

When Actions Contradict Stated Beliefs

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Many people fit the label hypocrite, or in other words, deceiver, double-dealer, fake, or pretender.

There are a couple of secular meanings for the word hypocrite as defined by *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*. Number one, "a person who pretends to have values, moral, or religious beliefs, principles, etc. that he or she does not actually possess, especially a person whose actions belie stated beliefs." And number two, "a person who feigns some desirable or publicly approved attitude, especially one whose private life, opinions, or statements belie his or her public statements."

In other words, a hypocrite is one who deliberately and as a habit professes to be good when he is aware that he is not.

Now there are synonyms for hypocritical, I have mentioned some of them. For example, insincere, false, two-faced, dishonest, deceitful, deceptive, truthless, feigned, counterfeit. And of course on the positive side, the antonyms are sincere, heartfelt, genuine, and honest. And of course, that is the target that we aim for.

The primary motivator of hypocrisy, of course, is pride, and the major resulting sin is that it is a lie, it breaks one of the commandments.

In the Old Testament, hypocrite and hypocrisy are the English translations of the Hebrew word, *chaneph* or *choneph*. One is hypocrite, the other is hypocrisy. It is just one letter different. Hypocrisy means "to cover," "to hide," "to obscure, hence to pollute," "to be degraded or defiled," "to make profane," "to seduce." In New King James Version, hypocrite and hypocrites actually appear eight times in Job. In other places or other versions, the terms godless man, godless men, and godless are used to translate the original Hebrew word.

Now *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* states that under the heading, Hypocrite: "The Hebrew word from which hypocrite is rendered means profane man." *Wilson's* goes on to say that most forms of the word in the Hebrew mean, "one defiled in mind and conscience, yet concealing it and pretending to be outwardly what he is not inwardly. To seem to have zeal and affection towards God when his heart is far from him or dividing his heart between God and the world also opposed to the innocent who has a good conscience."

So a profane man violates sacred things, the Sabbath, the name of God, divine laws, and God's covenant. He stains what is beautiful and glorious, and there is a clear indication in the Old Testament that hypocrisy equates with profanity of any kind, not just religious. Other concepts related to profane are common and unholy. In the New Testament, the word hypocrite is derived from the Greek theatrical term meaning actor or to play a part. The essential identity of hypocrites, therefore, is that they pretend to be something they are not. Psalm 26:7 in the Revised Standard Version refers to them as false men, disassemblers.

Still, in the Gospels, the implications are more specific. Hypocrites pretend to be paragons of religious virtue while lacking genuine spiritual virtue in the inner being.

Mark 7:6 records Jesus's own words.

Mark 7:6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.'"

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, hypocrite primarily denotes "one who answers"; then, "a stage-actor"; it was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of their voice. Hence, the word became used metaphorically of "a dissembler, a hypocrite."

Throughout His ministry, Jesus vigorously exposed and denounced the hypocrisy of many who opposed Him, especially the scribes and Pharisees.

They paraded their charitable deeds, praying and fasting as a theatrical display to win the praise of men, and they sought to give the appearance of being godly, but they were blind to the truth of God. A composite portrait is easily assembled from Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees. They were ostentatious when they gave alms with the intent that people would praise them and when they fasted, they disfigured their faces. They also tried to trap Jesus by hypothetically pretending to be perplexed about religious issues.

According to the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "The hypocrisy of the Gospels is the appearing before men what one ought to be but is not before God. At times it is a deliberately played part. At others it is a deception of which the actor himself is unconscious." Thus, according to Christ, all who play the part of religion, whether consciously or unconsciously, without being religious, are hypocrites and so fall under His sternest denunciation.

Please turn with me to Matthew 6, verse 1. A study of the actual charges against the Pharisees shows not all cases can be interpreted as hypocrisy. We find blindness to their faults, an over-evaluation of human tradition, sheer ignorance of God's demands, and love of display. And the love of display is motivated by pride and often results in hypocrisy.

Matthew 6:1-2 [the heading in my Bible says, Do Good to Please God] "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound the trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."

It is interesting that this is repeated at least three times in just a few scriptures here as far as they have the reward.

Matthew 6:3-6 "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen

by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

The term hypocrite is used here to refer to a person who does good acts for appearances only, not out of compassion or other good motives. So his actions may be good, but his motives are hollow and these empty acts are his only reward.

