Jesus Opposes the Pharisees

Although some Pharisees like Nicodemus were sincere, many were hypocrites. They often tested Jesus. They tried to trick Him into saying something that would allow them to accuse Him of sin or error. Jesus condemned the Pharisees and warned His followers against falling into their hypocrisy. As He gave this warning, Jesus pointed to the root of the Pharisees’ sin: greed, called covetousness in the Scriptures. We, too, must heed Jesus’ warning against hypocrisy and greed.

Memory Verse:

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Luke 12:15
Read Your Bible – Luke 11:29-52
Put your initials on the line when you have finished reading the passage. ______

Bible Vocabulary
Jonas (jō’ nas): Jonah
Nineve (nin’ ē və): Nineveh, a city in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq)
ravening (ra’ və ning): greed
single: healthy, good

Answer the questions.

1. Who invited Jesus for dinner? _______________________
2. Jesus mentioned several Old Testament men in your reading.
   A. Who preached to the people of Nineveh? _______________________
   B. Whom did the queen of the south travel far to hear? _______________________
   C. Which two men were included in those prophets whose blood was shed?
      _______________________
      _______________________
3. Who protested that Jesus was reproaching them? _______________________

Vocabulary Words
façade (fə säd’): a false front of a building; a superficial appearance designed to look good
generation (je’ nə rā’ shən): a group of people living in the same time period

ANALYZE THE READING
At 24 Leinster Road in London, England, stands an unusual house. It is five stories high and looks just like the row of houses on either side of it. Its entrance has an attractive door and railings. Pretty plants grow in front of the house.

However, the door of this house never opens. No one ever peers from its windows. The house is only a wall painted to appear like a house. It is a very attractive façade, but light never shines from its imaginary interior.
The fake house was painted on the wall years ago by London’s Metropolitan Railway. It covers an unsightly gap made when a subway line was built. The façade looks good, but behind the false front there are only steel girders, train tracks, and the gaping hole of a black tunnel.

Because it looks so real from the front, tricksters often send pizza delivery boys, taxicabs, or salesmen to 24 Leinster. But no one ever answers the door of the dummy house, which Londoners call “The House That Never Was.”

In the time of Christ, many religious leaders in Palestine looked good on the outside. Behind their religious façades, however, these leaders were spiritually empty. Jesus condemned such leaders as an “evil generation” because they refused to believe in Jesus’ deity or listen to His teaching. Instead, they kept demanding that He give them “signs,” spectacular miracles to prove His claims.

In the next several verses, Jesus says that the Pharisees’ demand for miracles demonstrates their lack of faith in God. He does this by referring first to the Old Testament prophet Jonah. The prophet was trapped for three days and nights in the belly of a whale, after which he emerged alive. Likewise, Jesus would die and spend three days and nights in the heart of the earth. Then He would arise!

Jonah’s survival inside the whale became a sign for the people of the evil city of Nineveh. The wicked Ninevites repented of their sins and sought God. However, even though Christ would prove His deity by rising from the dead, many Pharisees would still refuse to believe in Him. What more spectacular sign could He give them?

Jesus then offered a second proof of the Pharisees’ failure to believe God and His Christ. Jesus reminded them about the Queen of Sheba, who in ancient times traveled a great distance to learn from wise King Solomon. This wealthy queen of a mighty nation humbled herself before another ruler because she longed to hear and learn the truth he could teach her.

But the people of Jesus’ day had a man far wiser than Solomon among them. Before them spoke the very Son of God, the greatest teacher who ever lived. One whose life perfectly corresponded to the truth He taught. One who overwhelmingly demonstrated the power of God and perfectly revealed to them God the Father.

Yet these religious leaders not only rejected Jesus, they violently opposed Him. Why? These self-appointed spiritual leaders did not love the truth because their trust was not in God. They trusted in their own goodness and wisdom. In their rejection of Jesus, they actually rejected God.

