

A Sure Mark of Pharisees: An Unteachable Spirit – Part 2

John 9

Introduction:

1. John chapter 9 gives us some very deep insight into the heart and mind of the Pharisee. What is it that made the Pharisee so arrogant, so obnoxious, so callous, and so haughty?
2. It was the Pharisees' conviction that they knew everything. As an upstanding Pharisee, you can't afford to let down your guard for one second. You must constantly demonstrate that in you resides complete and full spiritual wisdom.
3. **Romans 2:17-20** describes to perfection the attitude of the Pharisee. Notice verse 19, "*And art confident...*" Confidence is a key for a Pharisee. You must be confident in yourself that you always know the answer for everything. You are an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, you hold the key to knowledge and truth.
 - But in verse 21, Paul asks the question to the Pharisee, "*Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?*"
4. Herein lies the problem. A Pharisee always has an unteachable spirit. Jesus used the word "disciple" a lot. The word "disciple" simply means "a learner." Pharisees aren't candidates to be disciples of Christ because they aren't learners.
5. In John 9, the story centers on a man that was born blind (vs. 1). Jesus' disciples have some preconceived ideas about how the man got into this condition, and Jesus quickly straightens out their thinking. vs. 2-5
6. Jesus then heals the man (vs. 6-7), and his neighbors immediately begin to question the man (vs. 8-12). Then they take the man to the Pharisees and the fun really begins. vs. 13
7. In this chapter, one thing is clear - the Pharisees have everything figured out (so they think). They absolutely, positively know:
 - That Jesus is not of God. vs. 16
 - The man was not really born blind. vs. 18
 - That Jesus is a sinner. vs. 24
 - That the man born blind was blind because of sin. vs. 34
8. Little did they know that they were the biggest fools in town. They were wrong about everything that they **thought** they knew.
9. You read this chapter and they are so sure that they are right about everything, and they couldn't be more wrong. How does a person get this way? Verse 34 is the key - the Pharisees asked in sarcasm, "*...dost thou teach us?*" They were unteachable.
10. There were several character traits that made them unteachable. Let's learn from the Pharisees negative example and decide that we will possess a teachable spirit.

First, Pharisees explain away truth by seeking to discredit the teacher.

1. Jesus had done this miracle and healed this man on the Sabbath day (vs. 14). There was nothing scripturally wrong with this, but it violated the Pharisees' **tradition**.
2. So, after they questioned the man about what had happened, immediately many of the Pharisees explained away the truth of what Christ did by saying, "*This man if not of God.*" Why? "*...because he keepeth not the Sabbath day.*"

3. Notice, they make a big deal out of a sideline issue rather than deal directly with the truth that is staring at them. This is the way of Pharisees. If they don't like or agree with the truth being presented, they simply discredit the teacher.
 - Preachers do this all the time. "That isn't traditional Baptist doctrine." "Brother so and so doesn't believe that." "The guy teaching that sings praise choruses and uses a projection screen." "He doesn't even wear a tie on Sunday mornings."
 - What does that have to do with the subject at hand? Absolutely nothing, but it is a favorite tactic of the Pharisee.
4. Pharisees are only willing to listen to people just like them. Why? Because then they are sure not to have any of their views or opinions challenged.
5. Jesus was not one of them. He wasn't on the inside of the religious system in Israel. So the Pharisees constantly sought to discredit Jesus, thinking that this would also discredit his teaching. It is an age-old political tactic.
6. Christians do this all the time, too. They don't attend a L.I.F.E. Group because no teacher is qualified to teach them. When the pastor is gone, they don't come to church because the other staff doesn't measure up.
7. Husband, your wife points out some truth about you that isn't flattering. You respond, "But you are...." Rather than deal with the truth of her statement, we attack her character.
8. Pharisees explain away truth by seeking to discredit the teacher.

Second, Pharisees are not good listeners.

1. The Pharisees were on a seek and destroy mission. They interrogated the man's parents (vs. 18-23), then they went to the man again and asked him what Jesus had done to him. vs. 24-26
2. I love the man's answer in verse 27. The key is the phrase, "...ye did not hear." He basically tells them, "I've been talking, but you haven't been listening."
3. Pharisees are good talkers but they are not good listeners. Yet, the only we can truly learn is by listening.
4. Pharisees are above learning, so they aren't good listeners. But a godly person has learned the biblical art of listening. **Proverbs 15:31-32, 17:27-28, 18:13, 19:20**
 - A wise man loves instruction and loves those who give him instruction. **Proverbs 9:8-9, 12:1, 1:7-8**
 - Parents, it is your job to insure that your children grow up to be good listeners and take instruction well. **Proverbs 15:5, 10:17**
5. A Pharisee is an expert on everything. An expert has ceased the process of learning and has turned from a disciple into a critic. It can happen to any Christian. This is why a little knowledge can be a very dangerous thing. The Pharisee knows just enough to think he knows it all. **Illustration:** homiletics class in college
 - We can easily take on the role of the Pharisee and become hard-headed, stubborn, set in our ways, cynical, and sarcastic. We are experts at everything and quick to give our opinion.
6. But, oh, how exciting to be a learner – ever-growing, ever-changing. Do you remember when you first got saved? You lapped up everything you could get. You knew you had a long way to go, but you were just glad to be on the right road.

