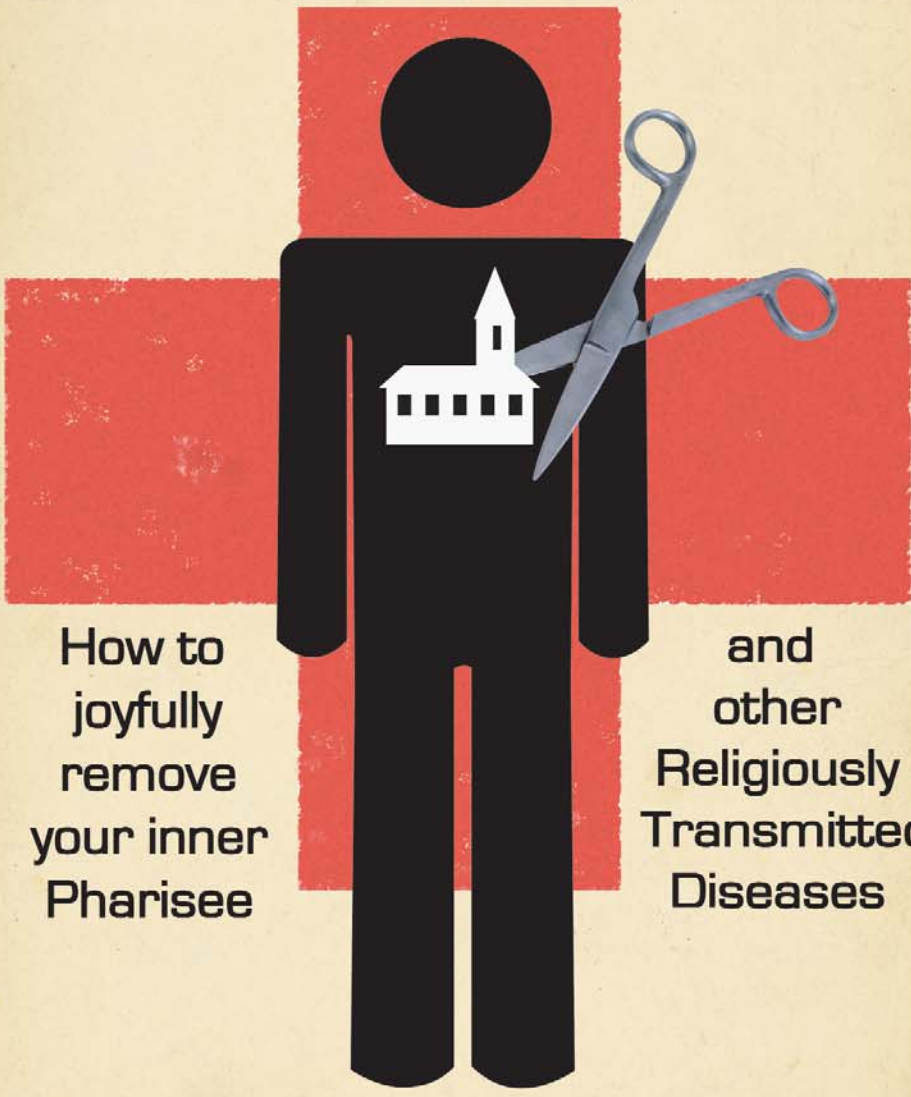


Unedited Sampler

# Phariseeotomy

(far´i-sec´toe mee)



How to  
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remove  
your inner  
Pharisee

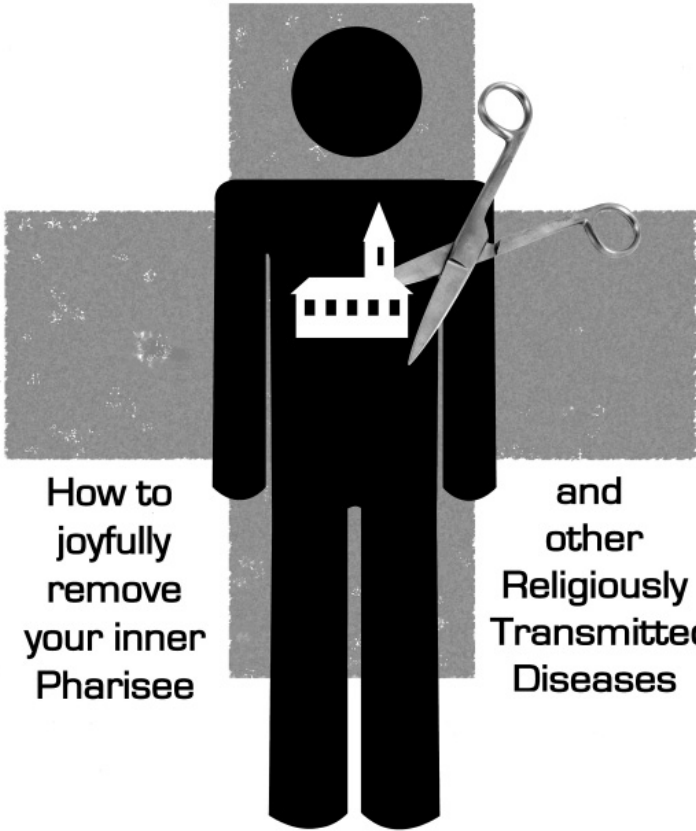
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 Influence



