

The King's Road: Warnings, Woes, and Mourning

Matthew 23:1–39 | Small Group Discussion Guide

1. Jesus Gave a Warning — Matthew 23:1–12

1. Jesus told the people to observe the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees but not imitate their actions. What does this teach us about evaluating both a person's teaching and their lifestyle?
2. Jesus criticized the religious leaders for placing heavy burdens on others without helping them carry those burdens. How can Christians or churches unintentionally do something similar?
3. Why is the desire to be noticed, honored, or recognized spiritually dangerous?
4. Jesus said, "The greatest among you shall be your servant" (v. 11). What does servant leadership look like in everyday life?
5. Application: Are you more concerned with recognition and influence, or with humbly serving others and allowing God to determine your influence?

2. Jesus Pronounced Seven Woes — Matthew 23:13–36

1. Jesus accused the leaders of shutting people out of the kingdom of heaven. How might religious people today unintentionally make it harder for others to come to Christ?
2. The Pharisees were called "blind guides" because they lacked spiritual discernment. What are some signs that a person or church is losing spiritual discernment?
3. Jesus criticized them for focusing on minor details while neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Why is it possible to be careful about religious practices while overlooking the things God considers most important?
4. Jesus compared outward righteousness to cleaning the outside of a cup while leaving the inside dirty. Why are we often more concerned with how others see us than with what is happening in our hearts?
5. The leaders honored the prophets of the past but rejected God's messengers in their own day. Why is it easier to admire faithful people from the past than to respond to God's truth in the present?
6. Application: Where might you be focusing on a minor issue while neglecting something more important in your relationship with God or others?

3. Jesus Mourned Over Jerusalem — Matthew 23:37–39

1. Jesus compared Himself to a hen gathering her chicks under her wings. What does this picture reveal about His heart toward Jerusalem?

2. What is the difference between rejecting Jesus out of ignorance and knowingly resisting His invitation?
3. How can a person be involved in religious activity yet remain unwilling to surrender to Christ?
4. Jesus' words show both judgment and deep sorrow. What does this teach us about the heart of God toward those who reject Him?
5. Application: Is there an area of your life where you are resisting Jesus' invitation, correction, or authority?

Personal Application

Take a few moments to reflect on these questions:

- Am I more concerned with doing the work of God than with worshiping and loving God Himself?
- Have I become overly focused on rules, preferences, or minor issues while neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness?
- Is there an area of my life where I appear spiritually healthy outwardly but need God to work on my heart inwardly?
- What is one practical step I can take this week toward greater humility, discernment, and genuine devotion?

Prayer Time

Spend time praying together:

- Ask God to reveal areas where you lack spiritual discernment.
- Pray for humility and a willingness to serve rather than seek recognition.
- Ask God to help you prioritize justice, mercy, and faithfulness.
- Pray that your church would never allow religious activity to replace worship, love, and obedience to Christ.
- Pray for people who are resisting Jesus, asking that they would respond to His invitation.

Closing thought: May we be a people who do not merely look religious, but genuinely love Christ, follow His Word, and reflect His heart to the world.