

## **How to Be a Builder (not a Bulldozer)** **Mark 7:1-23**

### **Introduction:**

1. At the time of Jesus' ministry to Israel, the Pharisees and scribes were the religious leaders who knew about the true God, knew the Scriptures, and knew about the prophecies of a coming Christ.
2. They didn't appear as monsters; rather, they appeared to be very good people with high religious standards. Jesus said, figuratively speaking, that they made clean the outside of the cup – they made sure they looked good on the outside. They looked like a lot of churchgoers today – good, God-loving people.
3. But yet they were a constant thorn in Jesus' side. They were sarcastic, judgmental, and very abrasive. The end of verse two summarized their approach to life, "*...they found fault.*"
4. They did not build up, but rather they tended to tear others down. They weren't builders; they were bulldozers. They tended to be very destructive in their words and dealings with Christ and others. Get two images in your mind:
  - A construction team building a beautiful new home.
  - A bulldozer destroying a home, knocking over walls, etc.
5. The Pharisees were like that second image. They intimidated and bullied people. They were arrogant and demeaning toward others. **Example:** Luke 18:9-13
6. But God is calling those who are members of His church (body) to be builders. There is a great word in the Bible for this – "*edify.*" It carries the idea of building something.
7. The word "edifice" means a large and usually impressive building. Paul said that the Lord had given him power to "*edification and not to destruction.*"  
2 Corinthians 13:10
8. God's desire is for us to be builders of people (our family, fellow church members, co-workers, spouse, and kids). Romans 15:1-3a
9. How can we do this? Let's look at the negative example of the Pharisees and turn it into some positive principles.

### **First, seek peace over preferences.**

1. The Pharisees were worked up (vs. 3-5). Think about it – washing hands, cups, tables, pots, etc. Who cares? Only the Pharisees and their religious clique. It was one of their petty preferences. It was tradition, not Bible. What did Jesus say in verses 6-9?
2. This same thing happens in families and churches all the time. People get all up in arms over something that is strictly a preference.
  - We all possess different opinions and preferences. Vanilla or chocolate, Chevy or Ford, Gators or Seminoles, Starbucks or Dunkin' – neither is right or wrong. We can allow our preferences to cause conflict in our relationships with others.

3. Romans 14 speaks all about preferences. What does Romans 14:19-20a teach? A mature believer's motto is "Peace over preferences." When we are able to lay aside our personal preferences without griping (letting everybody know that we are unhappy), then we'll know we are on our way to becoming a builder, not a bulldozer.
4. Paul said don't "*destroy*" (demolish) the work of God over your preferences. This happens when we seek uniformity (everybody is like me) over unity (united on the essentials of our faith).
5. When Christ came calling Israel to repentance and preparing them for their kingdom, He brought many changes. The Pharisees couldn't handle it. These changes interfered with their preferences. What is Christ saying in verses 9 and 13?
6. They missed the essential things (love God and love others) over trivial things. If we aren't careful, we can do the same thing. Rather than becoming a builder, we become a bulldozer. As a follower of Christ, we must seek peace over preferences. Philippians 2:2-3

**Second, give grace rather than find fault.**

1. The end of verse two gives us great insight as to why the Pharisees were bulldozers and not builders; they were experts at finding fault (or what they perceived as a fault) in everybody else, even the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Jesus would reach out to the lost – they condemned Him for keeping company with sinners. He would heal a crippled person – He did it on the wrong day. He would forgive somebody of their sins – they said He was blaspheming. Even when He would cast out devils, they managed to find fault.
2. The really sad part is they failed to realize that their critical spirit was actually killing them (Matthew 15:14). They were blind, but didn't even realize it.
3. When finding fault with others, we typically have a huge blind spot – our own faults! Oftentimes when we find fault with others, it leads to an over-inflated opinion of ourselves that is not based in reality.
4. When this happens, instead of giving people grace, we find fault. Why do we become this way? It is because we are blinded to the condition of our own heart. Mark 7:20-23
5. The only way to give grace to others is to grow in grace in our own heart. When we are constantly finding fault with others, we demonstrate a lack of personal growth in our own lives. If we truly are growing in the grace of Christ, we should have a Philippians 2:3 mindset, which isn't false humility. But how does it happen?
6. You are constantly examining your own heart, and you become an expert at spotting your own sin, but not very keen at seeing anyone else's.
  - Their sin is not your business, and you can't see someone else's heart anyway. You don't know what is really going on. You only know what is going on with you and your latest compromise. You are too busy with your own sin to worry about someone else's.

7. What is the result? Because you are so well acquainted with your **own** sin and not all-consumed with the others', it is quite natural to esteem others better than yourself.
8. When this mindset prevails, our words proceed out from a heart of humility, allowing us to minister grace with our words. Notice we become builders (Ephesians 4:29). We become grace-givers instead of fault-finders.
9. When we truly grow in grace, we expect more from ourselves and less from others. We begin to see people for who they are capable of being in Christ. We see the good in others and commend it. We think the best of others, giving them the benefit of the doubt, instead of thinking the worst.
10. We become a builder of people instead of a bulldozer. When it is time for us to leave this earth, may we be able to look back on the many lives that we have invested in and impacted for Jesus Christ!

**Conclusion:**

1. Are you seeking every day to edify (build up) others?
  - Seek peace over preferences.
  - Learn to give grace rather than find fault.
2. God desires for us to be builders, not bulldozers.