

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 9, Matthew 6:1ff, Works of Piety Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 9, Matthew 6:1ff, Works of Piety, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Bill Mounce's Lecture 9 on Matthew 6:1ff from his Sermon on the Mount series concentrates on **acts of piety**, specifically addressing giving, prayer, and fasting. The lecture emphasizes that the **motivation** behind these actions is paramount; they should be done to please God, not for human recognition. Mounce explores the pitfalls of performing righteous deeds for public praise, using examples and biblical context to illustrate the importance of **sincere intention** over outward display. He also touches on the concept of **rewards** and their true meaning in a spiritual context, differentiating them from earthly gains. Finally, Mounce provides insights into the practice of **fasting**, clarifying its purpose and proper execution according to biblical principles.

**2. 7 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 9 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Gospels → Sermon on the Mount).**



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3. Briefing Document: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 9, Matthew 6:1ff, Works of Piety

Briefing Document: Dr. Bill Mounce on Matthew 6:1ff - Works of Piety

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Bill Mounce delves into the beginning of Matthew Chapter 6 in the Sermon on the Mount, focusing on the "works of piety": giving, prayer, and fasting. The central theme revolves around the motivation behind these actions, emphasizing that they should be done to please God, not to seek human praise. Mounce explores the dangers of performing righteous deeds for the wrong reasons, the concept of reward, and provides insights into giving and fasting, setting the stage for a deeper discussion on prayer in the subsequent part of the lecture.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. The Overriding Question: Who Do You Want to Please?

- Chapter 6 of Matthew addresses acts of piety (giving, prayer, fasting), as well as the discussion of money and seeking God's kingdom.
- The fundamental question throughout this section is about motivation: **"Who do you want to please? Who are you living for? Do you live so that you're praised by other people, or do you live so that you're praised by God? That's the overriding question."**
- This theme naturally follows from Chapter 5's call to be different ("salt and light") and to submit to Jesus' understanding of the Old Testament.

2. Caution Against Practicing Righteousness for Human Praise:

- Jesus' thesis statement for this section is: **"be careful not to practice your righteousness, in other words, your acts of piety, in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."**
- The key is the motivation: **"To be seen by them."**
- Doing the right things for the wrong reasons (seeking human praise) leads to condemnation in this chapter.
- The only praise received in such cases is from human beings, not from God.

3. The Subtlety of Sin and the Importance of Heart Motivation:

- Mounce highlights that **"sin is so subtle and it's so deceptive that we can do the right things for the wrong reasons."**
- While the acts of piety themselves are not wrong, the motivation behind them is crucial.
- Righteous deeds done to be seen by people have no value in terms of divine reward: **"what is the value of good things done for wrong reasons? You have no reward from your Father in heaven."**
- The emphasis on the heart aligns with the latter half of Chapter 5, focusing on inner purity.

4. Giving - Motivation and Manner:

- The basic principle of giving is that it **"should be from the heart"** and for the right reasons (helping the needy).
- Jesus condemns announcing giving with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in synagogues and on the streets **"to be honored by others."**
- Those who give for human praise have **"received their reward in full,"** a technical commercial term in Greek meaning they will receive nothing further from God.
- The parallel in Luke 16:15 suggests that justifying oneself before men while the heart is known by God is an **"abomination in the sight of God."**
- Jesus emphasizes secrecy in giving: **"when you give to the needy, do not leave your do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that you're giving may be in secret, and then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."**
- Mounce interprets this dramatic language as emphasizing the motivation to seek divine praise, not human praise.
- He recounts a "stinking offering sermon" anecdote to illustrate the point that giving to control or manipulate is unacceptable.
- Mounce prefers the tradition of using an offering bag rather than a plate to promote more discreet giving.
- He raises the question of capital campaigns with public recognition, questioning whether the reward is sought on a wall or from heaven.

