

## *Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18*

**“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him...Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”**

### *Hypocritical Worship verses True Worship Of God*

So we're again returning to the Sermon on the Mount here in Matthew 6. Finally finished chapter 5, now we're in chapter 6 Jesus continues to address issues of the heart. As he's speaking, he wants us to understand, ***'What is a truly spiritual person? What is a real man of God? What is a real woman of God?'*** So he's been speaking to the people around him, and as we've been studying in this sermon series, we're being reminded, it's all about the heart. As he continues now in chapter 6, you know I think back to my time in our HQ

church, Mike being the pastor, I think back to a season there where I remember a particular man who used to sit in the front row. And he'd be there every week, and he reminded me a bit like a certain country-western singer, he had the dark black hair and beard, really nice looking hair...but he always dressed in black, and he had this large cross he'd wear on his chest. I mean, everybody noticed the cross, the guy sat there with the cross. But there was this way about him that when you saw him, and you saw him walk, the way he held his Bible, the way he listened to the studies, the statement was *'This is a righteous man, this is a godly man.'* That's the sense that he would give off, godliness and holiness. Well I was interning at one particular time as a pastor there, and Charlie O. was interning at the same time, and it was our turn one particular day to do the counseling. And so we were counseling as people came in to the offices there for counseling, we were the pastors that were doing that, and I remember Charlie coming to me at this one particular time, and he was frustrated, he was frustrated because of an experience he just had in counseling, and was just going to talk to another pastor about it, and I was there. So it turns out he had actually been counseling with this particular man and his wife. And his wife had actually brought him in for counseling. The reason why she did, she was desperate, man. The marriage was on thin ice, it wasn't going very well. And she was one of these gals that was hurting, man. And she just wanted a husband that loved her, and she wanted help. So somehow, she I'm sure begged and begged over a long period of time, and had dragged this guy over to the counseling, and there they sat. Well as Charlie was sharing in counseling, he quickly discerned that this man was really prideful. In fact, he wasn't teachable, and anything that Charlie would try to suggest he wouldn't respond to, he sat there with his big old cross and his Bible, had that weight to him, but he just was not teachable. But his wife, his wife, I mean, she was dying on the vine. He was a miserable man to be married to, and it didn't even seem to effect him. So Charlie of course, as he got done with that, he was frustrated, just kind of sharing the deal with me. Now this man, I don't know the man, but I remember the story, and I remember seeing him, and thinking of him one way, and then hearing that, makes me think of where we're going now in Matthew chapter 6. [For a very good study on what makes a marriage work, from both the man's and woman's perspective, see <http://www.HOWMARRIAGEWORKS.com>] You know, the religious Pharisees that Jesus now addresses again, as he's done repeatedly, same sort of thing in the sense that there was a look, and they really worked hard at it, they

wanted to look spiritual. But you know, if you had a camera at their home, or maybe if you had God's camera and you could see into the inner man, what you'd see would be quite different than what they were portraying to people, like this one particular man. Now this man at our HQ church, you know, he wanted you to have the sense that he was close with God, spiritual man, but then I think of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, when it comes close to being close to God, I think immediately of **1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 3, verse 7**, right? **"Husbands likewise dwell with them"** that is, your wives, **"with understanding, giving honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."** The point being, if you're not doing this, you have no communion with God. And so here's a man that's looking like *'I'm so spiritual, I've got it down.'* And yet the Bible's saying **'You're not even anywhere close to God, because I can look at an element of your life and see this,'** and even I can attest to that. Your wife is saying *'Love me, show me some attention, the world doesn't revolve around you,'* and certainly the Bible says **'Your prayers aren't even being answered, your prayer-life is hindered.'** Well it's this show, right, putting on the show, the religious show, and not having the heart.

