



IRRECONCILABLE!

Lesson 8
The Larger Picture

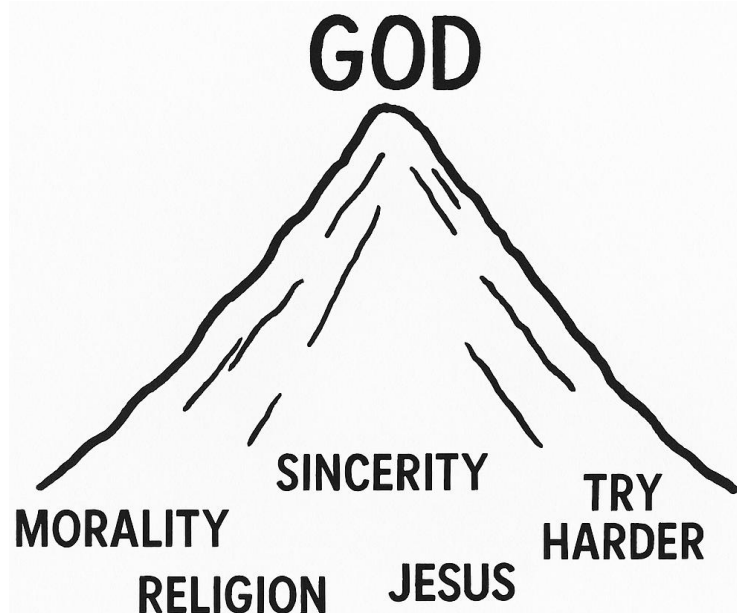
“... not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. (Philippians 3:9)

Setting the Stage

🗺️ The Road Map – Do All Paths Lead to God?

Setup:

1. Examine the picture below and draw a “road” to where each “word” leads.
2. Ask: “Which of these roads actually reaches the top of the mountain? Why not the others?”
3. Explain where you think each road ends:
 - Does it stop short?
 - Circle back?
 - Fall off a cliff?
 - Make it to the top?



Debrief:

- Why is the “**Jesus road**” the only one that truly reaches the mountain?
 - What does this show about the claim “*all paths lead to God*”?
 - How does this activity expose the “Pharisee road” of trusting in works?
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Tracing the Pharisee's Footprints: Legalism in Religion and Life

How the leaven of Pharisaism shows up in the world's religions, in churches, and even in us

1. One Way or Many?

Read: John 5:23; John 14:6

Explore: Why do these verses rule out the idea that “all paths lead to God”?

Extra Discussion: Why does the “all paths lead to God” idea appeal to people?

Takeaway:

☞ Only Christ is the way to the Father. Religious “tolerance” that denies Him is not kindness but deception.

2. Guardians of the Gospel

Read: Acts 17:11; Galatians 5:1

Discuss: How can your congregation and family actively guard the truth of the Gospel?

Extra Discussion: What dangers threaten the Gospel in our churches today?

Takeaway:

☞ Guarding the Gospel is both defensive and joyful: defend against error, and delight in proclaiming Christ's freedom.

3. “Good Christians” or Fruit of Faith?

Scenario: “My Buddhist neighbor is more Christian than some Christians I know.”

Read: Romans 12:1

Explore: What’s wrong with this statement?

Extra Discussion: What happens if churches measure Christianity by outward performance?

Takeaway:

☞ A Christian is not “good” by works but by faith in Christ; good works follow as gratitude, not proof.

4. Forgiveness without a Calculator

Read: Matthew 18:21–22

Explore: Why does conditional forgiveness (“I’ll forgive if...”) echo Pharisaic thinking?

Extra Discussion: Why do we struggle to forgive endlessly?

Takeaway:

☞ We forgive without conditions because Christ forgave us completely, without condition.

5. Worship Wars or Gospel Witness?

Read: Colossians 3:16–17

Explore: How do we keep worship conversations from sounding pharisaical?

Extra Discussion: How can Satan use worship style debates to damage the church?

Takeaway:

☞ True worship isn't about my style but about God's Word and Christ's cross proclaimed.

6. Drawing Fences

Read: Matthew 7:3-5

Explore: What's the danger in over-defining sins with man-made rules?

Extra Discussion: Why are people attracted to strict rules?

Takeaway:

☞ Rules can't make us holy; only the Spirit through Christ's Word can change the heart.

7. Show Me a Sign

Read: John 20:29–31

Explore: Why do people still want signs to prove God’s love?

Extra Discussion: What dangers arise in churches that chase after signs and wonders?

Takeaway:

☞ Faith doesn’t rest on spectacular signs but on Christ’s resurrection and the sure Word of God.

Group Sharing

- Where do you see “Pharisee footprints” in the church or world?

- How can you personally counter them with Gospel-centered thinking?

Closing Insight: Pharisaism is the natural religion of the sinful heart. The Law unmasks it, but the Gospel dismantles it. Righteousness is Christ’s gift, not our achievement.

Wrap-Up

The Larger Picture—The Pharisee’s Road Is the World’s Road

Pharisaism wasn’t an isolated distortion—it represents the path of every works-righteous religion. All roads that rely on human effort, sincerity, or morality fail to reach God. They look different, but they share the same error: denying Christ as Savior. We face the same temptation:

- **All religions except Christianity** teach some form of “Do this, and live.” (Romans 10:3).
- **Traditions and opinions** can slip into the church, adding or subtracting from God’s Word (Mark 7:8–9).
- **The opinio legis clings to us**, whispering that we can secure God’s favor by trying harder (Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:1).

The Law strips away every false road. It exposes the futility of fences, traditions, and “good Christian” measurements, leaving us with no righteousness of our own (Philippians 3:9).

Gospel Comfort

The Gospel shows us the one road that reaches the mountain: Jesus Christ.

- In Christ, we are justified freely by grace, not by works (Romans 3:23–24).
- In Christ, forgiveness is unconditional, not transactional (Matthew 18:22).
- In Christ, we live by faith, not by signs or experiences (John 20:29–31).

What the Law unmasks, the Gospel heals: our pride, hypocrisy, and misplaced trust are answered with Christ’s forgiveness granted to us and his righteousness credited to us.

Key Takeaway for the Class

- **Pharisaic religion:** All roads of human effort—moralism, sincerity, tradition, legalism—fail to reach God.
- **Christian faith:** Only the road of Christ leads to life, because salvation rests not on us but on his finished work.

“Faith is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God. It kills the old Adam, makes us completely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it.” — M. Luther



At-Home Activities

1. Worldview Comparison (Personal)

Pick a world religion (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, secular humanism). In one sentence, write how it echoes Pharisaic thinking (earning God's favor). In one sentence, write how Christ answers it.

2. Forgiveness in Action (Practical)

Identify one person in your life you struggle to forgive. Write a prayer asking God to help you forgive them as he has forgiven you in Christ (Ephesians 4:32).

3. Silent Audit (Reflective)

As you participate in church this week, listen for phrases or attitudes that sound like "Pharisaic leaven" (e.g., measuring faith by works, pride in tradition). Note one, and then counter it with a Gospel truth.

