

## Doing the Right Thing the Right Way

Matt. 6: 1-18

It's always possible to do the right thing the wrong way. In this passage, the right thing is giving, praying, and fasting. The wrong thing is doing it for the wrong reason, to be seen by people and to receive glory from them.

There are three types of people in this passage. Those who seek to impress people, those who seek to impress God, and those who focus on God's glory.

There are things we should understand about what Jesus is saying here, starting in verse 1. First, the issue is not giving publicly. Unless we give electronically, all of our giving is basically done publicly. In fact, in 5: 16 we are told to do our good works before men.

The issue is the motive. We should not give to impress people. When we do, we have received our reward in full by gaining admiration from people. Our motive must always be to glorify God, not impress people.

Also notice that there is a reward from God we can lose or gain based on the way we give. Verse 1 shows us there is a reward from our Father in heaven that can be gained when we give the right way. It can be lost by giving the wrong way.

A hypocrite in its original meaning was an actor, one who is behind a mask or putting on an act for people. This is what Jesus calls those who give to be seen of men. Instead, we are to give in secret.

The expression "do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" is an old Jewish expression simply emphasizing doing something secretly.

When we give God's way, with the right motive, he will see in secret and reward us. The word "openly" was a later addition, but the point is still true that God will reward us.

The same applies to prayer. We are told in verse 5 not to pray to be seen by people. The issue again is not where we pray or even whether or not people hear

us. There is no problem with corporate prayer. The issue is always the motive. God sees the motive, and when it's wrong, the only reward is the praise of men.

We should have a secret place where we can go to pray in secret. The reward of God is not simply the location of our prayer, but our seeking his glory and honor and not our own.

The idea in verse 7 of vain repetition is that of assuming we gain God's approval by many words or eloquence. These are the ones that seek to impress God. However, this does not impress God. He wants us to come to Him the right way. He already knows what we need before we ask, yet He tells us to ask Him.

Why? It's because He wants an intimate relationship with us. Prayer is the means by which this relationship is created. And when we pray seeking His glory first and foremost, then our needs, this is the way He has ordained to act on our behalf. This is the essence of the Lord's prayer in vs. 9-13. This is the right way to come to God.

Finally, the same principle applies to fasting. The hypocrites would disfigure their faces and put on sackcloth and ashes to show their piety. Again, they have received their reward in full by impressing people. The issue is not fasting. This is a good thing, but it should not be done for people to see, but to God alone. When we seek Him with fasting, He sees in the secret and will reward us.