Now when Jesus says not to tell your left hand what your right hand is doing, He teaches that our motives for giving to God and others must be pure. It is easy to give with mixed motives, to do something for someone with the expectation of benefiting ourselves in return. However, we should avoid all scheming and provide for the reason of giving, that is, responding to God's love.

It is easy to do what is right for recognition and praise to ensure our motives are not selfish. We should perform our good deeds quietly or in secret with no thought at all about reward. Jesus says we should check our motives in three areas: generosity, which is found in verse 4; prayer in verse 6; and fasting in verse 18.

Let us continue in Matthew 6, verse 16. This is about fasting to be seen only by God.

Matthew 6:16-18 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrite with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your heads and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret, will reward you openly."

So those acts should not be self-centered, but God-centered, done not to make us look good but to make God look good, to glorify God.

The reward God promises is not material and is not given to those seeking it. Doing something only for ourselves is not a loving sacrifice, and with our next good deed, ask: "Would I still do this if no one were ever to know I did it?" In other words, do not toot your own horn.

The command in Matthew 7:1 to "judge not" is often misunderstood, especially by the unconverted. It refers to rash, censorious, and unjust judgment. Christ does not condemn judging as a magistrate because it is lawful and necessary when it is according to justice. Nor does Jesus condemn our forming an opinion of the conduct of others. For it is impossible not to form an opinion of evil conduct, but the opinion must be based on God's truth and not on our emotions or our prejudices. So Jesus refers to a habit of forming a judgment hastily, harshly, and without allowance for less severe circumstances, and expressing an opinion harshly and unnecessarily when formed. So it refers to private judgment rather than judicial, and it may be that Jesus had the customs of the scribes and Pharisees in mind.

Let us continue on, this time in chapter 7 of Matthew, and we are going to read verses 1 through 5. These are scriptures that you are very familiar with.

Matthew 7:1-5 "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Only God, the sole perfect discerner of inward realities, could pass the condemnation that they were hypocrites. God's words to Samuel in I Samuel 16:7 explain why, "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

One method of detecting a hypocrite is by his unmerciful judgment of others.

Proverbs 11:8-9 The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead. The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge [that is, the truth], the righteous will be delivered.

He seeks to confirm his standing by destructively accusing others, and in doing so, he falls into self-deceit and therefore is a hypocrite. The more he finds fault in others, the more confident he becomes in his own worth, and the more easily he appeases his conscience regarding the inconsistency between his moral state and his actions, as well as the incongruity between his private life and his public ways.

So Jesus' statement, "Judge not" is a rebuke to the hypocritical, judgmental attitude that tears others down to build oneself up. It is not a blanket statement against all critical thinking, but a call to be discerning rather than negative. Give people the benefit of the doubt.

Jesus instructed us to discern false teachers, and Paul taught us to exercise church discipline and trust God as the ultimate Judge.

So Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others are often habits we dislike in ourselves, and often our unbroken bad habits and behavior patterns are the ones we most want to change in others. Now if we are ready to criticize someone, we must check to see if we deserve the same criticism. We should judge ourselves first and then lovingly forgive and help our neighbor.

The Pharisees are the prototypical hypocrites of the Bible. They were model citizens of Israel and accepted leaders because of their zeal for the law, but pride knocked them down. The *McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia* says,

Pride is inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem, attended with insolence and rude treatment of others. It manifests itself by praising ourselves, adoring our persons, attempting to appear before others in a superior light to what we are, contempt and slander of others, envy at the excellences others possess, anxiety to gain applause, distress and rage when slighted, impatient of contradiction, and opposition to God Himself.

That is quite a mouthful, is it not? It does not paint a good picture.

Pride is the parent of hypocrisy. Discontent, ingratitude, covetousness, poverty, presumption, passion, extravagance, bigotry, war, and persecution, evil has pride connected with it in at least a nearby or remote sense.

What did the the scribes and Pharisees represent? The Jews had a profound and lasting sense of their religion's continuity. The Jews had a saying: "Moses received the law and delivered it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, the prophets to the men of the great synagogue [that is, the scribes]." So Judaism is based first on the Ten Commandments and then on the Pentateuch, the law, and the Jews were a people of the law, and like every nation they had their dream of greatness. Pride drove them to this goal, but by the hand of God, the experiences made that dream take a special direction.

