

6. The Religious Leaders Tried to Close Minds While Christ Expanded Vision

Leaders can try to center everything around themselves by closing their minds and trying to close the minds of others, or leaders can expand the vision of people so that people develop a vision to serve others. In the time of Christ, the chief priests and Pharisees chose to try to close the minds of others. In contrast, Christ was continually working to expand the vision of His followers. In our topic today, we will see the example of the chief priests and contrast it with the example of Christ.

First, we see that the chief priests did not want the people to learn. John 7:28-30 says, “Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, ‘You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.’ Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.” Then, in John 7:45-46, we read, “Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why have you not brought Him?’ The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’” Here, we see that the chief priests tried to stop Christ from teaching the people.

Second, we see that the chief priests accused others of being deceived. John 7:47 says, “Then the Pharisees answered them, ‘Are you also deceived?’” The religious leaders had sent men to arrest Christ. Those men heard the teaching of Christ and recognized that no one had ever taught like Christ. Instead of listening to the men who had heard Christ, the chief priests accused them of being deceived. Here, we see that the chief priests and Pharisees were doing everything possible to try to stop people from following Christ. This was happening even though their own workers recognized the greatness of the teaching of Christ.

Third, the chief priests used sarcasm. John 7:48 says, “Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?” Here, we see that the religious leaders began to use sarcasm to try to humiliate their workers. Many times, when people are trying to control other people, they will use sarcasm to try to make others feel that they know nothing. Here, we see that this is one of the things the chief priests and Pharisees were doing to try to maintain their control.

Fourth, the chief priests and Pharisees tried to make other people think they had superior knowledge. In John 7:48-49, they said, “Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” They were trying to make the people think that their rejection of Christ was based on their superior knowledge, instead of their unbelief. They continued to claim that the people were ignorant. Many people try to close the minds of others so they can control them by claiming to have superior knowledge. In actual fact, they are really trying to control others by fear.

Fifth, the chief priests and Pharisees had closed their minds. John 7:50-52 says, “Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, ‘Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?’ They answered and said to him, ‘Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.’” One of their own leaders said

Growing Christian Leaders Series – Developing Leaders Who Have the Attitudes of Christ 6. “The Religious Leaders Tried to Close Minds While Christ Expanded Vision” Updated October 2025

Copyright © 2002, Duane L. Anderson, American Indian Bible Institute; 2022, DLA, Serve and Equip

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This resource is available from and distributed free of charge by Serve and Equip <https://sveq.org>
ANY REPRODUCTION OF MATERIAL FOR RESALE OR PROFIT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED

that they were not to condemn a person before they heard what that person said and saw what that person did. Instead of obeying the law, the religious leaders immediately closed their minds and refused to even listen to Nicodemus.

In contrast to closing minds, Christ chose to expand the vision of those who followed Him. First, we see that Christ expanded the vision of His followers to include their family and friends. In John 1:40-42, Andrew became concerned about his brother and brought him to meet Christ. Then, in John 1:43-46, Philip became concerned about his friend Nathanael and brought him to meet Christ. From the first day these men followed Christ, they became concerned to help others meet Christ.

Second, we see that Christ expanded the vision of the disciples to the next towns. Mark 1:38-39 says, “But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” Christ invited the disciples to go with Him and see His vision for the next towns. In the process, they were being shown the spiritual needs of others. Christ kept expanding this vision by taking them with Him throughout the entire region of Galilee.

Third, Christ expanded the vision of the disciples to people who were rejected by the other Jews. Jesus took the disciples along with Him as He traveled north from Galilee to the cities of Tyre and Sidon. There, Christ met a woman who had a daughter that was demon possessed. Christ helped expand the vision of the disciples to see the need of these Gentiles. Matthew 15:28 says, “Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.” The disciples began to realize that even Gentiles afflicted by demons could place their faith in Christ.

Fourth, Christ also expanded the vision of the disciples to rejected cultures. The Jews would travel many extra miles to avoid going through Samaria. John 4:4 tells us that Christ did just the opposite. That verse says, “But He needed to go through Samaria.” Christ had two reasons why He needed to go through Samaria. He wanted to meet the spiritual needs of the Samaritans. Christ also wanted to expand the vision of the disciples.

In John 4:35, We see that Christ expanded the vision of the disciples. That verse says, “‘Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!’” Then, John 4:41-42 tells how Christ met the spiritual need of the Samaritans. Those verses say, “And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.’” The disciples learned that the Samaritans were also open to placing their faith in Christ.

Fifth, Christ expanded the vision of the disciples to the entire world. The final words of Christ, before He returned to heaven, are given for us in Acts 1. In Acts 1:8-9, we read, “‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in

Growing Christian Leaders Series – Developing Leaders Who Have the Attitudes of Christ 6. “The Religious Leaders Tried to Close Minds While Christ Expanded Vision” Updated October 2025

Copyright © 2002, Duane L. Anderson, American Indian Bible Institute; 2022, DLA, Serve and Equip
Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This resource is available from and distributed free of charge by Serve and Equip <https://sveq.org>
ANY REPRODUCTION OF MATERIAL FOR RESALE OR PROFIT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” People often remember the last words a person speaks. The disciples lived with the last words of Christ guiding their ministry for the rest of their lives. They continued to spread the good news of the death and resurrection of Christ to the ends of the world.

The two examples of the religious leaders, and of Christ, raise some very important questions. Why did the religious leaders refuse to even listen to Christ? Why did they mock and make fun of those who chose to listen to Christ? Why did they turn against Nicodemus when he spoke for Christ? The answer to all of those questions is that they were trying to close the minds of the people so they could control the people by fear. They were afraid that, if the people began listening to Christ, they would lose their power and control as religious leaders.

We also need to ask some questions about the ministry of Christ. Why did He encourage the disciples to tell their relatives and friends about Him? Why did Christ want the disciples to go with Him to the next towns and then throughout Galilee? Why did Christ take the disciples with Him to the Gentile towns of Tyre and Sidon? Why did Christ need to go through Samaria when the disciples were traveling with Him? Why did Christ use His last words to the disciples to help focus their vision on the ends of the earth? Christ did these things to show the disciples that He was concerned for people in every part of the earth.

What attitudes are we developing in the people we have contact with? Are we trying to close their minds and control them by fear so we can please ourselves? Are we following the example of Christ by taking people with us and showing them the spiritual needs of people wherever we go, so they can develop a vision to help those people learn about Christ? The answers to these questions will probably tell us whether we are trying to control people and get them to follow us, or whether we are trying to lead people, by our example, and expand their vision, so they will help others learn how to know and follow Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example for others to follow as they see your vision to help others learn to know and follow Christ.