



## [Luke 12:1-7](#)

(1) In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (2) For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. (3) Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. (4) "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. (5) But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! (6) "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. (7) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

*New King James Version*

*Hypocrite* originally had a neutral sense, "someone who answers," and *hypocrisy* meant "answering." Initially, these words were used of the normal flow of question and answer in conversation or discussion. They later became connected with question-and-answer sections in plays, naturally followed by the idea of acting a part. Eventually, "hypocrite" came to describe one who is never genuine but always play-acting. The basis of hypocrisy is insincerity.

Hypocrites inhabit every walk of life, trying to impress others in an attempt to hide who they really are. In the Christian life, a hypocrite is someone who tries to appear more spiritual than he really is. Such a person knows that he is pretending and hopes he will not be found out. His Christianity is a shallow charade.

As the crowds following Him grew, [Jesus](#) decided to warn His disciples of this spiritual pitfall. They could easily surrender to human nature, giving in to the temptation either to gain popularity by pleasing the crowds or to avoid trouble by pleasing the Pharisees. Human nature drives us to want people to like and admire us, and it seems so easy to

“act the part” that others want to see.

Jesus compares hypocrisy to leaven, symbolizing sin ([I Corinthians 5:6-8](#); [Galatians 5:9](#)). Like leaven, hypocrisy begins small but grows quickly and quietly, infecting the whole person and eventually the whole society. When a person is puffed up with pride, hypocrisy flourishes and character deteriorates ([I Corinthians 4:6](#), 18-19; 5:2). Like all sin, it must be stopped before the underlying pride has an opportunity to spread ([James 1:14-15](#)). The longer he waits to deal with it, the worse it gets. Nothing can really be hidden ([Mark 4:22](#)), which makes hypocrisy foolish and futile. So why keep pretending?

Jesus was perhaps concerned that His disciples might be tempted to compromise the truth to avoid offending the crowds or the Pharisees (see [Luke 8:16-18](#); [11:33](#)). Many who profess to be God's ministers do something like this to remain in their pulpits. God's truth is like light, not leaven, and it must not be hidden.

Jesus mentions “fear” five times in these verses, teaching that a basic cause of hypocrisy is the fear of men. People will do almost anything to avoid embarrassment or harm. When we are afraid of what others may say or do to us, we try to impress them to gain their approval, and our human nature will stoop to deception to accomplish its purposes. Sadly, many of the Pharisees were more concerned about reputation than character—what people thought about them than what [God](#) knew about them. The fear of men always brings a snare ([Proverbs 29:25](#)), and Jesus wants His disciples to avoid it and be stable in their [faith](#). As Scottish novelist and poet, Sir Walter Scott, wrote, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive.”

— Martin G. Collins

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[Beware of Hypocrisy](#)

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[Fear of Man](#)

[Hypocrite](#)

[Leavening](#)

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