



Part 2 // Carey Nieuwhof // May 24, 2026

You already know that Christianity suggests you need to repent of your worst behaviour. But what about your best behaviour? In one of his most confrontational teachings, Jesus takes aim not at pagans or prodigals, but at the most faithful people in the room. The ones who did everything right. The *church* people. Shockingly, he tells them that their (self-)righteousness is driving people away from God. This message will change how you see religious people and perhaps how you see yourself. Best of all, it might set you free to truly see your Heavenly Father for who he is.

Scripture: [Matthew 23:13-16 NLT](#) // [Luke 15:1-2, 11-32 NLT](#)

Bottom Line: Becoming a Christian means repenting of everything you've done wrong. And everything you've done right.

Digging In:

1. Have you ever encountered someone who seemed morally or spiritually impressive but was difficult to be around? What made that challenging?
2. Do you think self-righteousness can be harder to recognize in ourselves than obvious failure? How so?
3. Read Matthew 23:13-16 together as a group. What stands out to you about Jesus' warning to the Pharisees in this passage?
4. Why do you think Jesus reserved some of his strongest criticism for religious people, rather than obvious sinners? What does this indicate?
5. Read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:1-2, 11-32. How are both sons actually disconnected from their father in different ways?
6. Which of the two brothers do you naturally relate to more—and why?
7. The older brother obeyed outwardly but still felt entitled and resentful. How can "good behaviour" sometimes become a way of trying to control or earn from God?
8. What's the difference between obeying God from a posture of fear/performance and obeying him because of his love/grace?
9. Where are you most tempted to believe that God "owes" you because of your good behaviour, sacrifice, or faithfulness? What is the problem with this perspective?
10. How can self-righteousness quietly create judgment, comparison, or resentment toward others? Have you experienced this—either giving or receiving?

11. Carey said, "There are two ways to be lost, and only one way to be found." Unpack this statement a bit. What are the two ways to be lost? What does it mean to truly be found by grace?
12. What is one practical way you can receive grace more honestly—and extend it more freely—this week?

Responding Together:

Ask each person to silently reflect on this question: "What do I think God owes me?" Then lead them in this guided prayer:

Jesus, thank you that your love for us is a gift, not something we earn. Forgive us for the ways we try to justify ourselves through performance, comparison, or control. Help us receive your grace humbly. And teach us to become people who extend that same grace freely to others. Amen.

Moving Forward:

This week, pay attention to moments where you feel entitled, superior, resentful, or disappointed with God. Ask yourself honestly: "What do I think God owes me?" Bring those expectations into the light and remember that the gospel is not about earning love—it's about receiving grace. Let that grace soften your heart toward both God and others.