

CHRISTMAS

AT GRACE DEVOTIONAL

THE SCRIBE IN ME: WHEN I KNOW BUT DON'T CARE // DECEMBER 20, 2020

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: Why is it important to be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only?

Key Passage: *“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’” (Matthew 2:3-6)*

Who were the Scribes?

Scribes in ancient Israel were educated men whose job was to study, transcribe, and preserve the Law and to write commentaries on the Law. Thanks to the scribes, we have the Old Testament portions of the Bible today—scribes would copy and recopy the Bible meticulously, even counting letters and spaces to ensure each copy was correct. In New Testament days, scribes were often associated with the sect of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20; 12:38). As teachers and interpreters of the Law (Mark 1:22), scribes were widely respected by the community because of their knowledge, dedication, and outward appearance of Law-keeping.

However, scribes often went beyond interpretation of Scripture and added numerous man-made traditions to what God had said. They became known for strictly following the letter of the Law while ignoring the spirit behind the Law. In fact, things became so bad that the regulations and traditions the scribes added to the Law were considered more important than the Law itself. This led to many confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus even declared that the righteousness of the scribes was not enough to get anyone to heaven (Matthew 5:20) and that what the scribes were teaching was not what God actually wanted people to know (Matthew 5:21-48). Jesus soundly condemned the scribes for their hypocrisy—they knew and taught the Law but did not obey it (Matthew 23). The scribes’ aim was supposed to be to preserve the Word, but they were invalidating it with the man-made traditions they were handing down (Mark 7:13). Scribes were more interested in impressing people with their (false) righteousness than in pleasing God. Eventually, the scribes played a major role in having Jesus arrested and crucified (Matthew 26:57; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:1-2).

Discuss: The scribes mentioned in our key text (Matthew 2:3-6) well knew the Old Testament prophecy of where the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2). Yet, they still missed recognizing Jesus as the prophesied Messiah. How is the spiritual blindness of the scribes similar to people today who have religious and even biblical knowledge yet still reject Christ as Savior, Messiah?

Discuss: How you answer someone who says they reject Christianity because of hypocrites in the church?

Don't just believe God's Word; put it into practice.

James 1:22 says, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." James tells us to show our commitment to God by obeying what we read and hear in God's Word. The phrase "Be doers" means "keep on doing"—that is, be devoted to constantly growing and moving forward in your practice of the Word. If we merely hear God's Word and don't apply or obey it, James says we are deceiving ourselves (v.22). In Luke 11:28, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" John tells us that obeying God's Word is convincing evidence that we truly know and love God (John 14:15; 1 John 5:2-3).

Discuss: In what ways are we deceiving ourselves (according to James 1:22) if we only hear God's Word but don't obey or apply it?

Discuss: In what ways can we be blessed (according to Jesus in Luke 11:28) by "keeping" (putting into practice) the Word of God?

Discuss: Why is obedience to God's Word (according to John in John 14:15 and 1 John 5:2-3) convincing evidence that a person truly knows and loves God?

James continues his point regarding the importance of putting into practice the Word of God by describing the Bible as a mirror, and then using a negative illustration and a positive illustration.

- Negative – "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like" (James 1:23–24).

Discuss: What words would you use to describe the hearer in 1:23-34?

Discuss: What are some negative consequences of looking into the mirror of God's Word and forgetting what it says we are like (v.24)?

- Positive – "But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing" (James 1:25).

Discuss: What words would you use to describe the hearer in 1:25?

Discuss: What are some positive effects of looking into the mirror of God's Word and acting on it (v.25)?

Discuss: How can one go about being a doer and not just a hearer of God's Word?

Resources

"How to Apply the Bible in Daily Life" article at www.ESV.org

"What is the Key to Applying the Bible to My Life?" article at www.gotquestions.org

How to Get the Most from God's Word by John MacArthur