

INTRODUCTION

Jeff Foxworthy has made a lot of us laugh with his "You might be a redneck" routine. He has hundreds of jokes, but two of my favorites are: "If you've been married three times and still have the same in-laws...you might be a redneck." "If your wife has ever said, 'Come move this transmission so I can take a bath'...you might be a redneck.

I thought I'd use the same approach and poke a little fun at Baptists. I've created a list called, "You might be a BAPTIST if..."

- (1) You believe Jesus fed the 5,000 with catfish and hushpuppies.
- (2) You believe Jesus really turned the water into Welch's Grape Juice.
- (3) Winning the lottery would not be entirely good news.
- (4) You've never sung the third verse of any hymn.
- (5) You're old enough for the senior discount on coffee, but not old enough to move into the senior adult ministry.
- (6) You've suffered the consequences of accidentally sitting in someone's "seat."
- (7) You believe God's presence is the strongest on the back three rows of the church.
- (8) If your definition of "fellowship" must involve a casserole, then you might be a Baptist!

But I'm not talking about rednecks or Baptists today. I want to talk about hypocrites—and they're easy to spot, too.

Before we read the scripture, let's notice the context. Jesus was only a few days from the cross and He spent these final days debating with the religious leaders and teaching His disciples. Matthew 23 contains some of the harshest words ever recorded from the lips of Jesus. Jesus had compassion on tax collectors and prostitutes and He was known as a friend of sinners. But the one thing that aroused a sense of righteous indignation in His heart was religious hypocrisy. He wasn't angry with these hypocrites; His heart was broken because their religious system had prevented them from the true knowledge of God.

The word "hypocrite" literally means "someone who acts in a play." Warren Wiesrbe has written: "Jesus is the only person in the New Testament who used the word 'hypocrite.'" Archeologists have discovered a Roman city named Sepphoris, which you could see from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. It housed a giant amphitheater. The actors who put on plays there were called *hypokrites*. They wore masks so the audience could identify the different characters each was intended to portray. So, practicing hypocrisy means wearing a mask designed to impress or deceive others."

Matthew 23:1-13. "Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the

the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. 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."

We throw around the word "hypocrite" a lot. People who don't attend church often complain the church is full of a bunch of hypocrites. I saw a funny sign recently that said: "This church is not full of hypocrites. There's always room for more."

There is a sign in the window of the office of the National Association of Telemarketers that says, "Absolutely NO SOLICITING." The caption read: "HYPOCRISY: For those who can give but can't take."

Hypocrisy is saying one thing, but acting another way. Someone said a hypocrite is a man who complains about all the sex and violence recorded on his DVR. Let's look at four marks of a hypocrite according to Jesus.

(1) If you do good deeds to be noticed by others...

you might be a hypocrite. Mike and I are grateful for your expressions of appreciation for our 20 years, but I'll let you in on a little secret. If you didn't already know it, I'm a lot more spiritual than Mike. Want me to prove it? Mike, come up on stage for a minute. Let me see your Bible. Is that all you got? Look at mine! It's a LOT bigger than yours! It's okay; you music guys don't use the Bible much. Is that the Bible you use all the time? Well, let me show you the Bible I use most of the time: I used to preach with this Bible until I had a hernia. But I still carry it around a lot, so people will know that I am the, ahem, the SENIOR pastor. Thanks, Mike, maybe you'll graduate to a bigger Bible soon.

Well, if you believe carrying a bigger Bible makes people think you're more spiritual, then you're exactly the kind of person Jesus was talking about in verse 5. He said, "Everything they do is done for men to see." He said they make their phylacteries wide and their prayer tassels long. A phylactery is a little leather box that contains a tiny rolled-up script with Bible verses. It has straps so they could tie these little boxes to their heads and left hands and arms to literally fulfill Deuteronomy 6:8. Jesus pointed out it had become a contest to see who could have the largest phylactery and the longest prayer tassels. It had nothing to do with real prayer or God's Word; it was all about making other people notice your spirituality.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warned against this kind of performance mentality. He said, "When you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:2) He also warned about praying just so others would hear you, and fasting in a way that shows off how holy you are. Praying, fasting, and good deeds are all

legitimate disciplines we should practice. It's all about our motives. Are we doing those things so that others will notice and think better of us?

Last Tuesday night, we were all aware of the tornados moving through East Texas. Cindy and I were actually at the Cowan Center watching Legally Blonde. About 30 minutes into the show, they stopped it and came to the stage and said a tornado had been spotted near UT Tyler. They announced that the cast and crew were being taken to a safe room, but the audience was to remain in their seats. That produced some nervous laughter.

Actually the safest place was inside the auditorium because it has no windows. And I learned that night that about the only place in Tyler where you can't hear the warning sirens is inside that auditorium. While everyone else heard the warning sirens and the wind and rain, we couldn't hear anything inside there. People were talking nervously during the weather delay, and I knew I needed to pray for the people here and all the people in Tyler.

