**What The Bible Says About Being A Hypocrite**

Week one of our series “Questions and Answers” deals with one that probably most of us have heard in the form of a statement. It goes something like this - “You Christians are nothing more than a bunch of hypocrites. Why would I want to go to church with people like that?”

This leads to a question that we are going to discuss today and it is this, and please do not get offended. I am addressing myself as well: Are we a bunch of hypocrites? How would we answer that question? So, here we go and let’s see if we can get a Biblical view on what hypocrisy really is.

Now, we have talked about hypocrisy here before, but this is a topic we want to tackle this morning because there is a legitimacy to the statement...up to a point. I have a different view on hypocrisy than some. I don’t think the church, the genuine body of Christ followers, people who are truly saved are hypocrites. In saying that, we have to define then what hypocrisy is and what it is not.

Before we go further, let’s define the word as the Bible does. **The Greek word was used to describe a stage-actor, someone who plays a part in a show or production**. **It also means a pretender, a counterfeit**. It can describe a person who says one thing and does another or tells us to do something and does the opposite. They pretend to be something they are not **(Lk. 20:20)**.

Hypocrisy is a choice, really, I call it, to deceive others. I tell you I love God, but my actions do not line up with what the Bible says I should act like. Or I tell you something that you should not do and then I turn around and do exactly what I tell you is wrong. No wonder Jesus did not have a good word to say about hypocrites and hypocrisy.

So, with these thoughts in mind, let’s begin with by discussing what hypocrisy is not:

**1) When Christians stumble, this does not make us a hypocrite.** This is not to excuse our sins. Christians do sin. We are not perfect, but to the world around us they set up subjective standards about how Christians should act like and when we do sin, or mess up, we are labeled as a hypocrite.

The fact is, a hypocrite is one who sins and does not care, or has no desire to change, but most Christ followers that I know want to live for the Lord but we are still in a body where sin dwells and we do at times mess up. But that does not make us a hypocrite.

**James Emery White** sums it up well. In his book **“The Search For The Spiritual”** he talks about how Christians have chosen to turn away from their willful disobedience and rebellion against God and accept the salvation Jesus offers through His death, and I will add, His resurrection. We are forgiven and we have asked God to lead our life.

But as White also states, **“But nowhere in this series of events (me - things just noted) does one reach perfection or sinlessness.”**

**2) Though Christians have messed up big-time, not everyone fits that category.** Let me explain what I mean. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of abuse, bullying, financial mismanagement by people in churches. The assumption then becomes by some that all churches, all Christians, are a part of the mix of these situations. We get lumped together.

That is not even real. What I mean by that is not all churches have this going on. It would be like saying I had a lousy doctor, so all doctors are bad. Calling the church at-large hypocrites because of the mess some have made of their situation does not mean everyone is like that.

**3) Hypocrisy is not descriptive of a person who has a sinful habit that needs to be taken care of.** Let’s say that George and Suzy (not real people that I know) have a problem of gossiping. They like to spread stuff. Now, to those who watch us, they would make the statement that these two people are no different than others they know who do not claim to be Christians. That sounds reasonable, right?

The problem is not with the gossiping. That, we know, is sin. But part of the issue is that everyone has a different problem that they think we as Christians should have already conquered - it might be getting angry, or jealous, greedy. If we have these problems as Christians, we need to work on them with the Holy Spirit’s help. But that does not make someone automatically a hypocrite because again, the expectation of perfection, of never failing, comes from others, especially those who do not know Christ.

But if I get angry in a wrong way, and then work to fix it, that does not mean I am a hypocrite because I got angry. It means I am trying to deal with things in my life. The concern would be not doing anything when the Lord shows us where we need to grow or to tell others to not get angry while we blow our top. That would make us hypocrites. If George and Suzy gossip and do not care, they are hypocrites.

Now, we need to look to see what Scripture says about hypocrisy. And then we will close with a few thoughts about how guard ourselves from being hypocrites. And, like I have mentioned, I believe most Christians, at least the ones I know, do not fit the definition of a hypocrite. So, here we go.

