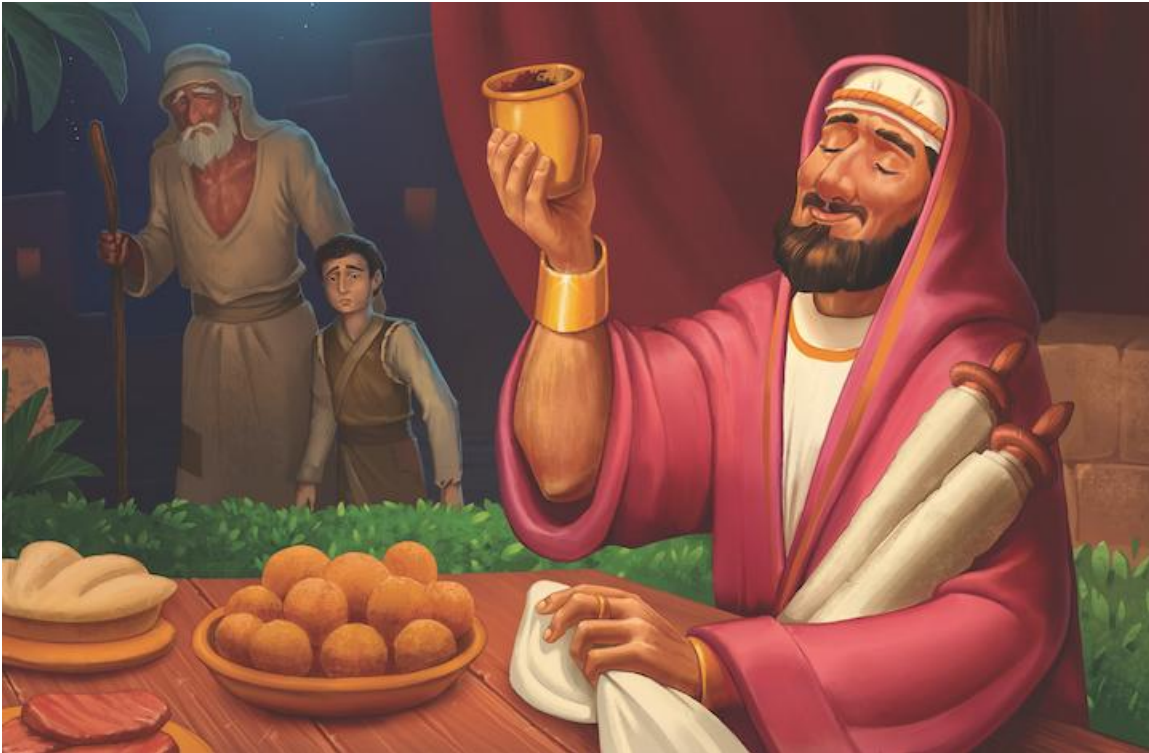




Jesus Warned about Not Loving (Matthew 23)

Dear families,

Jesus spent the bulk of Matthew 23 rebuking the Pharisees and Sadducees' unloving nature. He criticized the self-importance in their hearts and how it served as a stumbling block to those around them. Christ warned these religious leaders against making so much of themselves that they were blind to their own need for a Savior.

How did the religious leaders' behavior go against God's command to love Him and others? Why was Jesus so grieved by these men's lifestyle? As it turns out, Christ was grieved by the state of their legalistic hearts and was not impressed in their ability to keep up a pious appearance.

These leaders' lives seemed to be led in service to God, yet they failed to obey His greatest commands: to love Him and to love those created in His image. God did not play favorites as they did. Instead—and contrary to the ways of the world—He exalted the humble and humbled those who exalted themselves; through this humility in Christ's own death and life, God's love was displayed for all to see.

The focus of the Old Testament's teachings was to guide us in faith toward the cross of Christ, not to try to find salvation through our own means. Instead of extending the love of God as commanded, these religious leaders narrowed the focus of their love to themselves alone. They trusted in their own ability to obey God's laws rather than relying on their faith in the Messiah to make their hearts right before the Father.

Consider the reality that the Pharisees and Sadducees sought to make others more like themselves rather than the God they claimed to serve. Christ spent this chapter addressing the issue of their spiritual blindness, as well as their need for a regenerated heart with which to truly love God and others.

Explain to your kids that while these leaders were faithful tithers and rule followers, they failed to put their faith into tangible practice for others to see and experience. God's love is most clearly expressed and extended through justice, mercy, and faithfulness, not the self-important exaltation of ourselves.

Check out *The Gospel Project At Home* for resources designed to help you lead a family worship experience as well as suggestions for morning and evening prayer times and family activities.

FAMILY TALKING POINTS

CHRIST CONNECTION

This is the big idea of how this week's Bible story points to Jesus.

- **Babies & Toddlers:** When we trust in Jesus, He makes us right with God and changes our hearts so we can love and obey Him.
- ✚ **Younger Preschool:** Jesus said to love God and love others. (Matt. 22:37-39) The religious leaders loved themselves most of all. When we trust in Jesus, He makes us right with God and changes our hearts so we can love and obey Him.
- ✚ **Older Preschool:** Jesus said that the greatest commandments are to love God and love others. (Matt. 22:37-39) The religious leaders loved themselves most of all. When we trust in Jesus, He makes us right with God and changes our hearts so we can love and obey Him.
- ✚ **Kids:** Jesus said that the greatest commandments are to love God and love others. (Matt. 22:37-39) The religious leaders loved themselves most of all. When we trust in Jesus, He makes us right with God and changes our hearts so we can love and obey Him.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION & ANSWER

This is an important biblical truth that your child will encounter each week of this unit.

- **Younger Preschool:** How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus tells us God's message.
- **Older Preschool:** How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? God speaks to us through Jesus.
- **Kids:** How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

KEY PASSAGE

This is a Bible verse that relates to what your child will encounter each week of this unit.

- **Babies & Toddlers:** We can listen to Jesus. Deuteronomy 18:15
- **Younger Preschool:** God wants us to listen to Jesus. Deuteronomy 18:15
- **Older Preschool:** “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet You must listen to him.” Deuteronomy 18:15
- **Kids:** “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” Deuteronomy 18:15

**** Next week:** Jesus Warned about Not Acting (Matthew 25)