



Inside = Outside?

Matthew 23:1-12

Welcome to 'Together Apart', free intergenerational resources to help us be church together while we are apart.

All the sections explore the same Bible passage in a range of creative ways. Choose whichever parts work best for you, and remember that 'All Age' does not mean 'only for the kiddies'!

You can find lots more free resources like this at www.reflectionary.org

Here is what you can find in each section:



A Word in Your Ear

A section from the Bible passage that we can all learn from together, whatever our age. With space for notes or art around the edges



Food for Thought

Aimed at adults and teens, some thoughts and questions on the passage. Occasionally there might even be some Greek or Hebrew!



Inner Space

A journaling space for you to record what's in your head, whether that is worries, dreams or a shopping list.



Looking Closer

A creative and interactive look at the Bible passage. Great for older children and anyone who likes an immersive approach.



I Wonder...

An imaginative style of Bible study based on Lectio Divina and Godly Play wondering.



Take a Break

A chill-out zone, with meditative colouring for adults and children, and links to audio recordings of the passages.



Creation Station

A craft for children (or young-at-heart adults!) to help us think about the passage. Glue sticks at the ready!



High 5

Some creative prayer ideas for helping us to spend time with God. Five minutes, or as long as you want.



The Full Text

Just like it says on the tin.



A Word in Your Ear

Take your time reading this extract from our Bible passage. Ask God to help you hear. You can decorate the space around the words if you like.

from **Matthew 23:1-12**

The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law are experts in the Law of Moses. So obey everything they teach you, but don't do as they do.

After all, they say one thing and do something else.

They pile heavy burdens on people's shoulders and won't lift a finger to help. Everything they do is just to show off in front of others. They love the best seats at banquets and the front seats in the meeting places.

Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of the others.

If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured.

CEV



Food for Thought

You know what the biggest problem with Christianity is? Christians. Yes, us.

I mean, we're a bit of a mixed bunch, aren't we? We subscribe to great ideals: Love our neighbours as ourselves, forgive others seventy times seven, love, joy, peace and all the rest. Sounds brilliant! And it **is** brilliant, it's just that we are not. Not one single one of us has ever kept to these ideals. We all get it wrong every day

Q: What Biblical or modern examples can you think of that show God's people getting it wrong? Does it surprise you how many there are? How do you feel about your failures?

So does that make us a bunch of hypocrites, not practicing what we preach? If it's not possible to keep God's Law, perhaps we should stop trying. At least no-one could call us hypocrites then. For example, if I can't stop lying, I could just say that lying is OK, then I would not be breaking any law. Is that the solution? Or is that just moving the goalposts?

Moving the goalposts sounds like cheating, but it's not always wrong. Church services used to be in Latin, but instead of making everyone learn Latin, we (eventually) translated the services to local languages. We changed the law to fit us. The speed limit in the UK used to be 10mph, but now it's 70. People drive faster now and we altered the rules to match.

Q: When is it right to change the law (of the land or of the church) to reflect changes in practice, and when is it right to retain laws even though they are impossible to keep?

Jesus was not saying that the Pharisees and teachers were wrong to uphold the Law, even though it was impossible to keep perfectly. The Message puts it this way: *'You won't go wrong in following their teachings on Moses. But be careful about following **them**. They talk a good line, but they don't live it. They don't take it into their hearts and live it out in their behaviour. It's all spit-and-polish veneer.'*

Read Romans 7:7-25, where Paul laments that he keeps doing the things he is trying not to. Both Paul and the Pharisees failed to do what they said, but something was different.

Q: How does Paul's attitude compare with that of the Pharisees that Jesus was complaining about? How does regular confession change the way we think about ourselves in this?

For the Pharisees it was all words, no deeds. Does their bad example mean we should ignore what they said? If a preacher is found to be, say, embezzling donations, should we still listen to their teaching? Is the message of the gospel silenced by a bad messenger?

Those outside the church judge our faith by its adherents, and we are all poor examples to some extent (even the saintly Mother Theresa, I'm sure, had her moments of less-than-saintliness). But God still chooses to use us as his ambassadors.

Q: How do we cope with the uncomfortable truth that our actions will never match the gospel we proclaim? How can we be honest ambassadors of the kingdom?



Inner Space

What's going round your head? Here is a space for you to put your thoughts on paper. You can write, draw ... whatever you like. What will you put here?

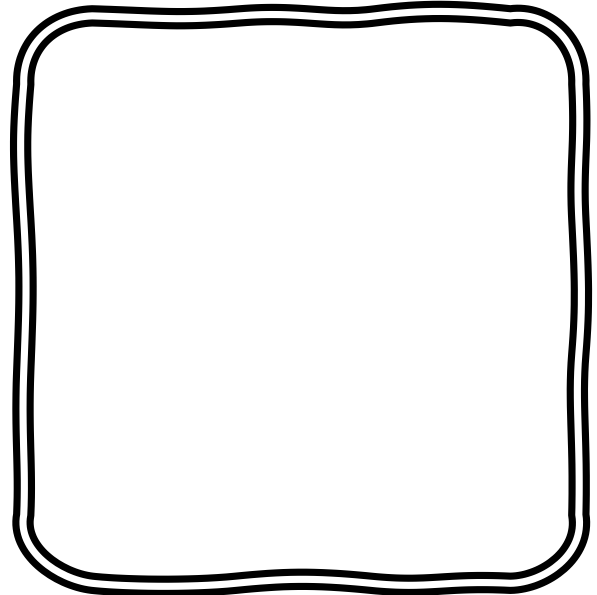
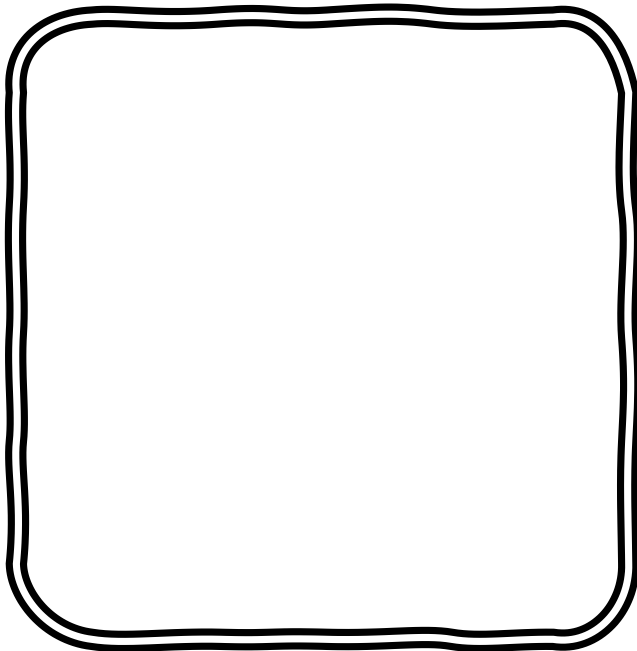


Looking Closer

The religious leaders in Jesus' time were very keen on telling people what to do, but they weren't very good at doing it themselves.

"They teach good stuff," said Jesus, "but they don't do it." It's like a PE teacher who never does any exercise, or a healthy-eating blogger who stuffs their face with pizza all day.

Q: What would you think of someone who told you to do lots of good stuff, but did not do it themselves? Would you still listen to them?

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border, intended for a student's reflection on the question above.A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border, intended for a student's reflection on the question above.

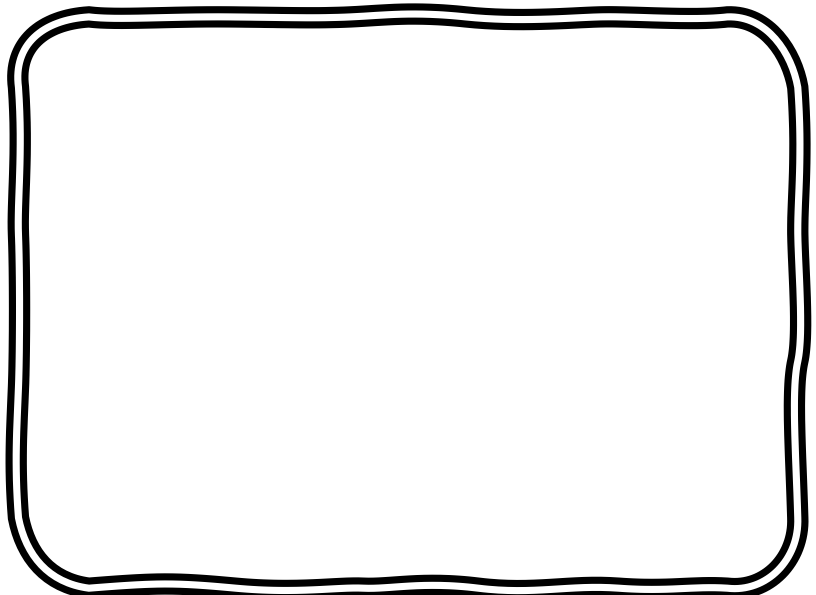
Jesus said the greatest commands are *love God*, & *love other people*. The Ten Commandments and other parts of the Old Testament say the same thing in more detail.

These rules are good, and they are what the religious leaders were teaching. But they made up lots of other rules as well, and told people off when they got things wrong, instead of helping them to love God. Jesus called this putting heavy burdens on people's backs, and not lifting a finger to help.

Q: How would all those extra rules be like carrying a heavy burden? How would you feel if you were carrying it?

Jesus was cross with the religious leaders because their insides did not match their outsides. They did things like praying in public so that people would think they were good, but God could see inside their hearts and knew who they were trying to impress. Would they still have done that if no-one had noticed?

Q: Why do you think, does it matter if we do good things for bad reasons? Do you ever do that?

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border, intended for a student's reflection on the question above.



I Wonder...

Read or listen to the passage a few times and let it sit in your mind.

Which words, phrases or ideas do you notice? Does anything stand out for you? Hold that in your heart and listen to what God might be saying.

I wonder where you are in this story.

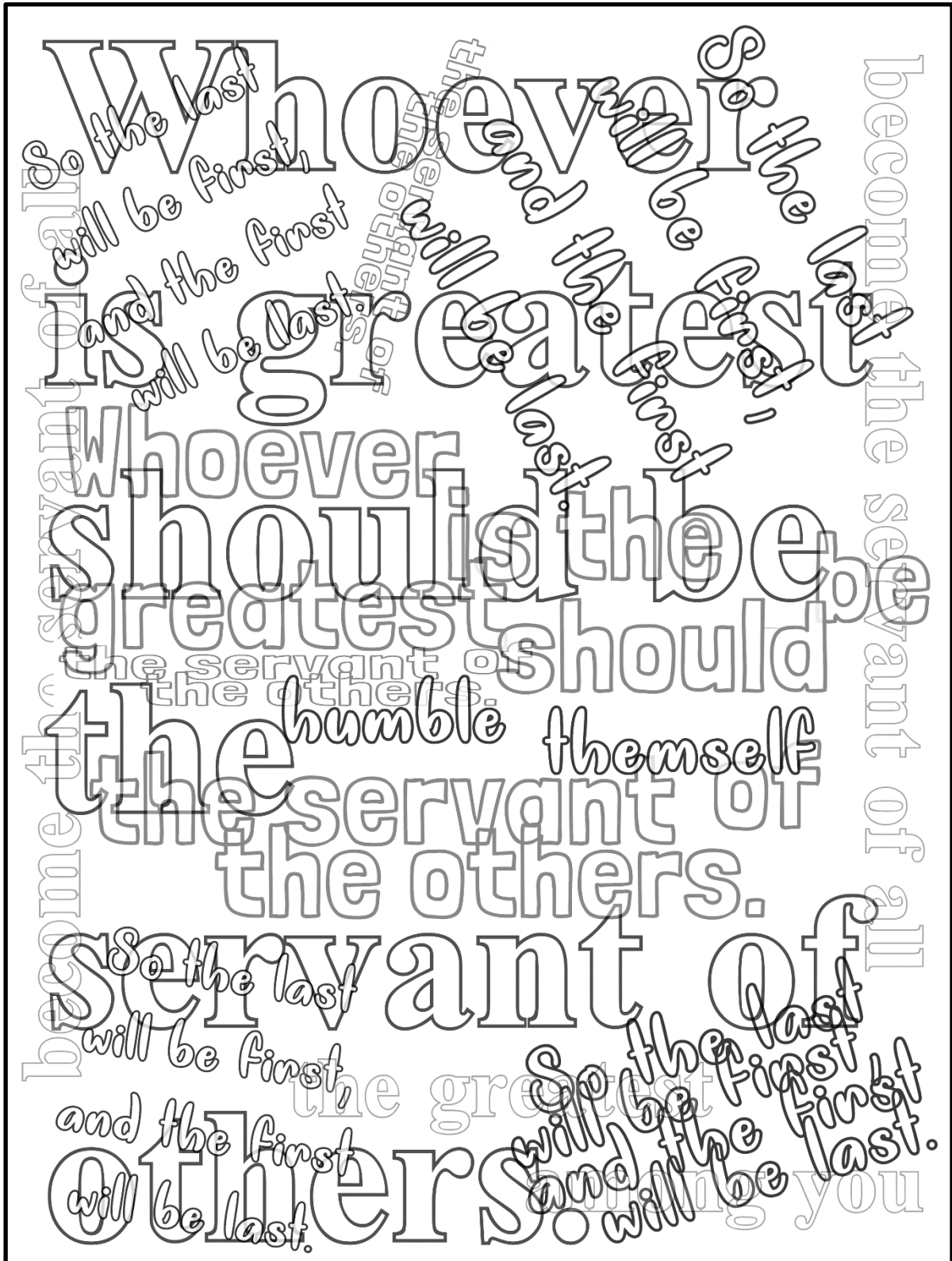
I wonder what you might say to the people in the story.

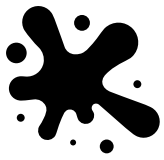


Take a Break

Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you simply sit and be. You can colour the picture below, or fill it with zentangles, or you can just spend the time breathing.

Matthew 23 on Bible Gateway audio [ESV](#) – [Message](#) – [NIV \(Dramatised\)](#) – [NIV \(Suchet\)](#)





Creation Station – Magic Outside/Inside Flexagon Picture!

Jesus was cross with the Pharisees because their outsides and insides did not match. They looked good on the outside, but inside they were selfish and mean. They said one thing but did another.

