

Our passage, Matthew 6:1-18, has a wonderful symmetry; that is, literary structure and balance and even elegance to it.

First, we have the statement of the general principle in v. 1 – about practicing righteousness.

Then it is applied in three examples:

1. Giving alms vs. 2-4
2. Prayer vs. 5-6
3. Fasting vs. 16-18

The middle example has more on Prayer/Lord's prayer (vs. 7-15) which we won't look at today since its goes in a different direction and we have already gone over it. But even here notice the symmetry. The middle section is expanded putting emphasis on prayer. And then the other two sections balance it off on either side of it, coming along side of prayer, as it were.

Finally, just note that each of the three sections has the same structure to it:

- wrong practice
- reward statement
- right practice
- reward statement

Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18 reading:

General principle - v. 1: "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

1. Alms - vs. 2-4:

- **wrong practice** - "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others."
- **reward statement** – "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."
- **right practice** – "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret."
- **reward statement** – "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

2. Prayer – vs. 5-6:

- **wrong practice** - "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others."

- **reward statement** - "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."
- **right practice** – "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret."
- **reward statement** - "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

+ further teaching on Prayer/Lord's prayer (vs. 7-15)

3. Fasting – vs. 16-18:

- **wrong practice** - "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others."
- **reward statement** – "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."
- **right practice** – "But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret."
- **reward statement** - "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."