### ***Jesus is looking at three major areas of religious practice---asking, Why do you do the things you do?***

As we go through these verses now in chapter 6, Jesus focuses specifically on the religious practices of man, he looks at three particular areas that we're going to look at this morning. That is, 1) Charitable deeds, the giving of charity as far as the giving of alms, and financials gifts, 2) secondly, he looks at prayer, and then, 3) he looks at fasting. Of course those three areas are big in religion, even today in Islam, those are the three big areas, giving of alms, prayer and fasting. So, religious practice, he deals with that, and he goes right to the heart of the matter, and what is in the heart. You can lay these couple questions across our text today, certainly questions for you and I, questions that stir the heart. Here's one of them. Why do you do the things that you do? Why do you do them? When it comes to prayer, and giving, and religious practice, why do you do it? Why do you come to church, why do you pray, where do you pray, and what's the motive and manner of your heart? Are you, am I, more like the man I just described, you know,

working hard to look a certain way before other men? Would your private life or my private life, the inner man, confirm that we're really people that love God? Or would it say *'Hey, wait a minute, we have an inconsistency here.'* And as we see here today, Jesus says that's hypocrisy. That when the outward show is one thing, but the inner life really isn't there. That's just hypocrisy, that's not the life God wants for you and I.

## ***1. Doing Of Charitable Deeds***

Well let's begin in **verses 1-4 of chapter 6**, **"Take heed that you do not your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father. 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 of men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will himself reward you openly."** So, once more, going right at that issue of the heart, and especially with these religious leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees, he deals with that false religious piety, where these guys are, they got the flash, man, but there's a real void in the heart. Now, outward performance, outward performance, that's what he's dealing with, trying to impress people. And yet, as you see in this Scripture here, it's not impressive to God at all. A little later in Luke chapter 16, Jesus will say directly to the religious leaders, the Pharisees, he says, ***'You justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'*** Trying to look impressive, but not only is it not impressive to God, if the heart's not there, trying to impress men, you may actually be an abomination in what you're doing in God's sight. It's an offense to God when I try to look a certain way before men, and yet in the heart isn't there for God, that the real motive and manner of the religious thing that I'm doing isn't simply between me and God, but when it's merely to impress other people. He's already stated back in **verse 20 of chapter 5**, he says, **"Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you're not going to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven."** That of course was a shocker that got it started. But now he's even got to using words like "hypocrites," and when he's saying hypocrites they know who he's talking

about, because of the way he's describing the things that they're doing. He'll even speak of performances that they do directly themselves. And he uses the word "hypocrite." Nobody likes to be called a hypocrite, that's for sure. And I'm sure it's not earning any points for him with them, that's for sure. As we look at the hypocrisy that he refers to here, no doubt there are people here today, man, people in church life all over this country, maybe some folks listening to this message [or reading it] right now, that are guilty of the same thing, hypocrisy, hypocrisy. Where somebody would be convinced that they're very spiritual, and as you look at them walking down the aisle in church, you see them with this big cross and the Bible. But you know, when you're in their homes, you'd never see 'em praying, they'd never be alone praying with God. But in church, in the prayer-group, they just consume the whole thing. But they never pray at home. So it's hypocrisy, it's this thing, *'I want you to just think that I'm spiritual, I want you to see me as spiritual.'* There's no love for God in their life. If there was a love for God, they'd be very different. Their private life would be a certain way, and then their public life wouldn't be hypocrisy at all.

### *Where the word "hypocrite" comes from*

The word for hypocrite here comes directly from the Greek, our word hypocrite comes from a Greek word that sounds very close to that. The Greek word for hypocrite that's used here is that word for "actor," they put the mask on in the Greek theater in their culture back then, they put it on when acting in their plays. The mask would have an expression on it that would be greatly exaggerated, a happy or sad expression, or an emotion that they were trying to depict. So that word, hypocrite, actually comes from the Greek word for the actor, the guy with the mask on, the guy playing the part, appearing one way, but in the inner man, underneath the mask wasn't necessarily that way at all. Jesus exhorts, as you see there in **verse 1**, he says ***'Take heed, be warned, take heed, search the heart, make sure you're not like that, that you're not like these men, doing your charitable deeds before men, your acts of righteousness, to be noticed by them rather than being noticed by God.'*** In fact he says ***'to be seen by them.'*** The word "seen" is interesting here too. In fact, the word "seen" we get from that word, is very close to the English word "theatrical," we get our word "theatrical" from the word "seen" here. So again, they do it to be seen, meaning, in the theatrical

