

Pharisees Live by Rules

by Zac Poonen

Pharisaical leadership is characterized by making life difficult for others with ridiculous rules, acting as if one is God, and causing division and hypocrisy in the church.

Scripture: Matthew 12:10-12, 1 Corinthians 11:5, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 12:10

Topics: "Legalism", "Compassion in Leadership"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that the Pharisees prioritize man-made rules over the life and compassion of Jesus, as illustrated by their questioning of Jesus about healing on the Sabbath. He critiques modern church leaders who impose similar burdensome rules, acting as if they are the ultimate authority rather than allowing God to be the Lawgiver. Poonen points out the hypocrisy in how some leaders enforce rules inconsistently, particularly regarding women's veiling, and warns against the spirit of the antichrist that arises when individuals elevate their own rules above God's. He highlights the need for church leaders to show compassion and avoid hypocrisy, especially in how they treat their own families compared to their congregants. Ultimately, Poonen calls for a return to the heart of God's law, which is rooted in love and mercy.

Transcript

"And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" - so that they might accuse Him" (Matthew 12:10).

Pharisees live by rules. They don't live by the life of Jesus. Their ridiculous rules taught that a sick man must not seek for healing on the Sabbath day. Many leaders of churches today also have made ridiculous rules that make life difficult for their flock. Those Pharisees had asked Jesus this question only "so that they might accuse him". The same is true of many church leaders today, who also are quick to accuse anyone who violates some small rule that they have made. God is the only Lawgiver (or Maker of rules) in the universe. If you make rules for others in a church, that Almighty God Himself has not made, then you will be acting as if you are God - and that is "the spirit of the antichrist" (See 2 Thessalonians 2:4). Then like those Pharisees, you will end up joining hands with Satan, the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10).

As an example, take the matter of women veiling their heads. The Bible says that women should veil their heads when they pray or prophesy (1 Corinthians 11:5). But some church-leaders teach that women must veil their heads always (24 hours every day) because they should be "praying always". But their

inconsistency is seen in the fact that they don't insist (by the same principle of "praying always") that men must therefore keep their heads uncovered always (and never wear a cap or a hat). Their inconsistency is also seen in the fact that they permit the sisters to veil just 15% of their heads (just the back part of their hair, because it is inconvenient to cover the entire head during the heat of the day!!). Pharisees are thoroughly inconsistent, but are blissfully unaware of their inconsistency. The only ladies I have seen who cover their heads fully are some Roman Catholic nuns like the late Mother Teresa. I have found almost all the others who emphasise this as a law (and judge others for not obeying it) to be inconsistent. They are hypocrites and Pharisees. God intended the veiling of the woman's head to be a symbol and not a rule. So I personally don't waste any of my time checking up whether every sister has veiled 100% of her head and whether any strand of hair is visible under the veiling!!

Pharisaical elders are also lenient to their own family members in many matters like this, but strict with others. That's why Jesus told those Pharisees, "If your donkey falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, what will you do?" They cared for their own donkeys, but not for a sick man. Church-leaders need to be very careful that they don't exempt their own family members from the rules they make for others.

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