



JESUS TEACHING ON HOW WE TRULY PRACTICE OUR FAITH
"For Gain... or for God"
Matthew Chapter 6 - Part One

Chapter 6 of the Gospel of Matthew hones in to the heart of what it means to live out the Christian Faith. Jesus introduces various disciplines that are at the heart of being a Believer and Christ-Follower. Continually He is warning about hypocrisy - doing the right thing for the wrong motive.

MOTIVES are incredibly important to God because they reveal what is really going on down in a person's heart, and God is the only one who can look into our innermost being.



Motives are related to the word for "move" or "motion." What "moves" you to do the good things of God? What "moves" you as you practice the disciplines that Jesus says are integral to the Christian Life? God is all about wanting us to stay right and clean and upright in what motivates us to do acts of service, charity, prayer, fasting, and other central activities as believers. God is about changing our hearts; so He can change our lives. When a heart is changed a life is changed and the abundant life that Jesus talked about becomes possible. Jesus has a lot to say about the heart. He talks about this because our motives are buried deep within our

hearts. ¹⁸ *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.* ¹⁹ *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.* ²⁰ *These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.* (Matthew 15:18-20, NKJV).

The writer of Hebrews says that our motives are seen by God, and there is nothing in all creation can hide from Him. ¹³ *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.* (Hebrews 4:13, NKJV). God knows the motive of everything we do, and we will each give an account of what we've done in our



lives and WHY we've done it. People can do things that are outwardly good, but if it is done with the wrong motive it is ugliness to God. It is sin.

I remember when I was doing work with Living Water International, some people

would come on a mission trip and spend more time on "photo ops" than they did on the actual work of the mission. They would give just enough money to get there, but they brought nothing extra for the work. I used to wonder, "What is their motive and why are they here?" These photos could easily be used to just generate more money, or even worse things. It is possible that such conduct could make a person think they were really doing something for God when in fact they were not. Jesus is saying that you may be doing good things, but **you must be doing them for the right motive or they have no spiritual value.**

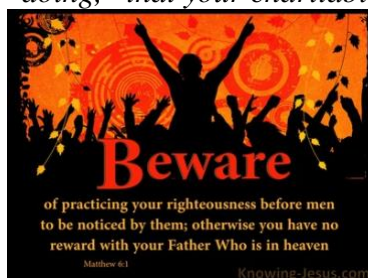


So few people do good deeds these days that it's kind of a big deal when it happens. However, good deeds done for the right motives (to show how much you love God) should be something that is done every day in the life of the believer. Paul tells the church in Corinth, "⁵ So be careful not to jump to conclusions before the Lord returns as to whether someone is a good servant or not. When the Lord comes, he will turn on the light so that everyone can see exactly what each one of us is really like, deep down in our hearts. Then everyone will know why we have been doing the Lord's work. At that time God will give to each one whatever praise is coming to him." (1 Corinthians 4:5, TLB).

Jesus is now telling us the proper attitude that we should have towards prayer, fasting, giving, and service. Jesus also talks a lot about how we handle our money because it is a great indicator of where we are spiritually. Luke 16:14 tells us that the Pharisees were "lovers of money." They were using their positions of power for personal monetary gain. A similar danger for all of us is that with an abundance of money, we can quickly feel like we don't need God. Let's open our Bibles to Matthew Chapter 6 and work our way through instructions on how to live out the Christian life with the right motives.

Do Good to Please God

6 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³ But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. (Matthew 6:1-4, NKJV).



When a Christian does a charitable act it should be done without an open display of the giving. This, however, does not mean that it must be done or given where no one sees it or knows about it.

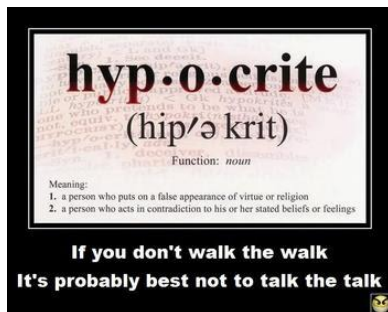
Those kinds of acts are fun but they sometimes are just impossible to pull off. Jesus is saying not to give so that your gift will be seen by others and make you look holy and righteous. Again, it is ALL about motives. Often, when God moves me to give to others, I give the gift reminding them of the words of James, the brother of Jesus, "¹⁷ *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*" (James 1:17, NKJV). By saying this, I am reminding them and myself that God is the giver of all good. I am not a hero. I am not a knight in shining armor. I am a vessel of the Most High God! Jesus uses the analogy of not letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing to express how secretive (and reserved) we should be in our giving. It reveals that we should avoid at all cost that human desire for recognition of others. **Be satisfied with recognition from God.**

When you give to others, give as though you're giving unto God. Don't ever give to get. Don't ever give to make another feel indebted to you. **DON'T GIVE LOOKING FOR ANY PAY BACK AT ALL.** Give because you have been given **SO MUCH** by your heavenly Father that your heart bursts to reach out and touch others with the love of God with the giving of your time, talents, and treasure.