Jesus spoke to His listeners a third time about their lack of faith. This time, Jesus used the eye to illustrate faith. A healthy eye, Jesus said, sees clearly, taking in streams of light and the images that the light illuminates. A diseased eye, however, cannot let the light in. Instead, it leaves the viewer wrapped in darkness.

Just as our physical eyes either receive or reject light, so a person either receives or rejects the truth. If our faith is in God, we will receive His truth. If our faith is in something else, the truth will not affect us. The Pharisees’ faith was not healthy because they trusted in their own wisdom and religious activities rather than trusting in God. The spiritual light Jesus offered them could not reach their minds because they were spiritually blind. They demanded miracles rather than humbling themselves before the wisdom of Christ, and so they remained in spiritual darkness.

Why did Jesus so strongly condemn the Pharisees’ hypocrisy? Hypocrisy is a very serious sin. Those who practice it become increasingly deceived. They begin to confuse their own goodness with true righteousness. They mistake their own wisdom for God’s truth, and eventually
become more comfortable denying the truth than admitting their hypocrisy.

The Pharisee who invited Jesus to dinner was astounded that He did not perform the ceremonial washing of His hands before He ate. Jesus rebuked the Pharisee for practicing outward, ceremonial cleansings of the body while failing to keep his heart and mind clean.

While the Pharisees pretended outwardly to be godly, they were inwardly full of greed, hatred, and pride. They emphasized hundreds of minor details of the Law while neglecting the great commands of God. They insisted on giving a tenth of the little herbs they grew in their gardens. However, Pharisees neglected to treat their fellow men justly, and they did not love God.

The Jewish religious leaders built monuments to honor prophets martyred in Old Testament times. Such monuments were a tribute to the righteousness of the prophets. And yet the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus, the greatest Prophet of all!

Jesus summed up His condemnation of the lawyers and Pharisees by accusing them of “taking away the key of knowledge.” By this phrase Jesus probably refers to the Scriptures. God’s Word is the key to true knowledge, but the Pharisees held the people in such contempt that they failed to teach them God’s Word. They substituted their own rules for God’s Law. Thus when Jesus came openly proclaiming the truth of God, the Pharisees denounced Him as a false teacher and a madman.

LIFE OF CHRIST

Do these exercises.

4. What surprised the Pharisee as Jesus began the meal at his house?

5. A. What became the sign of Jonah for the Ninevites?

B. What sign of His deity would Jesus give to this generation?

C. Contrast the Ninevites’ response to Jonah’s sign to the way most Pharisees would respond to Jesus’ sign.
Teachings of Christ

Answer the questions.

6. A. Who was Jesus? ________________________________________________
   B. Why was rejecting Him a very serious matter? _________________________

7. What did the Pharisees trust in rather than trusting in God? ________________

8. Why did Jesus say the Pharisees had taken away the key of knowledge? ___________

Check three correct answers for each question.

9. Think! What did Jesus mean when He spoke about a healthy eye and an unhealthy eye?
   A. ______ Whether a person receives light or not depends on where his faith is.
   B. ______ We must put our faith in God so we can receive His truth.
   C. ______ If we don't have spiritual light, it is because the light is too “dim” and hard to understand.
   D. ______ Pride and self-trust cause a person to become spiritually blind.
   E. ______ A person's ability to receive spiritual light is something he was born with and will not become better or worse with the passing of time.

10. Think! Why is hypocrisy so serious?
    A. ______ It causes people to become more and more deceived.
    B. ______ Hypocrites begin to confuse their own goodness and wisdom with God's righteousness and truth.
    C. ______ It may cause God to accept those who are not truly His children.
    D. ______ It leads people to deny the truth rather than admit their hypocrisy.

Bible Memory

Read the memory verse several times. Then write it, including its reference.

11. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
**THINK IT THROUGH**

Read the following Scripture passages. Match each story with two of the problems of the Pharisees.


**REVIEW**

Answer the questions.

14. What did both Jesus and John the Baptist teach their followers? ____________________________

15. What does prayer enable us to do? ____________________________

Complete the exercises.

