

# How to Avoid Being a Hypocrite

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No one likes a hypocrite, someone who is a phony and afraid of authenticity. Fortunately, God makes it so that you don't have to be a hypocrite.

## Summary

### What is a hypocrite?

A hypocrite is someone who says one thing, but then acts in the opposite way. The word hypocrite is a Greek word that was used to describe an actor. In Greek theatre an actor would put on a mask and pretend to be someone else. These actors were called hypocrites. That doesn't mean they were bad people. It was just their job.

Today, we might call a person a hypocrite when they pretend to be something they aren't, or when they do things just to fit in. But Jesus points out that there is an even more problematic kind of hypocrite: a religious hypocrite.

### What is a religious hypocrite?

A religious hypocrite is someone who preaches one thing, but does the opposite. And unfortunately, there are a lot of religious hypocrites in our churches and youth groups.

These kind of hypocrites will talk a good game about honoring God and doing the right thing, but will then do the opposite when they are around another group of people. They would rather be liked or popular than honor God. Or, a religious hypocrite will condemn people for doing certain sins, even though they do those same sins, or even worse sins, in secret.

### Jesus doesn't like hypocrites

Throughout his time on earth Jesus condemned religious hypocrites.

**Matthew 6:2** *When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get.*

Here he was talking about people who make a big deal of themselves every time they serve or help someone. They always have to write about it on facebook and make sure everyone knows what they did. This shows that their hearts aren't focused on serving, but on receiving praise for their actions.

**Matthew 6:5** *When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.*

These are hypocrites who use fancy words when they pray. They act like they know everything about God in conversations or small group. Jesus is saying that these people are just wearing a mask. They look good on the outside, but inside they are rotten. But Jesus didn't just come to condemn hypocrisy or we would all be in trouble. He came to free us from hypocrisy.

### **Choose authenticity over hypocrisy**

People often act like hypocrites because they are afraid of what people will think about them if they knew what they were really like. But here is the good news. You don't have to fake it. You don't have to pretend to be something you are not.

We all are messed up, and God loves us and forgives us in the midst of our messed up ways. We can be real with God. We can be authentic. And if you are acting like a hypocrite. Stop it. Admit it to God, admit it to a youth leader and friend. Ask God for forgiveness, and embrace authenticity.

Don't try and be someone you're not at youth group or in your small group. Be authentic. It's what God wants for you.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. **Set Up:** Watch the video together or invite someone to [set up the conversation](#).
2. What is a hypocrite? Give some examples of a hypocrite from life.
3. How can students act like religious hypocrites? Share some examples (without gossiping).
4. How do you feel about someone when you realize that they are a hypocrite?
5. Why is it important to be authentic in your small group, with a mentor, and with good friends?
6. **Takeaway:** Write a [personal action step](#) based on this conversation.