

**Lessons Learned From the Pharisees**  
**"How to Overcome our Love for Judging Others"**  
**Luke 18:9-14**

**Introduction:**

1. The Pharisees were a religious group in Jesus' day that were known for their religious zeal. They believed in keeping the Old Testament law as the scribes interpreted it. They were very reclusive and if you weren't a Pharisee, they wanted nothing to do with you.
  - We see the Pharisees constantly antagonizing Jesus, trying to catch Him in a slipup. They tried to discredit Him and make Him look foolish.
2. The problem was that most of the Pharisees talked a good talk, but their hearts were wicked and far away from God. **Matthew 15:8**
3. They were very judgmental of other people, looking down their noses at others who weren't in their group - "sinners." **Example: Luke 18:9-14**
4. I think we all are capable of acting like the Pharisees, don't you? So many times, there are few activities in life that rival the thrill of passing judgment on another human being.
5. For many, judgment and condemnation have become a way of life (nobody else can drive, we pick apart our family members, waitress is inept, the cashier is an airhead, the politicians are crooked, the L.I.F.E. Group teacher is boring, the choir is too loud, etc.)
6. Have you ever noticed how everything that is wrong with the world is always someone else's fault? We like it that way. Our flesh takes great pleasure in scrutinizing the minutest details of someone else's compromise, but somehow overlooks large chunks of our own self-contradiction.
7. Judging others can come so easy. It is that Pharisee in us. How can we overcome this? Let's look into the Bible and see how we can overcome our love for judging others.

**First, by refusing to compare yourself with others**

1. Notice verse 11, "*or even as this publican.*" He is praying with his eyes on the publican and thinking, "Compared to him, I'm in great shape."
2. The act of judging gives us a subjective means of affirming ourselves. No matter what I've done or how bad I am, I can always comfort myself by finding someone who is "worse" than I am.
  - What if someone appears to be better than me? No problem. I'll just manufacture some flaw in his character that allows me to be better than he is in my mind.
  - What happens is, I try to find value in myself by repeatedly finding someone further down the moral and spiritual ladder.
3. Notice in our text, he says, "I'm not like other men." Notice the comparison. His feeling is "I'm different, I'm better." It is the creed of the Pharisees to be better than everyone else and to invent a self-devised measuring stick whereby they can always come out on top and be better!

- Nobody else knows what your measuring stick is or even cares, but that is the fun of passing judgment. We call the shots. We make the rules. We draw the line in the sand and step over it, leaving everyone else on the other side. It is a foolproof way to feel good about ourselves.
4. Here is the fallacy of all of this (**Romans 14:10-13**). We aren't fooling anyone but ourselves. When you stand before God, nobody else will be there. The measuring stick will be God's Word.

### **Second, by striving for true spirituality**

1. The Pharisees were masters at setting up a self-prescribed list of "dos" and "don'ts." Of course, since **they** set them up, **they** are usually the only ones who can keep them. So they assume that they are spiritual and everyone else is somewhere beneath.
  - So often spirituality is reduced to a nitpicky list that some can't keep and other people don't care about.
2. In our text, notice how the Pharisee had his list. He had it all figured out. "I'm spiritual and you're not and here is the list of rules to prove it."
3. Here is the problem - spirituality isn't manifested by the keeping of a list of rules. It has been tried and it has been proven that it doesn't work. God tried it.
  - The Ten Commandments - a simple list, but the problem is that nobody in human history could ever keep it (except Christ). The list was given to show us how sinful and guilty we are and that we need a Savior.
  - It was given to show that our problem goes much deeper than our actions. The problem is our sinful hearts that are naturally bent toward sin.
4. True spirituality does not begin with the outward, it deals with the inward. This is why God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. **Galatians 4:6**
5. To be spiritual means that you are yielded to and walking in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is guiding your thoughts, attitudes, and actions through God's Word.
6. There are two works that the Holy Spirit does in our lives:
  - He roots out the negative. **Galatians 5:16-21**
  - He instills the positive. **Galatians 5:22-23**
7. Most Pharisees don't have on their list, "Love everybody," "Say only kind things about people," "Be gentle and meek with others," "Maintain a joyful attitude and countenance," "Be patient and long-suffering with others."
8. **Galatians 5:25** is the test of spirituality - not a self-prescribed list. Are you walking in the Spirit?

### **Third, by loving people where they are**

1. Isn't it interesting that this Pharisee is looking down his nose at this publican and condemning him? As a "spiritual leader," you would think he would be trying to help him and love him. Instead he stands and condemns him.
2. When you examine the life of Jesus, one of the things you can't miss is the fact that He just loved people where they were (whether they were demonically possessed, crippled, confused, blinded, violent, etc).
3. Christ taught Israel to love people, just as He loved people. **Luke 6:35-37**

- Isn't it interesting that we don't want God to judge **us**, but we want justice for everybody else? We like the idea of God having mercy on us, but **we** aren't that bad, we're good people. We deserve mercy. But those scoundrels out there who lie, cheat, and commit terrible sin - it's justice for them.
4. But we can't have it both ways. If everyone else gets justice, then I must get justice too. On the other hand, if God is going to offer mercy to me, then everybody gets an offer of mercy. It's the law of impartiality.
    - If I want mercy for me, then I have to allow it for everyone else, even those who, in my estimation, are "worse" sinners than me.
    - This is the big picture we need to see: justice for all; condemnation for all. A cross and an empty tomb for all; mercy for all! **Romans 11:32**
  5. This is why Paul taught the church to forgive and love people - because of the mercy and forgiveness that **we** have been shown. **Ephesians 4:32**
  6. If we are to overcome that fleshly love for judging others we must remind ourselves of our Savior and His mercy for us. This will cause us to love people right where they are.

**In Conclusion:**

1. What is the end of this story? Read verse 14.
2. Can you imagine the joy this Pharisee could have had if he would have put away his smug, judgmental attitude, admit his hypocrisy and join the publican with both of them on their knees before a merciful God?
3. Both of them crying out, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" Imagine the Pharisee in his long robe and ornate turban down on his knees next to the tax collector in tears of repentance and joy. Imagine the two embracing, both overwhelmed at the mercy of God in hearing and answering the same prayer.
4. It would be hard to imagine the Pharisee standing up after such an experience and judging anyone.