

## **What Should We Do With All The Hypocrites In The Church?**

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2 Timothy: Passing on the Faith Series

2 Timothy 3:5-17

If you were to ask people who never attend church or who have turned away from the church, what is the #1 reason you don't go to church, the answer you would probably hear is that the church is full of hypocrites. If you ask for illustrations of hypocrisy and the person knew anything at all about history, you had better be prepared to spend the better part of a day listening to example, after example of hypocrisy in the church - the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, Roman Catholic priests abusing children and the hierarchy of the church covering it up.

175 years ago there was a devout Jewish family in Germany. Their lives revolved around their Jewish community and their customs. Well, the family moved to another part of Germany and one day the father came home and announced, "We're no longer Jewish. We are now Lutheran. We will no longer attend the Jewish synagogue. But we're all going to get baptized and attend Lutheran church."

The son in the family said, "Father, why did we leave our Jewish faith?"

The father replied, "Well, in this part of Germany no one will deal with Jews. The only way for us to get along is for us to be Lutherans. If I want to continue in business here, then we need to attend the Lutheran church."

The son became very angry and bitter. He was angry with his father for practicing this sham. He was angry with the people in the church, who were not accepting them because they were practitioners of another religion. This young man left Germany and went to England. He spent years reading and studying in England and finally sat down and penned his thoughts in a tract called "The Communist Manifesto." He wrote, "Religion is just the opiate of the people." The young man's name was Karl Marx. Millions of people around the planet have been persuaded to become an atheist after reading Marx's writings.

Hypocrisy. You don't have to go back in church history to make this charge stick, especially when it comes to sports stars and celebrities. Sometimes we are guilty of hypocrisy in our own families. How many kids growing up in Christian families say, "Look, it doesn't seem like Christ has worked for you, mom or dad. You guys aren't happy in your marriage. Mom, you are still always depressed and anxious. Dad, you still have a secret stash of pornography. Mom, Dad, if Christ is so real, why do you still fight like cats and dogs? Mom, Dad, if following Christ is the most important thing in the world, why did you get divorced?"

A couple told me the other night that they used to attend another church that had gone through five pastors in 15 years. Several of the pastors left as a result of secret adulterous affairs that became public. I recently talked with a number of people who said it was the result of experiencing hypocrisy in the church that caused their children to turn away from the Christian faith.

What should we do with all the hypocrisy in the church? Let's first of all admit that the charge is true. In fact, whenever someone raises this issue with me, I say, "You don't know the half of it. It's worse than you imagined." But then I add (lovingly and affectionately, I hope), but friend, the fact is that all of us as human beings (you and me included) try to appear to be better than we really are.

All of us play pretend. We all wear masks. We all play games. In fact, it is the reality of our hypocrisy that points out the truth of the Christian diagnosis of the human condition. We are all, all of us, sinners in need of grace.

See, Christians ought not to approach the world as those who are morally or spiritually superior. Christians are people who have taken a look in the mirror and have not turned away from what they've seen. Christians are people who are painfully aware of the evil that lies within them.

The great Russian writer, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, was lying on a bed of straw in a prison camp in Siberia. He had this great insight. Solzhenitsyn said, "It occurred to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart."

In other words, we can't define evil and say that it is over there. The evil with the world is with that group, or that political party, or that religion, or that ethnicity, or that sex, or with people who do such and such. Evil runs right through the center of every human heart.

So, is that it? Do we just throw up our hands and say, "Well, let's just admit that we're all hypocrites and wallow around in sin like moral pigs?" Some Christians have taken that route. "Well, what can you expect? I'm just a sinner."

The apostle Paul, in the text that we're going to read, is not surprised that we find hypocrites in the church. He's very honest about the reality of hypocrisy within the Christian church. But he also challenges us to believe and to strive for a greater and greater degree of authenticity and genuineness in our Christian lives. I've called today's talk, "What Should We Do With All The Hypocrites In The Church?" Let's pray.

## **2 Timothy 3:5-9**

...having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

The apostle Paul is very honest about the presence of hypocrites in the church. After going through a list of different vices, Paul ends the list saying:

Having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Here is the description of hypocritical religion. It's all form. It's all externals. It is all appearance. Paul is talking about faith without life change. Looking good without being good. He's talking about people whose religion is all just posturing.

Do you know anyone like that? Do you know anyone who talks the talk, but doesn't walk the walk? Have you ever met people like that in church? People who read the Bible, but there's absolutely no change. Maybe they're a person who goes to the singles group just to hit on women, or to hit on guys. They join divorce recovery groups, again, just to hit on the opposite sex. They have huge blind spots when it comes to race, or anti-Semitism. They tell off-colored jokes without even blushing.

Having the form of religion, but denying its power. Paul is talking about spirituality that is completely divorced from life change. He is referring to a person who comes to church and sings the worship songs, attends all the meetings, but behind closed doors in their homes they are unbelievably cruel to their spouse. They treat employees like trash in their business. They are covering up a massive secret addiction. They aren't in recovery. They aren't bringing their addiction to the light. They are covering it up and pretending that everything is OK in their life when everything is wrong.

Having the form, but denying the power. What's hypocritical faith all about? It is religion without repentance. It's words without works. It is doctrine without deeds; creed without conduct; form without substance. It is the person who goes to a Christian counselor with their mate, says all the right things, puts on all the spiritual talk, feigns repentance, and then leaves the counselor's office and there is absolutely no change. Years of counseling and confrontation leave no impact on the person's heart at all.

Now, admittedly, there is no bright line between the person who is all form and no substance, what I'd call "Wonder Bread Christianity." It looks like bread, but

it's all air. You can roll the whole loaf up into something smaller than a tennis ball. Real Christianity is like a good hearty old-fashioned Jewish Rye Bread, where we all struggle with appearance and faking, but our faith is not just hot air.

Let me try to give you some handles on the distinction. Form without substance Christianity is all about formulas. Give me the formula for getting what I want from God. Give me three keys for a happy marriage. Give me the five points of an effective prayer life. Real Christianity is about friendship with Christ!

The question for real Christians is not, can I figure out how to make this or that area of my life work? The question is, how can I have a genuine friendship with Christ? Do you think about that? Are you a friend of Christ?

A second way to distinguish Christians is form without substance Christianity is all about performance. How many spiritual activities have you engaged in this week? Have you checked the box next to every day's Bible reading? Did you pray down your prayer list? Did you fill up your notebook with notes? Real Jewish Rye Bread Christianity is about spiritual progress. Are you actually looking more and more like Jesus? Are you becoming kinder? More compassionate? More honest? Less anxious? Less materialistic?

See, it's not enough to engage in a million spiritual activities. At some point, you and I need to stop and ask, are these activities changing me? Form without substance Christianity never asks the question about whether I'm actually changing, so long as we look busy and we fill our lives up with motion, that's enough.

Now, again, when we read the Bible, or when we read the history of the church, we are not reading the history of heroes and heroines unblemished by sin and significant blind spots. Often Christians engage in this kind of pious rewrite of Christian history or biblical characters, cleaning up our history. We remove the warts from people. We deny their racism, or their anti-Semitism, or their horrible views of women, or their doctrinal errors, or their violent tempers.

The Bible portrays people like Jacob as a manipulator and a deceiver and people like Samson, a man whose life was ruined by out of control lust, or David, an adulterer and murderer. Church history is replete with people like Martin Luther, a vulgar man, given to violent outbursts of anger and was a virulent anti-Semite. Or C.T. Studd, who was a great athlete in England, the nation's best cricket player, who became a famous missionary, but who in later years lived a life wracked with conflict and disputes from other missionaries. He became a morphine addict.

See, the Bible and church history is not a history of unblemished heroes. It is the history of God and his grace.

Paul goes on to give us another indicator of hypocrisy run riot – faith without thinking. Verses 6-7:

These are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and were swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

Paul uses a very pejorative adjective in referring to some of the women in Ephesus. He calls them not weak-willed women. He calls them “little women.” They are little women because they are little morally, and they are little intellectually. He says:

They are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires.

They are moral midgets and in verse 7, they are intellectual midgets.

Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

Likely, these were the younger widows that Paul was referring to in 1 Timothy 5, who were being preyed upon by false teachers. These younger widows were spreading false teaching through the church of Ephesus, upsetting the faith of many. It is for this reason, I believe, that Paul told women in Ephesus not to teach. I don't believe 1 Timothy 2 was a universal prohibition against women teaching for all times in all places. There was a particular problem that Paul was dealing with in Ephesus. Little women, who were morally little and intellectually little, they were morally weak, and they couldn't discern the truth.

