

To Enter or Not To Enter

11.18.07

WELCOME - ICE BREAKER:

Have you ever cursed someone or had someone curse you?

WORSHIP - OPENING PRAYER and PREPARATION

Read Psalm 133 together and spend some time in prayer thanking, praising, and adoring God.

WORD

Matthew 23:13-32

***Important Note:** Not all questions have to be asked and not everyone has to answer every question asked.*

Questions for Home Group Leaders

Read Matthew 23:13-32

Insights into the passage/ Group leader Questions:

The Pharisees were invited into the community of God called the kingdom. They rejected Jesus' invitation to be in an intimate relationship with him and with the people of His community, the disciples. Because of this rejection, the Pharisees made choices to live a certain way that rejected being a part of God's intended community.

This past Sunday we had a celebration of our faith which included Baptism, membership, communion, and corporate prayer. As you talk down through Matthew 23 compare and contrast what it is for you to be a part of the community of God and what it was like for the Pharisees to be a part of their false faith community. Evaluate your actions and behaviors in light of those of the Pharisees, and ask yourselves if you are participating in God's community to the fullest.

This passage contains 7 Woe's that Jesus pronounced to the Pharisees. Use these to evaluate your own level of participation in the kingdom community of God.

1. Because Pharisees did not want to enter they prevented others from entering as well.

23:13-14

When you personally reject something God is expecting of you because it's too difficult or uncomfortable, do you sometimes lead others away from that challenge too? Have you ever been subtly influenced by others to not to do something God expected because your friend felt it was too hard, too scary, or "not a good idea"?

2. Because they did not want to change their lifestyle in order to enter the community they built relationships with their followers and led them into lifestyles that were even worse. 23:15

When have you failed to live as you should and led others into that bad behavior? When have you followed others into bad behavior? Why?

3. Because the Pharisees did not enter the community of God they developed easy replacements that made them appear as if they were participating in the Kingdom. 23:16-22

How can things like the latest book, program, conference, most dynamic teacher in town, or, the newest worship CD become cheap replacements for authentic relationship? Why do you think we substitute external religious "things" for the hard work of making disciples one relationship at a time?

4. Because the Pharisees refused to enter the kingdom community they highlighted the things they did well and ignored those things that they were not doing, (For instance, things that would put them in touch with messy people and messy lives.) 23:23- 24

What religious things do you practice that make you feel good about yourself before God? What spiritual expectations do you ignore because they might move you into people's messy lives? Are you merciful, just, and faithful? Why or Why not?

5, 6, &7 . Because they refused to adopt the values of the kingdom community, they had misplaced priorities. 23:25-32

They were focusing on:

- A) The external rather than the internal
- B) The appearance rather than substance

C) On law versus love

D) Religion rather than relationship

E) Image rather than integrity

How does our “Celebration of Faith” service refocus our priorities?

How did our “Celebration of Faith” service inspire you? Challenge you?

Convict you? Encourage you?