



Distracted By Details by [John T Polk II](#)

*All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.*

The Pharisees dwelt on details rather than Scriptures; they washed the outside, but not the inside "of the cup and dish" (**Luke 11:37-40**); they prejudged characters, but not convictions (**Luke 7:36-50**); they condemned everyone as major offenders, except for themselves (**Luke 18:9-14**; **Luke 7:28-30**). Jesus condemned Pharisees when He said:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! (**Matthew 23:23-24**)

They swallowed "a camel" (unclean to Jews, **Leviticus 11:4**) by straining out a "gnat" to keep from being "unclean" in their own eyes. Thus, they had overlooked far more important matters that involved their own hearts: "justice and mercy and faith." God had said so through the prophet Micah:

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (**Micah 6:8**)

"Justice" is the sense of fairness which applies the Law of God to all, including ourselves; "mercy" is the sense of empathy which motivates us to help with physical and spiritual burdens; "faith" is the conviction of heart that sustains us through this life of serving God. Jesus did not minimize the miniscule, but condemned ignoring the "weightier matters."

This obsession with "details" has caused many a conflicted soul. Take this test:

1. What is your focus on Calvary: the thief on the cross, or Jesus Christ's sacrifice (**2 Corinthians 5:18-21**)?
2. Is church attendance about increasing the numbers of warm (or not so warm!) bodies at each service, or considering:

... One another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (**Hebrews 10:24-25**)?

3. Can there be a "strong, sound sermon" without mechanically adding a mantra of "5 steps" right at the end of it (before you answer, maybe you ought to re-read all of the sermons of Peter and Paul in the New Testament)?
4. What is more important in a worship service: proper air conditioning/ heating, padded seats, and entertained children OR approaching the presence of God Almighty with sacrifices (**Psalm 95:1-2; 1 Peter 2:4-5**)?
5. Singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (**Ephesians 5:19**) on key and in harmony, or:

... By Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name (**Hebrews 13:15**)?

6. Giving "on the first *day* of the week" according to a pledge for a church budget, OR

Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper (**1 Corinthians 16:2**)?

Has worship assembly become a tiresome chore or are we:

... Renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (**Colossians 3:10**)?

Jesus Christ has already given His judgment about Pharisees.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit (**Psalm 51:12**).

--- **John T Polk II**

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