



## Dangerous Deception

### Pretending to Be More Spiritual Than We Are

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18  
7/25/21  
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**Big Truth:** *Our acts of righteousness (like giving, praying, fasting) must be motivated from a heart for God—rather than a desire to be seen, honored, or praised by people.*

#### **Introduction:**

- Deception is making others believe something that isn't fully true.
- Using deception to lead people to think you're living an exceptional Christian life is unacceptable.

#### **1. Be careful not to make a \_\_\_\_\_ *out of the things we do for the Lord.* (Verse 1)**

- "Be careful" . . .
- "Righteousness" . . .
- "Seen by them" . . .

*Jesus warned that there is a dangerous loss we'll experience if we settle for a show . . . If we put on an act meant to deceive people into thinking we're more spiritual or righteous than we actually are. Jesus uses examples of giving, praying, and fasting. **Fasting** is giving up food or meals to spend extra time getting close to God . . .*

#### **2. How to \_\_\_\_\_ *on the way we give, pray, and fast.* (verses 2-6; 16-18).**

*We mess up if we do our acts of righteousness to be seen/honored by others. Our heart—our motives are completely off—and we're going to hurt ourselves.*

**Hypocrites** (vs 2,5,16) are deceivers, pretending to be more devoted to the Lord than they really are.

**Costume example:** *When kids pretend to be someone they're not, it's cute. Adults? Not so much.*

#### **3. How to do it \_\_\_\_\_ *when we GIVE, PRAY, and FAST.***

#### **GIVING** (vs 3-4) . . .

*How can your **left hand not know what your right hand is doing?***

#### **Applications:**

- *When we give to God by giving to the church—or to someone in need . . . work to keep what you give very private. Between you and God.*
- *Give to others in secret . . .*

#### **PRAYING** (verse 6)

### **Applications:**

- *Make time for private prayer . . .*
- *When we do pray in public keep this in mind . . .*

#### • **FASTING** (vs 17-18)

- **“Wash your face?”**
- **“Put oil on your head?”**

Jesus said **“when you fast” not “if you fast.”**

Fasting is a *Old Testament and New T practice. Acts 13:2-3, Jonah 3*

### **Fasting is about . . .**

- *Humbling myself before God*
- *Focusing on drawing close to God*
- *Focusing on some need I want to bring before the Lord.*

### **Applications:**

- *Pick a day this week. Fast a meal or 2. No food, just liquid.*
- *Don't make it obvious that you're not eating.*

**4. Whether giving, praying, or fasting . . . or any other act of righteousness, we must decide which \_\_\_\_\_ we will focus on.**

### **THE AUDIENCE WE SEE . . . THE AUDIENCE WE DON'T SEE . . .**

Verses 6 and 18 remind us that God is *unseen. He is our audience.*

Verses 4, 6, and 18 remind us that *God sees what we do in secret—and he rewards that.*

***Even when we get it right . . . We must still be careful . . .***

***Marshmallow example: If we absorb that praise we'll get puffed up with pride—to our own destruction.***

*“The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but people are tested by their praise.” Proverbs 27:21*

**5. Whether giving, praying, or fasting . . . consider Jesus' warning . . .**

If you do it to be seen, appear more spiritual, to get honor from others . . . you'll have no reward from God. But if we do it right . . . there is a reward. *V.3,6,18 “Then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

***Counterfeit example: somebody put a lot of effort to make counterfeit money look real. We must fight the tendency to simply “look real.” Put our efforts into surrendering to God and becoming the real deal.***

### **Conclusion:**

**“Operation Mincemeat”** . . . The briefcase with all the fake papers meant to deceive went to the top. Similarly, all the “Christian” things we do with deceptive motives—to get praise, honor, respect from others—will go right to the top—but Jesus won't be fooled. Let's be sure that our acts of righteousness (like giving, praying, fasting) are motivated from a heart for God—rather than from a desire to be seen, honored, or praised by people.