You know, there is an old saying that sin makes you stupid. Talk with police officers. Most crooks are not as they are portrayed in the movies, these brilliant masterminds playing a cat and mouse game with the chief of police, or the detective, thinking six moves ahead, constantly covering their tracks, devising elaborate weapons and ransom schemes. Talk with police. Most crooks are caught because they are stupid. Have you ever read the stupid crooks column in the newspaper? I love these.

There was a hold up of a bank in Salt Lake City. Witnesses told police that a man and a woman walked into the bank and handed the teller a note saying they had a gun and wanted money. They just made one little mistake. They scrawled their note on the back of a personal check with their names imprinted on the front. They left the bank with \$1300. Witnesses immediately wrote down the license plate of the getaway car. When police checked the registration, they discovered that it matched the name on the personal check. And so these two were immediately arrested.

Or how about the burglar who tried to break into a Houston restaurant by climbing down the chimney? He got wedged in the chimney. His companion tried to help by breaking the window, which just set off the alarms. And so he ran out leaving his friend dangling from the chimney, screaming for help. When the police came, they saw these legs hanging from the chimney. He was pleading and begging, "O, please, just get me out of here. I don't mind going to jail. Just get me out of this chimney." The police laughed at him and began singing, "Chim chimney, chim chimney, chim, chim cheri..." They called the fire department, who pulled him from the chimney. He was covered with grime. The owner of the restaurant said, "I didn't realize how much soot was in the chimney. I probably needed a chimney sweep, but I don't now!" The judge said, "If you can't take the grime, don't do the crime."

Or how about the escaped convict who went to a hardware store to buy some bolt cutters. The store clerk said, "I thought there was something suspicious about the man when I saw that his hands and legs were in handcuffs."

Or the man who tried to hold up a store, but he couldn't get his bullets in the gun because he was trying to put 40-caliber bullets in a pistol that only held 22-caliber bullets.

The fact is, friends, that your conscience and your mind are linked. And sin will make you stupid. Have you ever thought, "My brain must have been on hold when I hooked up with this guy," or "I don't know why I ever agreed to room with this person. I knew what their lifestyle was like." I've talked with a lot of people who have said that when they surrendered their lives to Christ, for the first time in their lives they began to think clearly. I've talked with people who said, "You know, it was only after I became a Christian that I started to do better in school. It was the first time in my life that I loved to learn. I discovered that I really do like to read." Often after conversion people find that they will go back to school.

But these women were morally little and they were intellectually small.

Paul goes on and describes the woman not only as loaded down with sins, but:

Always learning, but never able to acknowledge the truth.

He's talking about someone who is open to anything – the uncritical, unthinking person. It is the person who listens to anyone and believes anything, so long as that anything sounds spiritual. Paul is talking about a person who runs from church to church, a person who believes the silliest and flakiest things, reads silly Christian books, and has no disciplined study. They are intellectually lazy. Do you know anyone who just believes anything and everything?

A leader, who I deeply respect here, got together with a person who was leaving a cult, and who did not believe in the deity of Christ. The leader opened the Bible with this former cult member and talked for about a minute or two and the person looked at the leader and said, "Well, I'm convinced now that Jesus is God." The leader came to me and said, "This is a person who doesn't want to think." The person didn't seriously examine the scriptures and become convinced. They didn't ask questions. They didn't dig in and say, "Tell me more. Help me to see whether Jesus is God or not."

Do you know someone who will believe anything? Look at the best-seller lists for the last year. You will see *The DaVinci Code* near the top. It is a book by Dan Brown. It's been the topic of a Primetime TV special on ABC. Sony Pictures has just picked up the film rights to the book. I've heard people, as they are discussing the book, say, "This is amazing. This guy has done all of this historical research." The book is a quest for the Holy Grail and ends up with a discovery of Mary Magdalene's tomb, in which there are these secret documents proving that Christianity is all wrong, that the Catholic Church has been suppressing for centuries the original true gospel, which was really goddess worship.

Dan Brown literally has fact after fact absolutely wrong.

