

The Savior Warns about Hypocrisy

Use the following table to facilitate a discussion about what the Savior said about the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Don't worry about discussing all the verses. Rather, have meaningful discussion about the verses that most interest your group. At the bottom of the table, record truths and insights you find.

| Matthew 23 | Definitions and Context | Discussion Questions |
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| Verses 2–3 | Moses's seat implies a chair of teaching and judgement. "Bid you observe" means "invite you to obey." (For additional information, see "Matthew 23:1–3. What was important about Moses's seat?" in <i>Scripture Helps: New Testament</i> .) | What made the scribes' and Pharisees' teachings a form of hypocrisy? What problems can a hypocritical teacher create? |
| Verse 5 | Phylacteries were small leather cases worn by Jews on the arm and the forehead. They contained excerpts from scripture (see Deuteronomy 6:6–8). The "borders of their garments" were tassels worn on the hem or corners of their clothes in remembrance of God's commandments (see Numbers 15:38–40). (See "Matthew 23:5. What were phylacteries and borders of garments?" in <i>Scripture Helps: New Testament</i> .) | Why did they enlarge their phylacteries and borders? What religious symbols in our day can be misused in a similar way? |
| Verse 23 | Mint, anise, and cumin are spices—very small things. "Weightier matters" means the more important things. (See "Matthew 23:23–24. What was Jesus teaching when He talked about tithes, gnats, and camels?" in <i>Scripture Helps: New Testament</i> .) | What spiritual problems might we encounter when we focus on less important things? What are some examples of focusing on less important things in our day? |
| Verses 27–28 | A person who stepped on a grave was considered ceremonially unclean (see Numbers 19:16). So graves were whitewashed to make them easily visible. (For more information, see "Matthew 23:27–28. What were whited sepulchres?" in <i>Scripture Helps: New Testament</i> .) | What does this imagery teach us about hypocrisy? What might happen when we become more concerned about how we appear to others than how we appear to God? |
| Verses 29–30, 34 | Tombs were memorials built to honor prophets. To garnish means to decorate. (See "Matthew 23:29–30. Why did the Jews garnish their sepulchres?" in <i>Scripture Helps: New Testament</i> .) | What are the dangers of honoring past prophets and criticizing living prophets? Why is it important to honor both past and present prophets? |

Record Truths and Insights:
