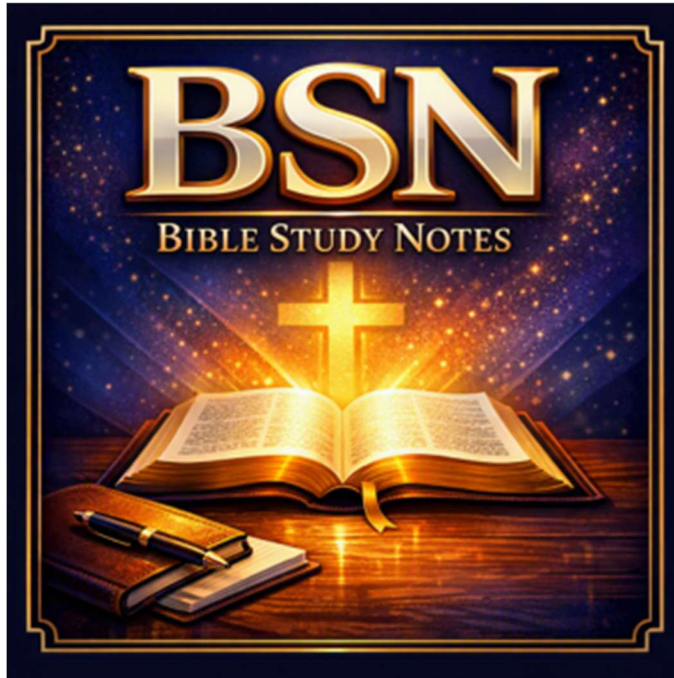




Bay Area Vineyard
Sunday Morning 10:00 am
For more Studies call (218) 220-7650
Online: BayAreaVineyard.org



Nine Lessons from Matthew 23:25–26

Fifth Woe: Integrity start by cleaning the inside of the cup first!

Matthew 23:25–26 *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.”*

The Setting:

Jesus continues His warning against religious hypocrisy. The Pharisees were careful about outward purity and public appearance, but beneath that respectable exterior were greed and self-indulgence. Using the picture of a cup washed outside but filthy inside, Jesus teaches that genuine righteousness must begin in the heart.

1. Outward respectability can conceal inward corruption

The Pharisees appeared disciplined and religious, yet Jesus saw what others could not see. Their public image hid sinful desires.

We may attend church, speak correctly, serve faithfully, and maintain a good reputation while privately nurturing pride, envy, greed, lust, bitterness, or selfishness.

Lesson: *A respectable appearance is not the same as a righteous heart.*

2. God sees beyond appearances

People usually evaluate what is visible, but Christ examines our motives, desires, and secret choices. Nothing within us is hidden from Him.

This truth should not merely frighten us; it should invite honesty. We do not need to pretend before Jesus. We can confess what He already sees and receives His cleansing grace.

Lesson: *Spiritual health begins when we become honest with God about what is happening inside us.*

3. Hypocrisy focuses on image rather than reality

The problem was not that the Pharisees cared about outward conduct. Outward obedience matters. Their error was concentrating on how they appeared while neglecting who they truly were.

Other Bible Studies Available:

The King Comes in Humility

Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Matthew 21:12-19

The Withered Fig Tree: Genuine Fruit, Faith, and Prayer

Matthew 21:18-22

The Parable of the Tenants

Matthew 21:33

When I am Lifted up

John 8:21-30

The truth will set you free

John 8:31-38

The Greatest Commandment

Matthew 22:34-40

Whose sone is the Messiah

Matthew 22:41-46

Practice what you preach

Matthew 23:1-12

Seven Woes

Matthew 23:13-26

Summary of Lessons

1. Lesson: *A respectable appearance is not the same as a righteous heart.*
2. Lesson: *Spiritual health begins when we become honest with God about what is happening inside us.*
3. Lesson: *We should desire genuine holiness more than a reputation for holiness.*
4. Lesson: *We must examine not only what we do for God, but why we do it.*
5. Lesson: *Freedom is not doing whatever we desire; it is becoming free to obey God.*
6. Lesson: *Lasting change grows from inward renewal, not merely external rule-keeping.*
7. Lesson: *God desires both a clean heart and a godly life, in that order.*
8. Lesson: *One sign of spiritual sight is the willingness to admit our need for cleansing.*
9. Lesson: *Christ does not merely improve our appearance; He cleanses, renews, and transforms us from within.*

Hypocrisy asks, *“What will people think of me?”* Integrity asks, *“What does God see in me?”*

Lesson: *We should desire genuine holiness more than a reputation for holiness.*

4. Greed can hide beneath religious behavior

Jesus specifically says that they were *“full of greed.”* Greed is an excessive desire to possess, acquire, or control. It can involve money, recognition, influence, comfort, or power.