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# Chapter Summaries

## **Introduction: Jesus Still Goes to Nightclubs**

From a statistical standpoint the American church looks more dismal than ever. Most of the solutions people are talking about simply don't jive with the research about why the American church is dying; yet, despite this, God is doing mind-blowing things. I share my "Saul-to-Paul" conversion story that happened while I was working in a nightclub. I.e., I entered into church as a complete heathen. Evangelicals and Charismatics were an incredibly strange world to me. And many people who grow up in it aren't even able to see how strange it really is. Thus my crazy story sets the stage for a deep thought: Most Christians who have religiously transmitted diseases don't even realize that they have them. We've all had encounters with weird Christians; but what if we *were* the weird Christian?

The book is organized into two sections: "Internal Diseases" vs. "Community Diseases." I.e., The first few chapters focus on how we, as individuals, comprehend God and his grace. And the second half of the book focuses on how *churches* get weird and ineffective.

## **Chapter One: How I Became an Urban Legend**

I continue my side-splitting/hair-raising memoir by sharing the story of how I cussed into a church microphone right after I got my first ministry job. My foible turns into a ridiculous drama that ends up hilariously crossing state lines – turning me into an "Urban Legend." But the theme is this: If the process of getting sin out of your life is anything but joyful, then chances are you have never experienced the true Gospel in the first place. Biblical repentance is an uncon-

trollable *reaction* to God's kindness – not an action to earn it (Rom. 2:4). According to scripture: Righteousness is not the *reward* of living rightly. It's the unmerited gift that irresistibly results in right living (Titus 3:5).

## **Chapter Two: Why I Gave Up Chopping Off Hands**

Why don't we apply every command in the Bible? There are some pretty strange things in scripture (especially the Old Testament). But which commands apply in the New Testament? As we unfold the depths of "covenantal theology" we cover topics such as "beer-drinking moose" and "chain-smoking monkeys." But, the spiritual take-away here boils down to this: Your value to God does not come from *what you do*; rather, *who you belong to* (to Christ). We do not approach God based on our own righteousness. And once we understand this it changes everything.

## **Chapter Three: The Radical Sell-out**

I share the story about how God recently spoke to us about emptying out all of our savings accounts for his kingdom. I unpack all of the emotions we went through as a family as we sold-out to Christianity on a deeper level than we ever had before. The sacrifice was huge and counter-intuitive... but filled with joy and miraculous favor. Out of this inspirational "obedience experience" I share a profound Bible lesson about miraculous Christianity and the joys of radical obedience. This chapter begins the transition from simply being entertaining humor into deep inspirational conviction.

## **Chapter Four: Checkbook Christianity**

After the previous three chapters, we finally have a foundation to "deconstruct" the very foundations of true Christianity. The goal of this chapter is to leave the reader feeling like: "Wow, I've never re-

*ally comprehended Christianity at this level. This changes everything.”*  
This is the chapter that reveals if we are “spreading the Gospel” verses “spreading religious diseases.”

