

WEEK FIVE: DO WHAT WE SAY

Statement...When is a Christian not a Christian? When our faith is all SHOW and no SUBSTANCE; when our claim to serve Jesus is a FRONT, or a COVER, and it has no effect on our daily lives. The bible has an ugly word for this issue: hypocrisy, the Greek word means “pretending or feigning loyalty”, performing a role that is only a role. At least 17 times Jesus blasted Jewish Leaders for hypocrisy. He knew that their first priority wasn't serving God but being seen serving God. They enjoyed status in community. They may fool the public, Jesus warned, but they could not fool God. They were not only "holler-than-thou" but they were also "holler-than-themselves". They were blind to their own sin, and blind to what mattered to God. They were all talk, and God was tired of his people talking a good game. Jesus gives a warning:

Beware of practicing your acts of piety before others or you'll have no reward from your Father In Heaven

WHO CAN SEE THEIR HYPOCRISY...hypocrites come in many forms-religious and non-religious-but their common flaw is pretense. Whatever image they project isn't real. They are phonies. Some are phony to the core; they lack substance and depth. We are all hypocrites to one degree or another. The problem is: we can't see hypocrisy in our own lives. Jesus doesn't expect perfection, but he does want honesty and faithfulness.

MAKING SIMPLE THINGS COMPLICATED...by Jesus' time, religious leaders turned God's 10 Commandments into 613 laws, governing every part of life This left people dependent on EXPERTS like PHARISEES to interpret the law but their legalism was stifling. It was their way of isolating the Jews from Gentiles-the rest of the known world-whom they thought God hated. We have no room for judgment over those Jewish leaders. Let the one without sin of hypocrisy cast the 1st stone. We all struggle being what we claim to be, and doing what we say. We are unwitting hypocrites if only by failing to be consistent Christians who practice what we preach.

Christians Are Characters...Jesus never used the word, what he is describing is character-our core/essence/moral compass. To Jesus, Christians don't just have character; we are meant TO BE CHARACTERS, REAL CHARACTERS, who live distinctively. All people are different; some are more different than others; and Christians are meant to be the most different of all.