

## ***Hypocrisy in Action***

A hypocrite is a fellow who isn't himself on Sunday.

The hypocrite sings

- *Have Thine Own Way, Lord* but does as he pleases.
- *Onward Christian Soldiers* but is usually AWOL from the Lord's army.
- *I Love To Tell the Story* but never mentions Christ to his friends.
- *Throw Out the Lifeline* but is satisfied to throw out a fishing line instead.
- *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* but lets the least little offense sever it.
- *All To Jesus I Surrender* even though he has capitulated to Satan and is, in fact, a servant of sin.

The hypocrite prays,

- "Give the speaker a ready remembrance of those things he has prepared to say" and then sleeps through the sermon.
- "Bless those who are sick and shut-in," but never lifts a finger to help them.
- "Bring us back at the next appointed time," and then sits home on Sunday evening to watch television.
- "Help us remain unspotted from the world," but he views pornographic literature and watches moral filth on TV and at the movies.
- "Forgive us of our sins as we forgive our debtors," but will hold a grudge till his dying day.
- "Help us raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and then leads them astray through his corrupt and contaminated example.

The hypocrite says, "Amen," when the preacher speaks on "The Sins of the Tongue," but often uses foul language and takes the Lord's name in vain. He goes out the door and says, "You really told them today, preacher!" and then participates in the very thing that was condemned!

Let us remember that the Lord has never been pleased with those who "say, and do not" (Matt. 23:1-3). The same could be said of those who "sing, and do not" as well as those who "pray, and do not." For the hypocrite, religion is but an outward show; he only pays lip-service to Christianity. Let's avoid falling into this trap (Luke 6:46-49).

- by Mark Mayberry

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## ***Constructive Criticism***

To be a "constructive" critic is a great gift. Such a critic offers something that is helpful - the content of his criticism makes it constructive. He also keeps his attitude right - aiming at helping, not hurting. He acts from love for the one he criticizes. On a practical note - and this is difficult - he must be perceived as helping. Such qualifiers are not easy and thus, it is uncommon to find truly "constructive" critics. There are far more plainly mean and malicious critics - who seem to enjoy picking at people. "Constructive criticism" is often missing because critics fail the integrity test. Can you pass the constructive critic test?

Criticism also is often not constructive because of the disposition of those criticized. Many people accept no criticism regardless of its quality - regardless who gives it - regardless of the spirit in which it is offered - regardless how badly it is needed. They simply reject criticism across the board - period! We cannot afford such an attitude. Undeniably, criticism is hard to receive - always. No one enjoys the criticism, but accepting fair criticism marks mature and spiritual people. Many Bible passages about correction, rebuke, and chastening focus on problems at the receiving end - receiving correction. "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal.4:16). "Yes!" is too often the resounding answer - no matter how, who, or why.

A good hearer profits from most all criticism -not just the "constructive." Oh, some criticism may be entirely baseless -useless - without merit - even untrue. But this is generally not the case, even with mean critics. (A malicious enemy prefers to find and parade your real fault rather than invent one.) A criticism clearly may aim to harm - come from an obviously malicious enemy -

delivered in a loud voice - accompanied by a smirk. It may drip meanness. BUT that mean critic may tell you an unnoticed truth about yourself or your conduct - truth you need to know - truth your friends are too nice to mention. An honest and humble hearer makes most any and all criticisms "constructive." He uses the criticism to grow - no matter why it is given nor who gave it. Admittedly, this is really tough!

Can you do that? Can you accept and use criticism for your own good regardless how or why it is expressed? Of course, you can! - but will you? It is much easier to reject criticism saying "that's not constructive criticism" - to get angry - to reply sharply - to find even worse flaws in the critic. Yet just remember: the right way is seldom ever the easy way.

- by Joe Fitch

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## **Centered on Self**

A denominational commentator wrote: "The Bible is set in a specific time and culture, not a book to be put in the hands of some fundamentalist preacher who applies it literally to the complex problems of our society." Do you see it? He is claiming that our situation is much more difficult than that of the people whose history is recorded in the Bible. Ours, he says, is a more 'complex' time than theirs, and thus the Bible cannot be expected to adequately deal with the issues of our time.

How common it is for us to imagine in our self-centered minds that our problems, our suffering and our troubles are worse and more complicated than those faced by others. This attitude is clearly seen in this commentator's foolish remarks.

It would be most interesting to listen as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian explained the 'complexities' of his life to a persecuted Christian of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. While he sits at ease with all the latest conveniences in his comfortable modern home, he could try to tell one of those disciples who was "scattered abroad" from Jerusalem (Acts 8:4) just how tough it is to live in 21st Century America. Or he could list his 'problems' to some of God's people who "were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted and slain with the sword" (Hebrews 11:37).

Do you see our point? It is so easy to assume that our own troubles are the most challenging ever faced. We all do this from time to time. When this happens, it would do us some good to stop and consider the terrible trials that others have faced throughout the centuries. And, for that matter, it would be helpful to remember the difficulties faced by many who are living in the world today.

Stop fretting and complaining. Stop thinking that your problems are the worst ever faced. Stop being so self-centered. Remember others, living and dead, who have faced harder things. Be grateful for your blessings. And develop Paul's mindset: *'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'* (Philippians 4:13).

- by Greg Gwin