5. The Nature of Reward:

- Mounce expresses a personal belief that the primary reward is not material or earthly gain, aligning with the "prosperity preacher gospel."
- He suggests that earthly rewards for acts like parenting and giving are found in the outcome and the meeting of needs. **"I think the reward of giving is seeing the need met."**
- Regarding heavenly rewards, Mounce leans towards the idea of **"laying everything at the foot of Christ"** and amassing treasure in heaven as a way to honor God.
- He questions the traditional understanding of specific, quantifiable rewards in heaven, suggesting that the greatest reward is the joy of pleasing God and the thankfulness in heaven of those whose lives have been impacted. **"The reward is what we lay at Christ's feet."**
- He connects the idea of reward to blessing, drawing a parallel with the immaterial blessings in the Beatitudes.
- Ultimately, Mounce believes the reward is **"knowing that we've done what we're called to do, we've done it well, we've done it joyfully, and we have earned our Savior's smile."**

6. Fasting - Motivation and Practice:

- Jesus states, **"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, they have received the full reward."**
- The proper way to fast is to **"put oil on your head and wash your face so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting. But it will only be obvious to your father, who is unseen."**
- Mounce admits to having no personal experience with fasting and relies on resources like John Piper's book "A Hunger for God."
- He defines fasting as **"depriving yourself of food, but generally not water, for a set period of time."**
- He notes various types and reasons for fasting in the Bible (corporate and individual).

- He argues that biblical fasting is a "**biblical practice but not a biblical command.**"
- Biblical fasting is **never** done for physical reasons (like detoxification) or because the body is considered inherently evil (a dualistic, Platonistic view). "**Christian fasting is not because the body is bad.**"
- The key issue in the passage is that "**Christian fasting is never an opportunity to impress.**"
- Mounce highlights the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who disfigured their faces to appear religious while fasting.
- He connects fasting to the idea of increasing hunger for God and identifying false "gods" in our lives (e.g., food, consumerism). "**I just had to decide that food wasn't my god.**"
- He acknowledges the argument that Jesus' use of "when you fast" implies an expectation of the practice, but maintains that it is not a direct command.
- Mounce shares an anecdote about a spiritual formation professor ostentatiously mentioning a 40-day fast, highlighting the importance of humility in spiritual disciplines.

Next Steps: The lecture will continue with a discussion on prayer.

4. Study Guide: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 9, Matthew 6:1ff, Works of Piety

Study Guide: Matthew 6:1ff - Works of Piety

Key Themes:

- **Motivation in Righteous Acts:** The central focus of this passage is the importance of inward motivation over outward performance in acts of piety. Jesus critiques performing righteous deeds (giving, prayer, fasting) for the sake of human praise rather than for God's approval.
- **True Reward:** The lecture explores the concept of reward from God versus reward from humans. Seeking human recognition negates any potential reward from God, which is presented as infinitely more valuable. Dr. Mounce also delves into the nature of heavenly rewards, suggesting that the greatest reward is ultimately laying everything at Christ's feet and the joy of pleasing God.
- **Understanding the Law:** The lecture includes a parenthetical discussion about the Old Testament Law, emphasizing that the Mosaic Law was a temporary measure to lead people to Christ and has been replaced by the Law of Christ. However, principles rooted in creation (like the cycle of work and rest from Genesis 2) still hold relevance.
- **Specific Acts of Piety:** The lecture examines giving and fasting as examples of works of piety that can be corrupted by impure motives. Giving should be done secretly and from the heart, focused on meeting the needs of others, not on public recognition. Fasting, while a biblical practice (not a command), should be a genuine expression of a hunger for God, not for physical reasons or to impress others.

Quiz:

1. According to Dr. Mounce, what is the overarching question addressed in Matthew 6?
2. What is the fundamental issue Jesus raises concerning the practice of righteousness in Matthew 6:1?
3. How does Dr. Mounce explain the meaning of the word "hypocrite" in the context of giving?

4. What are the two potential interpretations of the "trumpet blasts" mentioned in the context of giving?
5. What does Dr. Mounce suggest is the reward of earthly giving done with the right motivation?
6. Explain Dr. Mounce's perspective on heavenly rewards in relation to the acts of piety discussed.
7. What is Dr. Mounce's personal stance on the practice of fasting, and why does he feel this way?
8. Identify three things that Dr. Mounce argues biblical fasting is NOT.
9. What was the practice of the Pharisees regarding fasting that Jesus critiques in Matthew 6?
10. What question does John Piper pose regarding fasting that Dr. Mounce finds interesting?

