

AM I A DISCIPLE OR A HYPOCRITE?



It's a question hypocrites never ask.

It's a question disciples ask all the time.

Am I a disciple or a hypocrite?

If we ask the Lord, his answer could be something like this:

“The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach.

They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

“Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues.

They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’ “Don't let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. And don't address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven is your Father. And don't let anyone call you ‘Teacher,’ for you have only one teacher, the Messiah.

The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Matthew 23:2-12 (NLT)



Jesus tells us how to order our lives.

No fancy titles.

No seats of honor.

No celebrity status.

We are low-profile servants.

The greatest among us is the least.

Our job is to humble ourselves.



God will exalt us if and when he chooses.

That's how the kingdom works.

That's how the true Body of Christ works.

When we ignore these instructions, Jesus has the same words for us he had for the scribes and Pharisees.

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You won’t go in yourselves, and you don’t let others enter either.

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!....

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. Blind guides! You strain your water so you won’t accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people’s bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Matthew 23:13-15, 23-28(NLT)

With these words, Jesus prepares us for the approaching turbulence.

If I’m a hypocrite, I will be exposed by events of the days ahead.

If I’m a disciple, I will be sustained as I deny myself, take up my cross daily and follow the Master.

As long as we are in these bodies we keep asking the question.

Am I a disciple or a hypocrite?

Meanwhile, the crowds grew until thousands were milling about and stepping on each other. Jesus turned first to his disciples and warned them, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees—their hypocrisy.

The time is coming when everything that is covered up will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all.

Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear!

Luke 12:1-3



Prayer: Dear Lord, keep us ever aware of the danger of becoming so religious and self- important that we forget the lives of mercy and compassion you call us to. Forgive us for stepping on each other, for what we say in the dark, for the yeast we allow to poison our thoughts. When we veer, keep us asking, am I a disciple or a hypocrite? For your sake, for the sake of the Kingdom.... help us to humble ourselves and choose low profile servanthood. Help us to be ever willing to lay down our pride, our need for celebrity and recognition, and to take on the yoke of insignificance where your power, your compassion, your mercy, and your life can do their work through us. Amen.

Message: Richard E. Bieber July 2021

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