**1) Hypocrisy is claiming to follow God but our actions say otherwise.** What we will learn today comes from the mouth of Jesus. So please turn with me to **Mk. 7**. **Mk. 7:1-23** is an interaction that Jesus has both with the religious leaders and people in general. He talks about that it is what comes from the heart of a person that defiles them **(vss. 14-23)**, that leads them to do sinful things, wrong things.

But leading up to that, at the beginning of **Mk. 7** the religious leaders were unhappy with the disciples of Jesus because they did not wash their hands before eating. This was not a question of hygiene, but of how the disciples washed. The religious elite had a certain technique you had to follow before eating.

The religious leaders ask Jesus in **vs. 5** why His disciples did not conduct themselves in the ways of the traditions of the elders. Notice the Bible is not referenced here. See the response of Jesus in **vs. 6**. He tells them that the prophet Isaiah spoke of the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. The religious leaders did not always follow their own rules and they often did not follow Scripture but yet told people to do so.

That is why in another passage Jesus said that in some instances do what you hear from the teachers of the law, just don’t act like them. Why? They were hypocrites, by choice, pretenders. Isaiah hit the nail on the head as Jesus quotes from **Isa. 29:13**. The religious elite honored God with their lips. They said the right things, at times. They played the worship game. But as Christ notes in **Mk. 7:6**, their heart, who they were, was **“far”** from God. The word far means **“a great way off.”** They were not close to God.

Jesus goes on to tell them that the worship of a hypocrite is in **“vain.”** **It is fruitless, useless, without profit, a futile attempt that fell short**. The heart of the religious leaders was not in worshipping God and they put what men taught over what God wanted or said.

**Note:** Hypocrisy makes one self-righteous, proud, critical, and judgmental. That seems to be the case as Jesus deals with the religious elite. Hypocrites are great at pointing out our failures and are good at finding ways to condone their actions **(Mk. 7:8-13)**.

In **Mk. 7**, Jesus calls out the Pharisees about their hypocrisy and gives an example. Instead of helping to care for their parents, they would say that any monetary help they would give to mom and dad they would instead claim that they were giving it to God’s work. The reality was they did this so they did not have to help their parents and could spend it on themselves. This idea of **“Corban” (a gift devoted to God) (vs. 11)** was to free children from any obligation as their parents aged. Jesus called them out for this.

**2) We are hypocrites when we try to fix other’s problems while ignoring our own.** In the well-known passage of **Mt. 7:1-6**, Jesus talks about removing the beam from our own eye before trying to remove a speck from someone else’s. In other words, and this has nothing to do with being perfect, we should make sure that we have dealt with things in our life the best that we can before trying to help others.

It is hypocritical to walk up to someone and point the finger at their faults and shortcomings while not wanting to deal with our own. Jesus says this is hypocrisy **(Mt. 7:5)**. Fix our faults before we try to help others. In addition, stay away from manmade rules which lead to hypocrisy. Legalism is a sign of hypocrisy because legalists do not follow their own teachings.

**Point:** Hypocrisy overlooks our own shortcomings so that we can focus on those around us. We get on someone for something they said while we do the same thing. Get the beam, the large piece of wood, out of own eye before trying to help someone else get the speck of sawdust out of theirs.

**3) We are being hypocrites when we over spiritualize our Christianity. Please listen to what I am going to say.** This does not mean that we never share the message of Jesus or talk about spiritual things. But some people try to make every conversation spiritual. They think that they have to tie God to every single discussion and it becomes unnatural and to be honest, awkward and comes across as fake.

Sometimes we can have a discussion without trying to “Christianize” it. I believe that people who must try to make every single statement spiritual are in some ways like the people Jesus noted in **Mt. 6**.

We have looked at this passage before so we will just make some passing remarks. **Vs. 1** talks about being careful to not be self-righteous, making sure that everyone sees our spirituality. He is not saying we should not model Christ before others. But we do so for His glory, not to draw attention to ourselves. Some Christians, knowingly or unknowingly, want to come across super spiritual and they will talk and act just so we think that way of them.

In **vs. 2** Jesus says that when you help someone, do so without making a big deal about it. The religious leaders wanted you to know when they did something for someone. Jesus calls this hypocrisy.

