AM I A PHARISEE ... OR A PUBLICAN?

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### MIQ REPORT
More than 1,000 sites in 60 countries tuned into *Most Important Questions!* See how God blessed young people around the world through this special outreach and revival broadcast.

### AFCOE GOES GLOBAL
Did you know that AFCOE has locations in other nations? Take a closer look at our thriving Bible training center in the Ukraine.

### THE ANSWER, FINALLY
Although raised a Christian, Deborah Kelley turned from the Lord. But a "chance" meeting at her work led to a brand-new journey of truth.

### BIBLE ANSWERS
Is there life on other worlds? With his Bible in hand, Pastor Doug tackles this controversial subject.

### HEALTH BITE
Are you a human being or a human doing? Most people are always on the go—and don’t realize that all that stress has dangerous consequences for their health.

### HOW YOU HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE
The ministry has experienced abundant blessings over the past five years. Here’s a brief but soul-stirring look at what you’ve helped accomplish!

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Am I a Pharisee... or a Publican?
One of the most wonderful personal blessings for me as president of Amazing Facts is knowing that we have such a committed, solid core of friends who support us financially month after month. I’ve learned that nothing is impossible when God moves on these prayerful hearts to contribute to His end-time cause.

But this blessing often goes way beyond that. Some of our friends are very creative in helping us get out our soul-winning products—our books and DVDs—to the general public.

In fact, we very much rely on churches and friends like you to give out these evangelistic tools to people we aren’t able to reach with normal advertising. And your enthusiasm for Amazing Facts is the best kind of advertising there is!

It’s a very special relationship.

For instance, a church member in New Zealand, Rex, partnered with Amazing Facts to share the Final Events DVD in his country. Rex and his church friends saw the film and knew it would be a great outreach tool. They decided to distribute the DVD in the rural North Island. We worked with them on the price per DVD so they could mass mail them. They reached 115,000 homes! Interestingly, one of their responses came from the South Island where they hadn’t distributed any. And many responses came from those living in cities after having received the DVD from friends in the country.

Rex also shares that one eager recipient requested 20 additional copies to send to her friends for Christmas and asked for our Most Amazing Prophecies DVD. Another church member visits a farmers’ market to give out Final Events, and many souls are asking for additional copies to share so they don’t have to lose their only copy. Amazingly, a lady in Australia called to ask for 200 extra copies to share with others. Says Rex, “It’s astounding to see how far the impact of these efforts have gone. People love this DVD and want more.”

A group in Brazil has created a website to sell our Portuguese-language Cosmic Conflict DVD. (Check out the website at www.conflictoesmico.com.br.) This project was set up by a school to raise funds for its students. Hander Heim, a leader in this effort, says, “This is the beginning of a very fruitful ministry. Thanks to God and Amazing Facts.”

In the pictures, you’ll see that our DVDs have made it all the way to Uganda in Africa, where friends Rob and Stephanie Casebolt passed them out during their prison ministry efforts. It truly is something extraordinary—and it’s just the tip of the iceberg.

Dr. Robert Ford in Washington State has given away 50,000 Richest Caveman and Great Controversy books through his medical practice! Here’s an excerpt from a recent letter he received from one of his patients, Shelby: “Thank you so much for putting that book Richest Caveman into my hands. I’ve never heard such a testimony! I could not put it down—I laughed, I cried, I prayed.”

I got so stirred in my spirit. I thank God His Holy Spirit is stirring our hearts!”

Pastor Dan Cole of a church in Kamiah, Idaho, says that another patient, Connie, will be baptized this June after receiving from Pastor Ford the Richest Caveman and Great Controversy, which were a significant factor in her decision to go to their Bible seminar. Isn’t that an amazing fact?!?

Finally, last year Amazing Facts had a banner year in reaching people with the gospel—but we also came up short financially. A gift today would make a world of difference, so I ask that you use the enclosed envelope to make a donation today.

