



**Message 1: Public Performance vs Private Devotion**  
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Anyone who reads the four Gospels will quickly see that Jesus and the Pharisees were mostly not on real good terms. In fact, Jesus reserved some of his sharpest words for this religious group.

Who were the Pharisees? Where they the bad guys? Where they good guys that were simply misguided and misunderstood? Or, were they kind of like *us guys*? Let's take a look.

## WHO WERE THE PHARISEES?

During the time of Jesus there were three key religious groups: Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes.

The Sadducees were the **religious establishment**.

The High Priests were Sadducees, and they controlled the Temple and emphasized rituals and liturgy.

They were more concerned about control and position than spirituality.

Matthew 22:29, Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." (NIV)

The Pharisees were the **separated ones**.

The Scribes were Pharisees, and they controlled the synagogues and emphasized the Scriptures.

They were more concerned about rules than spirituality.

*Matthew 23:26, Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. (NIV)*

The Essenes were the **simple** but **devout** followers of Judaism.

They lived a communal life in the desert of Qumran.

They are not mentioned in the New Testament, but many early followers of Christ are thought to have been Essenes.

## JESUS AND THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees had gradually slipped into **legalism**.

Outward conformity to rules had become the true test of one's righteous standing before God.

*Matthew 23:27, Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. (NIV)*

When our desire for **righteousness** exceeds our desire for a **relationship** with God, the result is a counterfeit faith.

## PIETY – TRUE AND FALSE

Pious – deeply devoted to God (positive); conspicuously religious, hypocritical (negative)

A picture of the false piety of the Pharisees can be seen in Luke 18:9-14.

He is doing the right things for the **wrong** reasons.

Jesus is not comparing the **deeds** of the two men. He is comparing the **attitudes** of their **heart**.

A picture of true piety is found in Matthew 6: 1-18.

Authentic piety is **outward** in love.

Piety becomes nothing more than a performance when pride is allowed to reign.

When we minimize our own sins while maximizing the sins of others, we are more like the Pharisees than Jesus.