Since I was only a few rows from the stage I thought, "Hey, I've got an idea. I'll just walk up on stage and get on one knee and start praying quietly. Everyone will see me praying, and maybe it will calm them or they'll pray too." But the Lord spoke to my heart. "David, WHY do you really want to go up on stage to pray? So that everyone will see you and think what a good guy you are? This Sunday, aren't you going to talk about hypocrites who do religious things just to be seen by others?" I don't know about you, but I often have honest conversations with the Lord. So I smiled as I said, "You nailed me, Lord. You're right, a part of me wanted to go up there so people will see me praying." And my next thought was the Lord saying, "Well, I know what it's like to be nailed."

So I just prayed in my seat. I didn't even bow my head or close my eyes, I just began to intercede on behalf of the people in that room and around our city. And when I had finished praying, I didn't worry any more.

A few minutes later, a worried lady came over to my seat and said, "I'm SO glad to see you're here because I know we'll be safe. I just know the Lord isn't through with you yet." I smiled and said, "Thanks." But I thought, "Who knows, though. The Lord may be through with that guy across the aisle!" God answered all our prayers as the tornado left the ground above the campus.

I told that story just to illustrate how easy it is for us to slip into a mode where we perform religious acts so others will see us doing them. If the applause of people is what you're looking for, then that's all the reward you'll get. The real performers were on the stage that night and they received a lot of applause; that's what actors live for. But we live our lives to hear our Master say, "Well done good and faithful servant."

So does this mean we should *never* perform acts of service or good deeds publically, *only* privately? Of course not; in Matthew 5:16 Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." If you always point people to God as the source of your goodness, then, by all means, do good and be good in the name of Jesus.

Years ago, when we first started having men's events, I hosted a business luncheon in the FLC every month. We would give away a "Light of World Award" based on this verse. People would send me nominations and I'd just choose one each month and give them a plaque. There was a guy (who's no longer around by the way) who once asked me if I could give him the Light of the World Award. It caught me off-guard and I just said, "We'll see." But I was thinking, "Not gonna' happen."

(2) If you love being addressed with a special title...

you might be a hypocrite. Jesus spoke these harsh words to the religious professionals because they coveted a special status that came with special titles. They wore these titles as a badge of spirituality. Jesus said, "They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'" (Matthew 23:6)

I want to be the first one to confess that preachers are the worst at wanting titles. There are all kinds of diploma mills out there where pastors can write off and get a mail-order "doctor's degree." They do that so they can be called The Reverend Doctor Tinkling Cymbal, or the Right Reverend Sounding Brass. One of my seminary professors used to say that every incoming student should be given an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree (D.D.) so they could get over the urge for status and lust for a title.

It reminds me a funny poem I read once that said, "There once was a preacher named Tweedle, who refused to accept his degree. He said it's bad enough being Tweedle; without being Tweedle, DD."

I don't make a big deal about it, but there two reasons why I prefer not to be called "Reverend" or part of the "clergy." First, it's because I refuse to recognize the clergy/laity distinction. One of our core values at Green Acres is that EVERY MEMBER IS A MINISTER. Some of us do it as a vocation and the rest of you do it as volunteers. The word "laity" comes from the Greek word, *laos*, which means "people" and, hey, I'm a people too.

The second reason I don't like "Reverend" is because when I was a young preacher I found that the word "reverend" only appears once in the King James Version. It says in Psalm 111:9, "Holy and reverend is His name." God is the only one who deserves the title "reverend" or "revered."

So if you wonder what to call me, my name is David. If you're a child or teenager wanting to show respect to all adults you can call me Mr. Dykes, Brother David, or Pastor David. If none of those works, then you can just call me King David.

This lust for status isn't just restricted to pastors though. Maybe you love to be called "Deacon, Teacher, Master Teacher, Professor, CEO, Chairman, President, or Boss. After Jesus warned about how hypocrites have a desire for outward righteousness, status, and titles, He repeated His favorite paradox, "The greatest among you will be your servant." Do you wonder why Jesus never demanded people call Him Messiah, or Son of God? He didn't want a title. The title He preferred was "Son of Man" because that was a servant-title. The night before He was crucified,

Jesus was at the last supper. The disciples were proud of their titles as "chosen disciples." Only slaves washed feet, and none of them wanted that title. But Jesus got up and took off his robes and wrapped a towel around him and washed their feet. Whenever I'm training pastors around the world, I always teach this lesson: Jesus led with a towel, not a title.

(3) If you keep people out of God's Kingdom...

you might be a hypocrite. Remember, hypocrites were actors on a stage wearing a mask and playing a role. When the performance was over, they took off the mask. Some people wear a religious mask on Sunday. They have their Sunday clothes, their Sunday vocabulary, and their Sunday smile. But when they leave the parking lot, they take off the mask. Then next Sunday, they put their mask back on and play the role of good little Christian again. The most dangerous potential consequence of being a religious performer is it can keep others out of heaven.