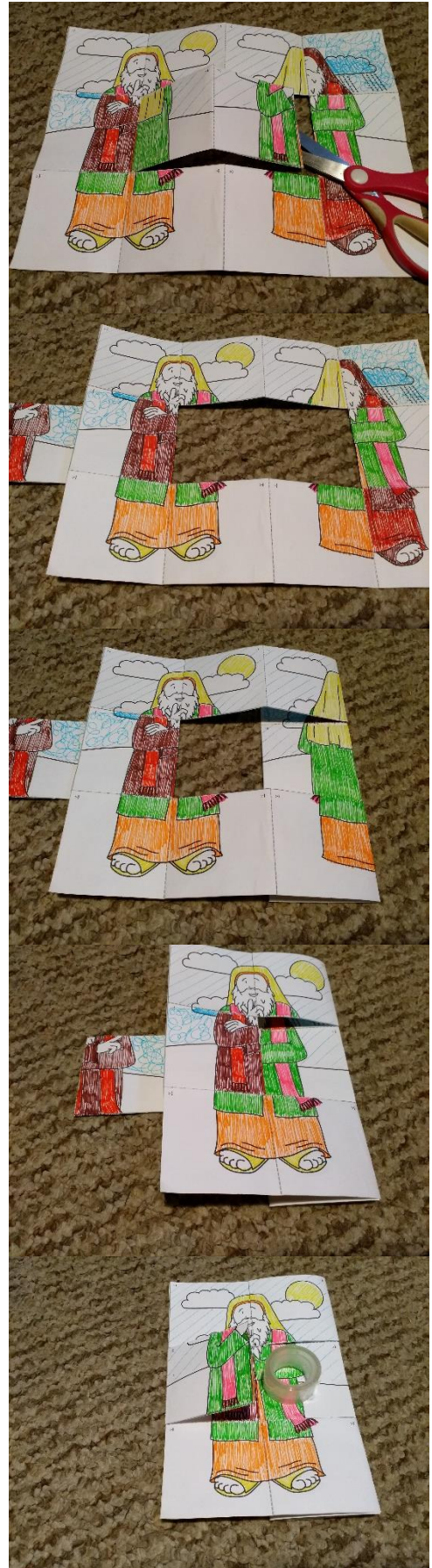
We can make a fabulous flexagon to change the picture from the outside to the inside!

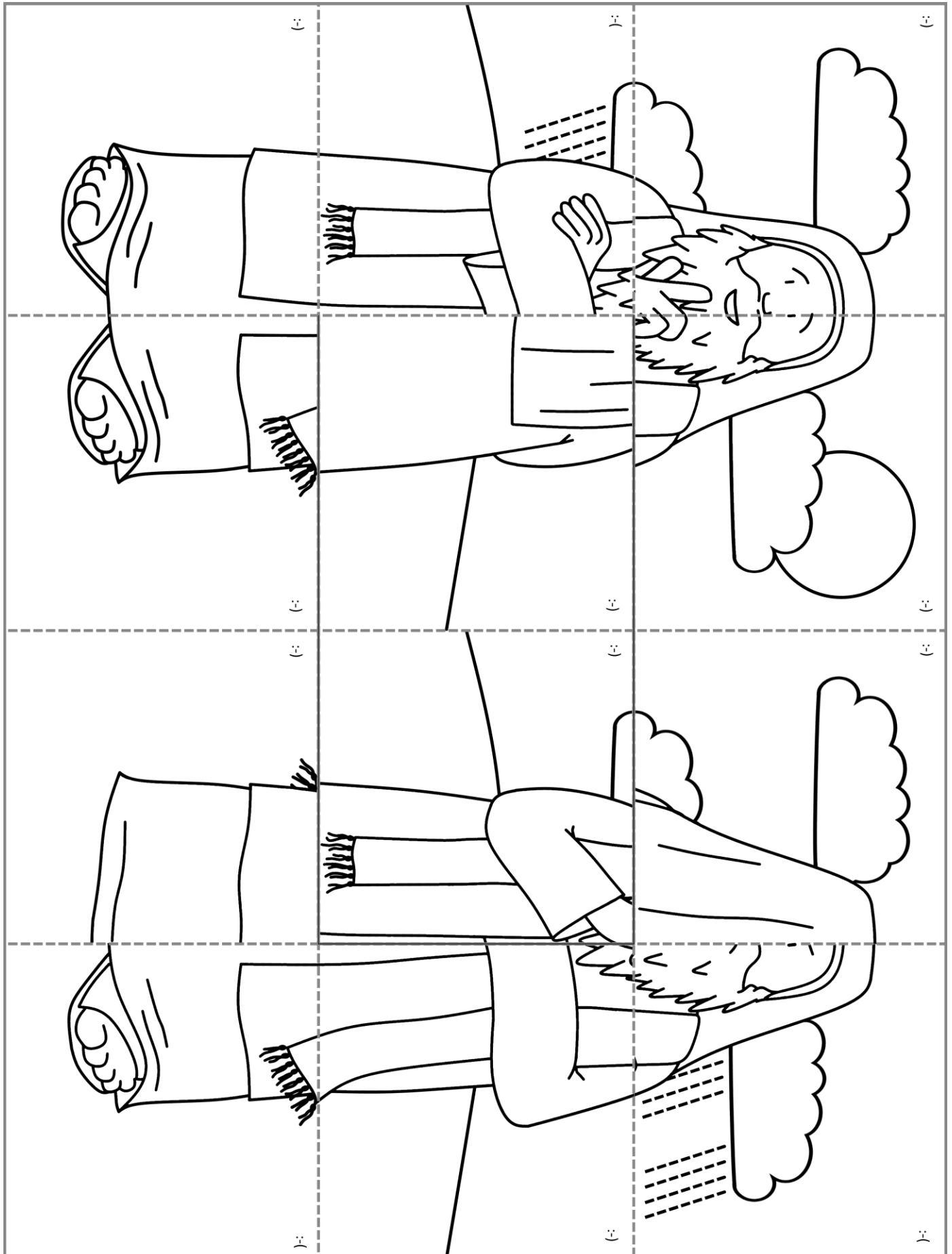
You will need:

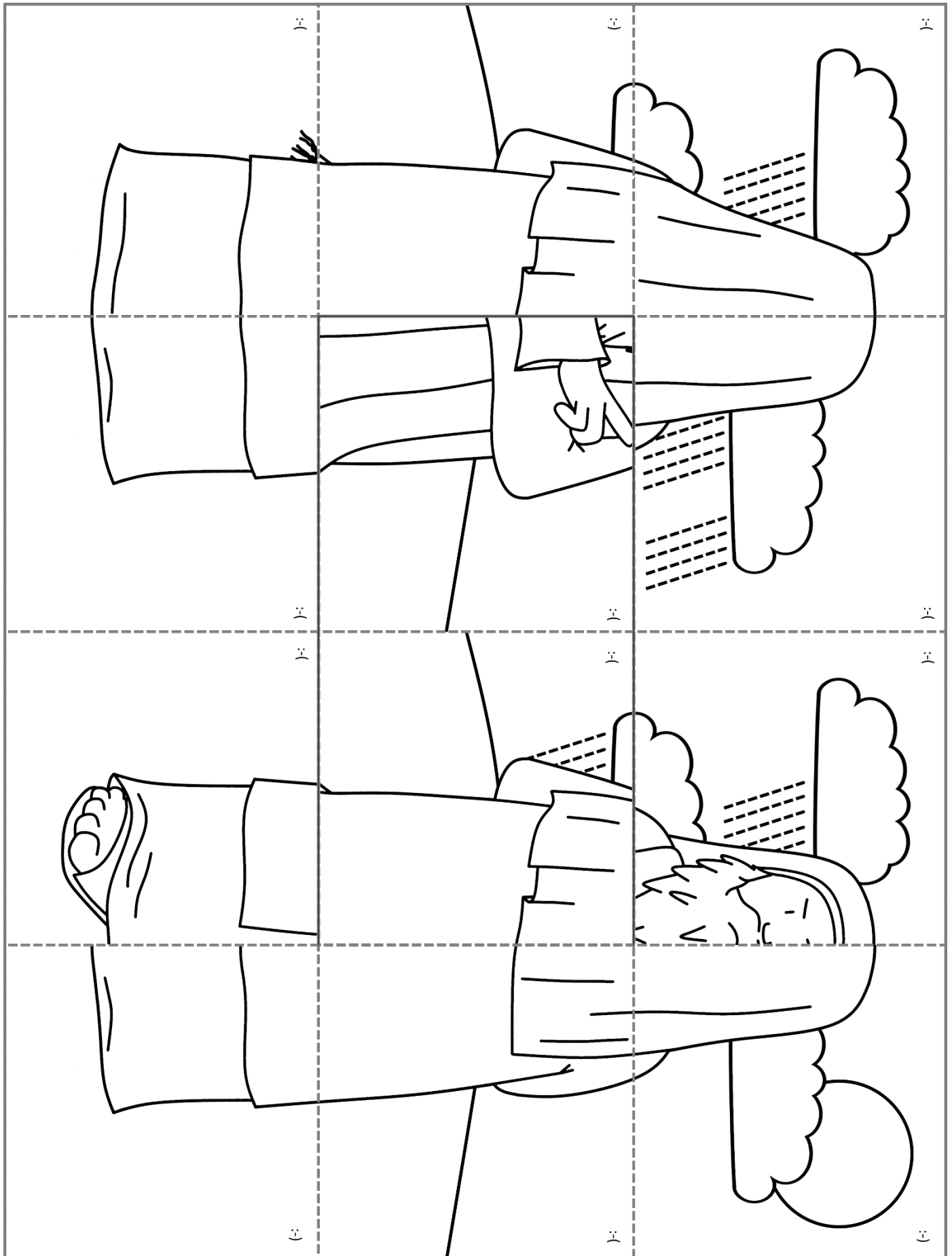
- Templates (see the next pages)
- Coloured pens, scissors, sticky tape and glue stick

