



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-2018 Midweek/Sermon Starter

Unit 1: Everything Belongs to Him
Sermon Series Title: Can God Trust You?
Sermon 3: Not for Show
Bible Passage: Matthew 6:2-4

Introduction

Publishers Clearing House is a multi-million-dollar marketing company that was founded in 1953 by Harold Mertz, a magazine sales team manager. Publishers Clearing House gained much acclaim in the early 1950s for its innovative marketing methods.

In 1967, Publishers Clearing House added a sweepstakes as a way to increase subscription sales. This sweepstakes has become the trademark for the company. Publishers Clearing House supposedly draws a random name from the list of customers and then dispatches “The Prize Patrol” to surprise the winners with an enormous check at their home. This exciting event is publicized with the hopes that it would draw more attention to and subsequent business for the company.

Background/Context

Jesus spent a lot of his ministry teaching about the importance of giving to those in need. Unfortunately, Jesus recognized that there were people who gave to those in need, but gave with incorrect motives. Jesus offered a warning, “be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them” (Matt. 6:1). In Matthew 6, we learn that God gives to us so that we might give to others. However, we must never give to be seen or give for show.

**A. Giving Should Be Practiced
(Matt. 6:2a)**

Perhaps you grew up with siblings just as I did. Whenever my parent(s) gave me something they told me, “You must share.” In fact, my mom would only give me certain things *if* I promised to share with my siblings. Sharing was the standard in my home.

Jesus commenced his discourse with these words, “so whenever you give to the poor....” Notice that Jesus did not say *if* you give. He said **when** you give. Why? Giving is the standard for Christian living. Jesus was talking to people that recognized the importance of practicing compassion and benevolence. In a real sense, Christians are givers—free, persistent, enthusiastic, contagious, and compassionate givers. Jesus’ implied assumption verifies this truth. Christian disciples freely give to their brothers and sisters in need because it is the way that we are identified in the world. 1 John 3:17 states, “if anyone has this world’s goods and

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sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God’s love reside in him.” In other words, our testimony of God’s love is validated through our benevolence.

God always attaches responsibility to resources. Jesus was talking to an affluent audience—people who had resources and who understood their responsibility to use their resources to help others. Jesus made it very clear, “you always have the poor with you, and you can do what is good for them whenever you want” (Mark 14:7). We all must accept our responsibility to use our resources to help others.

Application Point: The saying is true: “sharing is caring.” We share with people that we care about. When was the last time you cared enough to give to someone in need? Going forward be intentional in using your God-given resources to help someone in need.

B. Giving Should Be Done Privately (Matt. 6:2b-4a)

The mandate for giving is established in this text. There is no question about whether we should give. Christian disciples give freely. However, Jesus pushed the envelope further. He invites us to consider our motive and mindset when we give.

In verses 2b-4a, Jesus spoke out against people who only give publicly for praise. Jesus shunned people who give to be seen. The word Jesus used for *seen* is *theaomai* from which we get the word “theatrical.” These people literally put on a show when they give. They are just as theatrical as The Publishers Clearing House’s Prize Patrol. They want everyone to see and know when they give. Jesus called these people “hypocrites” which depict actors on stage. Yes, when we give for show we act like actors on stage awaiting applause from the audience. Moreover, we reduce the value of our gifts when we give for show. We must understand that the act of giving is a love ethic and it should never become entertainment.

Conversely, Jesus invited believers to give to others privately. Jesus stated, “when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be in secret.” God is more concerned about our attitude when we give than with the amount we give. All believers must give with the right motive and the right mindset.

Application Point: When have you been disturbed by someone’s failure to express gratitude for a gift you gave him or her? Remember, we do not give to be seen; we give because God gives to us. Find a way to anonymously bless someone.

C. God Prospers Sincere Givers (Matt. 6:4b)

Jesus concluded with a reason for why we are to give to others privately. He warned that those who sound trumpets when they give to the poor already have their reward. However, in Matthew 6:4, Jesus conversely encouraged us to give secretly because God who sees in secret will reward us.

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First, Jesus wants us to grasp the fact that God is omniscient—God sees and knows all. We don't have to seek attention, acceptance, approval, and appreciation from humankind. We don't have to give to be seen. We give because we know God sees all our good works. Scripture reminds us that "God is not unjust; God will not forget your work and the love you demonstrated for his name by serving the saints—and by continuing to serve them" (Heb. 6:10).

God not only sees but God will also reward us. Jesus wants us to know that God promises to prosper sincere givers. Proverbs 19:17 reminds us, "kindness to the poor is a loan to the Lord, and God will give a reward to the lender." Don't ever forget that God is a great giver. His gifts are the best because they are eternal. This is why Jesus invites us to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal" (Matt. 6:20). Seek reward from God—not recognition from man.

Application Point: How does it feel knowing that God promises to prosper you as you commit yourself to helping others? The best way to handle the lack of appreciation from people is by reminding yourself that God sees you and will reward you.