

Life Group Study Questions, Luke 7:1-23

1. In Jesus' day, ceremonial washing before eating had become an indicator, an external marker of a person's spirituality and of their devotion to God. Do you think we have such external markers that we use to measure our own or someone else's spirituality or devotion? Explain.

How do you think a marker could become a hindrance or a distraction?

2. How did Jesus define hypocrisy? Carefully read verses 6-8. Is Jesus' definition different than our culture's? In what way?

Do the definitions below add anything to your understanding of hypocrisy?

Community in Mission

A Definition of Hypocrisy

The Greek word for hypocrisy used in the New Testament is "hypokrisis" and means "the acting on a stage" and it is from the use of having more than one face that the same actor portrayed. In other words, they are actors in the Greek theatres who would usually play more than one role. They would go off stage and pick up and use a different mask for each character and sometimes wouldn't even leave the stage as they sometimes carried two faces or masks (from which we get "two faced"). Sometimes they played more than once character and so these actors were portraying someone other than their real self and thus they were being hypocrites; acting on a stage and pretending to be someone who they really weren't.

This is exactly what most of the religious rulers in Jesus' day did. Essentially they had a way of acting in a way that goes against their claimed beliefs or feelings and pretending to have virtues and principles which they really did not have.

<http://blog.adw.org/2012/02/what-does-jesus-mean-by-hypocrisy-its-deeper-than-you-think/>

Holman Bible Dictionary

(hīh pahc' rih ssee) Pretense to being what one really is not, especially the pretense of being a better person than one really is. The word is based on the Greek hypokrisis. A hypocrite in classical Greek could be an interpreter of dreams, an orator, a reciter of poetry, or an actor. Originally a neutral term, "hypocrite" gained the negative connotation of pretense, duplicity, or insincerity.

In the Bible the negative meaning prevails. Often hypocrisy refers to evil or to sin in general,

not pretense in particular. In the Old Testament, “hypocrite” was used by the King James Version whereas later translations (e.g. RSV, NIV) often use “godless” or “ungodly” (Job 8:13; Job 15:34-35 ; Job 17:8 ; Isaiah 9:17 ; Isaiah 33:14 , etc.). This “godless” person was totally opposed to God or forgetful of God. The Hebrew word often translated “hypocrite” referred to pollution or corruption. Although the Hebrews were concerned about pretense or insincerity (Isaiah 29:13; Jeremiah 12:2), there is no one Hebrew word exactly equivalent to “hypocrisy.”

Hypocrisy in the narrower sense of playing a role is highlighted in the New Testament, especially in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus often called the Pharisees hypocrites because of the conflict between their external actions and internal attitudes (Matthew 15:1-9); for being more interested in human praise than in God’s reward (Matthew 7:1-5); for being more concerned about the rules for the Sabbath than a woman's physical health (Luke 13:15).

Luke noted that the religious leaders pretended to be sincere when they asked Jesus about paying tribute to Caesar (Luke 20:20). Probably the most famous discussion of hypocrisy is Matthew 23.

Hypocrisy is a concern throughout the New Testament. Although the term does not occur, it was part of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy for refusing to eat with Gentile Christians in Antioch (Galatians 2:12-13). Paul warned Timothy about hypocritical false teachers (1 Timothy 4:2). Peter included hypocrisy as one of the attitudes Christians should avoid (1 Peter 2:1).

Six times New Testament writers stress that sincerity (without hypocrisy, *anupokritos*) should characterize the Christian. Christian love (Romans 12:9; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22), faith (1 Timothy 1:5 ; 2 Timothy 1:5), and wisdom (James 3:17) should be sincere.

3. No one plans to be hypocritical. So how do you think it happens?
Are there definable steps that move a person from sincerity to hypocrisy?

4. In Jesus’ day purity was primarily an external issue.
Jesus’ radical perspective was that purity is primarily an internal issue.
After a person receives and believes in Jesus and is born of the Spirit, what does God do to make us pure and what does he expect us to do?
Galatians 5:16-26

Ephesians 4:21-24
Philippians 2:12-13
Colossians 3:1-10

Are there other Scriptures you can think of that help our understanding of this?

5. Is there a difference between saying the Old Testament food laws no longer apply, and saying they have been fulfilled?
Explain what you understand the difference to be.

Remember Jesus did the same with the Temple in Jerusalem and the Sabbath day.

See Matthew 5:17-19.

6. What other questions do you have of this passage?