

Why Are There So Many Hypocrites in the Church?

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Hypocrite

A person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion.

A person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.

Christian

Someone who has been saved by God's redeeming grace. Their life is characterized by a continual submission to Christ, and their actions and words reflect the fact that Christ is the Lord of their life.

Hypocrite in the Church

A person who says that Jesus is Lord of their life, but the things that truly characterize them are not things that characterize Christ.

- Could be a true believer or not.

4 Types of Hypocrites in the Church (and two friends)

Seeker - In the church to see what Jesus has to offer.

Struggler - Fights sin in their life, but that battle can be very intense at times.

Faker - Calls themselves a Christian, but no evidence in how they live.

Stoic - Speaks of their salvation with as much enthusiasm as going to the dentist.

Fighter - Feels compelled to fight for "the truth" when opportunity presents itself.

Protector - Weighs their personal motivations more than Christ-like principles.

I. How did we get here?

Revelation 2:1-5 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks among the seven lampstands. I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent.'"

Letter to the Church at Ephesus

Paul wrote the epistle of Ephesians to this same church

A large city with many “worldly” attributes (**Acts 19**)

The church was doing many good works (**1 Corinthians 15:58**)

But they abandoned their first love

- Agape - giving for the needs of another, expecting nothing in return.
- Witnessing (**Matt. 5:14-16**)
- Loving one another (**John 13:35**)
- “It seems like the desire for sound teaching, and the actions taken to exclude all impostors, had created a climate of suspicion in which love within the community was lacking.”

Remember - Continuous action

Repent - One time action

“Don’t you ever get so cute in ministry—don’t you ever get so sophisticated in ministry—that you forget about the miracle of Calvary in your life. It is that Gospel, it is the cross-work of Christ, it is His deliverance in my soul, that is my authority to ministry to others.” ~ Crawford Loritts

II. How do we return to our first love?

Matthew 22:36-40 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend on the Law and the prophets.’”

Love God

Cultivate humility in your heart (**Matthew 7:3-5, 21-23**)

God doesn’t need us to defend Him, He invites us to love on His behalf. (**1 Corinthians 13**)

If we’re not careful, we will love salvation more than we love the Savior, Christianity more than Christ.

Love Neighbor

Love is an action—we need to be intentionally loving

“The thing that we don’t talk about in the church is that you can have a fun, yet worthless, marriage. There are a lot of happy couples that are absolutely worthless in the church... ‘Oh look, that couple gets along.’ Great, but do they accomplish anything for eternity? The goal is more than just getting along.” ~ Francis Chan

Questions for Community Group and/or Personal Application:

- (1) In your experience, what “turns people off” to Christianity?
- (2) What do you think about the “types” of hypocrites? Are they accurate?
- (3) How is character formed? What do you have to do for people around you to see a Christ-like character in your daily life?
- (4) What helps you to stay humble before God?
- (5) Who is your “neighbor?” How are you loving them well?