

Hypocrisy

Listed Scriptures

Mt 23; Lk 13:10–17; Tit 1:16; Jas 1:22–24, 2:14–26; Rom 2:1; Mt 15:8f

Lesson Aim

- 1) To take a hard look at whether we are Christians only on the outside.
- 2) To understand what it means to be a true Christian.
- 3) To take steps so that we can be in tune with God's voice.

Memory Verse

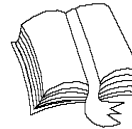
"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 Jn 2:4)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Amos 5–7

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D

There is no Bible Background information for this lesson.



W A R M U P



Imagine someone in the streets with a sign that says “CHRISTIAN BUDDY MACHINE-10 CENTS.” A lonely man waiting for the subway tells the machine his problems, deposits 10 cents, and the Buddy Machine gives him all the usual pat Christian answers to his problems. What do you think of this? Is the Buddy Machine showing real concern for this man? Is he showing real love and concern?

Of course he isn't. He's just giving answers that he feels Christians should give. But he is not sincere, nor does he truly care about the person he's giving an answer to. Let's think about this. Are we like this Christian Buddy Machine? Do we sometimes give the usual Christian response to people, but don't really mean it? Do we pretend to be Christians on the Sabbath, then act completely different during the rest of the week? Is it wrong to be a hypocrite? Let's look into what the Lord says about hypocrisy and what we can learn from His teachings.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Who Are Hypocrites?

According to the Merriam Webster online dictionary, hypocrisy is defined as:

1. a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not; especially: the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion
2. an act or instance of hypocrisy

The word derives from the Greek *hypokrisis*, an act of playing a part on the stage.

Thus, according to the above description, a hypocrite is someone who pretends. He is a person who does not act his real self but disguises himself to be another. Let's look into what the Scriptures say about hypocrites and how our Lord Jesus refers to them.

“Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.” (Mt 23:3)

The Pharisees and Scribes were meticulous in obeying the Law. They devised many of their own laws, which were supposed to help them better obey God's laws. However, when they lost the true spirit of the Law they became an organized group of hypocrites. Let's see what their problem was and find what we can do to check ourselves.



A. *Those Who Are Proud (Mt 23:1-12)*

The root of hypocrisy is pride. In fact, the root of all sin is pride, in that all sin contains an element of putting ourselves in the place of God. But it seems in the case of hypocrisy, one's pride is based simply upon one's position or status. Logically though, there is no virtue in status or position alone unless such roles were earned through virtuous behavior. Some people would like to be respected without earning respect. This was the case of the Pharisees. They were proud because of their status and the so-called works that they carried out before men.

Proverbs 16:5 says that everyone who is proud is an abomination to the Lord. Furthermore, Proverbs 16:18 describes that pride goes before destruction and it will bring a person low (Prov 29:23). In fact, everyone is guilty of pride but what differ are the levels of pride that each person has in his heart. It is a sin that everyone needs to be wary of because it is so easy to fall into the trap of feeling proud or exalting oneself.

There was one sister who testified how she broke down in tears during a service. She realized that she had become lukewarm in faith and that sin and pride had built up in her heart. At that moment, she felt distant from God, and it was the worst feeling in the world. She repented to Him in tears and begged for His forgiveness, asking Him to turn her heart of stone to a heart of flesh. After sincerely returning to Him, God showed her His mercy and love.

In serving and worshiping God we need to know to deny ourselves by removing the “I” in our thinking and taking away the ego in our service. We need to ask the Lord Jesus to humble us so that pride will never have a place in our hearts.



B. Those Who Put on a Religious Show

(Mt 23:23f; 6:1-4)

The Pharisees performed acts of righteousness but did not observe justice and mercy. They were ritualistic and merciless people and ignored the more important matters—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. They lived to put on a front before other people. Instead of being sensitive to God’s will, they were sensitive to public opinion.

Likewise, Isaiah 58 records how during the time of the prophet Isaiah, the people had been trying to find acceptance with God, but they were rejected. Instead of applying themselves to developing a heart of faith and holiness, they were into putting on a religious show. The present-day equivalent would be going to church every week, singing hymns, tithing, praying, fasting and witnessing—but doing it all for show, and not with a heart of love for God or people. What God wants is for us to seek Him, to “find out what is acceptable to the Lord” (Eph 5:10).

Saul was an example of one whose service to the Lord was one that loved fame more than God. Saul failed because he did not obey the Lord’s command and took things into his own hands. He sought his own glory more than God’s glory. That was why the prophet Samuel replied to him, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). The Lord will not accept any false offerings. What He wants is our sincerity in prayer and in service to Him.

In the same manner, Jeremiah wanted the people of Judah to realize that the mere act of performing temple sacrifices was no proof of faithfulness, especially when the priests’ actions outside of the temple were so immoral (Jer 6:16-20). What the Lord requires is for us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him (Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9f).