### **Chapter Five: Rabid Dogs and Other Things that Bite at Church**

Borrowing from Rick Warren, I talk about the primary purposes of a Biblical church: (*E.g., Evangelism, Prophetic Prayer, Discipleship, Worship, Social Justice, etc...*) Everyone has a “pet-purpose” (I.e., one or two of these purposes that we love *more than the others.*) When I ask people: “What is a ‘*deep*’ church?” they often reveal their pet-purpose to me (i.e., the function of God’s church that ministers to them most.) For example, at one point, extended worship experiences were an obsession for me. I would have happily attended a church that did 2 hour worship sets every Sunday. But my pet-purpose changed with time (& with kids : ) However, many people start to define their pet-purpose as the “most spiritual” or “most Biblical one” to the exclusion of the others. Thus, “if the church doesn’t devote the weekend services to My pet-purpose,” then “it’s compromised.” I.e., We develop a “rabid pet” that goes around and bites “less informed Christians.” People with “Christian rabies” have a “Rabid Pet-purpose”. They actually define the gospel around their pet-purpose rather than the broader design of God’s church. Indeed some are deluded into thinking their one pet-purpose IS “the Gospel.” In fact entire church movements can become legalistic like this. So, with plenty of humor, I reveal 2 things: (1) How people can put “a leash on their pets.” And (2) How healthy churches can create “dog parks” where people’s pets can run wild and free – before worship debates and other religiously transmitted diseases consume our church with silly debates.

### **Chapter Six: Toxic Religion**

This chapter starts out with some mind-blowing miracle stories that resulted when Christians stayed in unity with one another. After seeding the reader with an insatiable desire for unity in their church – I quickly unveil a revealing twist about how *each of us* inadvertently contributes to the death of our congregations by failing to understand two incredibly important facts: (1). Not all Bible beliefs are equally important. (2). Not all doctrines are equally clear in scripture. After giving some border-line controversial examples we discover that Legalism is when we take gray areas of scripture and make them more black and white than they really are. Toxic religion also results when we elevate the importance of certain doctrines without considering the greater battles that Christianity is facing.

### **Chapter Seven: the Meat Vs. Milk Debate**

There is a myth that churches need to choose between “feeding meat vs. milk.” For example, the whole seeker-sensitive debate is ripping churches apart all across the U.S. But what’s this debate *really all about*? In this chapter, we ask deeper questions like: “*Who is the church really for? Who are Sunday services really all about?*” Quite often we falsely assume that our churches exist to feed us the exact type of spiritual meal that we are most hungry for. But is this what the Bible really teaches? Hopefully, once we debunk a lot of the fear-filled rhetoric we’ll ask a deeper question: Can our church simultaneously offer both meat and milk?

### **Chapter Eight: Help! The Church Service Has Hijacked My Church**

This chapter dives deep into the research about “How Christians Grow in Christ.” Believe it or not, none of the top statistical causes of transformation have anything directly to do with church services. Ironically, the number one cause of transformation is all about *how many*

## Chapter Summaries

*Christian friends you have outside of church services.* In fact, you can preach the gospel to two different individuals; yet, the research shows: the person with the most Christian friends is the one who's most statistically likely to apply it. So: what does this say about how God created church? And how can we get in sync with this phenomenon?



## Chapter Two

# Why I Gave Up Chopping Off Hands

One of the customs in our family was to play our audio-Bible in the car. Every day our family would get a little extra exposure to scripture. Of course, if you've ever read the whole Bible, you'll quickly realize that there are many parts that are definitely rated R. I realized this the hard way as my nine, seven, and four year old kids heard the following passage one morning from Deuteronomy 25:11.

*“If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes to rescue her husband from his assailant, and she reaches out and seizes him by his private parts, you shall cut off her hand. Show her no pity.”*

My kids quickly realized that they weren't getting a “full gospel” in their classes at church. None of my kids cared about Jonah or Goliath anymore. “Dad, can we read Deuteronomy again?” they'd continually say with a curious snicker.

Of course I don't preach on this verse very much as it's only an occasional problem for my church. However, *I am* known to hold this verse up at football games and write it on sympathy cards – just to see if people actually read scripture references.

But seriously, when I first read this, I was captivated because: First of all, was it that big of a problem that God had to personally address it? Was there a rash of husky women crossing the line of appropriateness? I always imagine God reaching his break point: *“That's it!*

*Enough's enough!* What ever happened to the *wholesome* old-fashioned man-fight?"

But here's the question I want to ponder: When we set this command next to another Old Testament command, say, "*Do not steal,*" why do modern Christians apply the one verse and not the other? I mean there are all sorts of unique Old Testament commands that we no longer apply. So, as a young Christian, I wondered if we weren't being a bit hypocritical about which parts of the Bible we wanted to obey. Part of it was because I didn't understand covenant law very well. And, quite frankly, modern Pharisees still don't.

People would often say: "*Well much of that law passed away with the New Covenant.*" But this sweeping statement didn't really settle things for me. I think that most intellectually honest Christians are going to need a little more clarity. But theologian J.I. Packer proposed a solution for this confusion by distinguishing three separate types of law (the Do's and Don'ts given to Moses). Specifically there are three types of law in the Old Testament: Moral, Civil/Political, and Ceremonial Law.