7. What freedom when we realize that we don't have to know everything and we can take our seat with the learners! We can simply say, "God, use others to teach me."
8. Remember - no teacher is above being taught. When you quit learning you quit growing. You become relegated to the role of the Pharisee.

Third, Pharisees love to label and divide people up into camps.

1. As this chapter goes on, you can see the Pharisees temperature rising. They are getting hotter and hotter, and more and more exasperated.
2. Finally, in verses 28 and 29, they retreat into the safety of their camp. They basically say, "We are Moses' guys. We are in the Moses camp. You're in the Jesus camp."
3. The Pharisees considered themselves staunch defenders of true doctrine. Jesus Christ came to give them additional divine information and revelation, but they wouldn't hear of it. "What would the other Pharisees in our camp think?"
4. Jesus was outside of the comfort zone of their camp, therefore truth lied outside the comfort zone of their camp. Many of the truths He shared were new, so they immediately recoiled. They thought, "We've never heard that."
5. Before we apply this, let me make one thing clear. God is not dispensing new revelation today. God's Word is complete and final. Paul said it was given to him to fulfil (complete) God's Word. **All** that we need is found in God's Word. It is able to thoroughly furnish us unto all good works. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
6. But having said that, there are truths within God's Word that **I personally** haven't discovered yet. When they are revealed to me, they are new to me! **Illustration:** when you buy a car, it may be used and have been around for 5 years, but it is all new to you.
7. Pharisees pride themselves in following the old paths. They pride themselves in the fact that they don't change. They have it all figured out, so they don't appreciate somebody coming with a new idea that might mess up their system, their convictions, their rules.
 - They are so adamant about this, they begin to form their own exclusive camp or group. There is pressure within the group to make sure that nobody changes, but remains true to the ideology of the group.
 - Every once in a while, somebody will dare to go against the accepted ideas of the group. The other Pharisees see to it that they are kicked out of the camp, and then that person will many times form his own camp.
 - Where do Pharisees get the idea that new is always bad? In the Bible we see a **New** Testament, **new** heaven, **new** earth, **new** name, **new** Jerusalem, **new** commandment, a **new** and living way whereby we become **new** creatures in Christ!
 - In fact, Jesus said in **Revelation 21:5**, "I make all things **new**."
8. The most carnal church in the New Testament knew all about camps and labels. **1 Corinthians 3:3-9**
9. What a wonderful day when the Pharisee decides to forget all about the labels that he puts on people and the camps that he divides people up into and decides that he will love everybody and learn from everybody.

10. Here at Crossroads, not only are we not part of a camp, I don't even know what all the camps are. I don't care to know. We are Crossroads Campless Church!

Fourth, Pharisees resort to intimidation to win arguments.

1. Notice how these Pharisees play hardball when people didn't agree with them.
 - If you don't agree with us, we'll have you publicly humiliated and thrown out of the synagogue. vs. 22
 - If you don't agree with us, we will insult you and throw you out. vs. 34
 - If you don't agree with us, we will use our tongues to vilify (revile) you. vs. 28
2. This is a mark of Pharisees. Pharisees tend to be angry people. They will be nice to you as long as you don't cross them or disagree with them.
3. Pharisees aren't teachable because they are so defensive. If you try to discuss an issue with them, they go into the attack mode. Just like these Pharisees vilified this man in John 9, those with a Pharisical attitude do the same thing today.
 - Many husbands do this, many bosses at work do this; unfortunately many preachers do this, too.
 - Stay away from any ministry that seems to be motivated by fear and anger.

Proverbs 22:24-25
4. The Bible teaches that we are to speak the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:15**). Until we learn how to do this, we will never be able to engage in any deep, meaningful, edifying conversation with others. **Proverbs 14:29**
5. We will be quick to cut people off, talk over them, raise our voice, and resort to intimidation. What does this mean for us personally? We will never learn and grow past where we are right now.

Fifth, Pharisees have a very self-inflated opinion of themselves.

1. There is a word for this - pride! Those who are prideful are not teachable. They feel that they are above learning.
2. As you read this chapter, it is very clear that these Pharisees believe themselves to be God's gift to this community. They are the religious gestapo that kept everybody in line.
3. This once blind man gave the Pharisees a very logical, thought-out argument as to the character of Christ. vs. 30-33
4. How do they respond? Did they say, "You have a very good point. Maybe we need to learn more about this Jesus, too." Look at their response in verse 34. You can see the pride dripping from them.
5. On the other hand, the man born blind has a personal conversation with Christ and Christ revealed to him exactly who He was. vs. 35-38
6. Do you know the saddest part about people who are full of pride? They are so blind, but they don't get it. vs. 39-41
7. When you are full of yourself, you can't see clearly. You don't see things as they really are. You can't see your own faults, failures, shortcomings, and sins. We see clearly what others need, while huge blind spots prevent us from seeing our own weakness.
8. What is the key to humility? It is staying close to God's Word and continually growing and learning God's truth. As we do this, do you know what happens?

- The longer we are saved, the more we realize how little we know, how quickly we can fall, and how much we need Christ.
9. God's Word is the mirror that shows us who we truly are and where we need to change. Therefore, we are hungry for God's Word and possess a teachable spirit.