

In the Recovery Room

Recovering from the Pharisees in the Church

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

Luke 6:41-42

And she's supposed to be a good Christian!

- Many of the unchurched base their rejection of Christ on a bad experience with a Christianⁱ
- A high percentage of Christians leave the church and even their faith because of a bad experience with a Christian, a Christian leader or group of Christians.ⁱⁱ
- The definition of the word Christian has become so generic in our society it is almost useless in identifying the real thing.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Our Christian lives should create interest, not validate cynicism.^{iv}

The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.

-Brennan Manning

According to the Anti-Defamation League of the 5,000 hate sites on the internet about 300 have Bible verses or church language on them to promote their cause.^v

hyp-o-crite

n.: a person given to hypocrisy.

: a person who professes beliefs and opinions that he does not hold [syn: dissembler, phony, pretender]

[Middle English ipocrite, from Old French, from Late Latin hypocrita, from Greek hupocrit s, *actor*, from hupokr nesthai, *to play a part, pretend.*]

What is a Pharisee?

- Separatists
- Political party
- Strictest observers of the Mosaic ritual
- Zealous of tradition & law
- Outwardly moral
- Self righteous
- Pretense of superior piety

Jesus' rebuke of Pharisees

- Hypocrisy
- Pride
- False Teaching
- Blasphemy
- Seeking signs
- Persecuting and killing God's servants
- Love of money
- Doing things to be seen

Pharisees' Criticism of Jesus

- Associated with sinners
- Miracles done by Satan
- Not washing hands
- Working on the Sabbath

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Matthew 7:1-2

How have I been a Pharisee? What? Me? A Pharisee?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Separatists | <input type="checkbox"/> Pride |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political party | <input type="checkbox"/> False Teaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strictest observers of the Mosaic ritual | <input type="checkbox"/> Blasphemy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Zealous of tradition & law | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking signs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outwardly moral | <input type="checkbox"/> Persecuting and killing God's servants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self righteous | <input type="checkbox"/> Love of money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pretense of superior piety | <input type="checkbox"/> Doing things to be seen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hypocrisy | |

Woe to you, Pharisee! You:

- Shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces
- Devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers.
- Travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.
- Tithe a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness.
- Clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self indulgence.
- Are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.
- Load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.
- Have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.

Are We Sinner-Sensitive?

We must examine the possibility that we are doing things that make hurting people stay away from the church. Do you ever think your health is too messed up to go to the hospital? Assuming that you have insurance, does a hospital ever communicate that you are just a little too sick to come in?^{vi}

The Danger of Pharisaism

- What makes pharisaical sin so dangerous is that it disguises itself as a form of enlightenment. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “if then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:23)
- The darkness is great because one is deluded into thinking it is light. You think you are seeing better than anyone else, when in fact, you can’t see at all.^{vii}

Twelve Steps for Recovery^{viii}

1. We admit that our single most unmitigated pleasure is to judge other people.
2. Have come to believe that our means of obtaining greatness is to make everyone lower than ourselves in our own mind.
3. Realize that we detest mercy being given to those who, unlike us, haven’t worked for it and don’t deserve it.
4. Have decided that we don’t want to get what we deserve after all, and we don’t want anyone else to either.
5. Will cease all attempts to apply teaching and rebuke to anyone but ourselves.
6. Are ready to have God remove all these defects of attitude and character.
7. Embrace the belief that we are, and will always be, experts at sinning.
8. Are looking closely at the lives of famous men and women of the Bible who turned out to be ordinary sinners like us.
9. Are seeking through prayer and meditation to make a conscious effort to consider others better than ourselves.
10. Embrace the state of astonishment as a permanent and glorious reality.
11. Choose to rid ourselves of any attitude that is not bathed in gratitude.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we will try to carry this message to others who think that Christians are better than everyone else.

