

Study Hints for Thinking Further
International Bible Lessons

Matthew 15:1-20

Sunday, May 18, 2014

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be the answers to the discussion questions. These indeed are “hints” a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What teachings from the Bible did the Pharisees accuse Jesus’ disciples of breaking? Explain your answer.

None. They did not accuse them of breaking any of the Bible’s teachings. Jesus and His disciples obeyed the Law of God. They accused them of breaking the traditions of the elders, and strongly implied that Jesus was permitting them to break the traditions of the elders.

2. What did Jesus accuse the Pharisees of doing?

Jesus said they broke the commandments of God in order to live by their traditions, which they actually put above the Law of God or made more important than the Law of God for themselves and those they led and taught. By following and teaching their traditions, they misled others and taught others how to avoid obeying the Law of God.

3. What commandment of God did Jesus accuse them of breaking? Why do you think He chose that commandment?

Jesus accused them of breaking one of the Ten Commandments; the commandment to honor one’s parents. The commandment showed the importance of loving and helping others, especially those hungry or in need (such as His disciples that day). The Ten Commandments are the moral law of God; summed up in the commands to love God and your neighbor. The Ten Commandments are not ceremonial laws or ritualistic religious laws, but universal, objective, moral laws that apply to all people everywhere. Jesus used one of the Ten Commandments to show how the Pharisees violated God’s moral law and used traditions and religious rituals to break God’s moral law.

4. In what ways do people make void the law of God? In what ways do people make void the word of God?

People make void the law of God when they set aside the penalty of the law or teach that the law no longer applies today; or they create a law that they say is more important to obey than the lesser law that is now optional or obsolete. Whatever they may say, God's law is not void and there are both natural consequences and God's punishment to face when people break God's law. Because God's law is not void and cannot be voided, Jesus came and died on the cross to demonstrate God's love, forgiveness, justice, and mercy and to make salvation possible for those who repent and place their faith in Him as Lord and Savior.

People make void the word of God when they set aside the word of God, the Bible, for the teaching of someone else or the teaching and leadership of some group that may or may not claim to be Christian. They choose what they want to believe and do, and they disbelieve and disregard what they do not want to believe and do. They do not try to understand the intention or purpose of God when He has revealed what He has revealed in the Bible. They ignore the parts of the Bible that they do not want to study and live by. They say some parts of the Bible are obsolete, even some parts of the Bible that Jesus taught were important. They choose to follow some of the Bible's writers, while choosing to ignore or say other writers of the Bible were wrong. However, God's word cannot be voided. God declared through Isaiah: "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8). Truth cannot be made void, and Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Paul commanded, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

5. Who (or what kind of people) are Jesus' followers to leave alone? Why might Jesus have advised this response by His followers?

Jesus' followers are to leave false teachers and leaders alone, because they have chosen to be blind and the Father has not planted them. Let God change them or uproot them according to His timing and way, but this does not mean that a church should not exercise discipline of false leaders and teachers in the church. The Holy Spirit can lead a prayerful and prepared follower of Christ to speak to or answer a false teacher, but in general practice they need to be left alone and left to God. Jesus had good reasons for saying this. See the commentary on Matthew 15:14.

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