C. Those Who Act Holy (Mt 23: 25-28)

The Pharisees tried to clean their outward appearance while their inner beings were corrupt. They appeared to people as highly religious people, but on the inside they were full of corruption, just like whitewashed tombs. They knew the Law backward and forward and they knew how to dress and look important. They wanted to be admired, praised and honored for their good deeds but everything they did was just for men to see.

In the same manner Balaam was a false prophet who was hypocritical in all his ways (2 Pet 2:15f; Josh 13:22; Num 24:1). He may have been called a prophet by name, but he was not a true prophet at all. He was a seeker of material gain instead of a seeker of God. Even though he knew some of the truth, he did not have a spiritual life in him. He had an appearance of reverence but his actions proved otherwise. He was false in his ways and his service was in vain. He used his faith and his reverence as a way to earn money.

Are we like this? Do we say the right words and do the right thing to impress others with our spirituality? If others were to look straight through to our motives, would they find them sparkling clean? Don’t be like the Pharisees who only looked good on the outside but had nothing to admire internally. Ask ourselves: Are our Christian actions coming from wanting to “look good” to others or from a heart of humility and obedience?

There is a sharp contrast in the way some Christians act in church and how they behave in the world. Daniel was an ideal model in his relationship with both God and man. He did not live by a double standard. His daily conduct was consistent with his spiritual values. His enemies tried to find some charge against him, but no fault could be found (Dan 6:4). His walk in the world was in harmony with his walk with God. Is our walk in the world in tune with God’s walk?

It is so easy to be a hypocrite, to say “Lord, Lord” and not do what God’s word tells us to do. To sing melodious hymns in church and then hum along with the most bizarre, ungodly tunes on the car stereo. Or to expect God to hear us when we pray but not to hear us when we say things that aren’t kind or clean (Lk 6:46).

As the Lord reminds us, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21). May all of us learn to serve and worship our heavenly Father from the innermost part of our hearts.



Part 2

You, Hypocrite!

Are you playing the part of a hypocrite? Do you teach or advocate one thing while doing the complete opposite when no one is looking? Take the following quiz to find out.

Do you...	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. emphasize to others how important the Bible is, but seldom read it?				
2. insist prayer is your link to God, but only make time for one-liners to the Lord during your busy day?				
3. promise you'll pray for someone in need, but never remember to do it?				
4. express your respect for church leaders, but bad-mouth the pastor if he preaches too long or points out something you don't want to hear?				
5. talk about your concern for people who don't know Jesus, but make little effort to share your faith?				
6. state how crucial honesty is, but spit out a white lie if it'll help you in a sticky situation?				
7. tell others you obey your parents, but fuss when they want you to clean the kitchen?				
8. say how important it is to hang out with other believers, but choose to spend more time with your non-Christian friends than your Christian ones?				
9. announce that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, but abuse it with tobacco, drugs, alcohol or extreme amounts of food?				
10. preach that tithing is biblical, as well as important, but spend your money on CDs, movies and clothes before you give God His portion?				
11. maintain that you want your thoughts to always please Jesus, but fill your mind with books, movies, TV shows and magazines that are anything but godly?				
12. vow to do anything for the Lord, but say you're too busy when asked to do something for the church?				

Do you...	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
13. make it clear you believe in abstinence, but spend time alone with your boyfriend or girlfriend doing things you know are wrong?				
14. say you don't curse, but let out a few choice words if you get cut off in traffic or slam the door on your finger?				
15. say that cheating is wrong, but tell your friend about some of the questions on the history test you took the period before his/her class?				

Scoring

Give yourself three points for every "never" answer, two points for every "rarely" answer, one point for "sometimes" and zero for "often."

Score 40-45 points

You usually do what you say you believe. That's great! Only by living the godly life that the Bible teaches are you going to have true contentment. But remember hypocrisy is subtle and can easily creep in when you're least expecting it. So keep on evaluating yourself to make sure you're avoiding it.

Score 25-39 points

You've got some problem areas, but they're nothing that God and you can't handle. Take a closer look at the specific areas in which you're being a hypocrite. Is it your devotional life? Or maybe it's at school or on the job. Start confessing your sins and praying for strength to make wise choices. Consider asking a trusted Christian friend to pray with you, too. You can become more of the person the Lord wants you to be.

Score Below 24 points

If you don't want to hang out with the scribes and Pharisees whom Jesus condemned for hypocrisy, you need a major overhaul. The good news is that God is more than happy to do it, if you're willing to cooperate. Begin by telling Him you're sorry for the way you've said the right things, but done the wrong ones. Seek advice and help from a Christian adult who'd be willing to meet with you on a regular basis for prayer and accountability. You don't have to wallow in hypocrisy!