Dan Brown misdates the Dead Sea Scrolls and claims that 80 gospels were considered for inclusion in the New Testament. But the Catholic Church suppressed 76 of them.

The historical inaccuracies in Dan Brown's book just multiply and multiply. But so many people uncritically accept it, or they see a Discovery Channel show about how the Roman Catholic Church supposedly suppressed some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, because they disprove some of the Roman Catholic Doctrine.

Uncritical, unthinking. It makes me wonder whether some people want the truth. It makes me wonder whether some people are willing to do the hard work of digging out the truth. See, the kind of church I've always wanted to develop is a church that can think critically about their Christian faith, and then apply their Christian faith to their personal lives, as well as to the great issues of the day. I want to develop a church that can really influence this culture. And I say this with affection, but in so many churches, and in so many forms of Christianity, you have to unscrew your head and leave it on the coat rack, and then pick up your head on the way out the church doors as you leave.

You know, we will never impact anything that makes a lasting difference without engaging our minds. We are called upon to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. The problem with individuals is never that they think too much. I've talked with so many bright folks and they say, "Well, I have a hard time with faith because I think too much, or I'm a critical thinker." The

problem is never that you think too much. It may be that you have not been exposed to the world of evidence regarding the truthfulness of the scriptures. It may be that you've never been exposed; you've never investigated the truth claims of Jesus Christ. But people infinitely more brilliant than you and me, people like Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Pascal, Augustine, and C.S. Lewis, have all had their minds thoroughly convinced that Christ was the Way, the Truth and the Life.

I want to develop a church of people who out think, out serve, and out love the rest of the world. That is what's going to impact our culture.

Do you know that the Order of the Jesuits was started by the Roman Catholic Church in 1540 to respond to the challenge posed by the Protestant Reformation? There was the very real question of whether Roman Catholicism could survive. There was so much internal weakness in the Catholic Church, so much corruption. And such a strong challenge by the Protestants. The movement started in 1540 with ten men. But these ten men out thought, out worked, and out loved everyone else. In a decade they had 30 colleges up and running. In the late 1700's they built the world's largest higher educational network. They had 700 secondary schools and colleges spread over five continents. The Jesuits were confidantes to European kings, China's Ming Emperor, the Japanese Shogun, The Mughal Emperor of India. Talk about influence. The Jesuits were the first Europeans to explore the upper Mississippi. They were the first Europeans to cross the Himalayas and enter Tibet. They were the first Europeans to paddle up to the headwaters of the Blue Nile.

We will never influence this culture unless we think better than everyone else.

So Paul talks about people who profess faith, but there is no life change. Paul talks about people who profess faith without thinking. These are hypocrites, empty and hollow, holding to the form of religion, but denying its power and substance. How can hypocrisy be healed? We've admitted to the hypocrisy in my life and in your life. How can we stop wearing masks, become more genuine, and more authentic in our Christian faith?

Paul says there are two things. First of all, there is the power of example:

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it...

I want you to see this. Paul is drawing a sharp contrast between his own life and the life of the hypocrites. Verse 10 reads:

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings...

Literally, verse 10 ought to read, "But you know all about my teaching..." In other words, in contrast to the hypocrites, I'm living a different life. Now, Paul is not bragging or boasting. He is simply saying that it is possible to live an authentic, genuinely Christian life. It is possible, not to live by formulas, but to become friends of Christ. Some hypocrisy will remain, yes, but it is possible to make progress in our spiritual lives. The apostle Paul confessed in 1 Timothy 1 to continue to be the chief of sinners in his own eyes. But I do believe there is healing for our hypocrisy as we get close to and follow Christian examples. There are people we can pattern our lives after. We just need to meet them and get near them. That's what Christian community and our small groups are all about - the power of one life upon another life.

See, the most powerful learning device for a person is not a message, or a book, but it is a flesh and blood example. People need someone to observe. They need to see teaching fleshed out so that they will say, "Ah...I get it now. That's the way you share your faith."

"O, okay, I understand now. That's the way you pray for the sick."

