



# *The* ROAD LESS TRAVELED

## The Road Less Traveled (Luke) Sept 10: Misunderstanding the Kingdom

**Series Summary:** In the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, we see a unique aspect of Jesus' ministry- his life and ministry on the road. We see him interact with strangers, answer difficult questions, and teach with boldness. Along the way, Jesus teaches his disciples —and us as well —what the Kingdom of God is and what it means to follow Him.

**Big Idea:** The Pharisees knew the OT law really well, but their hearts were stone cold. We can know all of the information we'd like, but if our hearts aren't in the right spot then we can expect ourselves to be like the Pharisees.

**Schedule:**

- Live teaching
- Small group

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## LIVE TEACHING

**Series Lead in:** In the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, we see a unique aspect of Jesus' ministry, his life and ministry on the road. We see him interact with strangers, answer difficult questions, and teach with boldness. Along the way, Jesus teaches his disciples —and us as well —what the Kingdom of God is and what it means to follow Him.

**Today:** The Pharisees knew the OT law really well, but their hearts were stone cold. We can know all of the information we'd like, but if our hearts aren't in the right spot then we can expect ourselves to be like the Pharisees.

**Luke 11:37-40** When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. **38** But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal. **39** Then

the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. **40** You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?

- While we do not adhere to the same religious practices today, we do, in fact, have the same tendency to focus on the outside to the detriment of the heart. We so often are more concerned with the appearance of righteousness rather than being righteous.
- Jesus proceeds to give six rebukes (warnings or woes in other translations) to the Pharisees. When we see the heart of the warning, we realize that these warnings are not just for the Pharisees, but for us as well.

**Luke 11:41-42 (Woe #1)** But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. **42** “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

**Woe #1:** You legalistically observe the Law and yet you refuse to obey the greatest commandment, to Love God and love people (Mark 12:30-31, Deut. 6:4,5, & Lev 19:18).

**Heart of the issue:** The Pharisees had outward signs of righteousness without an inward yearning for justice. Therefore, they did not have the same heart as Jesus.

**Luke 11:43 (Woe #2)** “Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.

- The synagogues of the day had a specific seating order. In Jesus' time, synagogues typically featured stepped benches lining the walls, with attendees facing the center of the room.

**Woe #2:** You live to be praised by people. Your concern is with how much people are impressed by you or pleased with you, rather than seeking, above all else, to please and worship God.

**Luke 11:45-46 (Woe #3)** One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.” **46** Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

**Woe #3:** You willingly burden people without caring for their burdens. Instead. We are called to carry one another's burdens (Gal 6:2), not out of obligation but out of compassion (Mat 9:36)

**Luke 11:52 (Woe #4)** “Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”

**Woe #4:** The Pharisees had both failed to understand the true teaching of the Bible and had no desire to teach sound doctrine that would be a blessing to the people.

**Luke 11:53-54** When Jesus went outside, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, 54 waiting to catch him in something he might say.

**A Gospel issue:** At the heart of all of this was a misplaced expectation of who the Messiah would be and what kind of Kingdom he would usher in.

- The Pharisees were expecting a coming king (the Messiah) who would be impressed by their religious resume. They had grievously misunderstood the nature and mission of the promised Messiah.
- The Pharisees were waiting for a coming kingdom where they would be considered among the elites. They had grievously misunderstood the nature of the kingdom that Jesus would usher in.

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**Segway to Small Group:** But how do we avoid these pitfalls? How do we avoid making the same mistakes the Pharisees did? Jesus answers these various questions in the passage we will be discussing today.

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## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**Note:** We are using the same passage as in the main message. We're simply unpacking the passage more, and seeing how to apply it to our lives.

