



DOING IT WRONG?

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

Have you ever done the *RIGHT* thing...
for the *WRONG* reason?
Today we discover why
the *attitude* behind the *action* matters.

Right Actions & Right Attitudes

Matthew 6:1-4 (NET) ¹ "Be careful not to display your righteousness merely to be seen by people. Otherwise you have **no reward with your Father in heaven**. ² Thus whenever you do charitable giving, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in synagogues and on streets so that people will praise them. I tell you the truth, **they have their reward**. ³ But when you do your giving, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that **your gift may be in secret**. And **your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you**.

Your **reward** from God is forfeited when you do the right thing for the wrong reason, **to be seen by people**.

Jesus gives an example of *doing the right thing - charitable giving, for the wrong reasons, so that people will praise them*. Then Jesus uses a funny hyperbole (an exaggeration to make a point) to show what this is like.

Imagine a person blowing a **trumpet** in front of you, to announce your graciousness to everyone. Jesus calls these people **hypocrites** (v.2), that is - people who are pretending to be something or be someone they aren't (this Greek term was used of actors who played multiple roles by putting on multiple masks).

Jesus says **they will have their reward** (v.2) - that is - *the applause of people* - and that's where it ends. But the one who wants God to reward him/her won't parade it for everyone to see.

Instead, the followers of Jesus are to **show humility, love, and sincerity**.

Again, this **left hand/right hand** (v.3) thing is a hyperbole, an exaggeration to make a point. What's the point?

☀️ Kent Hughes

*"The idea is, not only are we not to tell others of our giving—we are not to make a big deal of it to ourselves."*¹

It's then that **your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you** (v.4).

• **Father**: Jesus calls God our Father - Creator, Provider, & Protector - the One who sees all we do & **will reward** us!

Jesus had said these words during the same sermon:

Matthew 5:16 (NET) ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they can **see your good deeds** and **give honor to your Father in heaven**.

It's not that people never see our **good works**, or that everything we do for others must be done in the shadows. It's not whether what we do *HAS BEEN SEEN* by others, but whether what we do is *TO BE SEEN* by others. The goal of our good works is so that people **give honor to your Father in heaven**. So our public actions demonstrate *humility, love, and sincerity*.

But if we are doing it *TO BE SEEN by others*, **then we're doing it wrong**.

BIG QUESTION: Do I seek the approval of God or the applause of people?

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 147.

Private Prayer

Matthew 6:5-8 (NET) ⁵ “Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, because **they love to pray** while standing in synagogues and on street corners **so that people can see them**. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But **whenever you pray**, go into your room, close the door, and **pray to your Father in secret**. And **your Father**, who sees in secret, **will reward you**. ⁷ When you pray, do not babble repetitiously like the Gentiles, because they think that by their many words they will be heard. ⁸ Do not be like them, **for your Father knows what you need before you ask him**.

Once again, we see the point of the hypocrite’s prayer: **so that people can see them**. Jesus again says that’s ALL the **reward** they will get - *the applause of people, but not the approval of the Father*.

Should we stop praying in public?

This is not the only place we can pray, nor is Jesus saying we can never pray in public. How do we know this? **The early church, led by the apostles of Jesus prayed in public**. The difference? They were praying *seeking the approval of God rather than the applause of people*.

Jesus was not condemning public prayer, but prayer for the public.

But whether you are praying in public or in private, you need to know something - you don’t get God’s attention because of your **many words** (v.7) said just the right way. **Your Father knows what you need**, so just ask!

You might be quick to lead prayer in public, but do you spend time praying in private?

Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18 (NET) ¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look sullen like the hypocrites, for they make their faces unattractive so that people will see them fasting. I tell you the truth, they have their reward. ¹⁷ **When you fast**, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that **it will not be obvious to others** when you are fasting, but only to your Father who is in secret. And **your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you**.

Many Americans don’t practice **fasting** (sacrificing time to eat in order to pray; going without food in order to seek God’s Presence & God’s answers), but Jewish people did. Fasting is not commanded in the New Testament, but it is certainly never discouraged. Do you have something serious to pray about? Consider taking the time you would eat to instead, spend it prayer.

But **when you fast**, it should **not be obvious to others**. Telling others about ‘the sacrifice’ you are making to have people applauding you - will be your **reward**.

But if you really want God to respond, then keep your fast a secret. “And **your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you**.”

Do I seek the approval of God or the applause of people?

FEET2FAITH

- 🕒 **Walk outside or find a quiet place inside and talk to your Creator.** Thank Him & ask Him for what you need.
- 🕒 **Ask for an opportunity to serve another & do it with humility, love, & sincerity.**