16. Number the four stages of prayer in order.
   A. ______ present our requests
   B. ______ receive an answer
   C. ______ sense our need
   D. ______ persistently pray

17. To teach the need for persistence in prayer, Jesus told the story of ____________________________

Circle the correct phrase.

18. God wants us to persist in our praying because **we need to overcome His reluctance, He wants us to exercise faith.**

Circle *T* if the statement is true and *F* if it is false.

19. *T* *F* The disciples wanted to learn to pray because they wanted power to live godly lives.

20. *T* *F* We should pray only for general needs and not make specific requests.

21. *T* *F* Since earthly fathers delight to give gifts, we can believe that God delights to give us what we need.
Beware of Hypocrisy!

Put your initials on the line when you have finished reading the passage. _______

Complete the exercises.

1. Describe the scene as the crowd gathered around Jesus. ________________________________________

2. Finish the point Jesus was making in verses 6 and 7.
   Sparrows are not very valuable, but God cares about them.
   We are much more valuable than sparrows.
   Therefore God ____________________________________________________________.

3. Whom did Jesus say we must not fear? ________________________________________________

Vocabulary Word

omnipotent (äm ni’ pə tənt): all powerful; God’s quality of having unlimited power; almighty

Analyze the Reading

Do you know how many hairs you have on your head? A teenager with black hair has about 110,000 individual hairs. A blond teenager has around 140,000. Did you realize that God knows the exact number of hairs growing on your head?

As today’s reading opens, we find the hostile Jewish leaders once again trying to trap Jesus in His words. They wanted to make Jesus say something either untrue or illegal. Then they could condemn Him before the crowds.

Jesus turned to His followers and warned them again about the sin of the Pharisees, the hypocrisy that led them to act outwardly good but inwardly to harbor all kinds of greed and hatred. Nothing is hidden from God, Jesus said. It is impossible to hide sin from Him. Every word and every action, whether spoken in darkness or committed in a closet, is known to the omniscient, all-knowing God. Some day He will reveal everything.

For this reason, we ought to fear God rather than people. We see people before us, look into their eyes, hear the tone in their voices, and it is easy to worry about what they think of us. Yet
even the mightiest person is limited in the power he has over you. God, however, is not only omniscient, He is also omnipotent. Another human being might taunt us for a moment or hurt us for a time, but God alone holds the power of salvation or condemnation. And His judgment lasts forever.

We should fear God indeed. But knowing that He is omniscient and omnipotent also brings the Christian great comfort. You can be certain that He cares very deeply and intimately about every detail of your life. You are of immense value to God. Jesus said that the Father knows every single one of the tens of thousands of hairs on your head right now. He is that concerned about you! He uses His unlimited power to protect you and provide for you.

God loves us so much that He will publicly declare us before His angels if we are faithful to acknowledge Him in our lives. Often it is easier, and may seem safer, to keep quiet about one's faith in Christ. However, He is our only Saviour. He is our only hope for eternal life. If we want Jesus to confess us before the angels in the life to come, we must live openly for Jesus in this life. If we deny Him by our words and life, He will deny us someday.

Jesus told His disciples not to worry about what to say when asked to speak publicly for Christ. This does not mean that Christians should not think about their faith. Rather, Jesus is saying that we should not worry about such situations because the Holy Spirit living in us will give us the best words to say.

**Life of Christ**

**Complete the sentences.**

4. The Jewish leaders tried to trick Jesus into saying something untrue or illegal because  

5. Jesus warned against the Pharisees' sin of  

**Teachings of Christ**

**Circle the letter of the answer.**

6. What did Jesus mean when He said that every word whispered in darkness shall be proclaimed?
   A. We should not worry about what to say when asked to speak for Christ.
   B. Nothing can be hidden from God, therefore we should fear Him.
   C. We should not trust others with our secrets.
   D. If someone tells us a secret about something wrong, we should tell an adult.

**Complete the sentences.**

7. We must fear rather than  

8. Knowing that God is omniscient can give us comfort because  

   -----------------------------------------------
9. A. Because God is omnipotent, He has the _______________ to save or _______________ the soul in judgment.

