

## **With So Many Christian Hypocrites, Why Should I Believe in Christianity?**

No one likes to listen to people who say one thing but do another, even if what they say is true. The doctor who tells you to lose weight, but stands before you with a huge gut, has given advice that will be hard to follow. So is the case with Christianity. When Christians say we should live in one way or another, but do not live in that way themselves it is hard not to dismiss Christianity altogether. I get that, but before one uses hypocrisy as an excuse to disregard Christianity, I think there are some important ideas to consider.

First, the Bible never suggests that Christians can or will be perfect. In fact, it teaches the opposite (See 1 John 1:8). It does say that Christians, by God's help, can come to live better lives, but never perfect, non-hypocritical lives. You might even say that believing in Christianity means believing people will continue to sin at times as faithful as they try to be. Thus, even if a Christian does act as a hypocrite, their action does not invalidate the Bible's teaching.

Second, while it is most certainly true that Christians do not always act very Christianly (me included), that does not mean they are hypocrites in every case. A hypocrite is not someone who makes mistakes; a hypocrite is someone who either blatantly ignores his own instruction to others or holds himself to be something in public that he is not in private. When Christians sin, they are to look back to God and live in a new way. When they do this, they are not acting as hypocrites, they are recognizing their own brokenness and their need for a Savior, just as the Bible calls us to do.

Third, the Bible speaks strongly against hypocrisy. Jesus was perhaps the loudest voice against hypocrisy in his day, regularly calling out the religious elite for duplicity. Read as he addresses such a crowd:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness...You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? (Matthew 23:27-28, 33).

Thus, if you find true hypocrisy distasteful, you are not invalidating the Bible's teaching, you are confirming it.

Fourth, although hypocrisy makes it hard for us to emotionally accept what hypocrites might say, that does not mean that on some points they may not be correct. Consider, for example, a medical researcher who develops a complete cure for the HIV virus. When publicizing her findings, she talks of her great heart for those affected by the disease. Later, it is reported that in the lab the researcher regularly said HIV patients deserve to die and that she only worked on a cure because of the money and fame she would earn from it. Now, if you were an HIV patient and learned the whole story of the researcher, you would have every reason to disdain her. But your disdain, should not go so far as to ignore her proven findings. And if you care about your own life, it should not keep you from adhering to the new found treatment plan. I would argue the same is true for Christian teaching and hypocrisy. It is completely understandable why a person would disdain a Christian who speaks and acts hypocritically, but that does not necessarily mean that what the Christian says is incorrect and should not be heeded.

Fifth, and finally, I think it is important that we do not invalidate one person's words, because someone who is said to have come in their name is acting as a hypocrite. Let's suppose a man goes into a bank and asks for all the money. He says he has been sent by you, then attempts to kill the clerk before running out the door. During the investigation, the clerk, based on the criminal's words, says the armed robber was sent by you. Would it be right for you to be put away for the crime even if you had nothing to do with it? I don't think so. Likewise, when someone comes on the scene calling himself a Christian, but acts in ways that are not consistent with what Christ taught, I do not think it is right to charge Christ for the behavior. So if you see real hypocrisy in Christians, my encouragement would be not to dismiss the teaching of Jesus, only the behavior of the errant messenger.

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