**Was there anything that stood out to you from the message?**

**How would you describe the downfall of the Pharisees? What mindset did they have that led them to miss the significance of Jesus' life, ministry, and teaching? Do those same mindsets exist today? In other words, how could we easily make the same mistakes?**

**Leader Note:** Many of the Pharisees' mistakes and mindsets are all too common today.

- They refused to speak directly to those whose behavior bothered them, in this case, Jesus. Instead, they conspired and condemned Him in their own inner circle. That is the default way most people deal with conflict.
- The Pharisees obeyed the law down to the letter. In doing so, they appeared righteous to many people, especially to themselves. However, they did not love God, mercy, justice, or people. They failed to understand that sin is inherently a heart issue (Matthew 6).
- They were controlled by pride. Pride will always blind you to your own sin.
- They were quick to criticize but slow to help.

### Read Luke 11:39-52 as a group

**Vs 39-41: Jesus makes an emphasis to make sure the inside is clean and in order. This is in reference to the state of our hearts. What are some signs that our hearts are not in sync with God's heart?**

**Note:** The popular answer is going to be pride, which isn't wrong. Every answer to this question is going to have a root of pride. Challenge them to think and dig deeper for their answers.

- Ex: Not caring for other people, thinking we're better than others, thinking our ways are greater than God's, living out our faith to try and impress others.

**Vs 42: How do we know if we are simply putting on a show instead of being genuine in our faith?**

**Leader Note:** The Pharisees knew the Old Testament extremely well, yet they ignored justice and lorded their position over the common citizen. They may have had the information, but they lacked the heart.

- In short, if we know scripture and what it says, but we don't live it out. An elementary/stereotypical way of viewing this is "I don't use bad language and I'm nice"...which is great and all. But what about sharing the Gospel and your faith? What about forgiving others who may have wronged you? What about not going along with the crowd when it comes to gossip, slander, and a party lifestyle? How about loving others even if we don't see eye-to-eye on some things?

**Vs 43: How do we know if we have an issue, problem, or even idol of trying to impress others and seek validation from others? (This can be impressing others with our faith, or impressing others in a general sense). What are the red flags?**

**Leader Note (Context):** Jesus's message to the Pharisees here- You live to be praised by people. Your concern is with how much people are impressed by you or pleased with you, rather than seeking, above all else, to please and worship God.

**Vs 44: Jesus refers to the Pharisees as unmarked graves (use the note below for the next question.)**

- **Leader Note (Context):** The Old Testament laws stated that a person who touched a grave was considered unclean (Numbers 19:16). Sometimes, a body might be buried in an unmarked grave, causing an unwary traveler to become ceremonially unclean by walking over it. Jesus accused the Pharisees of actually being hidden graves who made others unclean by their spiritual rottenness. Like graves hidden in a field, the Pharisees corrupted everyone who came in contact with them.

**How can living a non-genuine faith create harm and corrupt those around us?**

**Note:** If we leave our hearts unchecked, and live out pridefully towards others, then they're not going to see the true image of Christ from us. The damage and corruption comes when others know that we go to church, but treat others poorly. From there, those who do not know Jesus will start making assumptions that Jesus and the Church is full of pride, narcissism, and toxicity. This can easily lead to people not wanting anything to do with Jesus or the Church.

**Vs 45-46: What does it look like to carry each other's burdens out of obligation? What does it look like to genuinely help carry each other's burdens?**

**Vs 47-51 (Context, leading into vs. 52 question):** The Pharisees thought highly of the prophets that came before them. Jesus was trying to get them to see that they were as much in guilt as those who doubted and rejected the prophets. Mainly because they rejected Jesus, his people, and the heart behind God's Word.

**Vs 52: What's the difference between knowing the information that scripture gives, and obeying it?**

**Note:** The fact of the matter is that we can know as many verses, doctrines, theological points, passages, etc as we like. This doesn't mean that we are being sanctified (being made more like Christ). Obeying God's word, and truly putting it into practice, is where we are going to see the transformation. The Pharisees epically failed at this. The Pharisees knew every piece of information imaginable, yet their actions and hearts reflected that of a pagan.

**How can we as a group encourage one another to live out God's word so that we can avoid hardened hearts, and be the salt and light of the world that we're called to be?**