Moral Law represents "good things to do all the time." For example, the Ten Commandments are no less relevant today than they were thousands of years ago. For example, no Christian would kill their neighbor and say: "It's all good. I'm a *New Testament* Christian. I'm not under the law." Right? And why? Because these commands are generally good advice no matter when you live. But the next type of law is generally an application of Moral law on a municipal and national level.

The second type of law in the Old Testament is *Civil / Political Law*: I.e., These are the Mosaic equivalent of speed limits and garbage restrictions. So if the moral law says, *love your neighbor as yourself*, then the Civil law might say: *Don't practice on your shofar at 3 am.* I.e., Every nation needs to have order – (especially when two men start

fighting.) But most of these laws only applied as long as Israel was an autonomous nation-state.

Of course these ancient laws may seem a bit absurd or extreme to us as moderns; however, our *own law books* are still littered with strange laws – most of which are from the last one hundreds years.

For example, in Fairbanks Alaska, it's illegal to feed alcoholic beverages to a moose. I mean, how many “drunken moose altercations” did it take before someone put their foot down? Or, in San Francisco, it's illegal to wipe one's car with used underwear! And personally, that makes sense to me; but, I always wondered: How would the police determine if it's used or not? In South Bend Indiana it's illegal for monkeys to smoke cigarettes (a law that I'd still support today). Or, in Pennsylvania, ministers are forbidden from performing marriages when either the bride or groom is drunk – which makes sense. But, where I grew up in Wisconsin, such a law would have nullified 90% of all weddings!

But seriously, every culture has its share of excesses, right? No one wants to live around inebriated moose and chain-smoking monkeys. Thus our laws can become a rather strange necessity. The Civil-Political laws of the Old Testament are no exception.

Lastly we have *Ceremonial Laws* which were regulations that governed the worship rituals of God's people. These are the parts of the Old Testament that the book of Hebrews and Colossians refer to as fulfilled. For example, Christ became our Passover lamb. Christ became our sacrifice – once for all time. Christ became our Sabbath. Thus, Paul argued, these rituals were nothing more than a shadow of things to come. In other words, they were an object lesson – an analogy of sorts -- pointing to a greater reality fulfilled by Christ.

Keep in Mind: We would still be smart to obey the *Moral Law*. For example, disciplines like tithing or commands like “Do not steal. Do not commit adultery” are no less relevant today. After all these

principles generally predated the Mosaic law and spoke to deeper transcendent problems – things like selfishness and lust.

However some Christians falsely assume that everything from the Old Testament is suddenly obsolete with the New. And, yes, that's true of the Ceremonial facets of the law. But, if we love people, we still need to tell people when the stove is hot (a.k.a., teach the Moral law). Of course this doesn't mean we should do this by being judgemental idiots (see the chapter on Clanging Cymbals Disease). That's why Paul said: "We know that the Law is good *if one uses it correctly.*" I.e., The Moral Law (a.k.a. truth) is like a butter knife: You can use it to make sandwiches for the neighbor kids or you can kill them with it. That's also why Paul also said: "You have been made competent as ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter [of the law] for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6).

You see the difference between a Pharisee and a Christian is *not* that one teaches the law and the other doesn't. Rather the difference is *how* the law is taught. There are entire ministries that are designed around obnoxiously telling people about the moral law *minus the kindness that actually leads to repentance.*

In other words, many Christians falsely think that through logic and persuasive words they can lead people to Biblical repentance. And, Yes, we can motivate people to do all sorts of things through logic, persuasion, or other influence techniques. But if a person's repentance isn't a true "response to God's kindness," then we need to seriously question whether such a repentance is a Biblical one.

To put this another way: Many Christians falsely think that evangelism is the "proclamation of truth." But the Bible teaches that it's truth *plus* a relationship with the Spirit of life (Romans 8). In fact, the apostle Paul taught that ministering truth by itself is participating in *the law of sin and death* (Rom. 7). It's like giving medicine without the "spoonful of sugar." Thus, when people get angry, these legalists chalk

it up to “persecution.” In reality their victims are nothing more than little kids vomiting up the ill-advised approach to medicine.