Adapted version from

<http://www.briomag.com/briomagazine/quizzes/a0005401.html>



Part 3

Be a True Christian

In the end, no one is immune to hypocrisy. Every Christian must fight daily to practice what he preaches. If we find ourselves engaging in any type of sinful activities, then either stop the sin or refrain from teaching against the sin until we are ready to change.

Wisely, King David wrote, "I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites" (Ps 26:4). If we want to please God, and be a true Christian, practice what we preach and preach what we practice.



A. Give Him Our Heart (Col 3:23; Mt 15:8f)

One whose heart is of the Lord will always set his heart upon the Lord's dwelling place (Ps 27:4). In other words, his heart will always be knit with the heart of God.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira did not offer from their heart. Instead, they allowed Satan to enter their hearts and kept back some of the proceeds (Acts 5:1–11). When we offer, our offering must come from the heart and not from deceit. Ananias and Sapphira did not do this. They offered in an attempt to gain reputation and a good name. They altered and twisted the purpose of offering. What was supposed to be a thanksgiving offering became a means of a lie to the Holy Spirit. Not only did it not bring any good to them, it was not acceptable to God and brought about a tragic ending for them. Likewise, in our service to the Lord, He wants our very best. He wants what is most true. He wants us to "continually offer the sacrifice of praise to Him, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb 13:15f).



B. Give Him Our All (1 Cor 13:3)

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23). We are made up of the spirit, the soul, and the physical body. We are not of separate entities, but of a single unit. We cannot separate these three, thinking that whatever we do with our body will not affect our soul

or our spirit. The three are interconnected. In the same manner, when we profess to be a true Christian, we cannot just show it through physical manifestation—it must be accompanied by our soul and spirit too. In other words, we need to give Christ our all.

1 Peter 2:5, 9 reminds us that we are a royal priesthood, a chosen generation. We are to offer spiritual sacrifices. In order to be honorable, we must be holy, righteous and precious in the eyes of God. We cannot claim ourselves to be holy in the eyes of God if we are not holy in our actions. We need to fight for and work towards holiness. To achieve this, we need a heart of humility and sincerity. Thus, if we have put our faith in the Lord Jesus, we are spiritual beings whose bodies are "dead because of sin" and whose spirits are "alive because of righteousness" (Rom 8:10).

In Romans 12:1 we are not told to present our spirits as a living sacrifice. Instead, we are told to present our bodies for it is with our bodies that we show what is in our spirit. If we give ourselves completely to God, we can stop putting on an act. We can be real followers of Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a role, it's a reality and a lifestyle. To be a true and genuine Christian, we must have a heart of zeal, love, and sacrifice.



C. Give Him Our Very Best (Lev 23:9-14)

Apart from giving the Lord our heart and our all, we also have to be pleasing to Him, offering Him our very best.

Cain and Abel made sacrifices to God, but the Lord only accepted Abel's offering. God did not accept Cain's offering because Cain was not in the Lord's favor. "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen 4:7). Moreover, in 1 John 3:12 it tells us specifically why God did not accept Cain's offering: the Lord favored Abel because Abel's actions were righteous and Cain's actions were evil.

Likewise, in serving God, it doesn't matter what we do or how much we offer. What matters is whether or not we please the Lord. "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:8). These are God's requirements. He wants a sacrifice of our character and actions. That is, before we can make a pleasing sacrifice to God, we have to be pleasing to Him.



D. Worship Him in Spirit and Truth (Jn 4:24)

God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. It is important that we examine ourselves. In our service to the Lord, are we doing it for ourselves, for God, or for others? True worship must be sincere and heartfelt.

In Matthew 6 the Lord Jesus criticized the Pharisees for fasting and praying in order to be seen by men. Likewise, in Zechariah, the Israelites fasted four times a year for seventy years. However, God felt that their fasting was just a religious practice so that they could say that they had a successful festival. God is not so easily deceived. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs and goats...When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood" (Is 1:11, 15). Let's think about this. We may attend many spiritual convocations and partake of the Holy Communion, but are we truly worshiping the Lord in spirit and truth? As the Lord commanded the Israelites, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Is 1:16f). Let us seek to glorify the Lord's name with one heart and one will so that our labor will not be in vain.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1 What are the tell-tale signs of a hypocrite?

2 How can we check ourselves to see if we are true Christians?

3 In order to be true Christians, what does the Lord require of us? (cf. Mic 6:8)

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Part A: Testimonies of Wholeheartedness

Testimony 1

Two sisters were praying when suddenly, both cried out aloud. After the prayer, they both asked each other why the other suddenly cried out. One sister said that she heard a voice saying, "You are not serving me with your whole heart." The other sister said she heard the same voice. They decided there and then that they needed to serve and worship the Lord God with their whole hearts.

Testimony 2

Two brothers had the same dream. Both saw an angel coming to them. The angels displayed two books before them, one with brother X's name and the other with brother Y's name. The angel opened up brother X's book: on one side was a record of all the things he had done, with a list of all the holy work he had carried out. On the other side was a check mark against each work carried out. When the brother saw this, he was very joyful. Next the angel turned to brother Y and opened up his book. In his book, it also noted the works he had done, but against nearly every single one were crosses rather than check marks. He only had a few check marks against his works. Both brothers knew in their hearts what this meant. Brother Y, not surprisingly, was not very happy with his book. The angel told them that they are both working very hard, but one was using his whole heart to serve God, while the other one wasn't.

Questions to think about:

1. What do the two testimonies tell us about our attitude in worshiping and serving God?
2. Why is it important to serve with our whole heart? (Ps 9:1; 138:1; 111:1; 119:2; 34:10,69,143)

Part B: Hell is Real

*I went into my classroom
Ready for another year at school.
I didn't want the work,
Just wanted to hang and be cool.
I had on new clothes,
New sneaks on my feet.
I was there for class on time*

Went to the back and took my seat.
Yeah, I'm moving up.
I'm already grown.
Soon I'll be graduating
And out on my own.
I talked to some of my friends.
We were all having fun.
Said some things I shouldn't have said,
Did stuff I shouldn't have done.
I knew I was different.
I felt God touch my heart.
I knew I should set a standard,
But then I'd be set apart.
Walking to the bus,
I was not looking for strength.
I heard the car tires screeching,
But now it's too late.
I'm standing in this room
And I can see the heavenly gate.
Oh no! I never prayed.
I thought I had time to get it straight.
An angel walked to me.
He had a book in his hand.
I knew it was the Book of Life.
When would this dream end?
I told him my name
And he began to look.
Then he looked at me sadly and said
Your name is not in this book.
Angel, this is a dream.
No, I can't be dead!
He closed the book and turned away.
He whispered--You cannot proceed ahead.
No ... no this can't be real.
Angel, you can't turn me away.
Let me talk to God.
Maybe He'll let me stay.
He led me to the gate.
Jesus came to me,
He did not let me in but said,

Beloved what is your need?
Jesus, I cried, please
Don't cast me away from you.
Tears ran down His face as He said,
You knew what you needed to do.
Lord, please I'm young.
I never thought I would die.
I thought I'd have plenty of time.
Death caught me by surprise.
Lord, I went to church.
Please Jesus, I believe.
He said you would not accept me.
My love you would not receive.
Lord, there were too many hypocrites.
They weren't being true.
He took a step back and asked
What does that have to do with you?
Lord, my family claimed to be saved,
They weren't real. You know.
He said, I died for you.
Now I have to go.
I fell to my knees crying to Him.
Lord, I planned to be real tomorrow.
I couldn't make Him understand.
I had never felt such sorrow.
Then it hit me hard, I said
Lord, where will I go?
He looked into my eyes and said,
My child you already know.
Please Jesus, I begged
The place is so hot.
It seemed to trouble and grieve Him.
He whispered, DEPART FROM ME, I KNOW YOU NOT.
Lord, you're supposed to be love.
How can you send me to damnation?
He replied, With your mouth you said you loved me,
But each day you rejected my salvation.
With that in an instant,
Day turned into night.
I never knew such torture could be.

Now too late, I know the Bible is right.
If I can tell you anything,
Hell has no age.
It is a place of torture,
Separated from God and full of rage.
You know I thought it was funny—a joke,
But this one thing is true.
If you never accept Jesus Christ
HELL IS WAITING FOR YOU!

By Unknown

Questions to think about:

1. How do you think this poem targets Christians who are Christians by name only?
2. What is the author's point?
3. As a Christian, how can you make sure that the inside of your cup is clean?
4. How can you spend as much time working on the inside as you do on the outside?
5. How can you become more honest with yourself and with God?
6. What makes you substitute religion for obedience?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



*Sing Hymn 399: Lord, I Want to Be a Christian
To be a true Christian, we must live out a life of Christ.
It is not merely one of show, but one of true and honest
Christian virtues from our hearts. We must repent of
our proud heart and aim to live a life of true Christianity.
May the Lord help us as we strive to become pure, holy,
and perfect vessels for His use.*

Lesson 13

Review

Lesson Aim

- 1) To review the past quarter's memory verses.
- 2) To be able to apply the verses to our daily lives.

REVIEW

Jumbled Memory Verses

The following Bible verses have been jumbled. Side A contains the first part of the memory verses and side B contains the second part. Reorganize them so that the memory verse is complete.

Teaching Tips

You may want to arrange the students to work with a partner. Create a larger version of the table and cut out the memory verses and give them a time limit to reorganize them. Once they have finished, allow them to write out the complete memory verses individually.