life will result in a deep emotional connection with God, which in itself is a great blessing.

To learn how to cultivate a sincere and fervent prayer life, read the Bible Study “Teach Me to Pray: the Lord’s Prayer Applied” on the Bible Studies tab at www.ChooseJesusToday.com.

Fasting

Fasting means to abstain from eating. Unger's Bible Dictionary explains that the word “fast” in the Bible is from the Hebrew word “sum”, meaning “to cover” the mouth, or from the Greek word “nesteuo”, meaning “to abstain.” The act of fasting helps us to focus our mind on the Lord and draw closer to him.

Dr. Wiersbe explains, “Fasting helps to discipline the appetites of the body and keep our spiritual priorities straight.” Quite a few people in the Bible fasted; for example, Moses, King David, Elijah, Queen Esther, Daniel, and Paul. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days as he began his earthly ministry. As with all things, Jesus wants us to fast with a pure motive. Matthew 6:16-18, covers Jesus’ teaching about fasting:

And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

When the Pharisees fasted, they did so in such a way that people knew they were fasting. They looked disheveled and acted as though they were about to pass out from starvation. They did this so people would think they were more holy and spiritual than they really were. They wanted to win the praise of men. As a result, they received the admiration they wanted but lost God’s blessing. True fasting is between you and God, and it should be done in secret. That does not mean that you should not tell anyone. But, it does mean that you should not use your fast as an occasion to brag and seek praise from others. As with giving and with prayer, if we fast with sincerity and truth, God will bless our lives and draw us closer to him.

Summary

The Pharisees were showoffs. They gave, prayed, and fasted to gain the approval of people. Instead of earning God's approval, they received the shallow praise of men. They were spiritually hollow and lifeless. We must not live that way. We should want the abundant blessings of God in our lives. True worship will ensure a closer walk with the Lord and answers to our prayers; although, sometimes the answer is "no". It will also ensure the blessing of God here and now and the reward of God when Christ returns. Choose not to be a showoff. Choose true worship. And most of all, choose Jesus today!

God bless!