Thus, at my church, we’ve come to term these practices as “spiritual abortions.” Every human being has a “spiritual gestation period.” Unfortunately, some Christians can’t stand being a patient witness of God’s kindness so they resort to bizarre influence tactics that “prematurely deliver” spiritual babies before they’re ready. It’s like jamming big chunks of truth down a babies throat – yet we wonder why the baby dies? We can pretend that people have “rejected our Gospel;” but, the reality is that they’re rejecting our Pharisaical approaches to transformation. Quite simply: People know when they are encountering divine kindness vs. human religiosity.

But, for now, let’s not become lost in the silly things that Pharisees do. Instead, let’s focus on *ourselves* to see if we might have a sneaky Pharisee of our own lurking inside. So, as I introduce the following two approaches to the law, ask yourself this question: Which of these approaches do I tend to fall into most?

## **Earning Love vs. Reflecting Love**

So, to begin, we’ll start with the Pharisaical approach:

***The Legalistic Approach to God’s Law:*** occurs when we obey God’s moral law so as to earn God’s love and attain God’s righteousness.

*Key symptoms may include:* Striving; Lack of the “fruit of the Holy Spirit” (Gal.5:22 – a.k.a., Love, joy, peace, self-control, etc.) Lacking motivation for things like prayer or Bible reading; Every command of God feels like a curse. Obedience feels hard. God feels distant.

However, the other approach has a dramatically different feeling.

***The Grace-Driven Approach to God’s Law:*** occurs when we understand God’s free gift of grace. Our righteousness shockingly has nothing to do with our behavior anymore. God scandalously applies righteousness to our sin drenched souls out of pure generosity.

*Symptoms May Include:* Feeling like you just won the lottery; A desire to shout and scream like a crazy person; and, an insane desire to meet with this God over and over in prayer.

In other words, in the *Grace-Driven* approach: We don't obey because we *have to* but because we *want to*. I.e., the Moral law, which condemned us outside of Christ, has now become our worship list. Obedience is just one of the small ways we say thanks to Him while he drenches us with favor; yet, it naturally flows from our lives. Christianity is no longer a process in which we *earn love*; it's a process in which we *reflect love*. Or as Bruce Wilkinson put it: "We are not saved by good works. We're saved for good works!"

That's why we said in the last chapter: For the Christian, the Bible isn't a list of requirements, rather, a list of results after experiencing God's love. Righteousness is not the reward of living rightly. It's the unmerited gift that, once understood, irresistibly results in right living. And suddenly the motivating energy that drives our quest for morality changes from striving to thankfulness. As you would imagine this has a profound effect on how joy-filled and grateful your faith becomes. This also has a dramatic affect on how you motivate those around you to serve the Lord.

So which of these two approaches do you live out more? If you're like me you probably vacillate between the two of them quite often. So the real question is this: How do we stop this craziness? *Even more: "If God's yoke is so easy, then why does it seem to get heavy again?"*

Truth be told: It's incredibly easy to pick up burdens that God never called us to carry. Even more: There's still a part of us that wants to earn God's righteousness. And why? Grace just doesn't seem fair! And honestly it's *not* fair. But you're lying to yourself if you think you can start earning his love. So allow me to give you a better analogy of who you are in Christ. And I hope this will thoroughly persuade you to abandon all of your legalistic pursuits of God.

## You are a Door Knob

I've always liked celebrity auctions because they reveal how silly we all are. Some famous person blows their nose and the rest of us immediately start bidding on the tissue. Then, when our friends come over, we can brag about our majestically framed snot-rag (and how it reveals our tight bond with the blower). And hopefully, when our friends finish wowing, they will want to be our friends *even more* – at least that's how it worked for me in 5th grade when I got my favorite pro-wrestler's autograph.

A while ago the news reported that someone spent a fanatical amount of money purchasing a creaky old door-knob from the estate-sale of Marilyn Monroe. It was mind-blowing what this stupid old door-knob sold for! Of course it wasn't even a high-quality door-knob – (not that I'm a door-knob expert). But I certainly know that it had no intrinsic value – except for the fact that it belonged to Marilyn Monroe. And I hate to say it but, in many ways, we're no different than this door-knob.

On our own we're just another door-knob. But what makes us special is that Jesus touched us. Our merit comes from belonging to Christ. Now you might still be tempted to say: "But God: Look at *me!* I'm a *freaking great* door-knob! I read my Bible more than others. I even return 'rogue-shopping-carts' in the grocery store parking lot." And, although that's neat and all, I lovingly remind you that you're still an old door-knob. Your righteousness, worthiness, and ability to qualify for God's favor is not based on any intrinsic worth (Titus 3:5) Sadly: you on your greatest day *still* fell short of God's glory (Rom.3:23). Which is why, in God's view, our value is entirely based upon whom you belong to: Christ.