The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians conquered them, leaving Jerusalem desolate. And it was clear that they could not be preeminent in political power. However, although political power was an apparent impossibility for the Jews, they nonetheless possessed the law, and to them the law was the very Word of God and the greatest and most precious possession of the world. That is actually when they took focus on it—and they did at times.

In the 5th century BC under Ezra and Nehemiah, the people could return to Jerusalem, rebuild their their shattered city, and take up their national life again. When that happened, Ezra the scribe read them the book of the law, which they had forgotten about. At this point, the people were nationally dedicated to keeping the law. All this is recorded in Nehemiah 8, and it is well worth reading.

From that time, the study of the law became the greatest of all possessions, and that study of the law was committed to the scribes of the great synagogue. Now as they continued to humanly reason, the great principles of the law were broken up into thousands upon thousands of little rules and regulations. The law said that a man must not work on the Sabbath day, so the scribes labored diligently to define what work was. They laid down how

many paces a man may walk on the Sabbath, how heavy a burden he may carry, the many things he may and may not do. By the time this scribal interpretation of the law was finished, it took more than 50 volumes to hold the mass of regulations that resulted.

One man who was training to be a rabbi told me that one thing that they had to do was that they could not carry burdens on the Sabbath. And so what they would do is so that they would have something to eat, they would stuff sandwiches in crevices on the city streets so that they could pick up a sandwich and eat it as they went on their way without without preparing a meal or anything like that. So that is just an extreme example of how bad it got with these detailed rules.

The return of the people to Jerusalem and the first dedication of the law took place about 455 BC, but it was not until long after that that the Pharisees emerged. About 175 BC Antiochus Epiphanies of Syria deliberately attempted to stamp out the Jewish religion and introduced Greek religion, customs, and practices. And it was then that the Pharisees arose as a separate sect. The name Pharisee means the separated ones. They were the men who dedicated their whole lives to the careful observance of every rule and regulation the scribes had devised.

Because of the ongoing threat against the Jews and their religion, the scribes and Pharisees determined to spend their whole lives in one long observance of Judaism in its most elaborate ceremonial and legal form. They were dedicated men who accepted the ever-increasing number of religious rules and regulations extracted from the law. There were never very many of them, only 6,000 at most.

In reality, if a man were going to accept and carry out every little regulation of the law, he would have time for nothing else. He had to withdraw himself and separate himself from ordinary life to keep the Judaic law.

The Pharisees then were two things. First, they were dedicated legalists. For them, religion meant observing every detail of the law. Second, they were men in desperate earnest about their faith because no one would have accepted the impossibly demanding task of living a life like that unless they had been obsessively committed. They simultaneously developed all the

faults of legalism and all the virtues of complete self-dedication. A Pharisee might either be an arrogant legalist or a man of burning devotion to God. And to say this is not to pass judgment on the Pharisees because the Jews themselves passed that verdict on them.

The Talmud distinguishes seven different kinds of Pharisees. Now this list is fascinating and eye-opening, illustrating attitudes that every Christian should strive to avoid.

1. There was the shoulder Pharisee. He was meticulous in his observance of the law, but wore his good deeds upon his shoulder. He was out for a reputation for purity and goodness. True, he obeyed the law, but did so to be seen by men. That was the shoulder Pharisee.

2. There was the wait a little for Pharisee. He was the Pharisee who could always produce an entirely valid excuse for putting off a good deed. He professed the creed of the strictest Pharisees, but he could always find a reason for allowing the practice to lag. He spoke, but he did not do.

3. There was the bruised or bleeding Pharisee. The Talmud speaks of the plague of self-afflicting Pharisees who received their name for this reason. Since women had a very low status, no austere orthodox teacher would be seen talking to a woman in public, even if that woman was his wife or sister. These Pharisees went even farther. They would not allow themselves to look at a woman on the street. Instead, they would shut their eyes and bump into walls, buildings, and obstructions to avoid doing so. They must have been pretty beat up after a few years, or maybe even a few weeks. Thus they bruised and wounded themselves and their wounds and bruises earned them a remarkable reputation for exceeding piety.

