

Jesus made very strong statements about the futility of doing things so that others could see us. One of the most extensive passages is Matthew 6:1-18, where He emphasizes that those who do such have received their reward **in full**. He speaks specifically of three themes: giving, praying, and fasting. Similarly, in Matthew 23:5, he condemns the Pharisees with: "Everything they do is done for men to see." Here he talks about fanciful clothing, positions of honor, and special titles. He concludes with the counter idea, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:11-12)"

In Luke 6:31-35, Jesus gives us a better plan to find a reward. He first states what we call the Golden Rule, "Do to others as you would have them do to you," and then goes on to explain that we must do good to even our enemies with no thought of being repaid. He uses the example of lending money, and says that our reward will be great if we just do Good for its own sake. A similar passage is found in Luke 14:12-14, where Jesus asks us to give banquets for those who do not have the means to pay us back.

In terms of being an effective influence for God, the show-off spirit does not amount to very much. Those who just want to be seen are rarely a significant force in bringing people to God. The reason is very simple: they aren't glorifying God, but themselves.

How well did the Pharisees bring in converts? Jesus tells us in Matthew 23:13-15, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are." This is a great witness to the technique they employed.

It reminds me of a great story I heard about someone who went to ring the bell at Bible camp, only to find that the clapper was missing. I won't tell the complete story, but let's just say that it might remind us of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 13.1, "If I ... have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." The offensive noise represents the value of the works we do for our own glory.

We see people who try to get attention for themselves by being a "Praise the Lord" fanatic. Now, I'm all for glorifying God at every opportunity, but some people just aren't sincere about it. People, especially kids, have an uncanny ability to spot such hypocrisy wherever it occurs. The apostle John said it best this way: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth (John 3:18)." It is much better that people see God in the little things that we do to serve others.

We must show God rather than show off. We must minimize our own glory, and yet through our service and striving for Goodness we must help people to understand God's love. If we thought of it in terms of our sense of feel, we could imagine someone probing in the dark for the truth. When they encounter someone with the Pharisaic mind, it is like touching something sharp and prickly. And, because not many people have pet porcupines, you can guess that this would be somewhat repulsive. If we have become spiritually insensitive to the feelings of our fellow man, if we do not act out of love, then an outer shell hides our heart and those who reach out to touch it are repelled. A person reaching out in the dark must feel something warm, fuzzy, and comfortable. We must show God to others in such a way that they are attracted to Him rather than us. They must be able to touch God through us without being distracted by our own personality.

We must not seek our own glory, but we do have a part in presenting God to those around us. We must be a good example for others. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:15-16, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." We must do what is good and right in such a way that the praise goes to God. Indeed He is the only one that really matters.

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