sense, this performance, this spectacular performance. Jesus says, ***'Watch out, watch out that you're not being like that, putting on the spiritual act before other men.'*** Now, thinking about church life, something that may appear spiritual, something that I may say *'Wow, that was such a spiritual act that guy just did, man that sacrifice was so great, he just stepped in and he sold his house and he gave it to help those people, that was so spiritual.'* What may seem as a great spiritual act may in fact be very selfish, and may be hypocritical. *'Did you see what she did? Man she does that stuff all the time.'* And yet in the heart, God's saying *'That stuff is so offensive, that is so offensive to me, because you're doing it to impress people, and get the praises of men. That's a real turn-off, I'm not impressed at all.'* Jesus in these verses refers to how the religious leaders actually sounded the trumpet when they would do a charitable deed. But there are those that suggest to us that in the Temple court originally, next to the chamber of secret, was this container, this large chest that was called a trumpet, and people would deposit their offerings there. And it was done in a way that was humble and discrete. A little later it would fill up, and there would then be this particular time where now the poor people would come, and the religious leaders would then distribute these offerings, gifts to the poor people. Well some have suggested that over time the religious leaders decided to modify that and started to actually carry around a little brass trumpet, or maybe they had somebody with them that did this, and they decided to go into the communities. So they would go into a particular neighbourhood, would blast that little trumpet, and the poor would know, *'Hey, Joe Pharisee is here, and he's got money, man, he's going to toss out the bubblegum,'* and the kids would come running, and the people would come running. But they would blast the trumpet, certainly getting everybody's attention, *'I'm here to bless your life. I've got it right here, and here we come with our wonderful religious and generous spirit.'* Well, everybody thought it was pretty cool. Obviously Jesus had a very different opinion. Archibald Robertson speaks of a missionary who had a discussion one particular day, he was sharing a story like this in India where a Hindu priest, or a group of Hindu priests would do the same thing, they would blast a trumpet before they would give their charitable gifts and their blessings to the poor, they would blast a trumpet. And no doubt, what he's referring to here is common even in church life, maybe guys aren't blasting trumpets, but man, sometimes there's flashing lights. In some instances there's church

buildings, church facilities that you can go to, and there's a big old name on top, there's always the middle initial, but there it is up there, and it's signifying, it wasn't that they were a martyr for Christ on a mission field somewhere, often it is the case that the dude gave a big check when he died. That's the deal Jesus is addressing here, it's this issue at heart. And when people do that, what does Jesus say? **'You've got your reward.'** That was your reward, the little light that flashed on that telethon at the bottom of the screen, your name and address that just came up, you just got your reward. When it says "reward," the Greek is actually, in other ancient papyri, the NIV has it this way, the NIV is actually close to that word, it says **"They have received their reward in full."** In ancient papyri that word is often seen in referring to a receipt, when you've paid something, and you get that receipt which says "Payment in full," your receipt. And Jesus says **'You've got your receipt.'** Doesn't last long. In fact, Peter reminds us that in **1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 1, verse 24,** **"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers and its flower falls away."** All the glory of man is like grass. In New England you get the sense of grass, it's not around for very long, and then it dies. Grass, very temporary. And he says, **'The glory of man is like grass.'**

