

GROUP DISCUSSION

Questions for facilitating dynamic discussion

Too Good to Be True?

September 24, 2023

Week 4: Then why are Christians hypocrites?

Romans 2:24

The Bible declares that God's goodness exceeds our wildest dreams. We'd all love to believe that, but skeptics have a list of reasons it can't be true. Rather than ignore a skeptic's arguments, let's have honest and courageous conversations about life's hardest questions. This week, we're discussing how Christians can behave so badly, and why they're not always very good at representing God's heart.

Kicking It Off: The term "hypocrite" is from Latin *hypocrisies*, meaning "play-acting, pretense." Sometimes hypocrites act one way in public but live another life in private. In honor of "acting" ... if you could act in any movie, what would it be, and which character would you play?

Discussion:

1. God's Word is pretty clear about calling hypocrisy a problem, as shown in 2 Peter 2:1, yet it's also quite common. What are some examples of modern hypocrisy that come to mind?
"So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech."
2. What can potentially happen when people see God in the lives of His children, in light of Matthew 5:16?
"In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."
3. What did Jeff say we can presume about someone who claims to be a Christian but isn't showing much true "fruit" in their life? (See Matthew 7:15-17.)
"You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit."
4. What was Jeff's definition of an "imposter" — and how can their personal spiritual issues affect someone else's faith? How is that connected to cultural Christianity?
5. How might Jesus' ministry act like a place that helps hospital patients? How can the words of Matthew 9:12 help encourage you when you're striving to live for God?
"When Jesus heard this, he said, 'Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do.'"
6. Satan can be quite strategic in tempting influential Christians to abandon their faith, as demonstrated in Luke 22:31. How can moral failures from believers especially diminish people's view of God?
"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat."

Wrapping Up: There is huge potential to positively affect someone's life when they see God's people fully living out their faith, reflecting God's heart. Ask God to help your group members shine like a light in the darkness, so people are drawn to God after seeing real, genuine goodness in His people.