

Not First #2: SECRECY

Word

Scripture Reference

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Discussion Questions

1. How do people show or shout out their greatness to others?
2. In a world that exclaims, “Look at me!” it is important that followers of Jesus practice spiritual disciplines that remind us that we are not first in this world. Read Matthew 6:1-6;16-18. This passage is part of Jesus’ sermon on the Mount, and it teaches us about the spiritual discipline of secrecy. Secrecy identifies your true motive (v. 2, 5, 16). The admonition to practice this discipline is so that you will not become a hypocrite or a fraud. What is hypocrisy? Discuss why people call attention to themselves. If you do something good, but no one knows about it, is it still considered good? What’s the big difference of this belief from those who think that they should broadcast the good things they do in their lives? When is it a good time to share with others the good things you’ve done for someone?
3. There are two areas which God wants us to keep in secret:
 - a. **Secrecy in charitable action (v. 1-4).** What was the instruction in verses 2 and 3 when you give to the needy? How did the Pharisees act when they give to the Lord? How was the poor widow different from them? Discuss why it is quite difficult for some people to do a good deed and keep quiet about it? What should motivate you to be charitable without letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing?
 - b. **Secrecy in spiritual action (v. 5 ,6; 6-18).** May times when people practice spiritual matters such as praying and fasting,

because of spiritual pride they make it about themselves instead of doing it solely for God. Does this mean that you should not pray in public? When you pray in front of others, how can you focus completely on what you are saying to God instead of how your prayers sound to others?

4. In practicing the discipline of secrecy, the passage also gives us these encouragement (v. 4, 6, 8):
 - a. **God is omnipresent and omniscient.** God is everywhere always. How does it affect you that God sees and knows what you are doing, even when you may think that no one is watching you? How should these attributes of God encourage you to live for Him instead of trying to impress others?
 - b. **God rewards.** Your Heavenly Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you. Why is God’s reward much better than any recognition men can give you? Why is it impossible to enjoy the good things that this world offers without God’s blessings?
5. When you practice the discipline of secrecy, it releases you from two things that hold you back:
 - a. It **prevents you from being in the bondage of the approval game.** Discuss why it is not healthy to always be looking for the approval and compliments from others. What happens when you only look for the approval of One, and that is of the Lord Jesus?
 - b. It **gives you freedom from comparison game.** Why is comparing yourself to others a dangerous game? What would be the best way to overcome comparison of yourself to others?

Walk

In charitable and spiritual actions, you are to practice secrecy because it identifies your true motives. What you do should not be to impress other people; it is between you and the Lord. The practice of this spiritual discipline frees us from the approval and comparison game, because the omniscient and omnipresent God sees and knows all, and will reward us openly. Knowing these things, what could you do to ascertain that your

giving, prayer and fasting are not done for show? What practical examples of giving in secret could you do this week? How can you commit your spiritual disciplines to God alone?

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the great reminders to keep what I do for you in secret so that I can identify my true motive. Help me to always remember that I should do things not to impress others, but to give glory to Your name. Help me to give without strings attached, to pray with the motive of worshiping and serving You; and when I do fast, that it should be between You and me alone. Thank You that there is no need for me to impress others because You can see every good thing that I do. Thank You that nothing can be better than the rewards You give to those who practice secrecy as spiritual discipline. Lord God, help me to have this kind of discipline that I need in my spiritual life. In Jesus' name. Amen.