### ***"Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing"***

Jesus says **'Take heed, examine your heart, let me show you your heart, what the motive is, what you do these things for. And if you do things like that in your church life, before other men, boy it's so foolish, take heed that you don't live that way, ensure that you keep your heart in check.'** So what he says, there's a way to ensure that you can do that, rather than sound the trumpet, don't even tell people when you give, or you do certain acts, don't tell anyone. Don't broadcast it in any way. Then he goes even a little further with it, doesn't he? Here's a little heart-check to help you, **"Don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."** But don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing---the point is, do it so that you're not even impressing yourself (and that's pretty hard to do, considering). So whatever it is, whatever you're doing, do it in such a way that you're like *'God, thank you that you're giving me this grace, and I just love serving you Lord, this is the best I can do, but use it Lord, let it bring you glory,'* so that it's done that way in the

heart, in the heart so it glorifies God, and so that there's not pride and seeking to glorify men (or self). In Matthew chapter 25 Jesus does note people, people who actually did charitable things and didn't even realize they were doing them. You remember where he stands there and speaks in the future about separating the goats from the sheep. And he'll say to those, his children, *'Man, you fed me, you blessed me, you were so good to me.'* And the response of the righteous is *'Lord, when did we do that? When did I feed you Lord?'* and he says, *'When you did it to the least of these my brethren.'*

***The balance between “Let your light so shine before men” and “Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”***

Now, remember, at the same time, he's always balancing Scripture, that's the great thing about going verse by verse. Because you can get legalistic if you're not balancing the Scripture. This doesn't mean, you know if you leave here, and you see somebody writing a check out for somebody else, and you're like *'Whoa, they're like in sin, I can't believe...'* It doesn't necessarily mean that they're in sin either. It's a matter of the heart. We go from here in the Scripture, a little bit later in the Book of Acts you'll see people publicly giving. You know, at the end of Acts chapter 4, Barnabas, he comes and he lays a lot right there at the feet of the disciples, and it's stated in a way that, man, this guy is just giving to God, and it is a very beautiful thing. And it's done publicly. So Jesus is not saying that it's always a sin to do something publicly. What he's speaking of is the heart, and hypocrisy, and why we do the things that we do, and *'What is the motive, what is the manner in which I'm doing it? Is it just to glorify him, or is to toot my own horn?'* Interesting, when you've got Barnabas there, Acts chapter 4, you have the contrast, very next verse is the beginning of Acts chapter 5, we have Ananias and Sapphira, doing what looks like the same thing on the outside, Barnabas just did it, and they come along, and they drop dead for apparently doing the same thing (cf. Acts 4:34-37 and Acts 5:1-11, which is in direct contrast to Acts 4:34-37). Ananias and Sapphira were tooting their own horns to look good in front of everyone in the early Church there in Jerusalem, it cost them their lives. Jesus was not happy with what they just did. But with Barnabas, it looked like it was pretty cool. But why wasn't God happy with Ananias and Sapphira? You even have the

Holy Spirit showing Peter what was going on in their hearts, and he's like **'Why are you lying to the Holy Spirit? Hypocrites, man.'** And they drop dead. It shows you what God thinks of it. It isn't like God says *'Man, no big deal.'* Offensive abomination in the eyes of God to be a hypocrite. Why do we do the things that we do? Do we do it to be seen? Do we want people to really think that we are spiritual people, *'It's important for them to think I'm a spiritual man or woman.'* You know, there's that balance. As we saw in chapter 5, Jesus said **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works."** That seems to be public to me. But the key is, that they would glorify God, glorify your Father in heaven. It's the way in which the good works are done. Live in such a way that the light of Jesus Christ comes out, and people are going *'Man, praise God.'* [Comment: This can be more recognized properly as our light shining forth from God, when our alms are done in a church-corporate manner, such as when Samaritan's Purse came into the region of Katrina's devastation in New Orleans, along with those Christian volunteers and workers who helped rebuild many houses, all in the name of Jesus Christ. Also when a congregation sent members down into that area to do the same thing, in the name of Jesus. The glory went to God, to Jesus, the way it should have. When you give to Samaritan's Purse or Mission Aviation Fellowship or even a tiny Christian orphanage I know of in South India that always needs support, say you cut a large check or whatever, nobody has to know (except maybe for your tax accountant). See

