

## **Jesus on the Fat Hill: Give From Your Heart - Matthew 6:1-4**

This week, did someone ask you for money to help the poor?

Maybe it was on TV. Maybe you saw a commercial for World Vision, or you saw Sally Struthers plead for help for poor children.

Maybe it was in your e-mail box. Maybe you got an email from [www.one.org](http://www.one.org) who uses celebrities like Brad Pitt or Bono to ask for help to relieve the debt of 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries.

Maybe it was in the mail. Did you receive a letter from James Dobson, the Red Cross, or other people asking for money to help the poor.

What did you do with the requests? Did you send them straight to the recycle bin, or change the channel? Did you think, "I wish I could help, but..."? OR, did you send a check? Jesus wants you to hear what He has to say about Christians giving to help the poor.

Jesus wants His disciples to be completely different from the selfish. His ultimate goal for His followers is for them to bring glory to God, not themselves. He doesn't want us to live for ourselves or the for the approval of others.

Jesus was point blank in the Sermon on the Fat Hill about this. Jesus urged His followers not to be people-pleasers seeking to impress others, but to be God-pleasers. He didn't want His followers giving to the poor, because it would make themselves look good. He doesn't want His followers to be people who seek people's approval, especially when they give to the poor.

Let's face it, if you get your self-worth from the approval of people, you're mood is going to be frequently down in the dumps and your giving erratic. You will go up and down depending on other people's moods.

We have to remember that God is faithful to us, so we should be faithful in loving others.

1 John says we love because God first loves us.

God is always rooting for you. God wants the best for you, and in the end, it's only His favor that matters.

When we give, we should seek God's favor.

Turn with me to Matthew 6:1-4. This is a passage that speaks to each of our hearts when we consider giving to those who are in need. When we give, each of us can be tempted to be people-pleasers.

Jesus speaks to those of us who have such a ravenous hunger for praise. He speaks to those who would go to almost any length to get approval.

Some might have a hard time saying “no” to anyone. You want so much to be liked that it’s almost impossible to overcome peer pressure.

Maybe, you’re always wondering what people will say, what people will think, how people will respond. When people approve you, you’re up, when someone is upset with you you’re devastated. Your whole life is viewed as a stage performance seeking the applause and avoiding the disapproval of the crowd.

This can happen even when it comes to acts of spiritual service like teaching Sunday School, volunteering at a food pantry, or doing construction for the poor. Instead of seeking God’s approval, you’re most concerned about what people think.

Would you pay attention today as we study Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount that encourage us to seek only God’s approval?

READ Matthew 6:1-4

Jesus tells us, that when we give...

### **1. DON'T BLOW YOUR OWN HORN - READ Matthew 6:1**

We all instinctively want to be liked. From the time we’re born we want approval and attention. Little children unashamedly say, “Watch me, Daddy!” “Look at me, Mommy!”

Teenagers want more than anything to be popular. They are careful to dress, talk, and act in whatever fashion is acceptable among their peers. Sometimes they dress the opposite to get noticed --Body piercing, tattoos, green hair, and black lipstick are means of saying, “Look at me!”

As adults we worry, “What will the neighbors say if we don’t mow our grass?” We care what people think of us and that’s not altogether bad.

The Bible says we ought to be sensitive to our witness to others.

Matthew 5:16 – *...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

In fact, the Bible says that people will notice when we do good, no matter how much we try to hide it.

1 Timothy 5:24-25 - *The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.*

So even if you try to hide your good deeds, eventually people will notice. We can't help it!

What Jesus is addressing is the motive behind why we give and serve. Motive is the central issue to God.

We should ask ourselves:

Are you giving or doing good deeds to exalt Christ or to make yourself feel good?

It's the selfishness of it all that Jesus warns against.

We each should ask ourselves, "Why do we do what we do?"

A preacher named John Ortberg once asked, "I know I'm supposed to be humble, but what if no one notices?"

