

Why Are Christians Such Hypocrites?

DEFINITIONS

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

Merriam-Webster

MARK 7:6

"Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."

ACTS 11:26

"And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

- A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus Christ and follows him.
- This question may be asked regarding the Church overall, or regarding individuals.

HEART ISSUES — CHECK MINE FIRST

- Intellectual — asked as a "strawman fallacy" amid debate. It is easier to argue against the fallible, seen man than the Almighty, unseen God.
- Emotional — asked from personal hurt, individually or corporately.
- Observational — paired with limited knowledge and experience.
- Unbelief
- Seeking justice, understanding, or an excuse?

HOW TO ASK — POSTURE

- Approach with humility and sorrow. Hypocrisy happens — so not surprised, but appropriately appalled, including by one's own.

"Suffering and rejection sum up the whole cross of Jesus. To die on the cross means to die despised and rejected of men. Suffering and rejection are laid upon Jesus as a divine necessity, and every attempt to prevent it is the work of the devil, especially when it comes from his own disciples; for it is in fact an attempt to prevent Christ from being Christ. It is Peter, the Rock of the Church, who commits that sin, immediately after he has confessed Jesus as the Messiah."

— The Cost of Discipleship, p. 87

HELPFUL QUESTIONS — IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER

Do you have a specific occurrence of hypocrisy you'd like to address? Would you give me an example?	What is it that you know or have personally observed?
May I offer some possible context to what I know of Christian hypocrisy?	Would you like to know what God thinks of Christian hypocrisy?
Christian hypocrisy is very real — but is there any room for misunderstanding as well?	What do you think the response of the Church or individual Christians should be to it?
Would you mind if I share how I've been affected by Christian hypocrisy?	I confess — I'm it. Would you like to hear how I became the Christian hypocrite?
Is this a personal stumbling block between you and possibly believing the truth about God's love for you?	What does it make you feel and think?
Have you considered knowing the God who agrees with you?	Would you consider attending church with me? May I pray with you?

SCRIPTURE VERSES

MATTHEW 23:27

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

1 JOHN 4:20–21

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."

MARK 7:9

"You are expert at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."

LUKE 12:1B–2

"He began saying to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.'"

HEBREWS 5:12–13

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of God."

MATTHEW 16:24

"If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

ANSWERS

- Agree with the concern — it is sin.
- Exhort and encourage toward mercy, forgiveness, and our need for a Savior.
- I've been hurt by it, and I've been guilty of it. Offer personal testimony from either side.
- Self-righteousness is offensive to us, but especially to God.
- Work out the difference between self-righteousness, being an infant Christian (1 Cor. 3:2), failure (Rom. 7), and being incomplete (Phil. 1:6).
- Hypocrisy does not escape the Lord's eye.
- The Lord has planned for Church discipline because He loves His Church and desires it — and individuals — to confess and repent.
- Explain the standard: self-denial to the point of the cross.

- Causes of hypocrisy include: arrogance, foolishness, fear of man, unbelief, and wolves (Mt. 7:15).