4. There was the pestle and mortar Pharisee, the humpbacked Pharisee, or the tumbling Pharisee. This is all the same type of Pharisee, just three different terms that they used for them. There was the pestle and mortar Pharisee. (And they did not have a vessel with a pestle. Every time I read that that popped into my mind.) The pestle and the mortar Pharisee, the humpback Pharisee, and the tumbling Pharisee. These are very descriptive. Such men walked so ostentatiously humbly that they were bent like a pestle in a mortar, or hunchback. They were so humble that they would not lift their feet from

the ground, tripping on every obstruction they met. Their humility was a self-advertising ostentation.

5. There was the ever-reckoning or compounding Pharisee. If you are an actuary or a CPA, you know what that means. He was endlessly reckoning up his good deeds. He was always striking a balance sheet between himself and God, and he believed that every good deed he did put God a little further in his debt. To him, religion was always to be reckoned in terms of a profit-and loss-account.

6. There was the timid or fearing Pharisee. He was always in dread of divine punishment. Therefore, he consistently cleaned the outside of the cup and the platter to make it seem reasonable. He saw religion in terms of judgment and life in terms of a terror stricken evasion of this judgment, meaning at all costs avoid God's judgment, but he did not understand it.

7. Finally, there was the God-fearing Pharisee. He was the Pharisee who really and truly loved God and found his delight and obedience to the law of God however difficult it may be. But he was self-deceived and worshipped a God he had formed in his own mind through human reasoning.

That was the Jews' classification of the Pharisees.

In the Gospels, the words Pharisee and hypocrite are near synonymous. The etymology of hypocrite suggests a pretender. In Jewish culture, the Pharisees present themselves as the authoritative voice on righteousness and the law, and they are compelling in many ways. They were fervently loyal to God, zealous for knowledge of Scripture, and respected as the authority even by those who disagreed with them.

Jesus challenged their assumed right to their position, exposing their pretense, and emerged as a higher authority. The Pharisees defended their stance aggressively, ultimately collaborating in Jesus' death.

Now the images of a Pharisee form a portrait of a person who exhibits zeal without knowledge of the mystery of the Kingdom, occupying the seat of Moses in Jewish culture, outstanding by all cultural measures of righteousness, but threatened by the Messiah's arrival.

Please turn to Acts 23, verse 6. In their zealous efforts to observe the law and establish boundaries that demarcated the true Israelite identity, they embraced both oral and written law, thus differing from the Sadducees on the resurrection of the body, among other matters.

Acts 23:6-10 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am being judged. And when he said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confessed both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man [speaking of Paul]; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

So the commander saved his life, in a sense, at least saved him a beating sadly, by those Pharisees and Sadducees. I do not think the Pharisees would have been beating him, but the Sadducees would have because the Pharisees actually credited him.

Please turn over to John 10, verse 33. Now Jesus infuriated the Pharisees by solving their most challenging riddles, surpassing their highest standards, and exceeding their discernment of the law. But they were stirred to action when He asserted His right to their position as religious authority. Along with miraculously healing the impure, Jesus claimed a special relationship with God. He also owns the Messianic role with direct appeals to their treasured law.

John 10:33-39 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make yourself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written

in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into this world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.

So they had a strong pattern all the way through first with John the Baptist, and Jesus' preaching and then the apostles where they constantly tried to destroy true men of God.

The envious and spiritually blind Pharisee retaliators used their political and religious clout for revenge. With their priestly roles and political connections, they encouraged Jesus' trial and crucifixion. So the proverbial blindness of the Pharisees is ironically reversed when one Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, gained sight by being blinded on the Damascus Road. His vicious persecution of Christians demonstrated the false conviction of pride that motivated the Pharisees. And after being blinded by Jesus, whom he was persecuting, his narrow-minded view of the law was corrected, and he saw clearly and repented.

We also find a few other Pharisees trusting in Christ as well.

Acts 15:5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them [that is, the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

So there was a sect of the Pharisees who did believe.

