Religion that shuts God out

Matthew 23:13–26 · An open door. An honest heart.

Michael wanted to lead the younger class. Joseph carried books; Rosie set out crayons. When Gracie arrived, Michael said, “**Only my helpers may join**.” He kept her supplies for his own table. Gracie stopped at the door. Was his Bible club helping her come to God—or getting in her way?



Circle something Michael could share. Draw an arrow from the books to the table. What could he say to welcome Gracie?

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

Matthew 23:13

Whom are we following?

Rosie asked why Gracie could not join. “Everyone follows my rules,” Michael said. Together they read Jesus’ warning about leaders who shut people out and lead followers away from God. Joseph asked, “What if **our rules are wrong**?” Michael had counted every crayon but ignored the friend at the door.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Matthew 23:23

Find six words in straight lines: across, down or diagonally, in either direction. In the verse, underline the three things the leaders neglected.

W	U	T	T	Y	S	H	T	R	V	V	I
J	E	S	U	S	P	L	C	R	V	D	R
E	K	T	A	H	A	F	M	S	U	I	L
C	U	G	P	T	K	N	C	E	H	T	I
Y	C	P	Z	X	M	G	U	R	R	L	H
L	S	F	N	V	O	Q	K	D	O	C	C
U	O	B	Q	K	T	U	U	V	Z	Y	Y
F	A	I	T	H	F	U	L	N	E	S	S
Q	F	R	B	M	O	T	R	A	E	H	F
K	D	W	I	N	J	U	S	T	I	C	E
T	X	P	I	I	S	G	O	Y	E	X	E
X	D	Q	S	M	X	T	X	M	J	P	T

JUSTICE • MERCY • FAITHFULNESS • JESUS • HEART • TRUTH

What is inside?

Jesus' words about a clean cup with a dirty inside made Michael pause. His tidy table hid a **greedy heart**. "I wanted everyone to admire me," he admitted. We all sin; hiding it behind good words is hypocrisy. Michael needed more than a nicer rule. He needed to **turn to Jesus**.

Color the friends repairing the harm. Find and circle six surprising objects that do not belong. Draw a cup of pencils on the empty table.



Decode the reminder. A=1, B=2, C=3 ... Z=26.

12	15	22	5	7	15	4

Come honestly to Jesus

“Jesus, forgive my pride and greed. **I trust You, not my good deeds**. Change my heart,” Michael prayed. He returned Gracie’s supplies and asked her forgiveness. Then he and Joseph moved the box while Rosie prepared the papers. Gracie joined them. Michael kept helping, **even when nobody praised him**.

You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

Matthew 23:26

Number these events from 1 to 4.

___ Michael returned the supplies and welcomed Gracie.

___ Michael kept the supplies and shut Gracie out.

___ Michael prayed honestly and trusted Jesus.

___ Jesus’ words showed Michael his greedy heart.

Jesus died and rose to save sinners. Helping cannot buy His forgiveness. We turn from sin and trust Him; then we learn to love others.

One way I can repair harm today: _____

Jesus, forgive me. Help me love You and serve others even without praise. Amen.

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