[http://www.unityinchrist.com/evangelism/samaritan\\_purse.htm](http://www.unityinchrist.com/evangelism/samaritan_purse.htm) and <http://maf.org> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/evangelism/sisterchurches/BlessiOrphanHome.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/evangelism/Short-TermMissions.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/wearesalt.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Questions.htm>]

There's hurting people out there, let's go and just share the love of Jesus Christ, and give that little cup of cold water here in North County, or wherever you are.

## ***2. Prayer: how it's supposed to be done, and how it's not supposed to be done***

Well Jesus goes from the charitable deeds, and he goes to the next deal, and this kind of pricks the heart, man. **Matthew**

**6:5-8, “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 might be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 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. 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. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask him.”** I’ve noted this before, but every time he says Father, it’s also catching their attention, that the Jewish man would not come to God and call him his Father. The nation of Israel, Judah, Judea at this time, would refer to God in that sense. But an individual would never come and say ‘*Abba*’ to God. *Abba* in Hebrew literally means *Daddy*. If you’re walking the streets in modern Israel today, you will often hear a little Israeli boy or girl calling his or her father “*Abba, Abba,*” which means “*Daddy, Daddy.*” So he’s making a statement too about the relationship, this blessed life with the Father and closeness to God. But what is the man that has that? What is the woman that has that intimacy? Well it certainly isn’t a hypocrite, somebody whose trying to appear religious, as opposed to somebody that’s actually close to the Lord. So here he addresses this issue of prayer. And possibly, surprising to some, you can hear a beautiful prayer, you can hear a flowing, just so passionate and the tears coming man, and you’re hearing it going ‘*Wow! Unbelievable. I wish I could pray like that.*’ And God may be going ‘*I didn’t hear a word of that. I didn’t hear a single word. Didn’t impress me at all. In fact, it bothered me a bit, even offensive to me,*’ because of what was in the heart of the person who was praying. He says again, ‘**Take heed that you’re not like these hypocrites,**’ he rebukes the spiritual leaders, ‘**Don’t be like them when you pray. They do so publicly, and they do so in a way that folks are really impressed. And yet God isn’t impressed, and they’re not really thinking about God anyway.**’ Now that very thing goes on in the Church today too, the performance in prayer, folks performing, rather than having a true heart that’s crying out to God. But in the Church, man, there could be some sophisticated, polished speeches, or maybe not so sophisticated and polished, but yet the heart is trying to impress others in one way or another.

## *Importance Of Being Somebody Of Prayer, Private Prayer*

Well, it's important to be somebody of prayer. He says "**When you pray...**", and we'll go on from here. In fact, next week, I was going to skip and go to the next thing. We're dealing with the thing of hypocrisy here. Jesus is dealing with hypocritical prayer here, he then goes on and talks about how we should pray (which we'll cover next week, verses 9 to 15). The point that he's especially making here, is that we are or should be people of private prayer. If you're somebody of private prayer, then you have the right to pray publicly, and then when the Church prays together publicly in a community sense, because we are people of private prayer, now our public prayer is probably going to be effective. But if all the Church ever does is come together publicly in the community, if the people at this church and other churches, you know, we have the little prayers we say and the little prayer-meetings, but if we're never alone in our houses, as he says, in the prayer-closet, in secret with God, then our prayers aren't going to do a whole lot. But it's the private prayer-life that is the barometer that tells me in the prayer-meeting if my prayers are effective. It's the heart, and a good barometer of that is when I'm alone in my house. Do I feel the desire, and do I have the habit of getting alone in my office or wherever, and going '*Jesus, Jesus,*' and crying out to him? So now when I'm in the prayer-meeting I can go '*Jesus, Jesus,*' and there's a good chance it's going to be a genuine prayer. [Comment: I was reading Charlie Lockwood's account of the nine submarines that broke into the Sea of Japan, called "*Hirohito's Lake,*" to wreak havoc. One submarine skipper related later to Admiral Lockwood that he'd go to the cigarette deck, behind the periscope sheers, and pace back forth, where he couldn't really be seen, and pray for his officers and crew and the overall safety of the boat. It was private prayer. This skipper said he wasn't a religious man, in that sense, but the circumstances were extremely dangerous. He said if anyone saw him, they wouldn't have known what he was doing. But his boat survived. I would say his private prayers were heard and answered, whereas one of those nine subs that went with them into *Hirohito's Lake* never made it back. The book is "*Hellcats of the Sea.*"] But if I ain't doing that at home, when I get together and I'm doing that at church, it's maybe an emotion I'm just kind of going with the crowd, just wanting to make sure they hear me pray---'*I am a Christian so I'll make it sound that way.*' But what's needed in the Church in New