We want people to notice our goodness.

Many churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have a tradition in which many members make their financial contributions using only their right hand. They hide the money by rolling it tightly and making a fist to cover it. Accompanied by rhythm instruments, they form a line and do a dance as they make their way to the offering basket. These cheerful givers each place their hand into the basket before releasing the money, ensuring that no one else knows how much was given.

Today, it is easier to give anonymously. You can do a bank transfer, give online, or send a check in the mail. In fact, one reason we encourage our members to use envelopes when giving is this call from Jesus to be secret in their giving.

If you're tempted to be a people-pleaser let me share four good reasons to quit worrying so much about what people think of you.

1. People are fickle - They can applaud you one minute and condemn you the next.
2. You will lose your joy if you give out of self ambition.

David had to cry out in Psalms 51:12 - *Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.* He had lost his joy in giving, because he had become selfish.

3. The attendance at your funeral will be determined by the weather, not how you have pleased others.

4. In the end, only God's evaluation matters

Jeremiah 17:10 (NLT) - *But I know! I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.*

Paul says in Gal. 1:10 – *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? ...If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

One of the things that made Jesus so attractive was that He wasn't very concerned about the opinions of people.

One of His enemies admitted this trait to Jesus in Matthew 22:16 – *We know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.*

Serena Williams won the Wimbledon Tennis tournament for the first time in 2002. After her impressive victory, a reporter asked Serena if it bothered her that many of the English fans were rooting against her. She politely said, "No," she understood – there had been people rooting against her all her life. But she still wanted to win for herself. Then she added, "Besides my dad was sitting in those stands, and I knew he was rooting for me and I wanted to please him."

Your heavenly Father is rooting for you!

Jesus says, when you give...

1. Don't toot your own horn, and...

## **2. DON'T BE A HYPOCRITE - READ Matthew 6:2-3**

Jesus calls those who do good things with selfish intentions hypocrites. A hypocrite simply means someone who pretends to be something that in reality they are not.

I read about a person who went to a concert at a beautiful old art-deco theatre. At the end of the concert, this person noticed two ushers standing near his seat who were applauding harder than anybody else in the whole place. The man said that he was thrilled with this particular concert because of the talent and virtuosity of the musicians.

It thrilled him even more to see these two ushers standing there applauding more vigorously than all of the concert goers. He was shocked when he heard one usher say to the other, "Keep clapping. If we can get them to do another encore, we get overtime!"

At first, it appeared that these two ushers were serious music lovers. It turned out, however, they were only applauding so long and so hard because it would mean a few more dollars in their pockets.

There are people who do good things for the wrong reasons - It might seem at the outset that they're trying to do what is right but it ends up that they only do it for their own benefit. They put on a good show. These are the hypocrites.

Jesus doesn't want us to be a hypocrite. We shouldn't put on a show when we give.

Think about it, people today sometimes give to good causes for public approval.

- ◇ At any fund-raising telethon, you'll hear the names of the donors names read out loud: "So and so gave a hundred dollars."
- ◇ Go to almost any hospital in America and you can read plaques like "This wing donated by so and so," and families are listed who have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to that hospital.
- ◇ Even Bible Colleges put names of donors on bricks or, if you give enough money, you can have a dormitory or library named after you.
- ◇ Even in our District, the churches who don't give as much as another church are judged. A list is put out of what the churches give every year at the District Conference.

Jesus wants us to be careful to not act like a person who cares about the cause you are giving to, while in reality you really want recognition.

This is being a hypocrite. Jesus wants our motives to be pure.

Jesus isn't telling us that we shouldn't keep track of what we give for income tax purposes. He is not saying that it's wrong to give by envelope or check because the church treasurer is going to find out. He is not saying that you should just reach into your wallet and close your eyes and give whatever bill you pull out.

He's saying not to call attention to your giving. Be satisfied with having no one know what you give but God.

We should give because we love, not because we want to be loved.

