



CHANGING
THE FACE OF CHRISTIANITY

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Our mission is to reverse negative Christian stereotypes in the world and prepare the field for more effective witnessing to non-believers.

Negative Stereotype: Non-Christians believe we are hypocritical.

By hypocritical, they mean saying we believe something, but acting contrary to that belief; having a double standard. Or pretending to be better or more "holy" than someone else while privately being the same as other people. We talk about having "joy" and "peace" in our lives, while in many cases our lives are just as messed up, stressful, and full of uneasiness as everyone else. We have no problem passing righteous judgment on someone else, while ignoring our own problems. What's your definition of being hypocritical?

A Story to Make It Real: *From "anonymous" on thinkatheist.com*

"I do agree that Christians can be good people. But, not good enough to defy their god by doing some community outreach with "hell-bound" people. I would never consider being a Christian, but I might consider not being so critical if more Christians were open and genuine and willing to actually talk about their beliefs. Their arrogance ("we know the truth, you don't") belies the hypocrisy of whatever *acceptance/love* they could muster."

Examples: (Do you have any stories to share here? What's the impact of our hypocrisy?)

1. The way we lecture "non-believers" on sinning without developing any relationship.
2. How we act perfect on Sundays after being lewd or drunk on Saturday.
3. How we wear a cross around our neck, while cursing out a store clerk.
4. Claiming that loving others is part of being a Christian, but we verbally assault a friend or family member on a social media website.
5. How we justify our own sins, "I'm not as bad as other people who..."
6. How we pray loudly in church, or offer to serve and then complain about the person we're praying about or the service we have to do.
7. Driving a car with a Christian emblem on the back of our car, but driving disrespectfully or against the law.
8. Segregating ourselves with only certain friends, while gossiping about those around us.
9. Any other examples you can think of?

What God Say About It (The Bible): Jesus spoke about and warned against Hypocrisy:

- **Matthew 23:13 (NIV)**

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

- **Matthew 23:26-27 (NIV)**

Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. "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.

- **1 Peter 2:1 (NIV)**

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

- **Matthew 15:7-9 (NIV)**

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

" 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. ^(Isaiah 29:13)

- **Matthew 24:51 (NIV)**

He will cut him to pieces and assign him **a place with the hypocrites**, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- **Verses for further study:** James 3:10-12, Luke 12:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, Matthew 7:3-5, John 8:7-11, Luke 13:15, Matthew 23:24, Job 20:5, Hebrews 6:1,

- **Closing Thoughts on Hypocrisy:**

Every Christian is guilty of living a sinful life because no **one is capable of escaping sin** on our own. When we speak or live in a way that hides our sins, or we act as if we do not struggle with any sins, we start down a road of hypocrisy. We begin to live as if we are above those who do not go to church. We live as if our sins are paid for, and not as bad as other people's sins, like we have a license to sin, because we know Jesus.

But this is exactly what the Bible scriptures speak about guarding against. We need to **confess our own sins to one another**, and look at each other as equally burdened with the same effects of sin. We need to stop living as if we are perfect or "special" compared to others who may not yet know Christ. And when we live in a way that demonstrates that we are all equal in our plight, we can then begin to see the value of **Christ as a savior to us all**.

- **Are you more concerned with pleasing man or pleasing God?**
- **Can you admit your own sins, and be willing to follow what you believe?**

Action:

- 1) In the coming weeks, evaluate your behavior outside of the church. Do your beliefs and actions match?
- 2) Study these Bible verses for greater depth and meaning.
- 3) When you represent Christ to others, be honest about your own shortcomings and admit your own failures and the redemption that Christ offers.

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