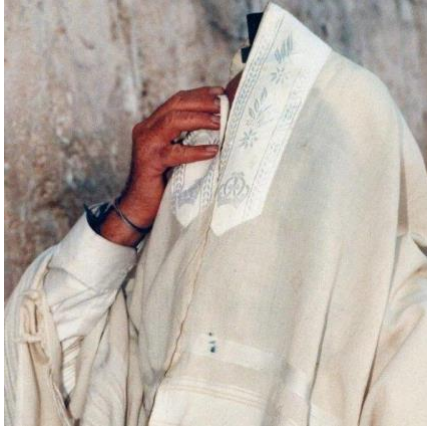
The Model Prayer

Jesus then turns to the discipline of prayer. He tells us the keys and the secrets to having an effective prayer life with genuine communication with the God who made you and loves you.

⁵ *"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. (Matthew 6:5-7, NKJV).*



Verse 6:5 - Jesus is telling His disciples to not be like the hypocrites when they pray! In seminary I heard a funny story about a professor that called on a student to pray. The student prayed a long, elaborate, impressive prayer that went on forever. When he was finished, the professor said, "I'm sorry, if I had known you didn't have a private quiet time today I would have called on someone else." It is a funny story, but it warns us to pray with integrity. This doesn't mean don't pray in front of others, but rather to pray in front of others as you pray when you're alone with God. Don't be a "stage actor" (meaning of hypocrite). Be the same when you're in the presence of the church body as you are when you're alone. And that includes how you pray! The hypocrites longed to be praying in public, looking righteous and holy. Inside, they were rotten to the core. Don't be like the hypocrites! Don't be an actor. **BE A PRAYER WARRIOR!**



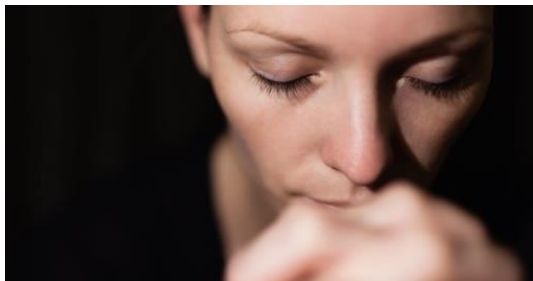
6:6 - Grammar becomes interesting in verses 5-7. In verse 5 and 7, the Greek pronoun translated **you** is plural. But in verse 6, it is in the singular! This is to emphasize the importance of our private conversation with God. A main key to answered prayer is that secret prayer that is done in secret with the door shut! The Hebrew mind wasn't familiar with a "closet" like we think of. It was more in line going into a "secret place" to be alone with God. For the Jewish mind, that place was under a prayer shawl. Jesus was saying, "Go to that secret place, that hidden place, where you are alone with God!" I have told you all that my "prayer closet" is sometimes under a prayers shawl. Sometimes it is on my zero-turn lawn mower.

When I am in those two places, I am no longer **DISTRACTED** by the world. Instead, I become **ATTRACTED** into the very presence of God. There He whispers to me. There He tells me what He wants me to do and how He wants me to do it. I don't always understand the why (the human logic) of what He wants me to do, but I walk away with the assurance that I am in the center of His will and **THAT IS WHERE I WANT TO BE!** The idea is **GET ALONE**, wherever that works for you, and **GET BEFORE GOD!** When our motives are genuine, they get through to God and He hears us and answers us.



This in no way means that public prayer is bad. We're commanded to pray together. The early church met often and prayed together. (Acts 2:42; 12:12; 13:3; 14:23; 20:36). The idea is not where we pray, but **HOW** and **WHY** we pray. Is it for gain (to be seen by others), or for God, who **LOVES** to hear from His people.

Verse 6:7 – Extemporaneous, heart-felt, heart-filled prayer doesn't consist of a bunch of memorized prayers that are somehow a formula to get to God. I believe it was John Knox who said something like "How can we expect our prayers to move God when we are not even moved by them!" Unsaved people pray with many formulated prayers and words. God wants to hear the cry of your heart!



Verse 6:8 - Since God knows what we have need of before we ask it, you might ask, "Why in the world should we pray?" We pray to share our hearts with Him and to express our need for Him. Prayer is the mechanism He has set up for us to communicate with Him. Scripture tells us that sometimes God does things in answer to prayer that He would not have done otherwise if we had not asked. (James

4:2).

Jesus then moves from looking at our motives in the charitable deeds we do to our motives in how we pray. Do we pray for show or do we pray to be in sweet fellowship with our Father in heaven? He gives us a model of HOW we should pray. He says to us, "This is how you should pray." We sort of make a mistake when we call this "The Lord's Prayer" because in reality this is how we, His disciples, should pray.

⁸ "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray:

*Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.*

¹⁰ *Your kingdom come.*

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ *Give us this day our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts,*

As we forgive our debtors.

¹³ *And do not lead us into temptation,*

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:8-13, NKJV).

Next week we will look at this model prayer given to us by Jesus. It is not a model necessarily for WHAT we are to pray, but more of a model for HOW we are to pray. Oh what a privilege it is to communicate with the God of the Universe who knows you better than you know yourself. He knows the number of hairs on your head. He gave you a finger print that is different from everyone else on the planet. He loves you and He wants to commune with you. Ask Him today to keep your motives pure and to reveal Himself to you. Ask Him to reveal to you the things in your heart that need a change. Then ask Him to change them.

Let us pray.

<p>Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.</p>
