

*We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who convicts the world of sin, that He alone brings new life to those who are spiritually dead, and that He baptizes [or places] all believers into the one true Church, which is the Body of Christ, that He indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts upon them and fills those who are yielded to Him.*

–First Bible Church Constitution, Article III

## **The Connection Between This Doctrine and the Hypocrisy Question**

The Holy Spirit's job is to make us holy. He is the one who regenerates us and causes us to turn from sin to Christ. He convicts us of our sin and empowers us to live a life of love and obedience to the Lord. In short, he focuses on helping us become more like Jesus in every area of our lives. And Jesus was never a hypocrite. He hated hypocrisy and called it out when he saw it. The more like Jesus we become, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the less hypocrisy we will tolerate in our lives.

### **Three Kinds of Hypocrisy**

Every time the word hypocrite (*hupocrites*) is used in the New Testament, it is spoken by Jesus. The Greek word refers to 1) one who answers; 2) an actor; stage-player; 3) a dissembler, pretender (Thayer's Greek Lexicon). Most of Jesus' charges of hypocrisy were directed toward religious conservatives who considered Jesus a radical and liberal activist who championed the cause of the poor and marginalized.

- 1. Personal Hypocrisy:** When professing Christians obey Jesus' commands selectively and then arrogantly criticize those who don't sin like they do, they are trying to give the appearance publicly that they are closer to God than they really are in private.

Matt. 6:2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

Matt. 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

Luke 6:42 "How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

- 2. Political Hypocrisy:** When professing Christians use double standards to gain political power that will protect their wealth and make it "easier" to follow Jesus. This hypocrisy is especially noticeable to unbelievers in America who are young, female, minority, or liberal.
  1. Sexual Politics: John 8:7 And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."
  2. Financial Politics: Mark 12:17 Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."
- 3. Corporate Hypocrisy:** When blatant and public hypocrisy is permitted in the church without being corrected by other members and the leadership, the church as a whole is guilty of hypocrisy.

### **Some Examples of Hypocrisy:**

1. Zealously opposing same sex marriage while remaining silent on unbiblical divorce in the church, or being abusive to a wife, or being disrespectful to a husband.
2. Praising, ignoring, or defending things in a politician of your own party that you criticize in a politician of the opposing party.
3. Being selective in which “justice issues” should be addressed by the government, such as protesting abortion but ignoring systemic racism.
4. Disobeying the Golden Rule of Social Media: “Tweet others the way you want to be tweeted.”
5. Demanding to be listened to and understood by political opponents without carefully listening to and understanding them.
6. Misquoting or misrepresenting a political opponent, either intentionally or carelessly.
7. Insulting and spreading rumors about a political opponent in conversation or on social media.
8. Vilifying, demonizing, recognizing nothing good or no common ground in a political opponent.

### **How To Respond To the Charge of Hypocrisy**

1. Admit that hypocrisy in the church is a real problem and that you struggle with it in your own life. Explain how you are a work in progress and the Holy Spirit is helping you become more like Jesus, but you have not yet arrived. Ask them to forgive you if your hypocrisy has caused them to take Jesus less seriously. Humility goes a long way, but defensiveness shuts down the conversation.
2. Point out how much they have in common with Jesus who is the most vocal critic of hypocrites in the Bible. Then, ask them if you can talk with them about some of the points below (From *Brothers, Stand Firm!*, 173f).
3. *Even if the church is full of hypocrites, that doesn't mean the Christian message is false.* To draw that conclusion, several logical fallacies must be committed:
  1. *Ad hominem* fallacy: They are attacking the person they are arguing rather than the argument. Illustration: The unhealthy doctor.
  2. *Guilt-by-association* fallacy: If they disregard your presentation of the gospel by linking you to notorious scandals and displays of hypocrisy, they are presuming your guilt by association (televangelists, prosperity preachers, sexual assault in Catholic priesthood, etc.). Ask them if there are any corrupt contractors (or doctors, teachers, or lawyers—whatever their profession is) and then conclude, “Therefore, all contractors are corrupt.”
  3. *Red herring* fallacy: If they respond to the implications of the resurrection with an irrelevant topic to divert or distract from the original issue, they are waving a red herring. Hypocrisy among some people who claim to follow Christ is irrelevant to the veracity of his claims.
4. *Every follower of Jesus Christ is at various stages of growth, so even the most healthy churches have immature believers.* The good news is that the good news is for everyone, even really broken people. Some people have a lot farther to go, in terms of cleaning up their lives by the power of the Holy Spirit, than others. On the surface, it might seem like these baby believers are just hypocrites. On closer examination, they are making progress toward being like Christ.
5. *I can't speak for every church but I can speak for mine. Is there anyone in my church whose hypocrisy is keeping you from seriously considering the claims of Christ?* Tell them that the Bible has specific instructions for situations like these. Explain to them that you plan to go to that church member and follow the Biblical protocol in cases like this (church discipline, Mt. 7:1–5; 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:1–13).