What to Do:

1. The templates have two jumbled pictures, marked with happy and sad faces. Colour one picture (😊) with bright, happy colours and the other (😞) with grumpy colours.
2. Stick the pictures back to back. Cut around the edge and fold along the dotted lines. Cut along the solid line around 3 sides of the middle two squares.
3. Make sure the pictures are the right way up and the flap is attached on the left. Tuck the flap underneath to the left. It will stick out on the left.
4. Fold the right-hand column underneath. You will see the pictures start to match.
5. Fold the right-hand column underneath again. The gap in the middle will be filled entirely, and the picture will be almost complete.
6. Take the end of the flap from the left and fold it over on top towards the right. This will make the picture on the front complete. Join the end of the flap to the right-hand middle section with sticky tape. Make sure the tape does not go on any other squares.
7. You can see the outside of Pharisee, front and back. Now close your Flexagon like a book and open it out from the back. You will find the pictures are jumbled up. Flex it again the same way and, WOW! The Pharisee has returned but he has changed! Now you can see when he is like on the inside – a right old grump-a-lump!







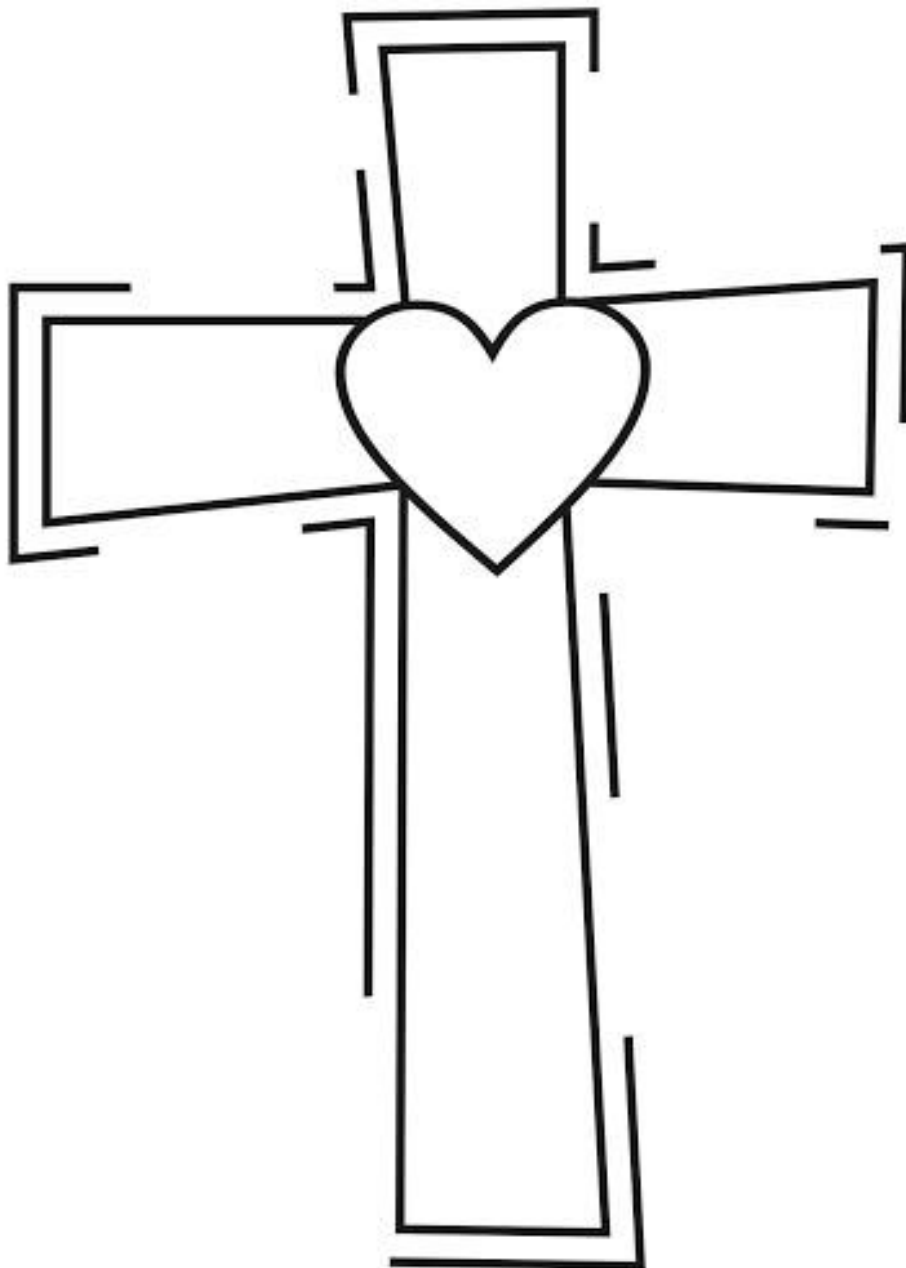


High Five

Look Down, Look Out, Look Up

We can use the shape of a cross to help us pray.

- **Look Down** The main branch of a cross goes down. Look down and see yourself. Look inside, do you like what you see? Does God? Write on the cross one thing to thank God for about yourself, one thing to say sorry for, and one thing to ask.
- **Look Out** The two arms of a cross point sideways, like arms open wide to hug someone. Look out to the world and people around you and write on the cross the people, places or situations you want to bring before God.
- **Look Up** The top branch of a cross points upwards. Look up and see God over everything. What will you write on the top branch to praise God?





The Full Text

Matthew 23:1-12

1 Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:

2 The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law are experts in the Law of Moses. 3 So obey everything they teach you, but don't do as they do. After all, they say one thing and do something else.

4 They pile heavy burdens on people's shoulders and won't lift a finger to help. 5 Everything they do is just to show off in front of others. They even make a big show of wearing Scripture verses on their foreheads and arms, and they wear big tassels for everyone to see. 6 They love the best seats at banquets and the front seats in the meeting places. 7 And when they are in the market, they like to have people greet them as their teachers.

8 But none of you should be called a teacher. You have only one teacher, and all of you are like brothers and sisters. 9 Don't call anyone on earth your father. All of you have the same Father in heaven. 10 None of you should be called the leader. The Messiah is your only leader. 11 Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of the others. 12 If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured.

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