

Good News

From Getwell

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Home of
The Spiritual Sword Lectureship

Radio Program
The Truth in Love
WHBQ-AM 560 / FM 98.5
Sundays, 8:00 a.m.

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ACTIVITY

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:20 a.m.
Worship.....5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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ON THE HOME FRONT

Sunday, February 6th at 1:30 p.m. at the Getwell Church of Christ, there will be a memorial service to honor and remember Billy Collins. Billy passed from this life on January 6th. He was a member at Getwell for a number of years.

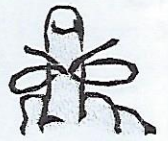
As it was mentioned in last week's Homefront, the new issue of the Spiritual Sword is in circulation. The theme of this issue is "Have You Found True Happiness?" If you have access to a copy, take a few minutes and want some encouragement, pick an article, read it, think on it and let wisdom from these articles which are based on the Word of God guide you. I guarantee you will come away happier and if followed true happiness from God's word.

Articles in this issue:

Editorial: The Meaning of True Happiness	Alan E. Highers
Not by Riches	Wayne Lankford
Not by Human Wisdom	Dan Jenkins
Not by Pleasure	Jason Jackson
Not by the Exercise of Power	Phil Sanders
Not by Worldly Fame	Gary C. Hampton
Pearls from Proverbs	Hugh Fulford
Peace from Psalms	Justin Rodgers
How to See Good Days	Allen Webster
The Beautitudes of Christ	Steve Higginbotham
The Conclusion of the Whole Matter	David R. Pharr
The Complete Individual	Hiram Kemp
How Did We Grow?	Alan E. Highers

Ron Wallace

RON'S REMINDERS



How Can You Worship With All Those Hypocrites?

One of the most frequent accusations leveled against the church is that it is "full of hypocrites." While it is certainly true that the church from time to time does have its fair share of hypocrites, 1) so does the rest of the world, and 2) there are probably far fewer hypocrites in the church than the accusations suggest. Let me explain.

The word *hypocrites* appears seventeen times in the King James New Testament, with the singular form *hypocrite* appearing another three times. The term *hypocrite* also appears eight times in the Old Testament, with the plural form *hypocrites* appearing another three times. The first instance used in the New Testament is found in Matthew 6:2, where Jesus instructs Christians not to sound the trumpet before themselves while doing their charitable deeds, like the hypocrites do.

Hypocrites comes from the Greek word *hupokrites*, and refers to "an actor under an **assumed character** (stage player). (Strong's Concordance, emp. added). The idea is that a hypocrite pretends to be something he is not, saying one thing but doing another, or believing one thing but living out the opposite of his belief. A hypocrite is one whose love for all things pertaining to the faith (including his brethren) is feigned, the opposite of what Peter and Paul talked about in I Peter 1:22 and 2 Timothy 1:5, respectively.

Unfortunately, many times churches are rocked by some sordid scandal as preachers are caught in adulterous affairs, treasurers are found to have embezzled money, or youth groups are shut down due to misconduct. But many of the same sorts of scandals also happen in the town counsel, or in corporations, or at schools, and people don't typically refuse association with these organizations in light of some scandal taking place. When was the last time someone said, "I'm not going back to work. Too many hypocrites up there," or "I finally had to pull my kids out of that school because of all the hypocrites?" Maybe it has happened before, but it surely seems like more times than not, this reasoning is only used to pull out of the church.

Furthermore, consider that statistically speaking, the number of churches that have **not** been rocked by some sort of scandal surely must far outweigh the ones that have. When it comes down to it, the idea that the church is full of hypocrites is a straw-man argument that many people use simply because **they are looking for a reason not to attend**. Unfortunately, excuses for not attending worship services are "a dime a dozen," and when one finds an excuse that blames **someone else** rather than himself, even better!

I want to offer two reasons why this accusation about the church being full of hypocrites and the subsequent straw-man argument are false. Both reasons rely on the fact that Christians at the end of the day are responsible for their own selves (see Ezekial 18:20), so shifting the blame towards another is fallacious in and of itself.

1) While it is true that worship is usually described in the New Testament in the context of corporate worship (worshipping together), thus we do **impact** one another in worship, it is also true that whether or not someone to your right or to your left in a worship service is faithful is irrelevant to whether or

not you are right with God, generally speaking. (There are a couple of factors that do come into play as far as our responsibilities toward one another as Christians, such as the responsibility to withdraw from someone who walks disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6), and reconciling with an offending brother or sister before coming to worship (Matthew 5:23-24), but I am talking about individual accountability toward God (see I Corinthians 11:27-28).

Thus, when someone hurls the accusation that hypocrites are present at church, the question simply must be asked: What does that have to do with you? The answer of course is nothing, aside from the responsibility to try to help such hypocrites get back on a right footing with God. But if that never happens, you can still be right with God regardless of what the hypocrite does! Again, it's about personal accountability.

Think about the following possible scenario: A Christian who has been subject to church discipline may still, for whatever reason, decide to show up to worship services. This Christian technically is not right with God. Should you leave the worship service because the Christian who has been withdrawn from showed up? Well of course not! You still have the responsibility to faithfully attend and worship God. But the one who uses the hypocrite straw man would do just the same to make a straw man out of this scenario! It simply is not a valid reason for neglecting one's own duty to worship and serve God.

2) There is a **major** difference between a Christian who occasionally stumbles into sin but otherwise walks in the light (1 John 1:7) and a hypocrite. The book of First John teaches very plainly that all Christians still sin from time to time. We should not sin, but inevitably from time to time we still do (1 John 2:1). In fact, if we are not willing to admit this fact, then we make God out to be a liar, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us at all (1 John 1:8, 10)! Christians **confess** sins in their lives (1 John 1:9); hypocrites do not!

A hypocrite, a "play actor" in the church, does not admit his faults, nor does he repent of them. He is a pretender. A Christian who occasionally stumbles will have no problem admitting he was wrong, regretting his bad decision and repenting of the sin. But a hypocrite, when confronted, usually does the opposite—he digs in and stubbornly refuses any wrongdoing. Faithful Christians don't continue living **willfully** in sin (Hebrews 10:26), for their properly trained, good conscience (included in an unfeigned faith—I Timothy 1:5) guides them back toward the truth. A hypocrite, however, lives in ongoing sin, with little regard whatsoever to his conscience, which has been seared with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2).

The differences are stark. Faithful Christians are admittedly imperfect people who are trying to do their best to grow more like Christ each day. They stumble often, but they get back up and keep running the race that is set before them (Hebrews 12:1). They are **not** hypocrites!

Hypocrite, rather, is a word that should only be used for those play actors who **appear** to be Christians, but upon close examination, their lives show no semblance of being like Christ. They claim to believe in Christ, but they talk like the world, walk like the world, and act like the world. They are fakes. They are phonies. And they do give Christianity a bad name. But true hypocrites (in the Lord's church) are far less common, in my experience at least, than claimed by those who typically hurl the accusations. Far more often, the accusers are simply looking for excuses because they don't want to associate themselves with Christians.