In **vs. 5** Jesus warns against our attitude regarding prayer. Do we pray in such a way that people notice us or think we are spiritual or do we simply come to God humbly, only concerned with what He thinks. How we pray shows whether we are flaunting our Christianity or not.

I think one of the key things to note is that Jesus says that people who do this get their reward. That reward is not from God, their reward is what they wanted, to be noticed. The problem is that God does not reward them for their actions. See also **Mt. 6:16**.

**4) Hypocrisy is seen when we lead others away from God by what we teach and how we act.** I want us to look at **Mt. 23**. In this chapter, 6 or 7 times, Jesus calls the religious leaders hypocrites **(Mt. 23:13-15; 23, 25, 27, 29)**. The reason I note 6 or 7 times that Jesus called the Pharisees “hypocrites” is because **vs. 14** is added in some MSS while not being noted in others.

Keep in mind that the Pharisees came across as very religious. They were the ones you would expect would draw people closer to God but in fact they were leading the people away by their questionable teachings and behavior.

**Note:** The concepts of hypocrisy overlaps. It is us claiming certain things to be true but not living by what we say or saying one thing but not following what we say. It is interesting regarding social media. Some people talk up Christian stuff and yet never set foot inside a church. Now, I get it when someone cannot be here because they are sick, or out of town, taking a day off, whatever.

But some people, more than able to be here, chastise the world and other believers while ignoring the simple command of **Heb.10:24-25** about the need to worship together.

In **Mt. 23:28** Jesus seems to me to sum up the idea of hypocrisy as He confronts the religious leaders. They may look good on the outside (look and act religious) but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence **(Mt. 23:25)**. These hypocrites were **“filled to capacity”** with these two sins Jesus noted. **“Greed”**, a desire for more or we want something so bad, will do what is necessary to get it - lie, cheat, steal.

**“Self-indulgence”** is simply selfishness, being self-absorbed, centered on ourselves. It shows a lack of self-control, which is seen in greed. **Mt. 23:26** tells us that our heart reveals who we really are. We can only fake spirituality for so long.

**Note:** Now, note **vs. 28**. Jesus says that the hypocrite **“outwardly”** appears to be righteous to others. Hypocrites know the Christian lingo, the songs. They even serve and outwardly to others they are righteous. But they can be mean, arrogant, and bullies to others. They pick and choose who they are spiritual in front of. I have seen this so often over the years.

Hypocrisy is a deadly disease. We have looked at four facts about hypocrisy. So, how do we as believers guard against this in our lives.

**1) Be honest.** That does not mean we have the freedom to sin and then simply excuse it. Nothing could be further from the truth. But Christians are not perfect, and we need to humbly admit that we stumble but that we are, for the most part, desiring to live in a way that honors God.

I am far from perfect and have made many mistakes in my life. But, like you, I want to live for Christ. So, I am honest, admit my faults, sins, and work to correct those.

**2) Guard against self-righteousness.** Do not be rude, condescending, arrogant, or think that we know the best always. Do not think that our opinions are the ones that matter or are the only ones that are right. We need to realize that we have our faults, and not point fingers at everyone else.

We know what God thinks of hypocrisy so we need to be sure that we do not treat others in a way that Jesus would not like. Some here today may even practice favoritism, something James called out in **Jam. 2:1-13**.

We need to make sure that we humbly hear others, and recognize that we are all growing in our faith, and are at different stages in that development. Instead of throwing mud on someone, try praying for them and encouraging them. We cannot hide self-righteousness and hypocrisy. It will come out at some point.

**3) Constantly check our attitude and motives.** Hypocrites are focused on self. When they serve, they like to be noticed. Or in serving, they criticize the way others do things. If my motive is to be noticed I have missed the point of why I am doing what I do. Make sure our attitude is right. It is not about us; it is about God. We might need to get off our high horse of pride.

**4) Practice grace, forgiveness, and kindness.** God has shown us grace, yet we are so impatient with others because they don’t “measure up.” Show a little grace, because at some point we are going to need it shown to us.

We need, as noted already, to quit picking out the faults of others. We need to also forgive when needed. People wrong us, forgive them. We are do so because Christ has forgiven us **(Eph. 4:32)**. We are to be kind to all. We do not have to agree with everyone on everything, but we need to practice some kindness.