   B. Knowledge of God’s omnipotence comforts us because His power to _______________ and _______________ for us is unlimited.

**Following Christ**

10. What is the result of

   A. living openly for Jesus? ______________________________________________________________________

   B. denying Jesus? _____________________________________________________________________________

11. Who will give us words to say when we are asked to speak for Jesus? ______________________________

**Bible Memory**

*Complete the verse.*

12. “And he ____________ unto them, Take _____________, and beware of ________________ : for a man’s _____________ consisteth not in the _________________ of the _________________ which he possesseth.” ___________ 12:15

**Think it Through**

In 1529 a fourteen-year-old youth was imprisoned for his faith. According to the *Martyrs Mirror* (page 434), the boy was locked in a tower for about a year. The authorities threatened him and did things to cause him to fear, but he always remained faithful. Along with six other prisoners, this young man praised God and comforted his cellmates. Eventually, they were all sentenced to death.

As this adolescent stood waiting to be beheaded, a wealthy ruler rode up to him and said, “My dear child, turn from your beliefs and I will give you a home and money to live on.”

The youth replied courageously, “Should I love my life more than my Saviour and escape the cross? I certainly cannot do that. Your wealth cannot be of help to either of us. I expect true riches in Heaven.”

He went on: “God has always fed and sustained me. I desire to obey Him until I die. Then I can leave this world with good cheer.” Then the boy added, “If we don’t depart from Him, He will give us an everlasting, glorious crown.”

Soon he died by the sword, not fearing man but living and dying in the fear of God.

*Complete the exercises.*

14. Name one way that a young person might deny Christ today.

REVIEW

Use vocabulary words from Lesson 6 to complete Numbers 15 and 16.

15. The Pharisees maintained a religious ________________ that masked their spiritual emptiness.

16. Jesus condemned His ________________ because they did not repent in spite of their opportunities to know the truth.

Circle T if the statement is true and F if it is false. Correct any false statements.

17. T  F  The Pharisee was surprised Jesus did not ceremonially wash His disciples' feet before they ate.

18. T  F  Jesus' death and resurrection would be a sign of His deity.

19. T  F  Jesus said the Pharisees had taken away the key of knowledge because they guarded the temple doors and barred sinners from coming in.

Answer the questions.

20. What sin deceives a person and makes him unable to distinguish between his own goodness and true righteousness? ________________

21. Why is it a serious matter to reject Christ? ________________

22. A. What determines whether a person receives spiritual light? ________________
   B. What must we do so we can receive His truth? ________________
   C. What causes people to become spiritually blind? ________________

Complete the sentences with Pharisees or Ninevites.

23. The ________________ repented because of Jonah's sign, but the ________________ denied the evidence of Jesus' sign.
You may be amazed at the thinking (or lack of it) of a sailor on a British ship wrecked off the coast of Brazil. The ship’s hold contained barrels of Spanish gold coins. As the ship began to sink, the crew hauled the gold onto the deck, hoping to save it. Soon they realized that the ship was breaking up too fast; they would have to abandon the treasure.
The sailors rushed for the lifeboats and began to push off. Just before the last lifeboat left, one sailor went back to make sure no one was left behind. He found a man with a hatchet who had smashed several barrels and was heaping gold coins around him.

“What are you doing?” shouted the sailor. “This ship is going to pieces!”

“It may go down,” said the other man, “but I’ve lived in poverty all my life, and I’m determined to die rich.”

People in Jesus’ day were no different from people today; they valued wealth and material possessions too. However, North American society is probably more materialistic than was Jewish society in the first century. Flashy advertisements spur covetousness, and the widely held idea that wealth equals success feeds the desire to acquire more and more things. We must be on guard against materialism and greed.

A man came to Jesus asking Him to settle an inheritance squabble. Jesus refused for two reasons. First, Jesus said, He had not been sent into the world to settle petty disputes about money. Second, Jesus wanted the brother to recognize his own covetousness, or greed. Covetousness is dangerous. It leads people into confusion; soon they begin to live for their possessions.

