

## GOD LOVES SECRET AGENTS

### MATTHEW 6:1-18

#### INTRODUCTION

Jesus addresses 3 religious practices: giving, prayer, fasting

First a Q: Why was Jesus so hard on the church leaders of his day?  
hypocrites, brood of vipers, whitewashed graves, blind guides

*They do not practice what they preach. Everything they do is done for people to see – Mt 23:3, 5*

God loves secret agents! (vs 1, 3-4, 6, 18)

Followers of Jesus should be seen doing good works, but we should never do these works in order to be seen

#### THREE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

1. Giving to the poor (their most important religious duty)  
they made a big show of it, presumably to encourage others

in fact they were drawing attention to themselves

they were honored by others, but ignored by God

how then should we give?

generously: standard of giving > standard of living  
without drawing attention to or honor for ourselves

2. Praying

they made a big show of it, presumably to encourage others

they used lots of impressive words to show their education

they were honored by men, but ignored by God

how then should we pray?

privately (does not negate corporate prayer meetings)  
just talk to God!

follow the prototype Jesus gave us  
with others in mind (*Our*)

relationally (*Father*)

begin with God's name, kingdom, will

practically

with a willingness to extend that for which we ask

admit our need for help

return to God's rightful role

3. Fasting

they made a big show of it, presumably to encourage others

wanted others to know how much they were suffering

Jesus here seems to encourage hypocrisy!

how then should we fast/practice other spiritual disciplines?  
resist the temptation to do a humble brag

be content to be seen by God alone

be confident that God's reward will be sufficient

#### CONCLUSION

Followers of Jesus should be seen doing good works, but we should never do good works in order to be seen

A recent example

Two questions:

Am I doing what Jesus wants me to do?

Why am I doing this?

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