But even if you aren’t able to do that, you can still share truth by partnering with Amazing Facts and passing out our DVDs and books filled with the everlasting gospel!
10  MIQ
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Search the Inside Report archives online at www.AmazingFacts.org!
Training Disciples
“I’ve been a Sabbath Christian my whole life but never understood much. Since I have been on the Amazing Facts website, I have been learning so much and understand things I never understood before. Now I’m teaching three elderly ladies at my job about God; you would be surprised how much they don’t know about the Bible! I’ve given them your Broken Chains book and they love it. Thank you so much for your help and keep doing what you’re doing because it’s a blessing.”  Florida

Keeping Faith Fresh
“I have really enjoyed listening to Amazing Facts. Even though I have heard these truths before, it is always great to hear them again. They have re-affirmed my faith. Praise God for Amazing Facts! Michigan

Editor’s Note: These letters aren’t a way for us to pat ourselves on the back, but rather a way for us to thank you for your loving gifts. Otherwise, none of the work at Amazing Facts would be possible. God bless you!

Cosmic Conflict International
“I just watched the Cosmic Conflict DVD. I was moved by the beauty of heaven. It made me hate sin, and it reminded me that I have something better to work for—serving Jesus faithfully—even though I live in this sin-sick world. I watched it a second time and felt encouraged to keep going. Amazing Facts is a blessing to me, and I thank God for using it to keep me focused. For that reason, I pray for Amazing Facts and always will. The work of the Master must finish before He comes again.”  Uganda

The Positive Side of Suffering
“I was guided to your site by a co-worker. I wasn’t looking for this video but decided to watch it anyway. It was ‘The Positive Side of Suffering.’ Wow! It was just what I needed. … The sermon by Doug allowed me to find peace in my heart and calm my nerves. I thank you guys for the service you provide. Until God provides me a way to make it to church on Saturdays, I am comforted in knowing that I can learn through here and continue to seek the truth. My goal is to someday soon be able to attend Doug’s church in Sacramento and get baptized.”  California

Prayers From Manila
“I am so blessed by God through Amazing Facts. I strongly believe that He uses this ministry to spread the gospel throughout the world. I am praying for this ministry and for all of you people who chose to be used by God. He empowers you all. I hope that we can have Bible Study Guides translated into Filipino so we too can use them and share them with our countrymen seeking for the truth.”  Philippines

The Inside Report welcomes all correspondence regarding Amazing Facts. Letters and other materials may be used — in whole or in part and edited for content and clarity — in future ministry publications. If Amazing Facts has helped change your life for Christ, please write us at testimonies@amazingfacts.org!
Lifestyle Giving

REVIEWING YOUR ESTATE PLAN

Most information written about estate planning is geared to the individual who has no estate plan. Therefore, we often think that once we have signed our wills or planned our estates, we can forget about them.

But this is simply not true. Estate planning is a continuing process.

The following checklist will help you determine whether or not you need to review your estate plan. Please take a minute to answer these questions.

1. Does your estate plan include an Advance Health Care Directive in the event of incapacitation? □ Yes □ No
2. Do you have a durable power of attorney to manage property in case of incompetency prior to death? □ Yes □ No
3. Has your plan been reviewed within the last five years? □ Yes □ No
4. Do you have a letter of instructions for the distribution of household goods and personal effects? □ Yes □ No
5. Have you considered the many advantages of a living trust? □ Yes □ No
6. Have there been substantial changes in people, property, or plans for your estate? □ Yes □ No
7. Have you done everything possible to avoid interpersonal conflicts among family members? □ Yes □ No
8. Is the ownership of your property coordinated with your estate documents? □ Yes □ No
9. Have you provided for guardianship and property management for minor children? □ Yes □ No
10. When you established your estate plan, did you realize that God was the owner of all and was your plan designed under the direction of the Holy Spirit? □ Yes □ No

If you answered “no” to any of the above questions, it’s important that your estate plan be reviewed.

How Do I Review My Estate Plan?
The review of your estate plan will follow much the same process followed when you created your original estate plan.

Many individuals have found the material our staff has designed to assist our friends in the estate planning process to be just as valuable in the review of their estate plans.

We can prepare a special guide for your unique estate planning wishes, including information and guidelines for the estate planning process and an inventory form that can be used to list the data on your people, property, and plans.