Answer Key:

1. The overarching question in Matthew 6, according to Dr. Mounce, is "Who do you want to please? Who are you living for? Do you live so that you're praised by other people, or do you live so that you're praised by God?"
2. The fundamental issue Jesus raises is the danger of practicing righteousness, or acts of piety, in front of others with the primary motivation of being seen and praised by them, which results in having no reward from God.
3. Dr. Mounce explains that "hypocrite" originally meant "actor," someone who appeared to be something they weren't. In the context of giving, these are people who treat the church as a stage, money as a prop, and giving as a pretense to impress others.
4. The two potential interpretations of the "trumpet blasts" are either the loud sound made by coins dropping into metal, trumpet-shaped receptacles in the place of giving, or the literal blowing of trumpets by an entourage to announce a significant donation.
5. Dr. Mounce suggests that the reward of earthly giving done with the right motivation is seeing the need met and experiencing the joy of contributing to positive outcomes, such as supporting missionaries or defending religious freedom.

6. Dr. Mounce believes that the greatest heavenly reward is the opportunity to lay all of one's life's work and accomplishments at Jesus' feet. He sees this act of surrender and the joy of pleasing God as the ultimate reward, rather than specific material benefits in the afterlife.
7. Dr. Mounce states that he has never fasted and has not felt a personal conviction to do so, making it difficult for him to teach or preach on the topic with personal conviction.
8. Dr. Mounce argues that biblical fasting is never done for physical reasons (like detoxification), never done because we believe the body is inherently evil, and never done as an opportunity to impress others with one's spirituality.
9. The Pharisees practiced fasting twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays) and would deliberately disfigure their faces (neglecting hygiene, wearing ashes) to make it obvious to others that they were fasting and appear more religious.
10. John Piper's question regarding fasting that Dr. Mounce finds interesting is: "Are you willing to do whatever it takes to grow in your hunger for God?" This prompts reflection on what individuals might need to give up to deepen their relationship with God.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the tension presented in Matthew 6 between seeking human approval and seeking divine approval in acts of piety. Discuss why Jesus emphasizes the importance of inward motivation over outward display, drawing specific examples from the lecture on giving and fasting.
2. Explore Dr. Mounce's understanding of "reward" in the context of Matthew 6. How does he distinguish between earthly and heavenly rewards? What is his personal perspective on the nature of heavenly rewards for those who practice piety with pure motives?
3. Discuss the parenthetical explanation of the Old Testament Law provided in the lecture. How does Dr. Mounce clarify the relationship between the Mosaic Law and the Law of Christ? Why is this distinction important for understanding the broader context of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount?

4. Examine the specific examples of giving and fasting discussed in the lecture. How does Jesus critique the hypocritical practices associated with these acts of piety? What principles does he lay down for how these acts should be performed authentically and with the right motivation?
5. Evaluate Dr. Mounce's perspective on the biblical practice of fasting. While acknowledging it as a valid spiritual discipline, he expresses a lack of personal conviction. Analyze his reasons for this stance and discuss the key principles he draws from the passage regarding the purpose and pitfalls of fasting.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Piety:** Religious devotion and reverence to God, often expressed through specific practices or acts.
- **Hypocrite:** Originally meaning "actor," it refers to someone who pretends to be virtuous or religious but whose inner motives contradict their outward actions.
- **Almsgiving:** The practice of giving money or goods to the poor or needy.
- **Synagogue:** A Jewish house of worship and community gathering.
- **Denarii/Shekels:** Ancient forms of currency used in the time of Jesus.
- **Textual Issue:** A point of uncertainty or variation in the ancient manuscripts of the Bible, leading to different translations.
- **Lobotomy:** A surgical procedure involving cutting connections in the brain, used here as a dramatic and impossible scenario to emphasize the need for secrecy in giving.
- **Liturgy:** The customary public worship performed by a religious group.
- **Capital Campaign:** An intensive fundraising effort conducted by an organization over a specific period.
- **Prosperity Gospel:** A theological belief that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for devout Christians and can be obtained through faith and certain actions.
- **Millennial Kingdom:** In Christian eschatology, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth after his second coming.

- **Beatitudes:** The blessings listed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, often focusing on spiritual qualities and promises.
- **Fasting:** Voluntarily abstaining from food (and sometimes water) for a specific period, often as a spiritual discipline.
- **Somber:** Having or showing a serious and gloomy disposition.
- **Disfigure:** To spoil the appearance or shape of something, used here to describe the exaggerated expressions of sadness by hypocrites while fasting.
- **Corporate Fast:** A fast undertaken collectively by a group of people, often for a specific purpose like repentance or seeking God's guidance.
- **Partial Fast:** A form of fasting where certain foods are restricted rather than complete abstinence from all food.
- **Complete/Total Fast:** Abstaining from all food and drink.
- **Dualism:** A philosophical or religious belief that reality is composed of two fundamentally different substances, often spirit and matter, with matter being seen as inferior or evil.
- **Monasticism:** A religious practice involving a solitary or communal life of asceticism and devotion, often involving the renunciation of worldly pursuits.
- **Asceticism:** Severe self-discipline and avoidance of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.
- **Imperative:** Expressing a command or instruction.
- **Participle:** A verb form used as an adjective, which can sometimes carry temporal or conditional meaning.

5. FAQs on Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 9, Matthew 6:1ff, Works of Piety, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Matthew 6:1ff and Works of Piety

1. What is the overarching theme of Matthew Chapter 6, particularly concerning the "works of piety"? The central question addressed in Matthew 6 is about motivation and who we seek to please. Jesus examines acts of piety – specifically giving, prayer, and fasting – highlighting that these actions are not inherently wrong, but their value is entirely dependent on whether they are done to gain praise from others or to please God. The chapter challenges us to consider who we are truly living for and whose approval we prioritize.

2. Why does Jesus emphasize secrecy in acts of piety like giving and fasting? Jesus stresses the importance of performing righteous deeds in secret to ensure that our motivation is to please God, not to impress others. When we give or fast conspicuously, seeking human praise, that praise becomes our full reward, and we forfeit any reward from God. By acting in secret, we demonstrate that our primary concern is God's recognition and approval, which holds infinitely greater value than human accolades.

3. What does the lecture suggest about the nature of rewards from God for righteous actions? The lecture offers a nuanced perspective on divine rewards, suggesting they are not necessarily material or worldly gains as promoted by the prosperity gospel. Instead, the reward of righteous living, such as parenting or giving, might be found in the positive outcomes and the fulfillment of seeing needs met or spiritual growth in ourselves and others. Ultimately, the greatest "reward" could be the joy of pleasing God and the opportunity to lay whatever we achieve at Christ's feet, rather than expecting specific, tangible benefits in this life or the next.

4. How does the lecture interpret Jesus' teaching about giving in Matthew 6:2-4, particularly the phrase "do not announce it with trumpets"? The lecture discusses two possible interpretations of the "trumpets" mentioned by Jesus. One interpretation suggests it refers to the metal, trumpet-shaped receptacles for offerings in synagogues, where the sound of coins dropping would audibly announce the amount given. The other possibility is that it's a metaphor for self-promotion, where individuals would figuratively "blow their own horns" or even literally have fanfare to draw attention to their generosity. In either case, the point is to avoid giving for the sake of human recognition.

5. What is the significance of the word "hypocrite" as used in this passage regarding acts of piety? The Greek word for hypocrite originally meant "actor." In the context of Matthew 6, it describes individuals who perform acts of piety as if on a stage, with their giving, praying, or fasting being a pretense aimed at impressing an audience. Their motivation is not genuine devotion to God but rather the applause and esteem of others.

6. What is the lecturer's personal stance on the practice of fasting, as discussed in relation to Matthew 6:16-18? The lecturer admits to never having personally practiced fasting and therefore finds it challenging to teach with conviction. However, he explains that biblical fasting is a practice of self-denial from food (though usually not water) for a specific period. It is presented as a biblical practice, not a command, and should never be done for physical reasons (like detoxification) or out of a belief that the body is inherently evil. The primary motivation for Christian fasting should be to cultivate a greater hunger for God and to remove distractions or "false gods" in our lives.

7. What are some key distinctions between biblical fasting and other forms of fasting discussed in the lecture? The lecture contrasts biblical fasting with secular or other religious forms. Biblical fasting is not for physical detoxification or based on the dualistic idea that the body is evil. Instead, it is a spiritual discipline aimed at focusing on God and deepening one's relationship with Him. Additionally, it should never be done to impress others with one's piety, as was the practice of some Pharisees.

8. How does the lecture address the idea of public recognition for significant financial contributions to religious organizations in light of Matthew 6:3 ("do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing")? The lecturer raises the complex question of whether publicly acknowledging large donations, such as naming opportunities in capital campaigns, aligns with Jesus' teaching on secret giving. While acknowledging the desire to honor generosity, he expresses initial reservations, seeing a potential conflict with the principle of seeking reward from God rather than human praise. The discussion highlights the tension between recognizing significant contributions and maintaining the spirit of selfless giving motivated by divine approval alone.