There is something incredibly powerful about modeling. And modeling goes beyond simply showing people the way something is done. Modeling inspires hope. When you see a flesh and blood Christian, it communicates to you that it is possible to live a different life. It is possible to have cancer or to lose a child, or a spouse, and still continue to trust in Christ. The model will fill your heart with hope that it is possible to be single and sexually pure, even following a divorce. Models do that for us. We meet someone who has broken a life controlling habit that we're struggling with. That person not only tells us how to do it, that person communicates that it is possible to do it. You don't have to live as a pornography addict, or as an alcoholic, or struggling with your body image, or as a sexual abuse victim, or as someone with an eating disorder. You can change. And there are flesh and blood people in our congregation that have overcome those habits.

Or you meet someone who honestly admits to a sin that you are covering up. They are transparent. They are vulnerable.

Sometimes people wonder if it is really possible in this hectic, crazy world to establish a consistent devotional life. But then you meet someone in your home group, or women's group or your men's group, who is consistently praying, who is consistently talking about reading the word, whose lives are way more

complicated than your own. And they say to you, "Friend, it is possible. You can do it."

It is extraordinarily powerful to meet someone who tells you by their own lives that the principles in the Bible are possibilities for you. One of the wonderful ministries we have here at Vineyard is called "Begin Again." It is a ministry designed for people whose marriages are on the rocks, and who are seriously contemplating divorce. What this ministry does is that it takes couples away for a weekend. It is not a weekend of teachings. It is not a weekend filled with "fill-in outlines." It is a weekend in which a couple with serious, serious marriage problems gets to hear talks by couples who are exactly like them, who understand what it is like to have a marriage on the rocks. They hear from people who have cheated on their marriage vows, who have had years of fighting, people for whom counseling failed, but who are now experiencing a happy, healthy, life-giving marriage. By the way, if you think this ministry might make a difference in your life, you can contact our Marriage and Family ministry for help.

Couples sit there and hear these stories and Christ fills their hearts with hope. If it happened for them, it can happen for you.

And do you know the power of an example is particularly strong when it comes to extending the Christian faith? 2 Timothy is all about extending the faith. Paul tells us that what gets in the way of faith extension is hypocrites. But what permits our faith to be extended to relatives, and friends, and schoolmates, and colleagues in the workplace, and roommates, is the power of a life lived for Christ.

I want to share with you a video, a testimony by a guy in our congregation named Dan Thress (pronounced Tress). Dan had a very successful music publishing business. He traveled all over the world with his business. He went to London and he went to Cuba twice. He decided that it would be fun to live in Paris. So he lived in Paris for four years. He also worked for Warner Bros, and lived in New York for 10 years. When he was in Paris, he felt this incredible emptiness overwhelm him. He had desire to return to the U.S. What I want you to listen for in the video is the number of people who impacted Dan's life. Listen for the number of people who influenced Dan, this successful, but empty businessman, toward Christ.

You know, Dan is a committed member of the church here. In fact, he plays on our worship team. He plays the drums every other month here for us.

How do we know if we are dealing with hypocrisy or whether we are dealing with the real article? One of the marks of authentic Christianity is going to be endurance. Paul states in verse 10:

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance...

The genuineness of someone's profession of faith is going to be displayed by whether they continue on continuing on. People stumble along the way. We all do. The wheel comes off. You may fall off the wagon. But if Christ is in your life, you will get back up and continue to follow him. Endurance is the test of genuineness. Maybe you've strayed from the path. But do you turn around and get back on? Or do you just keep wandering farther and farther away?

Endurance is always seen in the New Testament as the test of genuineness. That's why, friends, you will never hear me stand up front on Sunday morning, after I call people to Christ, and say, "Now that you've come forward, you are certainly all saved." I have no idea in whose lives the gift of salvation has been granted. I have no idea who the Holy Spirit regenerated as they prayed. So I never tell people who come forward, "Now, you are saved." I don't know what kind of soil the seed of the gospel gets planted in. Their heart may be shallow. It may just be an emotional response. They may be in tears and excited, but then a day later, or two weeks later, or a month later, they are no where to be seen. It was just emotion.

It may be that their hearts are crowded with desires for other things. And the seed gets choked off. But if that person continues, and they are here in six months, and in a year, and they are continuing to follow Christ, despite the problems and struggles, if they endure, that is the test of the genuine article.

