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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Lesson Leaders:

James Haymon

Class Leaders:

Inreach: Pat Hester

Deacon: C M Hester

God-Honoring Piety Matthew 6:1-8

Lesson Background and Introduction

How public should our religious acts be? Should we expect public/published recognition when we give to a church or charity? Professional fundraisers tell us that public recognition is important and motivating. But this seems to be contrary to Jesus' teaching. Public acts of worship are not necessarily hypocritical. The issue is motive. Are we drawing attention to ourselves or pointing others to God? Is our giving intended to draw the praise of people or to encourage others to give? Are our public prayers designed to impress or to lead others to God's throne? Jesus' teaching in this regard has not grown stale. It is still needed in the church and the lives of Christians. Jesus expects His disciples of any era to be different, rejecting the ways of the world. We should not try to impress either God or others. We all struggle with hypocrisy at some level, whether we call it mixed motives or desire for respect. However, we can examine our hearts and motives as we live to please our Lord. May we seek to eliminate our hypocrisy by focusing on a true, sincere relationship with the Lord.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Check Your Motives - When you do good deeds, who is it for? Is it to get pats on the back from your family, co-workers, or church members? If that's your goal in life, you've gotten your accolades already. This is a major lesson Jesus attempted to teach His close followers: check your motives. Make sure your heart is in the right place. It is possible to honor God and do for others without making it a public display. In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained giving, praying, and fasting in secret.

Giving - At times, the religious leaders would parade up in front in the synagogues displaying how much they contributed or make a great show of their giving at the temple. Jesus called those who gave in this way hypocrites. A hypocrite is someone pretending, claiming to be upright and putting on a false, holy face. Instead of proclaiming your giving, Jesus said to keep your good deeds between you and God. He judges one's heart and motives, and based on that He will reward you.

Prayer - Jesus also used the word hypocrite in relation to how a person prays. Jews often prayed three times a day at 9 A.M., noon, and 3 P.M. At times, someone might pray publicly, which is fine unless the person praying is doing so to say, "Look at me, I'm so spiritual!" Jesus exhorted His disciples not to pray that way, but to pray to God, who is the important one listening.

The Prayers God Hears - Jesus added about praying, don't be repetitive, just mouthing words with no meaning. God sees past all the big words and long speeches. As Ecclesiastes 5:2 says, "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (KJV). God knows the inner part of your being, and He already knows everything about you and what you are about to say. Prayer should be communing with Him, a time to talk to a loving Father who cares about everything in your life.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

If someone were to read your life like a book, would they find Jesus in its pages

POEM FOR THE WEEK:

Oh, we would write our record plain
And come in time to see Our unsaved
neighbors won to Christ While read-
ing you and me. —Anon.

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

*Clearly you are an epistle of Christ,
ministered by us, written not with ink
but by the Spirit of the living God,
not on tablets of stone but on tablets of
flesh, that is, of the heart*

(2 Cor 3:3 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Jan 18, 2011)

Series: Honoring God

UNIT: Jesus Teaches About
True Worship

NEXT WEEK

Kingdom-Seeking Prayer
(Matt 6:9-15)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Honoring God through Giving (Matt 6:1-4)

The wrong way to give (1-2)

- Do not put trust and hope in wealth (1 Tim 6:17)
- Not using God's provisions wisely (Matt 25:24-27)
- Not being a trustworthy good steward (Luke 16:10-13)
- By being tightfisted in giving to the poor (Deut 15:7)
- By only giving out of wealth (Luke 21:4)
- By giving sparingly (2 Cor 9:6)

The right way to give (3-4)

- Give generously (1 Chron 29:14)
- Give sacrificially (1 Kings 17:12-16)
- Give self first (2 Cor 8:2-5)
- Share with God's people (Rom 12:13)
- Give cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7)
- Be sure to give to the support of family (1 Tim 5:8)

Honoring God through Prayer (Matt 6:5-8)

The wrong way to pray (5)

- Don't pray filled with pride (Luke 18:10-14)
- Don't pray to be seen and heard by others (Luke 20:47)
- Don't pray thinking that we know how to pray or what to pray for (Rom 8:26)
- Prayers are hinders when there are broken relationships with others (1 Peter 3:7)
- Disobedience of God's word causes prayers to be detestable to God (Prov 28:9)

The right way to pray (6-7)

- Pray for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44)
- Pray so that you will not fall into temptation (Matt 26:41)
- Pray in the Spirit on all occasions (Eph 6:18)
- Pray continually (1 Thess 5:17)
- Pray for others (James 5:16)
- Pray with a mind that is clear and self-controlled (1 Peter 4:7)
- Pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20)

God knows our needs (8)

- God knows everything about us (Ps 139:1-5)
- God can answer and fulfill before the call to Him (Isa 65:24)
- God meets needs according to the riches in Jesus (Phil 4:19)