A person may use religion to gain admiration, status, financial advantage, or control over others. Spiritual activity does not automatically purify selfish motives.

Lesson: *We must examine not only what we do for God, but why we do it.*

5. Self-indulgence reveals a heart ruled by appetite

Self-indulgence means allowing our desires to govern us. It says, “I want what pleases me, regardless of what honors God or helps others.”

This may appear in uncontrolled spending, eating, entertainment, sexual desire, anger, comfort-seeking, or the constant demand to have our own way. Christian discipline is not punishment; it is learning, by the Spirit, to place our desires under Christ’s authority.

Lesson: *Freedom is not doing whatever we desire; it is becoming free to obey God.*

6. Inner cleansing must come first

Jesus says, *“First clean the inside.”* He identifies the proper order of transformation. God changes the heart, and that inward renewal begins to reshape outward conduct.

Behavioral improvement without heart transformation often produces either pride or frustration. But when Christ changes our desires, our words and actions increasingly reflect His work within us.

Lesson: *Lasting change grows from inward renewal, not merely external rule-keeping.*

7. Jesus does not disregard outward obedience

Jesus says that after the inside is cleaned, *“the outside also will be clean.”* He is not teaching that conduct is irrelevant. Rather, outward righteousness should flow from inward holiness.

A changed heart produces changed behavior. Grace does not leave us unchanged; it teaches us to reject sin and live faithfully.

Lesson: *God desires both a clean heart and a godly life, in that order.*

8. Spiritual blindness prevents honest self-examination

Jesus calls the Pharisee *“blind.”* He could notice ceremonial details but could not recognize the corruption within himself.

We often see other people's faults more clearly than our own. Pride makes us defensive, while humility allows Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and trusted believers to correct us.

Lesson: *One sign of spiritual sight is the willingness to admit our need for cleansing.*

9. Only Christ can truly cleanse the heart

We cannot wash away inward sin through willpower, religious activity, or image management. We need forgiveness and transformation.

Jesus went to the cross to bear our guilt and rose again to give us new life. When we confess our sins and trust Him, He forgives us and gives His Spirit, who continues the work of making us holy.

Lesson: *Christ does not merely improve our appearance; He cleanses, renews, and transforms us from within.*

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- *Ask God to reveal hidden motives and secret sins.*
- *Confess sin rather than protecting your reputation.*
- *Examine whether greed or self-indulgence influences your choices.*
- *Seek obedience that flows from love for Christ, not the desire to impress people.*
- *Welcome loving correction instead of becoming defensive.*

- *Depending upon the Holy Spirit for inward transformation.*
- *Make your private life consistent with your public profession.*

Going Deeper

1. *Am I more concerned about appearing godly than becoming godly?*
2. *What hidden desire may be controlling my behavior?*
3. *Do I use religious activity to gain approval, influence, or recognition?*
4. *Is there a private sin I need to confess honestly?*
5. *Do my outward actions reflect a heart increasingly surrendered to Christ?*
6. *Where do I need the Holy Spirit to produce deeper change?*

Memorizing the Central Message

Matthew 23:25–26 warns us against polishing our outward appearance while neglecting the condition of our hearts. Jesus is not satisfied with religious image management. He desires truth, purity, and surrender within us.

Real holiness begins when Christ cleanses the heart, and that inward cleansing produces an outward life of integrity, self-control, and love.

Engaging the Holy Spirit through Prayer

Lord Jesus, You see beyond my outward appearance and know everything within my heart. Forgive me for the times I have cared more about looking righteous than becoming holy.

Expose any greed, pride, selfishness, or self-indulgence within me. Give me humility to confess my sins rather than hide them. Cleanse me through Your grace and renew me by Your Holy Spirit.

Transform my desires so that my private life and public conduct honor You. Let my obedience flow from a heart that loves You, and make me truthful, pure, generous, and self-controlled.