

Matthew 23:1-12

The Challenge of Discipleship Study 7: *Humility*

Focus Question: *Who in your life models humility?*

Word of Life

“The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Matthew 23: 11-12

Read [Matthew 23:1-12](#)

To understand Matthew 23:1-12, skim through the previous chapter. [Matthew 22](#) is filled with descriptions of religious leaders attempting to entrap Jesus. Finally, he turns to the crowds and his disciples, delivering his own evaluation. It is not favourable. He condemns the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy. They do not practice as they teach.

Jesus urges the crowd to learn from the *teachings* rather than the *actions* of the scribes and Pharisees. It seems these teachers have correct information, but have not applied the teachings to their own lives. They are hypocrites. In chapter 23, Jesus gives many examples to support his claim.

1. *How could the scribes and Pharisees have gone so far astray?*

Then, Jesus turns things upside down by proclaiming, “The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). How can this be? What does Jesus mean by this reversal? Why would someone *great* choose to become a servant? Jesus adds, “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus practices what he teaches. He becomes a servant to all and sacrifices his life. In the process, Jesus is denied, betrayed and humiliated. It is a humbling journey to the cross. Jesus’ life and sacrificial death becomes a model for his own disciples. He does not just speak about becoming a servant; he becomes that very servant. His life and death stand in sharp contrast to the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. His life of humble service condemns those whose lives do not reflect what their lips profess.

2. *What can be learned from Jesus’ warning about the scribes and Pharisees?*

3. *What does Jesus mean to “become a servant”?*

Take a moment to reflect on humble people who you have met in your life. Write down their names as you ponder what they have taught you.

4. *Describe what it is like to be with a humble person.*

5. *What can you learn from a humble person?*

6. *How is humility a challenge for today’s disciple?*

7. *What have you learned when you have served others?*

8. *What is the main message from Matthew 23:1-12?*

Prayer

Gracious God, fill our hearts with humility. Amen

Dig Deeper

[Matthew 5:1-12](#)

Last Word

This week, be intentional
about being the last to be served
and the last in every line.
Pray for those in front of you.