And if the person is willing to suffer for their faith. Paul writes in verse 14,

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Jesus says in John 17:15-16:

I have given them your word and the world has hated them for they are not of the world anymore than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

Now, Paul says that anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Considering what Jesus said, there are two ways that people have historically avoided persecution: 1) They escape from the world. A person says the pressure of the world is too great for me, so I'm going to take my family and we're going to move to 5 acres in the country. I'm going to home school my kids and we will only hang around with other Christians.

This is the error of the monasteries in the Middle Ages. This was the error of fundamentalism – let's pull up our drawbridges. And this is the error of Christians today. One way to escape persecution is to avoid contact with the world.

A second way to escape persecution is to assimilate with the world, to look just like people. Jesus said, "I've called you to be in the world, but not of it." The apostle Paul says that we are called to be godly, to not look like everyone else in the world. Friend, are you enduring in your faith? Are you willing to suffer for your faith? Are you willing to go public? Are you willing to go public with everyone that God is calling you to go public with – your family? Your work colleagues? Strangers on an airplane? Schoolmates?

This is the test of genuine faith – endurance and a willingness to be persecuted.

And when we are talking about the healing of hypocrisy, we not only have the power of example, but the power of the scriptures. Verse 14-17:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Why are the scriptures so powerful? It is because of the source of scripture. The apostle Paul writes:

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

The first reason you would want to expose yourself to not only great Christian examples, get around strong Christian people, but also expose yourself regularly to the scripture is because scripture is God-breathed. This is a much better translation of the Greek than the King James Version, which says, "All scripture is inspired." Literally, Paul is saying that the Bible is breathed into by God, not just inspired, but actually breathed out by God. It is expired. It results from the breath of God.

In the Old Testament, it says in Psalm 33:6:

The heavens were made and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth.

Scripture is the creative produce of God. God is the source of the Bible that we read and study and the source of what I preach out of every week. God is the source.

My difficulty with the word “inspiration” is that inspiration is used of almost everything. The latest rap song by Eminem was so “inspired.” I found the movie “The Last Samurai” inspiring. When we talk about the Bible being inspiring, we don’t mean that it is inspired in the same way that we talk about other inspired literature – Shakespeare, Jane Austin, John Grisham.

Why read the Bible? Because of its source. It has been breathed out by God Almighty. It was inspired by God. Now, that doesn’t mean that God sent the Bible to man by a divine fax machine. It didn’t come down from heaven in a leather-covered book with gold-edged pages. God worked in conjunction with people as he breathed out his messenger. And each of these people had their own temperaments, their own personalities, their own writing styles, their own historical situations, so that the message of the Bible sounds different in tone and style depending on the messenger.

In much the same way, if we had someone who could play lots of different musical instruments, a trumpet would sound different than a piccolo and a piccolo would sound different than a bassoon, or a saxophone. God breathed his message into the apostle Paul, who was very logical and learned. Paul’s message sounds different than the message that comes through David in the Psalms. It sounds different than the message that came through Luke or Isaiah. But the source of all scripture is God.

And the purpose of all scripture is to lead us to salvation in Christ Jesus. Verse 15:

How from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Martin Luther said that a woman goes to the cradle to find her baby. And likewise, we go to the scriptures to find Jesus. The purpose of a Bible study is to find Jesus. Because we meet Jesus in the pages of scripture. Because we learn of Jesus, we understand more of Jesus’ heart, and we understand more of what Jesus did as we study the scriptures.

Paul breaks this purpose down, of finding salvation in Christ, in verse 16 when he says:

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

The scripture is useful for teaching us i.e. for showing us correct doctrine. It is useful negatively for reproving us i.e. pointing out errors in doctrine. These first two words concern teaching. The Bible leads us into truth. It says, here's what's true; here's what's false; here's what you should believe; here's what you shouldn't believe. The Bible doesn't say, "Believe anything as long as you are sincere. You can have an uncritical and unthinking mind." The Bible says, "Here's truth. Feed on that; reject and confront lies."

And the second two words concern our practice as Christians – correcting is the negative part of the second pair. Correcting means to straighten out your practice. Righteousness is the positive part of your practice.

So, here's what Paul is saying. The Bible is there to lead us to Jesus. It leads us to Jesus in terms of our faith. It leads us to Jesus in terms of our practice. It gets rid of false ideas, and lies about God. It trains us regarding how we can practically follow God. It clears your head of crazy messages about spirituality. The Bible guides you into truth about life and truth about life after death, and angels, and what the future holds. The Bible provides you with truth for how you should live, how you relate in marriage, and how you relate as a single person.