England is Christians who have private prayer. It's the private prayer, it's the families, it's the men and women in the houses in the North County, up and down the streets of Leominster, Gardner and Townsend and Holden and all the communities around us, it's in those homes, in the morning, in the evening, in privacy, in the car, it's **that** prayer that starts to vibrate the nation, and to move the heart of God. And that's what we so much need.

### *They Pray Three Times A Day*

Jesus says **'When you pray, don't be like these hypocrites, when all they ever do is pray publicly to try to impress you.'** Of course, they wanted to look good, but they decided *'We need to pray three times a day in the synagogue, 9am, 12 noon, and 3pm.'* [Comment: It all started out well enough, as they were basing it on a Psalm of David, where David said he'd pray to the LORD morning, noon and night. Also it is recorded that Daniel prayed three times a day, morning, noon and night. But the Pharisees went on to make a legalistic show out of it.] That's the Pharisees and religious leaders, *'We're so religious, we've gotta be at the synagogue three times a day altogether to pray.'* What they would do, is that sometimes they might even plan it this way, *'You know, it takes me eighteen minutes to get to synagogue, and if I delay a couple minutes I'll probably end up in that big park, or I'll be right at that busy intersection,'* and so they'd do that on purpose, go out the door a couple minutes late, looking like they're making their way to the synagogue, but now it's noon, and they're at this busy intersection. What else can they do? So right there, in front of everybody, there goes this prayer-life, you know. And everybody's going *'Wow! Did you see that guy? Right there, man. I was trying to get to lunch, I had to stop there, and he's praying.'* It was planned that way. And you're like, *'Boy, that guy is such a prayer-guy, can't even wait till he gets to synagogue.'* And God's like, **'It is absolutely disgusting and gross to me, because he's a hypocrite, trying to appear one way. You go to that guy's house, Joe Pharisee, I have never heard him pray once when he's alone. Guy's a hypocrite. He doesn't have a heart for me, he wants to look a certain way.'** But Jesus says **'Don't you be like that.'** The one time I was on the Israeli airline there [El Al], going from JFK to Tel Aviv, the first time I went, and seeing the guys, it was beautiful for me to watch. They'd get up, right there as the sun was coming up on the plane, wherever we were, they'd put on the phylactery deal and prayer-shawls, and

