***Big Questions: Looking to God’s Word for Answers
“…always being ready to make a defense…” I Peter 3:15*If Christianity is true, why are there so many hypocrites in the church?**

**I. Hypocrite and hypocrisy as used in the Bible:** Primarily a New Testament term borrowed from the Hellenistic World of Theater, describing one who acts out a role for a crowd, maybe even while wearing a mask, but in real life is a totally different person

A. Biblically means to pretend to be someone or something that you are not, especially with reference to being a committed follower of God

B. Primarily in the teachings of Jesus: Giving, praying, fasting, and judging OR the use of theology and religious activities with ulterior motives

C. In the Apostles: Life and teaching inconsistent with the Gospel message as a means to advance a personal agenda, exercise authority, or achieve financial benefits

**II. The result of hypocrisy:** A self-centered, self-righteous life that reflects no humility toward God and that is offensive to just about everyone else, including God, thus harming the reputation of God in the process

**III. The reasons for hypocrisy in those claiming to follow Christ**

**A. Human Sin:** The resurrection of Jesus Christ does not eliminate human sin, even for those within the church who are His followers

**B. False Sheep:** Not all individuals that claim to follow Christ are truly His followers

**C. Self Righteousness:** We are naturally disposed to think more highly of ourselves than we should

**D. Predicted by God:** Jesus and the Apostles predicted this type of hypocrisy by individuals claiming to follow Christ, thus actually adding to the credibility of Jesus and the Bible

**IV. Our Calling:** We are called to live consistent with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ in the midst of a corrupt generation so that the personal testimony of my life, the only life I can truly change, will be a shining example of Christ and a striking alternative to less flattering hypocritical examples that dot the religious landscape

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**OR If Jesus really is the transformative figure of human history, why do some many of His followers show so little of the transformation of His life and teachings?**

**Scripture Read, Romans 2:1-4 (Slides)**

Interesting discussion at the mancave last Sunday evening as we were looking at a passage at the beginning of II Timothy 3, a passage we read last week and Paul is telling Timothy the type of behaviors that will emerge in end times

And Paul is concerned about these behavior emerging both outside the church and within the church

I also read from Romans 7 where Paul says “I do not do the good things I wish I would but practice the very evil that I do not wish.”

And the question, and this is a good question, Is Paul talking about in his own life the same types of sins as the sins he warns Timothy about in II Timothy 3

So I have been thinking about this all week. What is the difference between the battle with sin that every believer experiences and the types of hypocritical living that destroys the testimony of Christ in our lives? What is the difference between the battle to do good every day that we experience and the types of hypocritical good works used purely for self-glorification?

Humility, motives, battle, love

It is a normal battle with sin if we are humble before God and toward others

It is a normal battle with sin if our motive is for God’s glory and our personal, spiritual growth

It is a normal battle for sin if we are fighting for righteousness and goodness

It is a normal battle with sin if love dictates our actions

We can be hypocrites in the way we practice our faith. We can be hypocrites in the way we judge others. We can be hypocrites in the way we use our faith and good works for personal gain. In those cases, we are not humble, our motives are impure, we do not battle against sin in our own lives, and love has nothing to do with our actions.

**I. Hypocrite and hypocrisy as used in the Bible:** Primarily a New Testament term borrowed from the Hellenistic World of Theater, describing one who acts out a role for a crowd, maybe even while wearing a mask, but in real life is a totally different person

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B. Primarily in the teachings of Jesus: Giving, praying, fasting, and judging OR the use of theology and religious activities with ulterior motives

* **Read Matthew 6:2, 5, 16 (Slides 2, 3, 4)**
* **Read Matthew 7:5 (Slide 5)**
* **Read Matthew 23:25 (Slide 6)**
* 1. Sermon on the Mount: Giving, praying, fasting and judging
* a. Giving, Praying, Fasting with the motive of public recognition and self-glorification and NOT personal spiritual life and God’s glory
* b. Judging others while committing the same or worse sins
* 2. Confrontation of the Religions Leaders of His Day: Theological questions with ulterior motives and external religious activities with self-glorifying goals
* a. Asking theological questions with no motive other than to shame, humiliate or trap another person
* b. Using external religious activities to make yourself shine while making others look bad
* **Here is a summary of Jesus’ teachings on hypocrisy (Slide 7)**

C. In the Apostles: Life and teaching inconsistent with the Gospel message as a means to advance a personal agenda, exercise authority, or achieve financial benefits

* **Read Galatians 2:12-13 (Slide 8)**
* 1. Life or teaching inconsistent to the Gospel message of bringing all individuals into right relationship with God
* **Read I Timothy 4:1-2 (Slide 9)**
* 2. False teachings as a means to advance a personal agenda, exercise authority, or achieve financial benefits
* **Here is a summary of the Apostles’ teachings on hypocrisy (Slide 10)**

**II. The result of hypocrisy:** A self-centered, self-righteous life that reflects no humility toward God and that is offensive to just about everyone else, including God, thus harming the reputation of God in the process

* **Read Romans 2:23-24 (Slide 11)**

**III. The reasons for hypocrisy in those claiming to follow Christ (Slide 12)**

**A. Human Sin:** The resurrection of Jesus Christ does not eliminate human sin, even for those within the church who are His followers

**B. False Sheep:** Not all individuals that claim to follow Christ are truly His followers

**C. Self Righteousness:** We are naturally disposed to think more highly of ourselves than we should

We want to feel good about ourselves. We are highly motivated by our own personal sense of being good before God and others.

There are two unique, but parallel ways to accomplish this

**1.** We selectively prop ourselves up through artificial religious means

 **2.** We pull others down through artificial religious standards

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**IV. Our Calling:** We are called to live consistent with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ in the midst of a corrupt generation so that the personal testimony of my life, the only life I can truly change, will be a shining example of Christ and a striking alternative to less flattering hypocritical examples that dot the religious landscape