PHARISEES

identity of ♦ prominent Jewish sect: Mt 27:62–64; Jn 9:13–16, 22; Ac 15:5 ♦ members of Sanhedrin: Ac 23:6

beliefs and traditions: Ac 23:8 (see also reasons for Christ's renouncing of Pharisees below)

rejected John the Baptist: Lu 7:30

opposed Christ

questioned and tested Jesus about ♦ general: Lu 11:53–54; 20:20, 24 ♦ divorce:

Mt 19:3; Mk 10:2 ♦ washing: Mt 15:1–2; Mk 7:5 ♦ fasting: Mt 9:14; Mk 2:18; Lu 5:33 ♦ eating with sinners: Mt 9:11; Mk 2:16; Lu 5:30 ♦ Woman charged with adultery: Jn 8:1–6 ♦ paying taxes: Mt 22:15–17; Mk 12:13–15 ♦ most important command: Mt 22:34–36 ♦ coming of kingdom: Lu 17:20, 21

accused Jesus of ♦ demon possession: Mt 9:34; 12:24; Mk 3:22 ♦ blasphemy: Lu 5:21 ♦ breaking Sabbath: Lu 6:6, 7

criticized Jesus for ♦ associating with sinners: Lu 7:36–39; 15:1, 2 ♦ receiving praise: Lu 19:38, 39; sought to seize, kill: Mt 12:14; 21:45–46; Lu 20:20; Jn 7:32, 44, 45; 11:47, 53; 18:1–3

asked for signs: Mt 12:38; 16:1; Mk 8:11; Jn 6:30

denounced by John: Mt 3:7–10

denounced by Christ for ♦ hypocrisy: Mt 5:20; 15:1–9; 23:1–32; Lu 11:37–44; 16:14, 15; 18:9–14 ♦ pride: Mt 23:6, 7; Lu 11:43; 18:11; Jn 12:42, 43 ♦ for false teaching: Mt 15:1, 3–6; 16:6–12 ♦ blasphemy: Mt 12:24, 30–32 ♦ seeking signs: Mt 12:38; 16:1–4 ♦ persecuting and killing God's servants: Mt 21:33–46; 23:33–36 ♦ love of money: Lu 16:1

entertained Jesus: Lu 7:36; 11:37; 14:1

believing: Jn 12:42–43; 19:39; Ac 15:5; 26:5

significant individuals ♦ **Nicodemus:** Jn 3:1; 19:39 ♦ **Paul:** Ac 23:6; 26:5 ♦ **Simon:** Lu 7:36–40 ♦ **Gamaliel:** Ac 5:35^{ix}

ⁱ Burchett, Dave, 2002. When Bad Christians Happen to Good People. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press. Page 3

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ Burchett, p 71

^{iv} Burchett, p 89

^v Burchett, p 115

^{vi} Burchett, p 20

^{vii} Fischer, John, 2000. 12 Steps for the Recovering Pharisee (like me): Finding Grace to Live Unmasked. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House p 11

^{viii} Fischer, p 12

^{ix} *NASB Topical Index*, (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation) 1999, c1992

Respect for the Journey

by John Fischer

Everybody knows some truth. Everybody is right about something. Even the most evil of people is getting something right. Traditionally, members of the mafia have great family values. They are loyal. They will kill for their loyalty, but they are loyal, nonetheless.

When seeking to reach out to those around you who do not have a relationship with Christ, it's best to find out first what they already know, because they are getting something right. Think about it: Who would you rather be around—someone who agrees with you or someone who is always pointing out where you are wrong?

Ask the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to the spiritual needs of those around you who do not know Christ. Make it your goal to find out about the spiritual journey of others. Pastor Rick suggests we pray, "Father, help me to understand what is keeping this person from knowing you." We can't make people believe, but we may be able to help remove some of their barriers to believing.

It's not necessary to clear the table of someone's pre-Christian spiritual journey before you can set up Christ. Chances are Christ is already on their table somewhere in the form of truth. Jesus said He was the truth, so that all truth has something to do with Jesus. You can work this either way. You can

start with Jesus and lay out the truth, or you can start with the truth and work your way back to Jesus. Starting with Jesus works fine for those who already believe in Him and want to learn more. Starting with truth is best for those who may have doubts about Jesus but might relate to the truths He espoused.

"Jesus said that?" someone might say.

"Yes," you could say in response, "and would you be interested in hearing some other things He said as well?"

What's important is that we have enough respect for people to value what they already know, and then make ourselves available and willing to find out.

As Christians, we need to always remember we are not persuading people about God all by ourselves. The Holy Spirit is doing this, and was already doing it before we came along. We can introduce people to Jesus, but we cannot make anyone believe; just like you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.

"I try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what I like or what is best for me, but what is best for them so they may be saved." 1 Corinthians 10:33 NLT