In the Gospels, the Pharisees commanded tremendous respect, as I mentioned, and this aligns with their historical refusal to be loyal to Rome. They were politically influential due to their popularity as leaders. Now those subject to intra-Jewish criticism in the Qumran and other rabbinic literature, they were created with the role of judge in Hebrew culture, sitting in the seat of Moses. But the Pharisees were foremost interested in the restoration of Israel. And their concerns for upholding the law, the sanctity

of the Temple, the purity of Israel and the entire Israelite claim to the land of Israel was sparked by prophetic promises with significant political implications. And this is why we find them to be the foremost inquisitors of Jesus, because they were looking in the wrong direction. They were looking at the restoration of the nation of Israel rather than of people on a spiritual level.

They rightly perceived that they shared common interests with Jesus, the Rabbi from Galilee, and this is partly why they sent a delegation to examine John the Baptist, and later they constantly questioned Jesus. However, the gospels record a little casual conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees. Stories of conflict with Pharisees were more common, but this was a little casual conversation.

Please turn over to Matthew 23, verse 1. Jesus accused them of abusing their power, that is, by devouring widows' houses, taking the best synagogues seats, expecting dutiful marketplace greetings, and demanding the title of rabbi. Jesus criticized the burdens of the law that the Pharisees loaded on the people, and to make matters worse, if they offered no assistance, the Pharisees made a religion of burden, but did not lift a hand to help.

Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 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. [And that is hypocrisy.] For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

So Jesus was not commending the scribes and Pharisees with all their rules and their regulations. He said, insofar as these scribes and Pharisees have taught you the great principles of the law that Moses received from God, you must obey them.

Now the problem with the Pharisees was that they were not correctly applying the spirit of the law. The Ten Commandments are based on two fundamental principles. They are based on reverence for God and for God's name and for God's way of life toward others. They are based on respect for

a person's life, possessions, personality, and self. These principles are eternal and insofar as the scribes and Pharisees taught reverence for God and respect for others, their teaching was eternally binding and eternally valid.

However, their entire outlook on religion had one fundamental effect. It made it a thing of thousands upon thousands of rules and regulations, rendering it an intolerable burden. To make things worse, the Pharisees would not allow the slightest relaxation of the rules, even for mercy's sake. Their confessed purpose was to build a fence around the law, and they would not relax or remove one regulation. By all this, they prevented people from an opportunity to enter the Kingdom of God. The Pharisees shut the door to the Kingdom of God with their hypocrisy, which made them evil emissaries.

Matthew 23:13-15 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widow's houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" [or it would be hades in that case, in the Greek, as much a son of hades as yourselves].

Being a religious leader in Jerusalem was very different from being a pastor in secular society today. Their history, culture, and daily life centered around its relationship with God. The religious leaders were the best known, most powerful, and most respected leaders. And Jesus made these stinging accusations because the leaders' insatiable hunger for more power and money and status had caused them to lose sight of God and their blindness was spreading throughout the entire nation.

The Pharisees converts were attracted to Pharisaism, not to God. And by getting caught up in the details of their additional laws and regulations, they missed the point of God to whom the laws were intended. A religion of works pressures people to surpass others in what they know to do. Thus, a hypocritical teacher was likely to have students who were even more hypocritical than himself.

The Pharisees taught people false religious beliefs, making religion a science of evasion and what to get away with. So the truly converted person will never make a promise with the deliberate intention of evading it. He will never as he makes it provide himself with a series of escape routes that he can use if he finds his promise hard to keep.

Matthew 23:16-22 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it."

So, Christ is pointing out the discrepancy between the attitude of the Pharisees and God's truth.

We should think twice before pointing our fingers at the Pharisees for their art of evasion. This is a widespread area of human weakness. Some of us may have sought to evade some duties, such as tithing on a technicality or we may call in the strict letter of the law to avoid doing what the spirit of the law means we ought to do.

For Jesus, the binding principle was twofold. God hears every word we speak and sees every intention of our hearts. Because of that, we should be unfamiliar with the art of evasion. The technique of evasion may suit the world's perverted hypocritical practices, but never our open honesty as a faithful Christian.

The Pharisees lost their sense of proportion. They tithed their herb garden produce, but neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. In their eyes, the importance of a tithe of spice outweighed the importance of justice, mercy, and faith.

Matthew 23:23-24 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!"

So as ideal antagonists, the Pharisees shared the same source of knowledge, the Old Testament, about God as Jesus taught, but they were blinded by pride to the complete perspective, and their narrow-minded vision of the law eventually led to Jesus' harsh judgment of them.

