

Huh?

Part Nine: *giving, praying, fasting*

May 7, 2023

After he finished giving six illustrations that showed how the Pharisees had twisted the Law (Matthew 5:20-48), Jesus gave three illustrations that showed how the Pharisees were misusing some important spiritual disciplines. Jesus introduces this new section in his Sermon on the Mount with a warning that applies to each of his three illustrations. Jesus said, *“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.”* (Matthew 6:1, NLT)

After he gave a warning...

1st - Jesus taught how to give. Matthew 6:2-4

The Pharisees loved to call attention to themselves when they gave to the poor in the synagogues and on the streets. They wanted everyone to admire them and believe they were really spiritual.

In contrast to the Pharisees’ giving...

- **Jesus said we are to give discreetly and for God’s glory.**

The phrase *“Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”* was a common expression that meant “to do something discreetly.” But Jesus was not saying we should only give when no one is around to see us give (Matthew 5:16). Jesus wants us to give in a way that does not call attention to ourselves. Our giving should move people to praise God – not us!

Two things to remember about giving to the needy:

1. Jesus said, “When you give to someone in need...” because God expects you to share a portion of what He has given you with those in need.
2. You are not to give money to lazy people (2 Thess. 3:10), or people who will misuse the money you give them (James 2:15-16).

After he taught how to give...

2nd - Jesus taught how to pray. Matthew 6:5-8

Jesus didn’t condemn the Pharisees for praying standing up or in a public place. Standing was the normal prayer position for Jews, and it was common for Jews to stop during the day and pray wherever they were. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they used prayer to show off in front of people.

In contrast to the Pharisees’ prayers...

- **Jesus said we are to pray thoughtful prayers to God.**

Prayer is not about notifying God of your needs or convincing Him to meet your needs. God knows what you need and how badly you need it. Long repetitious prayers do not inform or motivate God; they just annoy Him! God wants you to think about what you should pray before you begin praying.

- **Jesus said your prayers should compose of praise, priority, provision, personal relationships, and protection (Matthew 6:9-15).**

After he taught how to pray...

3rd - Jesus taught how to fast.

Matthew 6:16-18

God only required the Jewish people to fast on the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27), but the Pharisees fasted each Monday and Thursday (Luke 18:12). They intentionally looked miserable and unkept to make people think they were really suffering to get closer to God. But the scribes and Pharisees fasted to make people think they were close to God.

In contrast to the Pharisees' fasting...

- **Jesus said we are to do fasting in secret.**

Only God and perhaps your immediate family should know when you are fasting. You should do everything you can to look normal when you are fasting so you will be rewarded by the Lord.

Two things to remember about fasting:

1. You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast without praying.
2. You must deprive yourself of more than food to devote yourself to God. You must go someplace where you will not be distracted by the people, places, things, and activities of this world.

Some Personal Questions...

1. *Why do you give an offering in church, or to people in need?*
2. *Are your prayers well thought out?*
3. *When was the last time you focused on God alone?*