right there in the aisle, you know, you got all these people sitting, and now these guys are lined up in the aisle doing all these bobbing-weaving things. Was it sincere? It could be, but it could just be what Jesus just described to us. [Comment: I once worked for Legal Seafood, in their first restaurant at Innman Square, Cambridge MA. Right next door to Legal was a little Jewish Kosher meat market, run by Sam and Sylvia, a wonderful married couple. They had to be Orthodox, no hypocrisy in either one of them. But I learned through much conversation, Silvia would sometimes relate a tiny bit about her prayer-life. She prayed in private to the LORD God, and I knew she prayed about an hour a day. She prayed for other people, Sam her husband. Good Jewish woman, totally sincere. Funny thing, the Jews know they're praying to Yahweh, and Yahweh is the very one who became Jesus, Yeshua haMeschiach. Strange, the Jews pray to the one who became Yeshua, and yet don't realize it, yet.] So here I am, right in the middle of a 747, and some of you have got one eye open because it's early in the morning, and there they go. [laughter] And, yet he says ***'Be a man or woman of private prayer.'*** That's what he says, he says, ***'When you pray, you go into your room, you get up with that cup of coffee, whatever it is, you go in there, you shut the door, nobody can hear you, you're not trying to impress anyone.'*** You go in there, nobody knows you're there. But somebody very important knows you're there, and it's God, and you're there to do business with God. And your heart is humble, your heart is desperate, and you cry out to God, and God says, ***'I hear, I hear. I'm gonna work, I'm gonna move.'*** And how would we know? We wouldn't know that you're necessarily doing it, or I'm doing it because it's totally private. But we'll know when things start to happen. We'll see the evidence and the fruit of it, in the holiness of our lives. We'll see our churches grown and multiply. We'll see our families, and other people get saved, as clearly as day, as we're hungering for God and having a full private prayer-life. [This website has a whole section on prayer. Check it out at <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prayer/bibleway.htm>]

### ***3. Fasting: How not to and how to***

He goes on, and then he deals with this issue of fasting. **Verses 16-18, "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you**

**fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”** Now the word for disfigure would mean that they would do it in such a way that their face is covered, in the sense that maybe there’s ash on it, or dirt, or they’ve got a hood over it. *‘I mean, I’m so miserable.’* Could you imagine, someone’s fasting, and he’s got ash all over his face? *‘I’m just dying here,’* and they want you to think they’ve gone without food and they’re at the point of death, because they’re so godly. They have their reward, *‘oh that guy has gone without food for six months, I’m sure.’* [laughter] *What a godly man, super-spiritual man.’* He says, **‘But when you fast, anoint your head, wash your face, look as if you’re not fasting.’** Take some measures and steps to demonstrate to people that you’re not actually fasting, and you’re not trying to show them you are. If they figure it out, they figure it out. Do it so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in secret, it’s a private deal. It’s all about your heart before God. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Now again, he’s not prohibiting public prayer, giving publicly in certain instances, and even fasting communally as we just did as a church, he’s not prohibiting that. You’ll go on in the New Testament and you’ll find the whole Church fasting. That’s not the point, again it’s an issue of the heart, I’m doing this for the reason of pleasing God. It’s the heart, it’s the heart that God responds to. What is the reason, motive for what you do, why you do it? Why are you fasting, why are you praying? Why are you doing those things in your church? Why? Is it because it’s the way we do and it looks impressive? And if I don’t do this people are going to think I’m weird? [people already think I’m weird, I don’t have to help them along in that area. Just that general animosity that occurs between believers and non-believers.] Or is it that you just hunger for God and you want God’s blessing, and you want him to work in our nation and community? That’s the difference. [condensed down from an expository sermon on Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18, given somewhere in New England.]

related links:

Whole section on prayer:

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/prayer/bibleway.htm>

Areas to give privately, that back up the Church's corporate example of letting our Christian "light" shine:

[http://www.unityinchrist.com/evangelism/samaritan\\_purse.htm](http://www.unityinchrist.com/evangelism/samaritan_purse.htm)

and

<http://www.samaritanspurse.org>

and

<http://maf.org>

and

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Questions.htm>

and

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/wearesalt.htm>

If you are in a troubled marriage:

<http://www.HOWMARRIAGEWORKS.com>

(Most couples who marry go into it not having a clue as to how the marriage relationship was designed by God to work, on the emotional/psychological level, men especially.)

Fasting:

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/prayer/fasting.htm>