

Don't Be That Guy

Week 1 | Hypocrisy

BOTTOM LINE

The word "hypocrite" is a very negative word, and unfortunately associated with Christians more than any other group of people. Everything we say and do flows out of who we believe we are.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

To create meaningful conversation that stretches our faith and draws us closer to the heart of God. This guide is a suggestion. Adjust the questions as appropriate for your group.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 23: 4-5,13,15,23-28 (all NLT)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share:** Have you ever met someone who said one thing and did another? Share your experience with the group. How did that impact your view of that person?
- Webster defines a hypocrisy as "imposing a standard on others that you yourself aren't living." This is the reputation of 'the church' for many people. This may be the reason you or someone you know has avoided church for years. No church bashing here, but if you've had this experience share it with the group.
- Read Matthew 23: 4-5, 13.** Does it surprise you to read that Jesus strongly called out those in church leadership (Pharisees) for being hypocrites? Does it surprise you that hypocrisy was experienced 2,000 years ago just like it is today?
 - v5- Jesus said they did their deeds to be noticed by men...An important question to ask ourselves is, "If I'm honest, do I impose my beliefs on others with a shadow mission of looking good in front of them?" This is a tough question to answer! Discuss ways you've personally experienced this.
 - V13- The Pharisees actually hindered people from coming to God! 'Religion' itself becomes a barrier between a person and their personal relationship with God. Discuss in the group ways that this is still happening in churches today.
- Read Matthew 15.** What does Jesus mean by 'and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!'"? (Hint: What happens when people are dedicated to false systems centered around legalism?)
- Read & Discuss Matthew 23-28**
 - v23- Jesus isn't condemning their concern for the law, but he says there are 'more important' aspects of the law. What are those? Discuss why they are more important.
 - Do you struggle with a focus on 'the letter of the law' instead of 'the spirit of the law'? Can you share a personal experience with someone who leads their life this way?
 - Jesus uses the metaphor of 'cleaning the cup' to illustrate the difference between what we look like on the outside and what is happening inside. The answer to removing hypocrisy isn't to try harder on the outside, but to look closer at the inside—to our hearts and minds. Jesus is saying we are all hypocrites in some way because we are broken on the inside. Is there an area of hypocrisy that you struggle with in your life?
- How do we remove hypocrisy in our lives? Intuitively it all leads back to 'try harder.' We impose the 'try harder' on ourselves and others where they lack. The answer is not intuitive. It's completely the opposite. It's about giving up. Surrendering to the power of Christ to lead to freedom and victory. Discuss together why this should be easy to do, but for some of us it is a struggle. What would it take to surrender this area of your life to Christ?

In 2015, George Burna did study on why millennials don't go to church. After interviewing thousands, 85% said the number one reason they don't attend organized religion was because of hypocrisy, found in both the leaders of the churches as well as the people who attend. It concludes: "Modern people contend that the greatest proof that God does not exist is the behavior of Christians themselves!"



TRY THIS

We all must be willing to admit that there is a little bit of 'try harder' in all of us. From time to time we all develop a shadow mission of some sort. We must all own our part in burdening others with the 'religion' of our faith. This week take some time to be quiet and still. Ask God to illuminate areas of your life that reflect 'trying harder.' If you're not comfortable asking God, ask a close friend or family member if they see hypocrisy in you. Don't get defensive if they do! Pray and ask God to change you on the inside. Write down what you discover. Watch for changes in yourself!