Jesus said, "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 23:13)

A painful part of my personal testimony is that when I was a young teenager I had a Sunday life and a Monday-Saturday life. I was a total hypocrite, but I would not have admitted it at the time. Every Sunday our family would load up and go to church and I would be a nice little Sunday School and youth choir boy. But on most weekends I would go out drinking with a neighbor who was a couple of years older than me. His family never went to church. Once he asked me why we went to church. He was opening the door for me to tell him about Christ, but I slammed it shut because I didn't have on my Christian mask. He later died in a car accident, and I don't know to this day if he knew the Lord. Tragically, it took the death of my friend to shake me out of my Jekyll and Hyde act. I threw away my mask. Is it time for you to throw away your mask?

(4) If this message makes you mad...

you might be a hypocrite. How did the religious leaders respond after Jesus said all these things? Did they say, "Jesus, you're right; we repent?" Nope. They were so angry they arranged to have Him arrested. They put Him through a mock trial, and then demanded the Romans crucify Him.

Jack Taylor used to say, "The truth will set you free; but first it will make you mad." I tend to think he was right. You may be thinking, "David, who are YOU to tell me that I'm a hypocrite?" I'll tell you who I am. I'm a hypocrite, that's who! At least I'm willing to admit I'm a recovering hypocrite. I don't always do the right things I want to do, and sometimes I do the wrong thing. I think we all should admit that we're recovering hypocrites. I like the bumper sticker that says, "Christians aren't perfect; just forgiven."

Paul struggled with this very issue: He wrote, "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature...what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:14, 18, 24-25) Can you relate to that? Paul struggled with

temptation and sin long after he became a Christian. His final solution was to declare, "I can't live the Christian life. I need someone to rescue me. And thank God, Jesus Christ is doing that day by day as I surrender control of my life to Him."

CONCLUSION

The point of this passage is found in the one-sentence parable Jesus gave in verse 12. It is more than a parable; it is a life principle. He said, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12)

The world talks about climbing to the top of the ladder, the top of the heap, or to the top of the hill. In God's Kingdom, it's just the opposite. The way UP (self-promotion) is DOWN (humbled by God). But the way DOWN (selflessness) is UP (honored by God).

The first church I served out of seminary was in central Alabama, about 20 miles from Tuskegee, Alabama. I would often fly into the same airport where the famous Tuskegee Airmen Trained. It was the home of Tuskegee Institute, one of the first predominately African-American colleges in the South. In 1881, Booker T. Washington became the President of Tuskegee Institute. Washington, who had been born as a slave, was already famous around the nation as an orator, educator, and author. He was a devout Christian and had even attended seminary at one time.

In his autobiography entitled *Up from Slavery*, he tells about an encounter he had shortly after he became the President of Tuskegee. One day he was taking a stroll through an elite section of Tuskegee. A wealthy white woman saw him and asked him if he wanted to make a few dollars by chopping her firewood. She didn't recognize him as the famous Booker T. Washington.

Having no other pressing business, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded with the humble chore she had requested. When he finished, he carried the firewood into the house and stacked it by the fireplace. When she tried to pay him, he politely refused and continued his walk through the town.

As he left her house, the lady's neighbor recognized Professor Washington and revealed his identity to her. The next morning, the embarrassed lady visited Mr. Washington in his office on campus. She apologized profusely for her mistake.

He replied, "It's perfectly all right, Madam. I always enjoy manual labor. Besides it's always a delight to do something for a friend." She shook his hand and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had made an impact on her. Not long afterwards she demonstrated her gratitude by persuading some of her wealthy neighbors to join her in donating thousands of dollars to Tuskegee Institute.

If I had been in his shoes, I might have said, "Madam, do you know who I am? I am the President of Tuskegee Institute!" Instead, Professor Washington demonstrated something extremely rare—therefore it is extremely valuable—humility and selflessness.

The Apostle Paul was once a proud Pharisee who put Christians to death. Jesus tackled him and set him on the right path. As you read his letters you discover an interesting progression in his self-evaluation. Early on he wrote to the Corinthians, "I am no less than the chief apostles." (2 Corinthians 11:5) A few years later he wrote to the Ephesians that he was "I am the least of the saints." (Ephesians 3:8) But his final self-evaluation was written to young Timothy. He identified himself as "the worst of sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15).

Where are you on that same path? Do you think, "I'm a pretty good person?" Or do you say, "I'm not perfect, but I'm better than most people, or at least some people?" Or do you say, "I'm just a sinner saved by grace?" Maybe you should say, "I'm not what I OUGHT to be, and I'm not what I WANT to be, and I'm not what I'm GOING to be, but thank God because of His grace, I'm not what I USED to be." I'm just a sinner saved by grace. If you can say that, then you might NOT be a hypocrite—just a recovering hypocrite who doesn't need a mask anymore.

OUTLINE

You might be a hypocrite if:

(1) You do good deeds to be noticed by others...

"When you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full."
Matthew 6:2

(2) You love being addressed with a special title...

"They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'" *Matthew 23:6*

(3) You keep people out of God's Kingdom...

"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 23:13*

(4) This message makes you mad...

"We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature...what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" *Romans 7:14, 18, 24-25*

LIFE PRINCIPLE:

"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." *Matthew 23:12*

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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes