

## “When You Give..., Pray..., Fast” (The Value and Blessing of Religious Practices)

Matthew 6:1-18

- I. A Disciple’s Characteristics: 8 Blessings (5:1-12)
- II. A Disciple’s Influence: 2 Metaphors (5:13-16)
- III. A Disciple’s Righteousness: Six Contrasting Illustrations (5:17-48)

A. The Kingdom Standard: Must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20)

	SCRIBAL RELIGION	KINGDOM RIGHTEOUSNESS
Concept:	R = Outward conformity to God’s Law	R = Inward conformity to God’s character
Role of Law	Means of gaining God’s (and man’s) approval	1. Reveals God’s character 2. Exposes Man’s heart
Approach	1. Interpret the Law 2. Work harder	1. Explain Law’s intent 2. Invite repentance and faith 3. Transform hearts
Standard:	Comparison to Traditions	Perfect fulfillment of Law
Results	1. Focus on details 2. Promote comparison 3. Feeling of uncertainty	1. Focus on character 2. Promote compassion 3. Feeling of resolution
God’s Response	Resistance	Grace

B. Six Contrasting Illustrations (5:21-48)

1. Murder: Replace anger/abusive speech with reconciliation and nurture of persons and relationships
2. Adultery: Replace lust with purity of heart expressed in love that cares for (not uses) the other.
3. Divorce: Replace hard-hearted hostility with servant-hearted faithfulness.
4. Oaths: Replace deceitful evasion with reliable promise-keeping (integrity).
5. Retaliation: Replace the imp`ulse for revenge with gracious generosity.
6. Enemies: Replace vindictive hate with God-like love.

C. The Kingdom Standard: Be “perfect” as your heavenly Father is perfect.

### IV. A Disciple’s Piety: Three Religious Practices (6:1-18): Giving, Praying, Fasting

General Principle: Guard against practicing good deeds to receive human admiration, for such motivation forfeits the approval of God.

	“THEY”	“YOU”
CHARACTER:	Hypocritical	Genuine
PRACTICE:	Ostentatious	Private
MOTIVE:	Vanity	Love/Gratitude
GOAL:	Man’s Approval	Purpose of Activity
PLACE OF SELF:	Self-focused	Self-forgetful
REWARD:	Human admiration	Approval of God

### I. A Major NT Warning to Disciples: Avoid Practicing Externalized Religion

A. Jesus vs. the Pharisees and Scribes in Mark 7:1-23

1. Jesus’ teaching

a. About The Disciples’ Authority

- 1) Scripture is \_\_\_\_\_; tradition is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) Scripture is \_\_\_\_\_; tradition is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) Scripture is \_\_\_\_\_; tradition is \_\_\_\_\_.

b. About the Nature of True righteousness

- 1) The new birth (regeneration) is indispensable – a new \_\_\_\_\_ is required.
- 2) God’s is more concerned with the \_\_\_\_\_ than with the \_\_\_\_\_.

3) The moral takes precedence over the \_\_\_\_\_.

4) \_\_\_\_\_ are more important than things.

2. Jesus Complaints with Scribal Traditions:

- Wrongly \_\_\_\_\_ – to impress other people; to earn favor from God.
- Reflected a “jump-through-the-hoops” mentality – \_\_\_\_\_ rather than internal.
- Some of the traditions were designed to actually \_\_\_\_\_ the intention of the Law
- They added details to the Law which made obedience onerous and almost beyond \_\_\_\_\_
- The Pharisees \_\_\_\_\_ their rules requiring that everyone follow them.
- They elevated their rules over the \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture.

B. Echoed in the NT Epistles

1. Warning #1: Don't let anyone take you hostage or disqualify you by their insistence on following \_\_\_\_\_ that are contrary to Scripture (Colossians 2:8, 18-23)

2. Warning #2: Do not make the mistake of rejecting Christ by returning to the \_\_\_\_\_ rituals of the Old Covenant. These temporary arrangements were a \_\_\_\_\_ of the provisions of the New Covenant secured by Christ in his death, resurrection, and exaltation (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews.)

**II. Applicational Counterpoint: Do not overreact to abuses of religious practices by \_\_\_\_\_ and/or \_\_\_\_\_ them altogether (Hebrews 10:19-23).**

A. NT pointers to the positive aspects of religious practices.

1. Matthew 6: Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ that his disciples would continue to give, pray, and fast.
2. Matthew 23:1-3: Jesus told his disciples to do practice the \_\_\_\_\_ of scribes and Pharisees.
3. Matthew 26:26-29; 28:18-20: Jesus provided two ceremonial ordinances to be practiced by his disciples –
4. Romans 14: Paul affirms that different religious practices are of \_\_\_\_\_ to different believers.

B. Some Values of Traditional Religious Practices:

- They provide \_\_\_\_\_ for corporate observance and worship
- They set us free from the need for constant \_\_\_\_\_
- They develop spiritual “muscle memory” through \_\_\_\_\_
- They create a theological/experiential “\_\_\_\_\_” that the individual can draw on in times of challenge, stress, crisis. These practices are part of the believer's spiritual disciplines which \_\_\_\_\_ us to respond well to the challenges of life.
- They enable us to draw upon the \_\_\_\_\_ of the saints.

C. Points to Apply

1. Disciples must \_\_\_\_\_ between those aspects of faith and practice that are biblically mandated and those that come from tradition.
2. We need to understand the \_\_\_\_\_ of spiritual disciplines and utilize them for our collective benefit.
3. Disciples need to \_\_\_\_\_ spiritual disciplines that will advance their spiritual growth and service and practice them as \_\_\_\_\_ to those ends.
4. Disciples should place a priority on their faithful participation in those \_\_\_\_\_ practices that advance the well-being of the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. One's spiritual growth may be advanced by learning from the traditions of other believers who exercise their faith in different settings.