

hidden graves that defiled those who unknowingly came in contact with them. The same thing can happen today.

In what way do you find “Pharisees” in today’s church, focusing on letter of the law but missing the intent or the point of what we do? What are some warning signs that you have crossed the line from Godly obedience to legalism?

It is not a bad thing to obey what the Bible commands, in fact referring to their tithing Jesus told the Pharisees they should tithe but not neglect the truly important things.

WRAP-UP

God is concerned with our innermost being; our heart and soul. The Pharisees were so focused on their external observance of the ritual laws, they neglected God’s love and justice. Their pride and greed revealed that there was darkness in their hearts. Pharisees were supposed to be helping others to find their way to God, but instead they made the way difficult, creating burdensome rules that were nearly impossible to keep. We don’t want to fall into the same mistake they did. If we focus on God and His love, we will be filled and overflow with love for others. We will become lights for all to see, and God will find us clean on the inside, where it counts.

Memory Verse

1 Samuel 16:7b NIV - 7 b ...People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge-

Ask God if there is a way you can change up some of your practices that have become routine to breathe new life into them.

“Cleaning the Inside”

Farm to Table #4

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was not reluctant to accept an invitation to the table. In chapter 11 of his gospel Luke describes a meal at the home of one of the Pharisees. But accepting an invitation didn’t mean Jesus accepted their practice of the religious laws. From the moment he entered the house, the Pharisees were offended by Jesus because he didn’t observe their ceremonies and rituals of hand washing. In fact, it’s not clear if he ever actually got to eat. But while he was there, Jesus made it clear that he wasn’t interested in how they appeared on the outside, it was what was in their hearts that mattered.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

How often do you use hand sanitizers?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Focused on the Outside

Wash your hands before you eat. That sounds like a reasonable request, but it wasn’t really what the Pharisees were looking for. Their ceremonial washing had little to do with removing dirt and everything to do with showing the world that they were following all the legally required customs of the Jews. Jesus, however, took his place at the table without ceremonial washing.

Luke doesn’t say the Pharisee spoke directly to Jesus, but that he was surprised when Jesus sat down without washing. How did Jesus explain how he viewed their washing rituals?

Luke 11:39-41 NLT - 39 Then the Lord said to him, "You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy--full of greed and wickedness! 40 Fools! Didn't God make the inside as well as the outside? 41 So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over.

Wow, I bet they didn’t see that coming. Jesus called the host and his guests filthy and foolish. But wait, hadn’t God originally commanded hand washing when the tabernacle was set up in the wilderness? Isn’t this what the Bible said they were supposed to do? Well, not exactly.

What were the circumstances for that ceremonial hand washing given to Moses (Ex 30:17-20)?

Exodus 30:17-20 NLT - 17 Then the LORD said to Moses, 18 "Make a bronze washbasin with a bronze stand. Place it between the Tabernacle and the altar, and fill it with water. 19 Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there. 20 They must wash with water whenever they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the LORD and when they approach the altar to burn up their special gifts to the LORD--or they will die!

Here is the story of how this had evolved into ceremonial washing before a meal. *When the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the table in a home came to represent the Temple altar. The bread placed on it symbolizes the offerings that were once brought to the Priests. The Jews, who believed that the Temple and the Priesthood would be restored, did not want the practice of washing hands before handling an offering or performing a ritual to be forgotten, and so washing the hands before a meal was strictly enforced.*

It seems like there were good intentions, namely, to remember you need to be cleansed before you enter God's presence with an offering. But it had gone far beyond what God intended and lost its true meaning.

Consider these practices. What do you think was the original intent of each and in what ways can their observance be diverted to merely an external display rather than an inward change?

- *Attending weekend church services*
- *Singing worship music*
- *Having a daily quiet time*
- *Following Bible reading plans*

Describe how you would get back on track if we find yourself focused on observance and missing the intended purpose?

2. Neglecting the Inside

The problem Jesus identified was not how meticulously the Pharisees cleaned their outward appearance, but what was left unclean in their hearts. We know God looks at our heart, not our outward appearance. (1 Samuel 16:7)

1 Samuel 16:7 NLT - 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

What did Jesus find in the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees (Luke 11:39) and what "more important things" were missing (Luke 11:42)?

Luke 11:39-43 NLT - 39 Then the Lord said to him, "You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy--full of greed and wickedness! 40 Fools! Didn't God make the inside as well as the outside? 41 So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over. 42 "What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. 43 "What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you love to sit in the seats of honor in the synagogues and receive respectful greetings as you walk in the marketplaces.

The Pharisee's love had been misplaced. In Luke 11:43 it says they loved seats of honor and respectful greetings. The word in the Greek used for love here is *agapaō*. It is the same word used by Jesus when he said, "For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.", "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.", and "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

What do you think it would take to change from being "full of greed and wickedness" (v. 39) to "being generous to the poor" from your heart (v. 41)?

3. Light or Darkness

The Pharisee's invitation to Jesus had come "as Jesus was speaking".

What had Jesus been speaking about? Read Luke 11:29 – 36 in your Bible.

Jesus contrasts what happened when Jonah preached in Nineveh with his preaching to this generation.

How would you explain the difference between the reaction of the people of Nineveh and those hearing Jesus? If Jonah spoke reluctantly and saw repentance but Jesus preached passionately and didn't, does the repentance depend on the skill of the one bringing the message? What does that imply about your potential effectiveness as a witness to the unsaved?

In verses 33 – 36 Jesus gives the example of lighting a lamp. He said your eye is like a lamp to your body and through it you are filled with either light or darkness.

What had the Pharisees and Scribes carefully focused on (Luke 11:39, 42)? This had filled them with darkness, and in turn those whom they led were in darkness as well. Jesus made that point when he compared them to