

The Spiritual Discipline of Giving

Chapter 17

Audio lesson: Sermon on the Mount 17



Objective: To understand the spiritual discipline of giving. (Text: Matthew 6:1-4)



“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. . . . When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

—Matthew 6:1, 3-4

Jesus has taught His disciples to consider the blessed attitudes that must be in their hearts, and He has taught them to apply those beatitudes in their relationships. Now in Matthew chapter 6, He urges His disciples to look in another direction—toward their relationship with God. They are to live their commitment as disciples by following certain spiritual, or vertical, disciplines and values.

The first spiritual discipline Jesus requires of those who want to be one of His solutions is the discipline of stewardship. Biblical stewardship understands that all we have and are (health, abilities, property, finances, families, etc.) belong to God, and we are only managers. And the kind of stewardship that God rewards is private and devout giving. It reflects a vertical focus on God rather than a horizontal focus on impressing people. Jesus says that those who give to be seen of others have already received their reward: the praise of men. True righteousness isn't motivated by a desire to impress people, and God rewards openly what is done in secret.



1. True or false? The Pharisees actually wanted people to see how generous they were.
2. True or false? The Pharisees were a good example of what Jesus meant in chapter 5, when He said to let your light shine before men.
3. True or false? In the first part of Matthew 6, Jesus continues to teach us how to look around at other people.
4. True or false? Today, no one has the Pharisees' problem of wanting attention for their good deeds.
5. True or false? It is not enough just to have spiritual disciplines; we must also have the same values Jesus has.
6. True or false? Jesus values outer appearances more than the inner character of a person.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one best answer for each question.

7. What is the best way to demonstrate values to someone else?
 - a. Keep explaining them until they understand.
 - b. Punish them until they learn the lesson.
 - c. Only pray and hope that God will teach them.
 - d. Show them how someone with those values lives.
8. Why would Jesus tell His disciples to let their light shine before men, and then criticize the Pharisees for doing acts of righteousness to be seen? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. The Pharisees' heart motive was their own glory.
 - b. Jesus was jealous of the attention the Pharisees got.
 - c. The Pharisees were acting out of their own righteousness, and the disciples were to act from God's life within them.
 - d. Jesus had a double standard.
9. Why did Jesus tell His disciples to give in secret? (*choose all that apply*)
 - a. So their motive for giving would be pure
 - b. So they wouldn't be embarrassed at how little they could give
 - c. Because He didn't want their generosity to draw attention to Him
 - d. So God would reward them



Have you ever given to God with a secret desire to be seen and admired by others? If so, how did you feel afterward? How can you give in secret?



Thank God that He sees into our hearts, that He wants our motives to be pure, and that He rewards us for the sacrifices we make. Ask Him to help you have pure motives in all that you do.



Going Deeper

1. What does Pastor Woodward mean by “look in” and “look around”? _____

2. Describe an opportunity you have been given to share in God’s work through giving. _____

3. What are your values? How do they compare to the values of Jesus? _____

4. What does the word “confess” mean in the biblical context, such as “confess Jesus”? _____

5. Why is the motivation for our giving important to the Lord and to us? _____

6. Why should the spiritual discipline of giving be a private matter? _____

7. How does our giving reflect both our relationship with those in need and with God? _____
