



# HOW to RAISE a Pharisee

By Matt Black  
Matthew 23

**Introduction:** In this study<sup>1</sup> we will cover 12 steps to avoid an outward, shallow understanding of salvation, and ways to point our children to a passionate relationship with the living Savior.

Let's get started...

**Step #1: If you want to raise a Pharisee, MAJOR ON THE EXTERNALS instead of *internal* issues.** The Lord said in **Matthew 23:27**, "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*"

Remember that "*man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart*" (**1 Samuel 16:7**). Christ said of them in **Matthew 15:8**, "*This people draweth nigh*

Two word pictures...

1. **A Good actor.** Christ called the Pharisees "*hypocrites*" which is a word that means 'actors' (**verses 25, 27**).
  2. **Dressing up a corpse.** Jesus said a Pharisee is "*like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones*" (**Matthew 23:7**).
- And here is the **Most Frightening Thing**: without a changed heart **verse 33** says there is no way our children will "*escape the damnation [or, CONDEMNATION] of hell*". As Jesus said, "*Except a man—[or a child]—be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (**John 3:3**).

**Step #2: If you want to raise a Pharisee, instead of leading by example, NEVER PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH.** **Matthew 23:3**, "*All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not*".

Jesus said, "*This people honoreth Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me*" (**Mark 7:6**). It's not enough to have our children in 5-Day Clubs and Sunday school and to teach them carefully from the Bible. We must be a living Bible before them. Our children need to see that our heart is so passionate for Jesus Christ that it actually affects the way we live.

**Step #3: If you want to raise a Pharisee, USE EXCESSIVE CONTROL & MANIPULATION instead of relying on the Holy Spirit of God.** **Matthew 23:4**, "*they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers*".

The Pharisee's did not rely on the Holy Spirit to convict of "*sin, righteousness, and judgment*" (**John 16:8**). Their preferred METHOD was to use guilt and excessive control to conform behavior. God's method is to convert the heart to change behavior.

1. **Grouchy Parent Syndrome.** How do you know if you have it?
  - Instead of relying on the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to press down on their heart, you use your **overbearing spirit** in order to produce the desired behavior. We should never threaten or put a child down! You may get the desired behavior, but you will drive his heart away.
  - You may even start **raising your voice** to get desired behavior.
2. Let me tell you about **Grace filled parents**.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: several of the spiritual applications for children below were adapted from Carey Hardy's presentation on the same subject at the 2006 Shepherd's Conference at Grace Church in Sun Valley, California.

- The grace filled parent knows we are warned never to use manipulation but to nurture our children. According to **Ephesians 6:4**, parents, specifically fathers, are not to “*provoke their children to wrath*” but to “*bring them up in the nurture and admonition (discipline) of the Lord*”.
  - The grace filled parent believes **James 1:20**, “*For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*”
  - The grace filled parent knows that “*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger*” (**Proverbs 15:1**). Raising a child should never mean raising your voice. As a parent, you can be effective in reaching the heart of your child only if you are in control. If you have a gentle humble attitude, your children will reflect that. Your tone of voice is heard louder than your words!
  - The grace filled parent believes **1 Corinthians 13:1**, that “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*” We’ve got to be a vessel for the still small voice of the Holy Spirit of God.
3. Let me finally say this: a godly humble spirit in the home does not mean that we do not deal with sin! It is absolutely essential to correct sin, but you must speak the truth in love.

### **Step #4: If you want to raise a Pharisee, TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO PLEASE MEN**

**instead of God.** The Pharisees were people pleasers! **Matthew 23:5**, “*But all their works they do for to be seen of men*”. Of course Jesus said in **Luke 6:26**, “*Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!*” **1 Corinthians 10:31** says, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*”

- **Application #1: In the Word of God, human success is not the goal; pleasing God is the goal!** How do you spell success in parenting? S-A-L-V-A-T-I-O-N! If your child experiences the new birth and lives a life hungering and thirsting after God, you have succeeded.
- **Application #2:** Our children are not going to stand before our friends and neighbors to see if they were a success. They are going to stand before God.

### **Step #5: If you want to raise a Pharisee, FOCUS ON PERSONALITIES instead of the Person of Jesus Christ.**

Look at **Matthew 23:6-10**. Pharisees “*love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ*”. The Pharisees would not look to Christ. Instead they looked to all their doctors and teachers.

- **Exalt the Architect, no the hammer!** God uses people. But let us not exalt the hammer! Let’s exalt the Architect! We are just pieces of clay in the Master’s hand!
- **To be a Christian is not to be a man follower, but to be a Christ follower.** It is to have Christ living in you—to have Him as your Master. As **verse 8** says, “*one is your Master, even Christ*”.
- **Signing a doctrinal statement does not make a child a Christian.** We are to have correct doctrine, but Christ must dwell in the heart by faith! Agreeing to good doctrine does not transform you. The “*devils also believe and tremble*” (**James 2:19**).

### **Step #6: If you want to raise a Pharisee, CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF PRIDE**

**instead of humility in the home.** Jesus rebuked the proud Pharisees and said: “*But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted*” (**Matthew 23:11-12**). The answer to almost every spiritual problem your child has answered by Peter in **1 Peter 5:5**, “*God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble!*” Or as David said in **Psalms 34:18**, “*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*”

The kind of broken home that God loves is to have a mother and father with a broken heart.

1. Serve them through **prayer**. Pray for them. Gather them around you each night and pray for them by name. Then let them pray and listen to their spiritual heartbeat.
2. Serve them through humble **confession** when you sin.
  - Confess your sins before your children.
  - When your children sin, don’t act as if you are holier than thou. You tell them, Daddy and Mommy are sinners too. That’s why we all need Jesus.

