



February 21, 2021
“Don’t Be a Hypocrite”
Matthew 23
Pastor Gary Hamrick

Hypocrisy involves some kind of inconsistency or contradiction in our lives, and unless we have never contradicted ourselves in speech, thought, or action, then we are guilty of it like everyone else. In Matthew 23, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his day for their hypocrisy. Seven times Jesus called religious leaders hypocrites and he challenged them about their inconsistent lives. We all have room in our lives to be challenged about any hypocrisy toward others, within self, or toward God.

1. Jesus and the “Hypocrites”!
 - a. Jesus and the disciples in the last week of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover.
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “What [happened in Matthew 23 was] in direct response to what [happened in Matthew 22]. ... The religious leaders of the day, that is primarily the Pharisees, the scribes, [Herodians, and the Sadducees], all got together in an attempt to malign and discredit the ministry of Jesus. They continually challenged him because they did not believe that he was the Messiah, and, thus, they made a concerted effort to turn the hearts of people who did believe [Jesus] was Messiah, away from him. ... [Jesus went off, so to speak, because he had had enough!] ... Jesus [used] some other pretty spicy terms [in addition to hypocrites] to characterize them as well... [including snakes, brood of vipers, blind guides, whitewashed tombs, fools, and sons of hell.]”
 - c. Matthew used the word hypocrite fifteen times, which is more than any other book of the Bible.
 - d. The word is only found nineteen times in the rest of the Bible.
 - e. Each time Matthew used the word in his Gospel account he was quoting Jesus.
 - f. Hypokrites is the Greek word from which we get the English word hypocrite.
 - i. The Greek word means a play actor, someone who hides behind a

- mask.
- ii. The Greek word is formed by hupo, which means under, and krino, which means to judge.
 - iii. The definition would be a person who underjudges self, and typically, a person who overjudges others.
- g. Hypocrisy always involves some type of inconsistency or contradiction in a person's life, either in words, actions, or thoughts.
- h. In a 2015 survey by the Barna Research Group, researchers found that millennials (20s to early 30s) attend church services less often than any other age group.¹
- i. Six out of ten men and women in this age group who were raised in the church no longer attend church services.
 - ii. The number one reason given by sixty-six percent of this group was because "American churchgoers are hypocritical."
- i. "Hypocrites in the church? Yes, and in the lodge and at the home. Don't hunt through the Church for a hypocrite. Go home and look in the mirror. Hypocrites? Yes. See that you make the number one less." – Evangelist Billy Sunday²
- j. Pastor Gary said, "You see, people can give all kinds of excuses about why they don't attend church or all kinds of reasons blaming people as to why they don't have a relationship with God, but the fact of the matter is that no one else on the planet will be an excuse for you on the day that you stand before God to [give] an account for your life. And, what's more, it's the very definition of hypocrisy to be able to point out hypocrisy in the lives of other people but not see it in your own life. And I realize that God's people will be held more accountable because we are exposed to a greater light, but, nevertheless, lying is lying, cheating is cheating, and hypocrisy is hypocrisy, and unless you've never contradicted yourself in word, thought, or deed, then you are just as guilty of hypocrisy as anyone else. ... We should be concerned about a double standard in our lives that becomes a stumbling block to other people either coming to faith in Christ or growing in their faith in Christ. ... We have to understand that people are watching us, whether you like it or not. Our lives are on display, and, hopefully, we should be a steppingstone for somebody to come to Christ or to grow in their faith rather than a stumbling block. Often, we serve to be the stumbling block because of the inconsistencies or contradictions in our lives. So, let's stop overjudging others and underjudging ourselves. Churchgoer or not, I'll be the first to admit that we have room to grow in this area.
- k. **Isaiah 9:17** – "... For everyone is a *hypocrite* and an *evildoer*..." (Emphasis

¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/what-millennials-want-when-they-visit-church/>

² https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/billy_sunday_183041#:~:text=Billy%20Sunday%20Quotes&text=Please%20enable%20Javascript-,Hypocrites%20in%20the%20Church%3F,the%20Church%20for%20a%20hypocrite.

added)

- i. **1 Peter 2:1** - *“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, **hypocrisy**, envy, and all evil speaking...”* (Emphasis added)

