

# Watch Out For Leaven – Part 2

## Matthew 16:6

**6** Then Jesus said unto them, **TAKE HEED** and **BEWARE** of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

## Matthew 16:6 NASB

**6** And Jesus said to them, **“WATCH OUT** and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

When Jesus tells the disciples to “WATCH OUT for the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” He’s warning them to watch out for the DOCTRINE of the Pharisees and the Sadducees!

## Matthew 16:12

**12** Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of **THE DOCTRINE** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

It’s important that we be on guard against false and strange doctrines.

## Hebrews 13:9

**9** Be not carried about with divers and **STRANGE DOCTRINES**. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be **ESTABLISHED WITH GRACE**; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

According to Hebrews, “strange” doctrines are those that try to establish our faith on the traditions of men rather than the grace of God. In other words, we know that a doctrine contains leaven if it teaches you to put your trust in man’s (your) ability rather than in God’s ability!

Moreover, the reason we must avoid such teaching is because once it corrupts the truth, you will no longer be able to grow by it.

## 1 Peter 2:1–2

**1** Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, **2** As newborn babes, desire the **SINCERE milk of the word, that ye may GROW** thereby:

Only that truth which is ‘sincere’ (or without leaven or mixture) is able to produce spiritual fruit (growth). Moreover, it only takes a little bit of this error to corrupt the truth. (Such is the nature of leaven!)

Not only is it important that we watch out for bad doctrines, it's also important that we watch out for bad attitudes.

### Luke 12:1

**<sup>1</sup> In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, BEWARE YE OF THE LEAVEN of the Pharisees, which is HYPOCRISY.**

This time Jesus is referring to the 'leaven' of HYPOCRISY.

Hypocrisy is a heart attitude, and it occurs when a person makes a conscious choice to deceive others. In fact, the word hypocrisy means to pretend. It refers to someone whose outward (public) portrayal of themselves is at odds with, or different from, what's in their heart.

### Matthew 15:7–9

**<sup>7</sup> Ye HYPOCRITES, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, <sup>8</sup> This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me WITH THEIR LIPS; but their HEART IS FAR FROM ME. <sup>9</sup> But in vain they do worship me,**

Notice, it's impossible for a hypocrite to worship (have true fellowship) with God. Worship or fellowship with God requires sincerity of heart!

How do we avoid hypocrisy?

### Luke 12:1–3

**<sup>1</sup> And I say unto you my friends, Beware of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. on another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. <sup>2</sup> For there is nothing covered, that SHALL NOT BE REVEALED; neither hid, that shall not be known. <sup>3</sup> Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness SHALL BE HEARD IN THE LIGHT; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.**

Jesus begins by revealing the pointlessness of hypocrisy. For example, anyone who acts hypocritically should realize that God is not fooled. In fact, one day your secrets (or hypocrisy) is going to be exposed!

Next, Jesus turns His attention away from the hypocrites and back to His disciples.

### Luke 12:4–5

**4 And I say unto you my friends, BE NOT AFRAID of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: FEAR HIM, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.**

Apparently, if we want to avoid hypocrisy, then we must learn to put our fear in God and not in man. This is because hypocrisy is often rooted in insecurity and fear!

### John 12:42

**42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, LEST THEY SHOULD BE PUT OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE:**

Notice how there were ‘chief rulers’ (or Pharisees) who believed on Jesus. However, they *pretended* not to believe in Him *out of fear* of what might happen to them! This is very common among hypocrites—they will *pretend* not to know something out of fear of what others might do or think of them!

### Luke 12:8–9

**8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9 But he that DENIETH ME before men shall be denied before the angels of God.**

Jesus reveals another factor surrounding hypocrisy. Not only is hypocrisy rooted in fear, it’s also an act of *treason* (a denial of Christ). Every act of hypocrisy is a denial of Christ (truth). Hypocrites might *pretend* like they desire the truth. However, in reality they are looking to find fault with it so they can go back to doing what they want.

### Luke 11:53–54

**53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge *him* vehemently, and TO PROVOKE HIM to speak of many things: 54 Laying wait for him, and seeking TO CATCH SOMETHING OUT OF HIS MOUTH, that they might accuse him.**

Therefore, the Pharisees and the scribes were acting deceitfully. They pretended to be interested in what Jesus had to say, but in reality they were trying to find a reason to reject His words.

We should also point out that these Pharisees (hypocrites) were trying to *provoke* Jesus to say something that they could later accuse Him of.

This is a reminder that encounters with hypocrites are oftentimes a test to see if we will act “out of character.” (Incidentally, the term **hypocrite** means “play-actor.”) We must be very careful (on guard) whenever we are around hypocrites, because their actions (words) are rarely sincere.

### **Proverbs 23:6–8**

**6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an EVIL EYE, Neither desire thou his dainty meats: 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; BUT HIS HEART IS NOT WITH THEE. 8 The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, And LOSE THY SWEET WORDS.**

We must be careful ‘eating at everyone’s table,’ particularly those with an “evil eye” (i.e. false intentions). When we discover their hypocrisy it can cause us to ‘lose our sweet words’ (i.e. become angry) or worse, become like them!

This is the real danger of hypocrisy—it will ‘rub off’ on you. (This is probably the reason Jesus likens hypocrisy to *leaven*, because leaven has the power to infect everything it touches!)

### **Galatians 2:11–13**

**11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I WITHSTOOD HIM TO THE FACE, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and SEPARATED himself, FEARING them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews DISSEMBLED LIKEWISE WITH HIM; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.**

The word “dissemble” is a word that means *hypocrisy*.

### **Galatians 2:13 NIV**

**13 The other Jews joined him IN HIS HYPOCRISY, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.**

Therefore, Peter’s separation (hypocrisy) began to spread to the other brethren, including Barnabas! Such is the nature of *leaven*. It will continue to spread until it has affected the entire lump.

By the way, this is the reason why Paul stood up and corrected Peter for his hypocrisy. In fact, if hypocrisy is not corrected (or removed), it will spread until it leavens an entire family or congregation!

### **Acts 5:1–3, 5**

**<sup>1</sup> But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, <sup>2</sup> And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being PRIVY TO IT, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup> But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to LIE TO THE HOLY GHOST, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? <sup>5</sup> And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and GAVE UP THE GHOST: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.**

It seems, God judged Ananias (and his wife) in order to prevent the leaven of their hypocrisy from spreading throughout the entire church!