**Step #7: If you want to raise a Pharisee, MAKE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS MERELY RULES TO LIVE BY instead of a mirror to show their corruption and need for Christ.** It was said of the Pharisees in **verse 13**, *“woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in”*. The parallel passage in **Luke 11:52** tells us how the Pharisees blocked the way to heaven. *“Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.”*

The “key of knowledge” is referring to the Law. The Pharisees thought the Law was given as rules to keep. The Pharisees were trying to keep the Law to get into heaven—instead of allowing the Law to be the Schoolmaster that shows us how sinful we are and lead us to our need of Christ (**Galatians 3:24**)!

**Romans 3:19-20**, says that the Law was given *“that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”* God’s Law, the 10 Commandments does not merit us favor in God’s sight—it measures our corruption in God’s sight!

Remember **Luke 5:31-32**, Jesus said, *“They that are whole [WELL] need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

**Step #8: If you want to raise a Pharisee, DON’T BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT YOUR STRUGGLES WITH SIN, instead use Spiritual Smokescreens.** The Lord says in **Matthew 23:14**, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.”*

Are you able to teach something to the children at church or in a 5-Day club, but not willing to live it out at home? Then you are making a pretense. You don’t intend to live it out.

1. Let’s look at the **Problem**. We can have all the right standards in front of others. But if who you are at church is not the same person you are at home and at work, then you are using a spiritual smokescreen.
  - Do we say “Amen” against fleshly living at church and then go home and watch it on the TV?
  - Do you act differently at church than at home? These are just a few ways we can “make a pretense”. We need to deal with this because if you don’t, when your child grows up he may very likely go the opposite direction of Christ.
2. What’s the **Solution**?
  - **Transparency**. Our kids need to see us applying the Word to areas of struggle in our lives. .
  - **Time** and work. Take that time with your kids and invest time on your knees and in the Word.
  - Begin **simply**. Take a walk with your family and ask spiritual questions. Take ten minutes and open the Bible after a meal time. You’ll be surprised how quickly you’ll all begin to live a transparent life.

**Step #9: If you want to raise a Pharisee, SUBSTITUTE OUTWARD STANDARDS FOR SPIRITUALITY.** We see this in **Matthew 23:23**, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: **these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.**”*

To jump to the outward Christian disciplines without dealing with the heart is nothing more than behavior modification. Christians have holy fruit coming out of their life, but **following a set of rules does not make your child a Christian.**

- **Application #1**: Being a Christian is not checking off a list! You should have habits of godliness in your life. So should your children. But having these habits of godliness does not make a person a Christian.
- **Application #2**: Some parents believe if their children have the right amount of verses memorized, says the sinner’s prayer, dress the right way, and are baptized, then their child must be a Christian! Not true. We are saved by grace through faith, not of works (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). We must be looking for Christ be formed in our children, not simply religious standards.

**Step #10: If you want to raise a Pharisee, HAVE A CRITICAL SPIRIT instead of building people up.** Look at **verse 24**: “*Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*” The Pharisee says in **Matthew 7:4**, “*Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye.*” But Christ says, “*and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.*”

Sometimes find it easy to criticize others while we fail to see the glaring sin in our own life. It is so easy to criticize others isn’t it? What is the right response?

- **Look at your own sins.** Get the beam out of your eye. Say with David in **Psalms 139:23-24**, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*” If you look at all the struggles against sin in your own life, you’ll be way too busy to criticize others.
- **Show love to others who offend you.** **1 Peter 4:8** “*charity shall cover the multitude of sins*”. **John 13:35**, “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” Love covers sin with love and forgiveness, but Pharisees critical and complain. Instead of a self righteous spirit, genuine Christian parents don’t judge others, instead they have compassion on them. Remember complaining is NOT a fruit of the Spirit.

**Step #11: If you want to raise a Pharisee, TEACH THEM TO FEED THEIR FLESH instead of feeding on Christ.** We read in **Matthew 23:25**, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*”

The word excess means “self-indulgent”. As parents, it is easy to give our children a hefty diet of things they don’t need. In case you didn’t know, video games, television, the internet, and cell phones can be used as a pacifier for children and young people, and these things can take massive amounts of time from children and teach them to be self-indulgent.

The temptation is to think that going to church or doing spiritual things makes up for all the hours and hours of wasted time. Actually, it is as Jesus said, “cleaning the outside of the cup” but inwardly, we are teaching our children to excess—self indulgence.

Your child may be involved in spiritual activity and going to church. Someone once said, “Going to church does not make us a Christian any more than going to MacDonald’s makes us a hamburger!”

We’ve got to deal with our children’s hearts. How?

- First set the example for them. Are you feeding on Christ?
- Second, feed them Christ. “*O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him*” (**Psalms 34:8**). Have daily times with your children, not just reading the Word but asking questions and probing their heart and praying and listening to them pray.

**Step #12: If you want to raise a Pharisee, DON’T GIVE TIME TO YOUR CHILDREN— just leave the winning of their hearts to someone else.**

- **We must take the TIME to reach our children’s heart!** Our children need RADICAL SURGERY on the heart, not “quick fixes” so that they won’t embarrass or annoy you
- **We must take TIME to APPLY and IMPRESS God’s Word into our children’s hearts.** Peter says we are “*Being born again...by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (**1 Peter 1:23**). Paul says in **1 Corinthians 3:6**, “*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*”. It’s hard work!

**Conclusion:** No one wants to raise a Pharisee. Remember our children are a stewardship. We will be held accountable for every action in regard to them. We cannot treat them based on whims, but with tender care and love, just as we would treat Christ. We need to bring them to Christ, not simply reform their behavior.