Now, though they were considered expert interpreters of the fine distinctions of the law, Jesus condemned them as false teachers of the law for hypocritically expanding its intention. While they took offense to His Sabbath healing of a man with a withered hand, He referred to the written law and scorned interpretation based on human reasoning. Jesus claimed their traditions made the word of God void by focusing on minute details, such as tithing of spices, and missing the greater purpose. In Jesus' caricature of them, they cleaned the outside of the drinking cup, but ignored the filth inside it, just as they did their own personal lives and spiritual condition.

Matthew 23:25-26 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also."

The Pharisees were so preoccupied with their external religious practices, that they overlooked their internal hypocrisy within themselves. They remained full of greed and self-indulgence and pride. They missed the truth that cleaning the inside is essential to and required for the cleanliness of the outside. In simple terms, hypocrisy is a spiritually filthy inside with the appearance of a clean outside. To emphasize their insufficient efforts at purity, Jesus called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs that on the outside look beautiful, but on the inside painted an entirely different picture. Physically, they were disguising their spiritual decay.

Matthew 23:27-30 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so, you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

The Greek word hypocrites literally means an actor in the Greek that it is translated from. And it is usually translated into the word hypocrite. And in some of Christ's uses of the word, it is equivalent to the concepts of evil and wickedness, godlessness, as seen in verses 27 and 29. But in general, the meaning is acting a part, false, deceptive, and deceived. He appears formally and outwardly religious and good, but inwardly insincere and unrighteous.

Please turn over to Luke 18, verse 9. Intent on separation from all defilement, the Pharisees applied the laws prescribed for priests and sacrifices to their circumstances. No wonder they were offended when Jesus fellowshiped with tax collectors and sinners. Their boast and observance of the law and their contempt for sinners is clearly expressed in Jesus' Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The Pharisee admired his own purity in his prayer. You almost have this memorized, this is a very familiar set of scriptures here.

Luke 18:9-14 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus explained that the tax collector who begged for mercy rather than the Pharisee, was justified in prayer.

There is a particular state of hypocrisy that is far worse than absolute subjection to sin, since in the absolute subjection to sin, at least the earnest desire may exist in the individual to rid himself of his faults. However, he does not possess the spiritual power to do so. On the other hand, the hypocrite is quite content with himself and has no desire to repent of the sin deeply lodged in his mind. He merely endeavors to hide it from God and men to be able to gratify his sinful inclinations more securely under the cover of an assumed purity. This is the hypocritical attitude and that is a danger for the Laodiceans.

Now turn over to Matthew 5, verse 17. In certain respects, the frivolous sinner is far better than the hypocrite, since the open sinner has at least no desire to deceive anyone about his condition. The frivolous sinner does not present himself to the world other than he is. However, this open truthfulness in the open sinner is counterbalanced by the hypocrite, recognizing at least the divine law and judgment. He remains conscious of the incongruity between his state of mind and heart and this sacred law. But yet hypocrisy as permanent untruthfulness as systemic deceit as a life in dishonesty, will gradually annihilate all sense of its condition. As time goes on, hypocrisy will annihilate, it will get rid of all sense of the condition itself. And this means that concerning hypocrisy, publicans and prostitutes may have an easier time repenting their sins than Pharisees. Yet Christ tells us that we will not be in the Kingdom of God unless our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees.

Matthew 5:17-20 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till it all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the

kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of God."

So unless we produce the fruit of righteousness, we will not see the Kingdom of God. We cannot receive salvation unless we are more holy, in a sense, than the Pharisees. The righteousness of true Christians is seated in the heart and is therefore genuine.

Now the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted of outward observances of ceremonial and traditional law. They offered sacrifices, they fasted and prayed frequently, and were meticulous about tithes and religious ceremonies. However, they neglected justice, truth, purity, and holiness of their hearts. The righteousness that Jesus requires of His Kingdom is obedience and purity and morality, honesty, self-control, the fear of God, and love of others.

The primary sin committed in hypocrisy is bearing false witness. It is lying. In 1923, Andre Gide in *Journal of the Counterfeiters*, worded it this way, "The true hypocrite is the one who ceases to perceive his deception, the one who lies with sincerity," or lies convincingly.

