

Panthers:

Why do you give? Do you ever do good deeds to be recognized and honored by others? When we give, we often want to let others see our acts of righteousness in order to be rewarded for our efforts. Our names are placed on buildings, printed in church bulletins, and presented in prominent periodicals. Two thousand years ago, people experienced the same temptation. Jesus offered a different way by exposing the motives of the heart.

In His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus described the *be-do-go of full surrender*. In essence, He said, “Who you are to *be* determines what you *do* which determines where you *go*.” In Matthew, Chapter 6, Jesus moved from who we are to *be* to what we are to *do*. He began with three acts of piety in Judaism: (1) giving to the needy, (2) praying, and (3) fasting. In each, Jesus cut to the heart of the matter exposing why we do what we do. We either have a selfish motive or a selfless one. With each good deed, He described what not to do, then what to do. Jesus said, “Do give.”

First, *do not give with the motive to be recognized and honored* (Matt. 6:1-2). Acts of righteousness by definition are done as a result of intimacy with the Father and flow from a heart surrendered to Christ (Matthew 5). Doing acts of righteousness to be seen by others is done with an unrighteousness motive and not rewarded by God (Matt. 6:1). Jesus said, “*So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full*” (Matt. 6:2-3). Trumpets were the shape of the giving boxes in the synagogues. The crowd surrounding the giving boxes would know who gave large sums by the sound of the coins hitting the box. Large coinage made loud noise when dropped in the boxes. Little coinage made little noise. Motives were often no different inside the synagogues than they were on the streets. Outside Judaism, on the Roman roads, Greeks gave in order to be recognized as significant among their peers.

Hypocrites were actors. They wore masks on stage, pretending to be one way on the outside, though they were another on the inside. Jesus said that if being seen (outside) was one’s motive (inside), then the attention he had received was His reward in full (a reference to payment in ancient business receipts). There would be no reward of an intimate relationship with God because of the selfish motive.

Second, *do give in secret*. Jesus said, “*But 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*” (Matt. 6:3-4). Not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing is hyperbole for giving in secret. We should not desire attention for our giving. Believers were often described as members of Christ’s body. The left hand not knowing the right hand’s giving activity meant that one believer wasn’t announcing his gift to another. This does not mean that we cannot receive public recognition for our giving. It means that we should not seek selfish recognition and honor. When our giving motive is unselfish, our reward is intimacy with God.

This week, give in secret out of intimacy with your heavenly Father. Don’t be motivated to give anything to anyone out of recognition or honor. Rather, give from your gratitude to the One who gave you life. Your reward will be intimacy with Him.
Giving in secret, Mitch