

**“Study Guide” – “5”**

**“Questions that keep People away from Church”**

**“Isn’t church just a bunch of stuffed shirted hypocrites?”**

**A. It is the question of the ages that has hindered the spiritual walk of more than just one searching pilgrim.**

- 1. It is a major topic of conversation when we are trying to lead someone to Christ – “I don’t want to go, the church is full of hypocrites.”**
- 2. Whenever we are losing a major discussion concerning the church we tend to use it as a weapon – “you are nothing but a hypocrite.”**
- 3. It is amazing, but have you noticed that as Christians we have a gift for seeing the hypocrisy in everyone but ourselves.**

*"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? **You hypocrite**, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5, NIV)*

- a. We avoid self-examination like it was the plague.**
- b. We have a tendency to believe that our motives are always pure.**
- c. What would it be like in the church if all who were involved would eliminate the hypocrisy from their own lives before they looked at the life of another?**
- d. How would our soul winning efforts be changed if no one could point out a hypocrite in the church with ease?**

**B. Chuck Swindoll says that the word “hypocrite” comes from the Greek word “hupocrites” which means: “one who answers back.”**

- 1. It is the image of a Greek actor playing multiple roles on stage.**

2. *The actor would come from one side of the stage wearing a smiling mask, and he would make the people laugh.*
3. *Then from the other side of the stage he would change masks and come out with a frowning mask of tragic expression and share lines that were solemn and sad.*
4. *The actor was called; you guessed it, “a hypocrite.”*

**C. Over the course of time the word took on a more negative connotation.**

1. *It eventually evolved into the word Jesus used to pinpoint the “double-masked” pretense that marked the Pharisees.*
2. *Scripture never allows us to get by with pretending to be what we are really not.*
3. *Jesus condemned boldly and publicly the hypocrisy of His people.*

*" Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ he is not to ‘honor his father ’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ““These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ ”” (Matthew 15:1-9, NIV)*

4. *The stinging words Jesus used should challenge anyone who claims to be a child of the King.*

- a. *“...they honor me with their lips...”*
- b. *“...their hearts are far from me...”*
- c. *“...they worship me in vain...”*

5. *People outside the church are not the only ones who hold a dim view of hypocrisy.*

**A skeptic wrote:** *“A Christian is a man who feels repentance on Sunday for what he did on Saturday and is going to do on Monday.”*

**D. Listen to some of the words that have been written to decry the hypocrisy that keeps people from coming to the Lord.**

**Anonymous: “A hypocrite is a fellow who isn’t himself on Sundays.”**

**Sir Francis Bacon – “Great hypocrites are the real atheists.”**

**John Bunyan: “A saint abroad, and a devil at home.”**

**Danish Proverb: “Better to be a sinner than a hypocrite.’**

**Matthew Henry: “Hypocrites do the devil’s drudgery in Christ’s livery.”**

**Madame Jeanne Manon Roland: “If the world despises hypocrites, what must be the estimate of them in heaven?”**

**“What is our answer to the question: “Isn’t church just a bunch of stuffed shirted hypocrites?”**

1. **The first step may be the most painful; we need to admit the reality; there are hypocrites in the church.**
  - a. **When someone points out a flaw in our life or in our fellowship nothing is harder than to say, “You are right, that is true.”**
  - b. **We don’t have to look very hard or very far to see the painful truth – “the church has hypocrites.”**
  - c. **When I witness to someone and they say the church is full of hypocrites I agree, but I also add, “I would rather go to church with them instead of spending eternity with them.”**
  - d. **One of the main reasons authentic faith has fallen on hard times is – “hypocrisy.”**
  - e. **When we give lip service to God.**
  - f. **When our first love is not God.**
  - g. **When our worship is hallow words with no meaning.**
  - h. **Our actions need to meet our words and when they don’t we are being hypocrites.**
  - i. **No one seems to be immune from this deadly sin.**
  - j. **Some of the greatest leaders in the church had to be reminded not to be hypocrites.**
  - k. **Paul confronted Peter when he was being less than upright in his deals with the Gentiles.**

" When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" (**Galatians 2:11-14, NIV**)

**I. Jesus addressed the problem of hypocrisy in no uncertain terms in dealing with the religious leaders.**

" Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'" (**Matthew 23:1-7, NIV**)

- 1.) **7 times in this section of scripture Jesus says, "...Woe to you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!"**
- 2.) **Listen to how He concludes this indictment.**

"**"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" (Matthew 23:33, NIV)**

**m. Sadly things haven't changed much in over 2000 years.**

**"We need to admit the reality, there are hypocrites in the Church."**

**2. We need to immediately examine our own lives to see if hypocrisy is living too close to our home.**

- a. **When we examine our own lives it is a lot easier to come clean with God when we have failed.**
- b. **So we must ask the tough questions of ourselves.**

- 1.) ***“Do I only offer lip service to God?”***
- 2.) ***“Is my heart cold to the things of God?”***
- 3.) ***“Is my worship just meaningless words?”***

***c. I believe we can find the answers to these questions and many more if we are really searching for the truth.***

***d. Now we can hide behind a “double – mask.”***

- 1.) ***It is possible to harden our heart to the point that we don’t care.***
- 2.) ***We may remain as undeveloped children in the kingdom and not realize how undeveloped our spiritual growth has become.***
- 3.) ***We may become so calloused we don’t care.***
- 4.) ***We may have an agenda that is totally different than the one God has for us.***
- 5.) ***We may never have been truly born again, so we don’t know what to look for in the first place.***
- 6.) ***We may be so apathetic that we just don’t care.***

***e. However, if none of those things are true then we can find the answers to the tough questions if we really are searching.***

