

## e-concepts

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# Hypocrites

By Dr. David DeWitt

### Why are there so many hypocrites in Christianity?

If Christianity is to be doubted because there are hypocrites who call themselves Christians, we must first be sure those hypocrites are really Christians. The legitimacy of anything original cannot be judged by qualities of a phony.

Unregenerate people who go through Christian-sounding religious formalities without having received Jesus Christ as their God and Savior are not real Christians. The presence of such hypocrites is just a fact of life about anything worthwhile. There are false diamonds in jewelry because real diamonds are valuable. Quacks spring up in the medical profession because good doctors are an asset to the community. Actually, the fact that Christianity attracts phonies is a good indication that it is real. Light tends to attract bugs.

### If Jesus had the true religion, why doesn't He keep His followers from turning into hypocrites?

This question assumes Jesus should remove the free will of believers and deny them involvement in the growth process. There is no claim in the Bible that true believers in Jesus Christ become perfect in this life. A true believer is one who recognizes his sinfulness and need for Jesus Christ as his Savior (see 1 John 1:8-10). Although Christians do change for the better, the change is from the inside out. It does not begin with outward appearances, as it does with hypocrites.

Jesus was harder on the hypocrites than on any other group. His words in Matthew 23 have been called the harshest language ever used by anyone against anyone. Jesus was talking to and about hypocrites. It is interesting to contrast our Lord's description of a hypocrite in Matthew 23 with the Bible's description of a real believer.

Hypocrites, Jesus said, *do all their deeds to be noticed by men* (Matthew 23:5), whereas biblical believers seek only to be approved by God (Romans 6:5-6; Colossians 3:23; Ephesians 5:10).

Hypocrites train others to be what they are. Speaking about their converts, Jesus told them, *You make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves* (Matthew 23:15). But real Christians train others to be like Christ, not like themselves (Matthew 28:18-20).

Hypocrites deal with external formalism, neglecting internal qualities (Matthew 23:25-27). Biblical believers, on the other hand, emphasize inner attitudes, knowing that God changes people from within (Galatians 5:22-24).

### If Jesus really changes people, why aren't all Christians morally better than all non-Christians?

Though God does deal with true believers, He does not make them perfect all at once. It is a great compliment to Christianity that people expect Christians to be better people. When someone complains to me that a certain person who claims to have received Christ is living inconsistently, I generally respond with something like this. "Maybe so. But if you really want to know whether there's anything to his faith or not, look at him closely. Get to know him really well. See if there *has* been any change in his life. But be careful," I warn. "You might find Christ that way, and when you receive Him but are not yet perfect, others may think *you're* a hypocrite."

### If some Christians are hypocrites, doesn't that suggest that Christianity has some mistakes in it?

We must encourage people to consider Jesus Christ and the Bible, rather than what people do with them. Any product must be evaluated on its own grounds. We do not stop going to hospitals because some doctors are in medicine just for the wealth they can accumulate. Either hospitals are a good idea or they are not. If they are, then insincere doctors do not make them a bad idea.

### So hypocrisy does not deny Christianity because:

1) It is undeniable that there are hypocrites within the ranks of these called Christians. 2) To forcibly eliminate hypocrisy would eliminate free will and growth. 3) Jesus' condemnation of hypocrisy is undeniable. 4) Biblical Christianity does not claim perfection for believers in this life. Therefore, Christianity cannot be denied because of hypocrisy.