So, whether we admit it or not, every church still struggles with the legalistic tendency to set up new ways to "earn God's love." For example, many churches teach on tithing or unknown tongues as

though they were an obligation (and consequently, a sign of elitism), rather than a celebration. In fact you can turn just about any command of God into an obligation.

Many Christians even turn their worship formats into an indispensable means for earning God's favor -- as though God is suddenly impressed that we cried 4.5 extra tears and did a full fifteen more minutes of [fill in the blank] than the church down the road. And suddenly God is so impressed that he exclaims: "*Wow. Take a look at that door knob! I haven't even touched it yet it's gotta be worth thousands! Wow. I better visit that church.*"

Ironically music wasn't even the driving force of church services until Wesley or the Moravians in the 1700's. Many historians credit Charles Finney in the 1800's as being one of the first to design emotional worship experiences that lead to "altar ministry" in the modern or charismatic sense. So, the modern concept of creating a "musical worship experience" is fairly new to Christianity. And yet, for many Christians, the music and altar ministry has idolatrously become the very litmus test as to whether the Holy Spirit even attends that church! How twisted is that!?

And don't get me wrong: I *love* powerful Spirit-filled worship experiences. In fact, we regularly have worship nights that go on for hours and hours. Indeed, at Substance, our church is filled with brilliant artists, song-writers, and worship leaders who understand how to minister unto God. But I bring up this example to show that, quite often, we're really no different than the Pharisees. They spiritualized and idolized their purity rituals. So when Jesus didn't "do worship" in the exact way that they idealized they couldn't even imagine him as being a legit God-follower. I.e., They missed the literal presence of God because He just didn't fit into their narrow concept of an anointed lifestyle. But unfortunately these same Pharisaical tendencies are still alive and well.



You see: We can look at first century Pharisees as though they were freaky-weird; but, sometimes the only way we're different is that we spiritualize a different set of rituals. However, in the end, none of us will gain access to heaven because we worshiped God for his "favorite length of time" or we had the perfect amount of great theology. And if you believe this, then, *you*, my friend have a false gospel.

Truth be told: when we all enter heaven, we're *all* are going to look back on our imperfect worship and theology and cringe. We're going to cry: "*Oh God! I can't even believe you took any pleasure in our ridiculous attempts to praise you.*" And God will say: "*That's because I took pleasure in Christ-in-You, your hope of glory – not your formats or your lame attempts at theological perfection.*"

So here's a question for you: What degree of perfect theology and methodology does God require before he allows you into heaven? If you understand the scriptures this very question is a sign that we've missed the point. "*It's by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works [or tithing, or tongues, or expository sermons, or perfect theology] lest any man should boast*" (Eph.2:8-9). Or, as Paul continued in Colossians: All of our earthly attempts to please God, outside of grace, "*depend on human traditions and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ*" (Col.2:8). Thus Paul said, "*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.*"

You see: In Christ, faith is our only obligation. The rest of God's law is celebration. Of course: I still wouldn't recommend killing your neighbors or ignoring tithes, tongues or any other spiritual opportunities. It's just that, in the end, Pharisees and Christians follow many of the same laws. The difference doesn't rest in *what* rules they apply as much as *how and why* they follow them. And until we deeply internalize this difference within our hearts we will be tempted to return to the same deep pit that Christ rescued us from in the first place.

## Suffering from a religiously transmitted disease? You might need a Pharisectomy.

After thousands of years of demonizing the Pharisees, we forget their movement was initially a spiritual revival. In Jesus' day, many Pharisees prayed and meditated on scriptures for upwards of nine hours a day, making committed Christians today look like spiritual wimps.

Yet, they completely missed the very presence of God in their midst. How could this happen? Could it be happening today? And what if despite our best intentions, we, like they, have contracted our own religiously transmitted disease?

With an entertaining blend of social scientist meets sage, Peter Haas provides a penetrating look at our faith that just might reveal our own "hidden Pharisees." Through a series of autopsies, Haas bypasses the cheap "church-make-over solutions" and cuts straight to our deepest need: a Pharisectomy.

**Peter Haas** is a pastor, author and popular conference speaker. After experiencing a radical conversion to Christianity while working as a nightclub rave-deejay, Peter traveled the world sharing about God's miraculous love and grace. Since relocating to Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2004, Peter has planted an arts-oriented, multi-site church called Substance, which has become one of the fastest growing and "most youthful" mega-churches in the United States.

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