



Things to Talk About and Reflect Upon

"Faux Faithfulness"

Points from Sunday's Message

- Point 1 - Moral mechanics do not make me moral.
- Point 2 - Faux religion frustrates Jesus.
- Point 3 - Fake religion promotes fakery, not faithfulness.
- Point 4 - False religion becomes a barrier, not a bridge.

Key Verse:

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

—Luke 11:42

Discussion Questions:

1. **Pastor Miles described religion as** nearly a "human universal" and warned that the *feeling* of goodness or righteousness isn't the same as actually being good. He compared it to "the comforts of a paper blanket" — it covers the moment but doesn't do anything for you. Where have you seen (in culture, in your own background, or in your own heart) the tendency to mistake religious feeling for real righteousness?

Further Reading: Romans 1:18–23 — how the awe of creation can pull us toward worship, yet also toward idolatry.

2. **Pastor Miles explained "moral licensing"** with the line, "I went on a walk today, so that second piece of cake, no problem" — the idea that good religious deposits can cover for bad withdrawals (going to church but being short with your spouse on the drive home). Practically: Can you name a specific area where you're tempted to let a "good thing you did" excuse a "bad thing you're doing"? How might you catch yourself in that trade-off this week?

Further Reading: Luke 18:9–14 — the Pharisee and the tax collector.

3. Jesus says the practices "ought to have [been] done" — but "without leaving the others undone." Pastor Miles framed this as a both/and, not an either/or, landing on Micah 6:8: "do justly, love mercy, walk humbly." Why do you think it's easier to keep up religious habits than to consistently pursue justice, mercy, and humility? Which of those three do you find most challenging?

Further Reading: Micah 6:6–8 and Isaiah 1:11–17.

4. In the third "woe," Jesus calls the Pharisees "unmarked graves" — people whose fake religion quietly makes others unclean without anyone realizing it. Pastor Miles said hypocrisy doesn't just fail to help people, it actually harms them and can lead them away from God. How does this reshape the way you think about your own influence on the people watching your faith — family, kids, coworkers, newer believers?

Further Reading: Matthew 23:23–28 — the parallel "woes," including the inside/outside of the cup.

5. The scribes "made obedience harder than God," loading people with burdens and even taking away "the key of knowledge." Practically: Are there rules, expectations, or standards (your own, or ones you place on others) that God never actually required — extra burdens that turn faith into a barrier instead of a bridge? What would it look like to set one of those down?

Further Reading: Matthew 11:28–30 — Jesus' "easy yoke" as the contrast.

6. Pastor Miles pointed to communion and baptism as "means of grace, not the ends" — reminders that "I did this, and I need this," rather than boxes that make us good. The Pharisees responded to Jesus' confrontation by attacking him rather than repenting. Practically: When God convicts you about faux faithfulness, what's your honest first instinct — defensiveness like the Pharisees, or repentance? How can the group help each other keep our practices (church, prayer, communion) pointing back to Jesus instead of becoming a source of self-righteousness?

Further Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21 and Romans 8:1 — the new identity and "no condemnation" Pastor Miles closed with.

Use these blended questions for deeper personal reflection, prayer, or small group discussion.