

# Jesus vs Religion Discussion notes

Mat gave the definition of 'being religious' as "someone who talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk".

- Do you agree with this definition?
- How is this different from how you've thought of 'religion' in the past?
- What do you think of when people describe you as 'religious'?

Before we go to look at our own lives individually, it's worth reflecting on the perception of Christians in general. So, where do we see Christians talking the talk but not walking the walk?

Throughout Jesus' life, but especially in the book of Matthew, we see Jesus talking the talk via parables and teachings and then immediately following that up by walking the walk with actions. So he would tell a parable about caring for the poor and then follow it up with a miracle to show exactly what he meant.

The book of Matthew also shows how Jesus' actions are completely opposite to those of the Pharisees: a religious sect that opposed strict laws on everyone else, but missed the heart of God and what Jesus really came to do. Matthew 23 is a passage in which Jesus confronts the Pharisees for this. Mat challenged us to consider how three of the same challenges given to the Pharisees apply to us today.

## 1) Do you put people off of God with your actions?

Matthew 23:13-15 is a powerful criticism of how we can put people off church when we act in hypocrisy. Read it together and ask: Do you put people off of God with your actions?

One study found that 25% of non-Christians said the main reason they didn't go to church was the people who went to church put them off. What does that stat make you think? How do we change that?

## 2) Do you major on the minors?

Mat asked a tough question that it is worth reflecting on: If everyone acted like I did, would the church be in a better or worse position?

Read Matthew 23:16-24 together. It tells us that the problem for the Pharisees was they were so caught up in the minor details of rules and how to live according to the law that they missed the big things that God *really* cares about "justice, mercy and faithfulness." Jesus describes this as 'straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel.'

- Where have you been guilty of focusing on the small things of faith and missing the important stuff?
- Why do we do this?
- How can we make sure that our focus, time and energy are on the same things that Jesus cares about?

## 3) Do you have an Instagram faith?

God is more interested on what's going on inside us than the perception we give on the outside. Jesus describes this like whitewashed tombs in Matthew 23:27-28 - the Pharisees are like a cup that looks clean on the outside but actually the inside is dirty. Read this passage together and then ask:

- Do I have an Instagram faith that looks great on the outside but isn't that strong on the inside?
- How does my work-life look compared to my church life?
- How does my Friday night stand up to what I believe?

## Response

When we talk about 'being religious' and hypocrisy, we're often asking people to expose their truest self. We are asking people to be vulnerable and honest about where they don't match up to

the outer appearance they present to the world. So, you may want to spend some time praying for each other that we would be encouraged and feel more comfortable being open and vulnerable.