



Sermon-Based Discussion Guide for Home Groups

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Gospel: The Message

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SCRIPTURE

Matthew 23:13-24

Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

¹³ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

¹⁵ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ ¹⁷ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸ You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ ¹⁹ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹ And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. ²² And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

²³ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

ENGAGE

Have you ever experienced people who are religious, but seem to focus on the wrong things? How do we know what is really important spiritually?

DISCUSS

1. Read the passage above. What do you like about the passage?

2. What percent of our North American culture focus on the right things spiritually? What percent would fit the mold of scribe and Pharisee?
3. The definition of hypocrite is one who wears a mask. How would that apply to people at Westwood? Do we have hypocrites? To what degree would you confess to being a hypocrite?
4. We each need to make sure that we are part of God's Kingdom. How can we be sure we are a part? What does the Bible say about that? How do you know about yourself?
5. How do you feel most of us do with what Jesus describes as the "more important things" of justice, mercy and faithfulness? Why do you think Jesus identified these as more important?
6. We need to use caution about being an obstacle to someone else entering the kingdom. Let's list some of the obstacles people have to entering. Next let's see how guilty we are of being an obstacle.
7. Are we sometimes guilty of expecting others to be living their Christian life out in the same way we are? Have you ever judged someone and then later come to understand that their belief is actually sincere? In what areas do we often look for or expect conformity?

YOUR NEXT STEP

What is one thing you have been challenged by as a result of today's study? What are you going to do this week to change that?

CHILDREN'S TIME

1. Ask the kids if they love Halloween and wearing masks? Explain that that is what a hypocrite is... leading someone to believe you are really someone else. Explain why that is a big problem for Christians. Discuss how it affects others.
2. Jesus told us there are some more important things in the Christian life, even more important than tithing. Read the passage above and have the children listen to those things.
3. Jesus cautioned about being an obstacle to others entering the kingdom of God? How can we be obstacles? What can we do to make sure we're not a stumbling block.

OTHER PASSAGES

Matthew 4:17

1 Cor. 13 (we see in a glass dimly)

1 John 3:2

Romans 10:9-10

Micah 6:8

Rom. 14:13, 17