Please turn over to John 8, verse 42. So there are slightly different perspectives to what hypocrisy is. Some are secular, some biblical, and some just changes in the meaning of words over time. A lie is an intentional violation of truth. In Scripture, the word lie is used to designate all the ways people deny or alter truth in word or action. It is also considered evil in general. The good in our word or action is designated as the truth. Evil is its opposite, or a lie. Consequently, Satan, being contrary to God, is the father of lies and liars. Dishonest persons are children of Satan, and the Scriptures obviously and emphatically condemn all lies, white or black, and Jesus made this emphatically clear to the Pharisees.

John 8:42-47 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil [You could say the greatest hypocrite ever to

be in existence.], and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear because you are not of God."

Truthfulness requires that we never alter the truth in words or actions to deceive others, whether for pleasure, to benefit others or ourselves, or even for the best cause.

Now flip over to Galatians 2, verse 11. In the 19th century, Leo Tolstoy wrote in *Anna Karenina* a very perceptive comment. "Hypocrisy is anything whatever that may deceive the cleverest and most penetrating man. But the least wide-awaked of children recognizes it, though it may be disguised."

The apostle Paul encountered hypocrisy among Jewish Christians who refused to eat with the Gentile converts.

Galatians 2:11-14 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed [This is Paul speaking about his conversation with Peter.]; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

So the Judaizers accused Paul of watering down the gospel to make it easier for the Gentiles to accept, while Paul accused the Judaizers of nullifying the truth of the gospel by adding conditions to it. And the basis of salvation was the issue. So the argument came to a head when Peter, Paul, the Judaizers, and some Gentile Christians all gathered together in Antioch to share a meal,

and Peter probably thought that by staying aloof from the Gentiles, he was promoting harmony. He did not want to offend James' Jewish friends, but Paul charged that Peter's action violated the gospel. By joining the Judaizers, Peter implicitly supported their claim that Christ was not sufficient for salvation. Compromise is an important element in getting along with others, but we should never compromise the truth of God's Word.

Now, if we feel we have to change our Christian beliefs to match those of our friends, we are on dangerous ground. *And this is a situation where our assumed convictions are revealed to be mere preferences.* Although Peter was a leader of the church, he was acting like a hypocrite, and Paul knew he had to confront Peter before his actions damaged the church. Therefore, Paul publicly confronted Peter. It is worth noting, however, that Paul did not approach the other leaders, nor did he write letters to the churches instructing them not to follow Paul's example. Instead, he confronted Peter directly. Sometimes sincere Christians, even Christian leaders, make mistakes and it may take the guidance of other sincere Christians to get them back on track. And if you are convinced that someone is harming themselves or the church, a direct and humble approach is usually the best course of action to take. There is no place for backstabbing in the body of Christ, and it reeks of hypocrisy.

Please turn over to Romans 12, verse 9. Paul pointed out that sincere love is one of the marks of a faithful Christian. In Romans 12, Paul explains how we can have unhypocritical love. He offers a series of guidelines and principles that we can use to govern our relationships with one another.

Romans 12:9-16 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer, distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Sometimes people *pretend* to love others. They know how to speak kindly, avoid hurt feelings, and appear to be interested in them. They may even be skilled at pretending to feel compassion when they hear of others' needs or to become indignant when they learn of injustice. But God calls us to honest and sincere love that goes far beyond pretense and politeness. Sincere love requires concentration and effort as it involves helping others become better people. It demands our time and our money and our personal involvement. So look for people who need your love and find ways to benefit them.

God's way of honoring involves love. As Christians, we honor people because they have been created in God's image, are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and are a unique contribution to God's church.

For a final scripture, please turn over to James 3, verse 17. Love must be heartfelt. There should be no hypocrisy, no play-acting, no ulterior motive. There is a false love that gives affection while at the same time keeping one eye on what can be gained for oneself. It is a selfish love with the goal to get far more than it will give. Christian love is not self-focused or insincere but has cleansed the self. It is pure and sincere with a heartfelt outgoing concern for others. And we must uphold the standard of righteousness that God has set before us. Properly honoring someone requires the wisdom from above. The apostle James says true wisdom is genuine and never deceptive.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

The depths of one's character can be measured by true wisdom. As we can identify a tree by the type of fruit it produces, we can evaluate our own wisdom by the way we act. So may God grant you genuineness so that you may be honest and sincere in your dealings with others.