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Practicing Righteousness
Matthew 6:1-6,16-18

¹ Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ² “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁶ “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Of Practicing Righteousness

Who Does It?

Why Do They?

How Do They?

Small Group Study Guide
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Getting Started

1. What is a funny example of a “humble brag”? Why is it often easier to recognize someone else blowing their own trumpet than to notice ourselves doing it?

The Big Idea - Jesus calls us to practice righteousness as children before our Father, seeking his pleasure rather than people’s applause. Private obedience helps expose and reshape our motives, and our Father sees the faithfulness others overlook.

Digging Deeper (Read 1-6, 16-18)

2. Reread verse 1. What exactly is Jesus’ warning against? How does this fit with his instruction in Matthew 5:16 to let others see our good works?
3. Compare Jesus’ instructions about giving, prayer, and fasting. What repeated words and ideas do you notice? What do they reveal about the central concern of this passage?
4. The sermon contrasts approaching the Christian life as a “professional” with approaching it as a child. How does Jesus’ repeated use of “your Father” shape our understanding of obedience, dependence, and spiritual growth?
5. Jesus says three times that the hypocrites have received their reward. What reward were they seeking? How might someone succeed at looking spiritually impressive while neglecting their relationship with God?
6. What does Jesus instruct his disciples to do differently in their giving, praying, and fasting? How could these concrete practices help redirect their hearts toward the Father?
7. Why is seeking the Father’s pleasure different from using people to feel important? How does the sermon’s illustration of a child looking toward a parent help explain that difference?
8. Reflect on this question: “*Am I really helping this person, or recruiting them to make me feel better about myself?*” In what settings are you most tempted to turn service into a search for recognition?

9. Consider the statement, "*What makes me feel unpaid might reveal what I was working for.*" What can your response to being overlooked, or someone else receiving credit, teach you about your motives? How can you distinguish understandable disappointment from dependence on praise?
10. Think about your public Christian activity and your private relationship with God. Where is there a healthy connection between them? Where might your visible activity be outpacing your hidden devotion?
11. Consider this statement: "*Unnoticed does not mean unseen.*" Where do you most need that encouragement right now? How does the Father's attention change the way you view an exhausting responsibility, a private struggle, or an overlooked act of faithfulness?

Making It Real

12. What is one specific step you will take this week to practice righteousness before your Father without seeking recognition? Consider hidden generosity, private prayer, or an unadvertised sacrifice.

Close in Prayer

Ask the Father to expose mixed motives, free you from dependence on applause, and deepen your joy in being known by him.