2. Hypocrisy Toward Others

- a. Pastor Gary said, “This is the contradiction between the standard you hold for yourself versus the standard that you hold for others.”
- b. **Matthew 23:1-3** - *“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.’ ”*
 - i. **Matthew 23:3** - *“... **they do not practice what they preach.**”* (1984 NIV) (Emphasis added)
- c. Pastor Gary said, “Do not let the Word of God lose its authority with you because of the bad examples of the people who might be teaching it. This is true today. God’s Word is wisdom and truth and it stands on its own, and it should not be validated or invalidated on the basis of the broken human vessels that God uses to teach it. Unfortunately, the reality is that men will fail [us]. Christian leaders may disappoint [us], but the unchanging truth of God’s eternal Word should never be diminished because of [these Christian leaders]. ... Human leaders are fallible people, and they may fail [us], but God never will. And because he never will, don’t you dare take your eyes off God and put them onto [anyone]. Make sure you are following the Word of God and keeping your eyes always fixed on Jesus.”
- d. **Matthew 23:13-15, 23** - *“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 widows’ 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. ... 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 and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”* (Emphasis added)
- e. Pastor Gary said, “[The] religious leaders made religious rituals and religious traditions more important than the Word of God. This clearly is also a rebuke about the way they had rejected Jesus... and because they had rejected Jesus, they were shutting [the door], in effect, in men’s faces because they weren’t helping them to enter in.”
- f. There was a common practice among the religious leaders who performed a “pray for pay” scam.

- g. The religious leaders went to great lengths to convert people to religion but not to Christ; to Jewish methods, but not to a Jewish Messiah.
- h. **Romans 2:1-3** - *“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?”*

3. Hypocrisy Toward Self

- a. Pastor Gary said, “This is a contradiction between what you say, think or believe and what you do. It’s when the inside doesn’t match the outside. It’s when the heart doesn’t match the habits.”
- b. **Matthew 23:25-28** - *“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. 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.”* (Emphasis added)
- c. It’s also true that on the inside a person can believe all of the right things but behave in a way that contradicts what they believe to be right and true.
- d. We read in Acts 10 that this was true in the life of the apostle Peter.
 - i. He came to realize that God showed no favoritism toward the Jews who practiced Judaism but accepted both Jews and Gentiles who believed in Christ.
 - 1. **Acts 10:34** - *“Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.’ ”*
 - ii. About ten years later, when Jews came to visit Peter, he distanced himself from his believing Gentile friends because he was concerned about what the Jews would say.
 - iii. **Galatians 2:11-13** - *“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I [Paul] withstood him face to his face, because he was to be blamed; 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.**”* (Emphasis added)

4. Hypocrisy Toward God

- a. Pastor Gary said, “This is a contradiction between what you say is right and wrong and what God says is right or wrong.”

- b. [Matthew 23:29-36](#) - *“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.’ Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”*
 - c. [Matthew 15:7-8](#) - *“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.’ ”*
5. [Psalm 86:11-13](#) - *“Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore. For great is Your mercy toward me...”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Matthew 23:1-3, 13-15, 23-36](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of this account before reading and discussing Pastor Gary’s comments about Jesus and those he called hypocrites. (See #1a through #1g above)
3. Spend time talking about the Barna Research Group survey concerning hypocrites in the Church. (See #1h above)
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about Christians being careful to examine themselves for areas in which they are hypocritical. (See #1j through #1l above)
5. Read and discuss [Matthew 23:1-3](#) and Pastor Gary’s comments about the importance of placing confidence in the truth of the Word of God. (See #2a through #2c above)
6. Ask the people in your group if there is a standard of hypocrisy that they have toward others that they do not have about themselves.

7. Read and discuss [Matthew 23:13-15, 23](#) and Pastor Gary's remarks about the burden of religious rituals and traditions. (See #2d through #2h above)
8. Read and discuss [Matthew 23:25-28](#) and Pastor Gary's comments about the importance of believing the right things and doing the right things. (See #3a through #3c above)
9. Ask the people in your group if there is any hypocrisy in their life that sees them believing the right things and saying the right things, but they live their life in contradiction to those beliefs and words.
10. Read and discuss [Matthew 23:29-36](#) and Pastor Gary's remarks about the sin of presumption. (See #4a through #4c above)
11. Ask the people in your group if there is any hypocrisy in their life toward God that sees them believing the right things and behaving in right ways, but their heart is not near to God's heart.
12. Read and discuss [Psalm 86:11-13](#). (See #5 above)
13. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)