Jesus said that when we give...

1. Don't toot your own horn,
2. Don't be a hypocrite, and...

### 3. **SEEK GOD'S APPROVAL** - READ Matthew 6:4

Making a great impression on others is important to most of us. Most single men believe that single women want a man who not only is cute and charming, but who has considerable cash flow. They want to make an impression.

In fact, there's a new method available to men to enhance his chances of attracting a possible mate. Pullmyfinger.com offers men a creative way to falsely impress women.

When a young man gets to the point where he can exchange phone numbers with a woman, the young man can fish around in his pocket for something to write his phone number on. Any slip of paper will do, but in this case the paper scrap is an ATM receipt that shows a bank balance of \$314,232.26!

He doesn't say anything, just hands her the phone number on the ATM slip. He knows the young woman will notice soon enough, and he's also confident that those little numbers on the ATM slip are certain to get the woman's attention.

The receipt, however, is bogus. It's called an ATMitation created by Richard Halpern at PullMyFinger.com.

Unfortunately, the ruse is likely to backfire when the gal discovers the ploy, the trickery, the deception. When she finds out he is broke, it is over!

It is unfortunate, however, that pullmyfinger.com makes considerable amount of money from this. This means that a good number of men don't think that there is any thing wrong with fooling women. "What's the big deal?" they say.

As Christians, we shouldn't go to such lengths to make an impression on someone. We should care first and foremost about God's approval.

We should do "acts of righteousness," not because such actions will impress someone. We should give because Christ has impressed us!

Jesus asks us to give, to deny our self and take up the cross daily, so that we can win the victory of eternal life and know that God approves of our actions.

God promises that, while we're saved by grace, we are going to be rewarded for our works. When we give, we should seek God's approval and know that in the end our rewards will be great:

- ◇ Matthew 16:27 – *For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.*
- ◇ Matthew 19:29-30 – *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.*
- ◇ Ephesians 6:8 - *The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does.*

These are just a few that talk about our rewards for tomorrow if we are faithful in our giving today.

Understand that the reward the Heavenly Father promises is not just eternal, it's for today too.

If you give to this church with your time, talent, and tithe, you know you are making a difference, when you see lost people saved, children taught the Word of God, hurting people comforted, and homes united.

There is a sense of satisfaction within. You ought to feel good that you've had a part in seeing people ministered to and God being honored.

You ought to say to yourself, "I've helped make that happen." - That in itself is a great reward.

The greater reward is to know that one day God will say to you, "well done, good and faithful servant." You know, I am not sure I need Him to even say that. It should be enough that one day, God would just smile at us and not even have to say a word.

Jesus said that when you give...

1. Don't toot your own horn,
2. Don't be a hypocrite, and...
3. Seek God's approval.

Are you satisfied to seek His approval alone and disregard the favor of people? It's possible to take deliberate steps to keep our giving a secret all the while gloating over our self-satisfied generosity.

Maybe there is something that has prevented some of you from accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Maybe you're concerned with what people will think.

1. If I walk forward, people who know me may think, “They don’t have any business doing that” or “I thought they were already a Christian” or “I thought they were already a member here.”
2. Maybe you’re concerned about the people at work or your family, friends, and acquaintances. Maybe you are scared to get baptized because of this. You might say, “They might make fun of me or lose respect for me.”
3. Maybe today’s the day you need to quit being a people-pleaser. Swallow your pride, humble yourself before God, and make a courageous decision for Christ.

Jesus promises that today, you can be spiritual rich by putting your trust in Him.

*2 Corinthians 8:9 - For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

In other words, Jesus gave everything so that you can have everything.

When you were down and out, empty, lonely, hurting, in pain, spiritually dead, Jesus gave His life to make you rich. All you have to do is put your trust in Him.

Jesus is sending a message to you right now, asking you to give: to give your life. In return, He promises a great reward!

*Breathe on Me Breath of God – Hymnal a Worship Book # 356*