

Overview: Pharisees and scribes were sent from Jerusalem to confront Jesus before His followers. He was not obeying the traditions of the elders. Jesus completely turned the tables on the Pharisees and scribes. Before the crowd He confronted and exposed their hypocrisy. This humiliated and offended the Pharisees and the scribes to the point where the disciples felt compelled to call it to Jesus' attention.

Read 15:1-9

1. What do you think was the true purpose of the Pharisees and scribes coming from Jerusalem? What implication do you find included with their *question* (2)?
2. Jesus answered their question with his own question (3). He also mirrored their insertion of a judgment. What do you think were His possible reasons for doing this? What conflict is Jesus framing by His question?
3. In verse 4 Jesus cited the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), along with the punishment for violating it (Exodus 21:17). The practice Jesus was exposing here* was declaring one's assets as given to God while selectively asserting control over them. What did He accuse the Pharisees and scribes of doing (6)? What led to this situation? How should you handle conflicts between God's commandments and man-made traditions?
4. Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13 here (8-9). How is this appropriate for what Jesus was encountering with the Pharisees and scribes? What does God long for from men, according to Isaiah?

Read 15:10-20

5. What was Jesus effectively doing by calling the people and saying, "Hear and understand" (10)? Why wasn't He addressing the Pharisees and scribes here (see 23:23)?
6. In verse 12 the disciples expressed concern over Jesus offending the Pharisees and scribes. What might have been the reasons for their concern? Do you think there are times when it is appropriate to upset someone like Jesus did here? If so, give an example.
7. Jesus responded to the disciples in verses 13-14. What did Jesus call the Pharisees and scribes? How does this shed some light as to why Jesus was so harsh in exposing and embarrassing them in front of the crowd?
8. Read verses 8 and 18. What defiles a person? Which is easier – to conceal what is in our hearts from each other, or from God? What does God desire of each of us, according to Psalm 51:6a?

** The "tradition of the elders" that Jesus rejected was called Corban. Declaring one's assets as Corban meant the assets were now dedicated to the Temple even though the dedicator still exercised control over the assets. It gave an outward appearance of godliness, but in actuality it provided an excuse to selectively avoid using assets for undesired expenditures like supporting elderly parents.*