If you want to find the mind of Christ for child raising, you can find it in the Bible. If you want to find the mind of Christ for the type of person you should marry, or for reconciling a relationship, or for handling your money, or how to behave in business, or how to relate to the government, or how to find a healthy personal identity, you can find it all in the Bible.

So, Paul points Timothy to himself, but Paul also points Timothy to the scriptures, which can heal us of our hypocrisy and our sin. Listen, the goal of discipleship is not lifelong dependence upon another person for truth. The goal of discipleship is to teach a person to go to God's Word to find the truth for themselves.

We have a granddaughter. When she was about 10-11 months old, she began to learn how to feed herself. At first more food ended up on the floor and in her hair and on her highchair than in her mouth. But at 16 months now, the food is going right into her mouth. She has learned how to feed herself.

The same is true with a baby Christian. At first, a baby Christian is clueless how to read the Bible. A baby Christian will pull verses out of context. There will be lots of misinterpretations. The truth is all over the floor. But if that baby Christian digs into the Bible for six months or a year, they will quickly learn how to handle the scripture. They will learn how to figure out what is true and what is false. It is not that complicated to learn how to feed yourself from the Bible.

Oh, you can spend a lifetime studying this book. You can spend ten lifetimes and hardly scratch the surface of the infinite mind and heart of God who breathed this book. But, friend, you can learn to feed yourself from the inexhaustible mine of

scriptures very, very quickly. Going to the Bible for yourself is absolutely essential, if you are going to become less and less hypocritical and more and more genuine. If you are serious about trying to grow as a Christian, you cannot grow as a Christian based entirely on meetings, worship services, small group meetings, etc. At some point you have to build a private history with God and that involves regularly feeding yourself from God's Word.

Here are two questions I'd like you to answer before God as we close today:

1. Do you have a plan for reading the Bible?
2. And do you follow the plan?

If you have no plan, you will probably not get anything close to a balanced diet from the Bible. You may have a few favorite verses. You may go to a few favorite chapters. But you are not really finding the whole mind of God.

And if you are not regularly going to the Bible to read, to reflect, to apply God's Word to your life, you are not growing as a Christian. It doesn't matter if you used to go to the Bible. If you look at the last week, the last month, the last several months and say, "Honest to God, I've really not been in the scripture," you are probably not growing as a Christian.

You say, "I don't know where to start." A good place to start is the NIV Study Bible. It is the version we use here at the Vineyard. It is not the only good version, but it is a very popular one. And the NIV Study Bible gives excellent balanced footnotes from a very broad perspective. But then I've made this suggestion often, but pick up from the bookstore a book called "Search the Scriptures." You can go through the Bible in three years. If you do more than one study a day, you can get through the whole Bible in one year. But it asks questions and assists you to read the Bible more carefully and then to apply it to your life. Now listen, don't read the Bible to check off the boxes, or engage in spiritual activity. Read the Bible, use a guide like Search the Scriptures, to become better friends with Jesus.

Friend, what should we do with hypocrites in the church? How about if we reduce their numbers? Not by tossing them out, but by you and I determining that we don't want to be Wonder Bread Christian hypocrites any longer. If you decide you want to be the Jewish Rye Bread genuine article, and I decide that I want to be the Jewish Rye Bread genuine article, then that's two less hypocrites in the church. And if you can convince your neighbor to be the genuine article, well, then pretty soon we'll have a church filled with authentic followers of Jesus Christ. And that will impact the world around us. Let's pray.

## **What Should We Do With All The Hypocrites In The Church?**

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Rich Nathan

February 21-22, 2004

2 Timothy: Passing on the Faith Series

2 Timothy 3:5-17

### **I. Hypocrisy Run Riot**

A. Faith Without Life Change (2 Timothy 3:5, 8-9)

B. Faith Without Thinking (2 Timothy 3:6-7)

### **II. Hypocrisy Healed**

A. The Power of Examples (2 Timothy 3:10-14)

1. The Need for Models
2. The Test of Endurance
3. The Reality of Persecution

B. The Power of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

1. The Source of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16)
2. The Purpose of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15-16)
3. The Necessity of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:17)