We are making this available to you at no cost or obligation. If this can be of value to you, please write us today by filling out the form below, cutting it out, and mailing it with the envelope that came with the magazine.

Or you can call 1-800-436-2695 or email dans@amazingfacts.org to get more information today.

Please send me free estate planning information! I understand that there is no obligation.

Please indicate if:
□ You would like a call to discuss your estate options.
□ You own your own business.

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Inside Report 5 1Q 2011
Am I a Pharisee... or a Publican?

In the book of Luke, Jesus shares a powerful parable that challenges you and me to do a little healthy soul searching. It depicts two men visiting the same church, both praying to the same God. But something between the two of them is very different.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (Luke 18:10–14).

The lesson plainly exposed on the surface, of course, is that humility is better than pride. But I have found many times with the Word of God that the longer we gaze into it, the deeper and wider it gets. The more we invest exploring it, the more dividends of truth we accrue. And over time it has occurred to me there's much more in this parable than what we commonly see with just a brief glance.

A Shocking Parable

In Jesus’ day the Pharisees were considered among the most pious and religious of all the believers in God. On the other hand, the publicans were branded as unfaithful and unjust extortionists. They were seen as the mafia of their day. You can see why, then, that Jesus’ conclusion of this parable literally stunned His audience. It was an outrageous and politically incorrect illustration to suggest that a publican would be justified and saved while a Pharisee would be unforgiven and lost. We’ll look more at this later, but Jesus turned their ranking system upside down.

These men represent two groups, but we are not talking about two groups in the world. Rather, these two men represent two opposite
destinies, the saved and the lost, among those who go to church. Every professed believer today falls into one of these groups. One of these men represents me. One represents you.

Which one?

We each need to ask for humility and guidance from the Holy Spirit when considering this question. You might be thinking you’re a publican when you’re really a Pharisee or vice versa. Or you might be some of both. It’s important we study this parable because we are all one of these guys, and we want to make sure we’re the one Jesus forgives.

Some Common Ground

These men had a few things in common. First, they both believed in God. If you want to be in the saved group, that’s a good start!

But believing in God is not the only criteria for salvation. “Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). Because devils also believe there is a God, there must be something more to being saved.

Both men also went to church. This too is important if you want to be in the saved group. I have often said that if you don’t have enough faith to get you to church once a week, it’s not likely you will have enough faith to get you to heaven for eternity.

Sometimes people excuse not going to church by claiming there are hypocrites there. But I say not to worry; there’s always room for one more. Besides, Jesus went to church every Sabbath even though it was peppered with hypocrites, some of whom even wanted Him dead.

Others complain that church is boring. But is the purpose of church to be entertained—or to worship God? And if your worship isn’t fulfilling, pray for God to change your heart. But go to church. Jesus set the example by teaching and worshiping in church every week (Luke 4:16).

The third thing these men had in common was that they both prayed. Jesus says in Luke 18:1 that men “ought always to pray,” and Paul writes that we should “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The saved indeed pray.

So we see both men believed in God. Both went to church. Both prayed. I’m hopeful you also practice these rudimentary elements of faith.

Now let’s consider some of their differences.

Am I Spiritually Proud?

The Pharisees proudly wore their piety. They were a hyper-conservative element of believers who were zealous about the Scriptures, the law of God, and the purity of the worship of Jehovah. When the Jews were captive in Babylon, the prophets told them they were overcome because of their unfaithfulness to God. In response, the sect of Pharisees formed so that Israel would no longer allow themselves to be influenced by the surrounding pagan nations. Fastidious in the details of their religion, the Pharisees knew that if Israel were to fall into idolatry again, God might forever withdraw His protection.

So this was generally a good group of people who were just very zealous in their belief of keeping themselves undefiled by their environment.

Unfortunately, many and perhaps most of the Pharisees let their zealotry for obedience eclipse their love for their fellow man. Jesus called them on the carpet several times for their preoccupation with external religion and rebuked them for their self-righteous wickedness. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

In this revealing parable, the Pharisee is a sanctimonious, hypocritical man.