To highlight this danger, Jesus told a story about a wealthy farmer blinded by materialism. This man’s wealth grew until he was controlled by it. He came to depend on his wealth, rather than remembering that everything depends upon God.

Those who dream of being rich should consider Jesus’ question: “When you die, who will own your many possessions?” The wise person devotes his energies to becoming rich toward God by using his resources to build God’s kingdom.

Knowing how anxious we can be about money, Jesus addressed the futility of worrying about material goods. Because earthly goods are only temporary, those who set their desire on them will always be anxious. Will a thief break in and steal my jewels? How can I be sure a fire will not sweep through my house and destroy my money? I must protect this and insure that, lest some disaster strike and wipe out my wealth!

*Take no thought* means “do not worry about.” We must not worry about how our needs will be met. If God feeds the wild birds, He will surely feed His people. If He clothes and beautifies plants that sprout up and quickly wilt and die, certainly He will clothe His children.

We cannot change a thing by worrying. If you cannot add to your height by wishing to be taller, how can you possibly provide for your needs by worrying over them? However, God can be trusted to provide our needs. He is solid and sure.

Of course, those who do not know God cannot place their trust in Him. But to the believer, God is a loving Father who knows His child’s every need. All that God’s children need to do is seek His will. Then they can rest, knowing that He will supply everything they need.

Money and possessions do have some worth. They can be used to help others. We need money to provide for our families and ourselves. Used wisely, money can advance God’s kingdom for His glory. However, money is certainly not of the greatest importance. Concerns about wealth should not determine what we choose to do in life—how we will work, where we will live, or how much we will give.
**Life of Christ**

Complete the exercises.

4. Why didn't Jesus settle the inheritance dispute?
   A. ____________________________________________________________
   B. ____________________________________________________________

5. Circle the letter of the problem that both the rich fool and the man with the inheritance trouble had.
   A. a selfish brother
   B. a large crop
   C. the thought that Jesus was a judge
   D. a materialistic attitude

6. Read the following verse and write a sentence describing Jesus' lifestyle.
   Matthew 8:20 ______________________________________________________

**Teachings of Christ**

Complete the exercises.

7. Copy the question that all who wish to be rich should ask themselves. __________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

8. Think! Circle the letter of the one who will worry about his earthly goods.
   A. The person who trusts God's care.
   B. The person who wants to use his goods to build God's kingdom.
   C. The person who understands that his possessions are temporary.
   D. The person whose heart is set on storing up wealth.

9. What point about the uselessness of worry did Jesus make when He mentioned adding to one's height?
   ______________________________________________________________

10. Check three reasons Jesus gave for not worrying. Refer to the Scripture you read for this lesson.
    A. _____ God provides food for birds, and people have more value than birds.
    B. _____ The Father knows the things we need.
    C. _____ Why worry, when you can pray?
    D. _____ Since God clothes grass that lives just a short time, He'll surely provide for our needs.
    E. _____ Life lived in worry invites death in a hurry.
**Lesson 8**

**Following Christ**

Complete the exercises.

11. A. Rather than worrying, all God's child needs to do is ___________________________.
    
    B. What will be the result? ___________________________

12. List three good uses for money.

   ___________________________
   ___________________________
   ___________________________

**Bible Memory**

Complete the verse.

13. “And he _________________ unto _________________, Take _________________, and _________________ of _________________: for a man’s _________________ consisteth _________________ in the _________________ of the _________________ which he _________________.” Luke _____ : _____

**Concordance Practice**

Use a Strong's Concordance to do the exercises.

14. A. The number for the word covetousness in the Hebrew dictionary is _________.
    
    B. Covetousness occurs _________ times in the Old Testament.
    
    C. Circle the word covetousness is derived from. **plenty, plunder, appetite**

15. A. The Greek lexicon has _______ Greek words for covetousness.
    
    B. The more frequently used word is Number _________, which is from Number _________.
    This means the two words are closely related.
    
    C. Pleonektes (4123) has the thought of eager for _________.