

Message Discussion Guide

Date: March 16-17, 2024

Title: What We Do Is More Important Than Simply What We Say

Connect with Each Other:

Icebreakers

- If you could be anyone for a day (other than Jesus), who would it be and why?
- How are your New Year's Resolutions going?
- What was your first car?

Pray Together

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your Word. Thank you for having Jesus come to us and show us what a life of integrity looks like. We know that we fall short, but we ask that you help soften our hearts and let us take down any masks that we are putting on so we can live an integrated life where our hearts, our words, and our actions are in alignment. We lift all this up in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Connect with God:

Key Bible Verses

Matthew 23:1-5 (NLT) - Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach. They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden. Everything they do is for show."

Matthew 23:23-24,26 (NLT) - "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. ... What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too."

1 John 3:18 (NLT) - Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

Message Summary

We want to be seen as people with integrity. Integrity is being honest and doing the right thing, even when it will cost you. Admitting your mistakes.

One way people get off-track is trying to put on a mask that claims they are good and righteous even if that's not really in their heart. It's like the person who acts one way in front of the boss and another way when the boss isn't around. It's trying to impress the "right" people. It's the person who is struggling on the inside but has a social media presence that makes it seem like everything is perfect in their life. Running around with a life like that is not just difficult, it's exhausting and leaves us more empty on the inside. It's being a hypocrite.

The Pharisees in the Bible often acted like this. Hypocrites. On the outside they professed to follow God. They were strict in telling everyone the rules and professing to follow them, but inside their hearts weren't right with God. Their hearts and their actions weren't aligned with their words. They were hypocrites.

Jesus says, you can listen to their teaching on the Word, but don't follow their example. Don't show off, instead show up. Be his hands and feet. Do what is right even when it might cost you. Admit when you are struggling, don't just put on a mask and pretend everything is perfect. Live a life of integrity where your actions match your words. Where your heart is right with God and you live that out.

Sticky statement

Actions speak louder than words

Discussion Questions

1. If the Pharisees followed all the "rules", why were they hypocrites?
2. Why do so many people live a life through a mask (i.e., pretending all is okay on the outside when they are struggling on the inside)?
3. Why not cover up my struggles? Why isn't it better to just pretend things are okay so others aren't burdened by me?
4. Have you ever had to be honest even though it cost you?

5. Why is living a life with a mask so exhausting? What can we do to change that?
6. What practical steps can you do this week to make your actions match your words more closely?
7. What other insights did you get from the message this week?

JESUS TAUGHT THAT A LIFE OF INTEGRITY MEANS OUR HEARTS, OUR WORDS, AND OUR ACTIONS ARE IN ALIGNMENT. THE PHARISEES IN THE BIBLE TALKED A LOT ABOUT GOD'S LAW, BUT THEIR HEARTS AND ACTIONS WEREN'T ALIGNED WITH WHAT THEY SAID.

**DON'T BE
A PHARISEE...**

BE LIKE JESUS!



WHAT SORROW AWAITS YOU TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS LAW AND YOU PHARISEES. HYPOCRITES! FOR YOU ARE SO CAREFUL TO CLEAN THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP AND THE DISH, BUT INSIDE YOU ARE FILTHY - FULL OF GREED AND SELF-INDULGENCE!

- MATTHEW 23:25 (NLT)