

# Pharisees Bind Heavy Burdens on Others

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen critiques the hypocrisy of Pharisaical teachings that burden believers instead of liberating them through God's Word.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:3-5, Matthew 11:30, Matthew 23:4, Luke 11:46, John 8:32, Romans 14:13, 2 Corinthians 1:24, Galatians 6:5, James 3:1, 1 Peter 5:2-3

**Topics:** "Hypocrisy", "True Discipleship"

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## Description

Zac Poonen addresses the hypocrisy of Pharisaical preachers who impose heavy burdens on others while failing to uphold the same standards themselves. He shares a personal experience from a youth camp where a speaker demanded excessive devotion without practicing it himself, revealing the inconsistency and burden of such teachings. Poonen emphasizes that true preaching should liberate and bless rather than bind and burden, contrasting the approach of Jesus, who used Scripture to free people rather than constrain them. He warns that many young people are disillusioned with church due to these burdensome teachings, which misrepresent God's Word.

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## Transcript

"They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger" (Matthew 23:4).

Pharisees try to appear spiritual by preaching high standards for others to follow but do not follow those standards themselves.

I remember a youth camp many years ago, at which I was one of two speakers. The other speaker preached saying that everyone must give 10% of their time to God (just like tithing money), meaning that everyone should spend 2 hours 24 minutes every day in Bible-reading and prayer. During the question time that followed, one of the young men asked me whether I agreed with this teaching. I told them that I did not agree; and then I asked the other speaker openly, "Brother, do you spend 2 hours 24 minutes everyday in Bible reading and prayer?" He sheepishly said, "No". Everyone then saw that he was a hypocritical Pharisee who was tying heavy burdens on others that he did not lift himself. That is just one example.

There are people who urge others to give 10% of their money to God, who do not give 10% of their own gross income. They are hypocritical Pharisees. The Christian world is full of Pharisaical preachers who

place impossible standards before others that they do not live up to themselves. These are the preachers who build Babylon and who destroy the work of God. They use God's Word to burden people instead of blessing them.

I love the Message translation of Matthew 23:4 that reads thus:

Instead of giving you God's Word as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn't think of lifting a finger to help.

Such preachers treat God's children as donkeys who are to carry heavy loads. The same message from the Bible can be preached in two ways - as a burden or as a blessing. It all depends on the preacher.

It is because of Pharisaical preachers that many young people are fed up of attending church meetings. Jesus preached from the same Old Testament that the Pharisees preached from. But He liberated people with those Scriptures, whereas the Pharisees bound them with greater chains with the same Scriptures. The same thing happens when Pharisees preach today

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