Meet the Publicans

A publican, on the other hand, was the ancient version of a tax collector—though they were quite different from tax collectors today. When the Romans conquered a province, they didn’t speak the language and didn’t know the culture, but they needed the tax income. So instead of collecting taxes themselves, they allowed Jews to procure contracts to be tax collectors. The tax collectors were required to amass a certain amount of tax from their district and could keep a percentage over that amount for themselves. Many of them would exploit their position to extort vast sums to fill their own pockets. Zacchaeus was fabulously wealthy because he was a tax collector in Jericho.

The publicans were detested by the Jews, who considered them traitors for taking God’s money from His people and giving it to the pagans. The publicans were also known for keeping the bars
open and being involved in prostitution. They represented the worst breed of sinners.

So in this parable about two people going to the temple to pray to God, the people naturally looked upon the Pharisees as the ones who were the closest to God. They looked upon the publicans as the most hopeless, God-forsaken untouchables. Yet Jesus favored the publican. The question is “Why?”

**Peculiar Prayers and Posture**

An important distinction between the two men was in the way they prayed. “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself” (Luke 18:11). He stood up, by himself, up front. He then thanked God that he was not like the publican. His head was up; his arms were stretched out.

But the publican’s prayer was entirely different. “The publican, standing afar off,would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). The publican was humbly standing in the back, not even daring to lift up his eyes.

At this point, the Pharisee began to chronicle all his good works, “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (verse 12). He wanted people to know what he was doing and giving for the Lord. He proclaimed his adherence to the law. His prayer was actually self-exaltation.

In contrast, Christ began His ministry by saying, “All their works they do for to be seen of men” (Matthew 23:5). Jesus says that’s all the reward they’ll get (Matthew 6:2).

This parable is important for us, even today, because we still have Pharisees in church today.

The problem with this Pharisee was that he expressed no need of help. He didn’t seem to recognize that he had any problems or faults. All he saw were virtues. Yet according to the Bible, his self-righteousness was worthless. “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20 NKJV).

Here, Jesus is not holding up the righteousness of the Pharisees as a standard. Instead, He tells us we must rise above their standard to enter the kingdom of heaven. Their righteousness was before men. True righteousness must be before God.

“He takes that ye do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward of your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men” (Matthew 6:1 NKJV).

It requires humility to secretly do good here on earth, to give something and not let anybody else know about it. It helps tame our spirit and reveals our motivation in doing good: Do we act so others will think of us as generous? Do we really care about the one we’re helping?

**How Do I Pray?**

“When you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing” (Matthew 6:5 NKJV).

The idea of the parable is not that standing while praying is bad, but rather to examine why you are standing. Jesus doesn’t want us to make a spectacle of ourselves while we pray. Don’t draw attention to yourself, either through your actions or by your words.

Have you ever been in a group prayer and started preaching for the benefit of those around you instead of really talking from your heart to God? I have. I sometimes still do it with our children. We kneel with them to pray, asking the Lord to help them get good grades and help them clean their room. They’re right there with us, and our prayer has turned into a mini-sermon.

When we deliver little innuendos and messages in our prayers, that’s one way we stand. That’s the prayer of the Pharisee, “Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men.”

Do you ever question another person’s behavior? Are you ever thankful that you’re not like that? Have you ever condemned another person’s church clothing? “That’s not at all respectful as my own modest attire is.” The Lord hears, “Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men.”

By the way, gossip is just an outward manifestation of this holier-than-thou attitude. Often we disguise our gossip as a prayer.

“Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue; wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.”

—John Wesley
request! “I’m not gossipping, but I just wanted to mention this so we can pray about it.” Then they reveal Sally went to lunch with Bruce, and they’re both married ... but not to each other. Have you ever said something like that? In your heart, maybe you were really saying, “Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men.”

**Whom Do I Trust?**

The Pharisee exalted his own religious practices at the expense of his neighbor. He trusted in his own good deeds to make him acceptable to God. He didn’t plead the merits of Christ. Many good people will do this without realizing it.

Hezekiah was a good man and a good king. The Bible says he did “right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Kings 18:3). Then one day, God told Hezekiah to get his things in order; it was