- 1.) ***“Am I authentic in my love to God, to myself, and to others?”***
- 2.) ***“Do I have trouble being real or do I settle for just being a phony?”***
- 3.) ***“Do I say what I mean and mean what I say?”***
- 4.) ***“When I am with a group do I say the same things to that group that I did when I was with the other group?”***
- 5.) ***“Does my life square with what I believe?”***

**Mark Twain was reportedly asked one time: “What’s the difference between a liar and a person who tells the truth?” Wisely, Mr. Twain replied, “Very simple. A liar has to have a better memory.”**

**An old country preacher once said: “Be who you is, ‘cause if you ain’t who you is, you is who you ain’t.”**

**We need to examine our own lives to see if hypocrisy is living too close to home.**

**3. When the claim is true we need to do the obvious – we need to repent.**

*"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:2, NIV)*

*"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:5, NIV)*

*"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:16, NIV)*

- a. Jesus lists three of the ways we practice our faith; giving, praying, and fasting.**
- b. He wants to examine the real way we give, pray, and fast.**
- c. Jesus knows that the picture has been distorted and He is making sure that we know what He expects from us.**
- d. So is the claim true, are we being hypocritical when it comes to our giving?**
- e. Is the claim true, are we being hypocritical when it comes to our praying?**
- f. And how about our life of fasting, are we being hypocritical?**
- g. If the claim is true, then we need to "repent."**
- h. It means we are to change.**
- i. It means we are to turn and go the other way.**
- j. It means we realize we have been doing wrong, we are sorry with a godly sorrow, and we turn to change our behavior.**
- k. A great deal of the physical, emotional, and mental problems that plague us a people could be eliminated if we would just repent and turn to God.**

**When the claim is true we need to do the obvious, we need to repent.**

4. ***We need to listen when people make the accusation about hypocrisy in our church or our life.***

**Socrates wrote:** “...the unexamined life is not worth living...”

**Phillips Brooks wrote:** *Be such a man, and live such a life,  
That if every man were such as you,  
And every life a life like yours,  
This earth would be God’s Paradise.*

**Cervantes:** “He who lives well is the best preacher...”

“Live blameless, God is near...”

**George Whitefield:** “Take care of your life, and the Lord will take care of your death...”

- a. ***Sometimes the accusation is nothing more than a smoke screen to divert attention.***
- 1.) ***Do you remember the woman at the well? Her answer was a smoke screen.***
- b. ***Sometimes the accusation is greeted with glad hearts because the spotlight is no longer focused on us.***
- c. ***Sometimes the accusation is true.***
- d. ***Sometimes the accusation is absolutely false.***
- e. ***The only way we will know for sure is if we listen to what is being said about the church, about our brothers and sisters, and about our own lives.***

5. ***We need to be aware of just how damaging hypocrisy can be to the lost, the church, to our very own lives.***

- a. ***It may sound surprising to us but Chuck Swindoll makes a great statement we need to hear and understand.***

**Quote:** “Practicing hypocrisy is natural. Resist it...”

- 1.) ***Hypocritical conduct comes as naturally to Christian people as breathing.***
- 2.) ***It appeals to our old nature.***

- 3.) ***We get hooked on hypocrisy because it looks so impressive and results in getting lots of strokes.***
- 4.) ***But in reality it, it represents the ugly underbelly of our faith.***
- 5.) ***That is why we have to identify it for what it is!***

*"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3, NIV)*

*"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46, NIV)*

*"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." (Romans 2:1, NIV)*

*"you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?" (Romans 2:21, NIV)*

*"They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good." (Titus 1:16, NIV)*

*"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" (James 2:15-16, NIV)*

*"Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be." (James 3:10, NIV)*

***6.) Hypocrisy can sour our faith into mere form with no substance.***

***b. It is hypocrisy that helps to darken the light in the church.***

- 1.) ***We become cold.***
- 2.) ***We worship with our lips.***
- 3.) ***We hide harden hearts to the truth.***
- 4.) ***We do things we know are wrong but we don't know how to change.***
- 5.) ***We become indifferent and apathetic to the truth.***
- 6.) ***We are dead men walking.***

**c. Hypocrisy keeps lost people from finding Jesus Christ.**

- 1.) **Can anything be worse?**
- 2.) **Can't we see the world laughing at what we call faith; they know it is really hypocrisy?**
- 3.) **Have we lost the fear of God to the point that we no longer care about the lost?**
- 4.) **There are many very troubling words in the Bible, but some that bother me the most are these:  
"Depart from me, you worker of iniquity, because I never knew you..."**

*"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:14-20, NIV)*

**We need to be aware of just how damaging hypocrisy can be to the lost, to the church, and to our very own lives.**

**6. Confront and refuse to participate in any activity which may be hypocrisy.**

**a. We need to confront any hypocrisy in our own lives and come clean.**

- 1.) **We need to repent before God.**
- 2.) **We need to repent before any people we have offended with our "double-mask."**
- 3.) **We may even need to repent before the church.**
- 4.) **But we need to do it for the sake of our eternity.**

**b. In love and truth, with much fear and trembling, we need to confront hypocrisy in the church.**

- 1.) **That means we are willing to be held accountable for our own actions.**
- 2.) **That means we refuse to tolerate hypocrisy in the name of Jesus.**
- 3.) **We must be in prayer before we begin such a walk.**
- 4.) **We must stay in the Word of God before we attempt such action.**
- 5.) **We must humble ourselves before we claim to lead others in righteousness.**

**Scripture:**

*" The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'" (2 Samuel 12:1-10, NIV)*

**c. Refuse to participate in any activity we know is filled with hypocrisy.**

- 1.) **Why? Because this is one area we can control.**
- 2.) **Why? Because we want to Glorify God!**

