

ASKING FOR A

FRIEND

Because someone you know is wondering

ASKING FOR A FRIEND

Week Three Devotional Guide

Every generation eventually asks honest questions about faith. Some questions are intellectual. Some are emotional. Some are deeply personal.

One of the most common questions people ask today is simple but loaded.

Why are Christians such hypocrites?

For many people this question is not meant to attack Christianity. It comes from experience. They have seen moments when what Christians say and how Christians live do not seem to match.

That disconnect can be confusing. Sometimes it can even be painful.

The Bible does not ignore this tension. In fact, Jesus confronted hypocrisy more directly than anyone in history. He never pretended that religious people always get it right. Instead, He invited people into something better.

The Christian life was never meant to be about pretending to be perfect. It is about transformation that happens slowly as people respond to the grace of God.

This week we will explore an important truth.

The problem of hypocrisy does not invalidate Jesus. And the answer to hypocrisy is not pretending harder.

The answer is honest faith that allows God to transform our lives.

Monday
Honesty is Where Faith Begins

Scripture Reading
Luke 18:13

Reflection

One of the biggest misunderstandings about Christianity is the idea that Christians believe they are morally superior to everyone else.

That has never been the message of the gospel.

The message of Christianity begins with the opposite confession.

We need grace.

Jesus once told a story about two men who went to the temple to pray. One of them spoke confidently about how good he was. The other could barely lift his head. He simply prayed, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Jesus said the humble man went home justified before God.

The difference between hypocrisy and authentic faith is not perfection.

The difference is honesty.

Hypocrisy pretends everything is fine.
Faith admits the need for mercy.

Questions for Reflection

When have you felt the tension between what you believe and how you actually live?

Why do you think it is sometimes easier to pretend everything is fine than to admit we need grace?

What would honest faith look like in your life right now?

Prayer Prompt

God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Help me stop pretending and help me live honestly before You.

Shape my heart with Your grace and begin the work of transformation in my life.

Tuesday

Jesus Confronted Hypocrisy

Scripture Reading

Matthew 23:3

Reflection

Many people assume that Jesus ignored hypocrisy or that He excused it.

The Gospels show the opposite.

Jesus showed incredible compassion toward people who knew they were broken. He welcomed the outcast, the sinner, and the person who knew they needed grace.

But when it came to religious hypocrisy, Jesus spoke very directly.

The problem was not that the religious leaders were imperfect. Everyone is imperfect.

The problem was that they were pretending.

They projected an image of righteousness while their hearts remained unchanged.

Weakness says, "I fall short."

Hypocrisy says, "I pretend I never do."

Jesus confronted hypocrisy because He wanted people to experience real transformation instead of religious performance.

Questions for Reflection

Why do you think hypocrisy is so damaging inside a faith community?

Where do you see the temptation toward image management in your own life?

What does authentic faith look like instead of religious performance?

Prayer Prompt

Jesus, thank You for confronting hypocrisy instead of ignoring it.

Search my heart and show me where I may be pretending.

Help my life reflect the grace You are working in me.

Wednesday

Church Hurt is Real

Scripture Reading

Psalm 34:18

Reflection

For many people, the question about hypocrisy comes from

personal experience.

Some people walked into church hoping to find healing but walked away with wounds instead.

They trusted spiritual leaders who later failed.

They experienced judgment when they were already hurting. They expected compassion and instead encountered criticism.

When faith and community are involved, those wounds cut deeply.

Church is supposed to represent the character of God. It is meant to be a place where people encounter hope and healing.

So when someone is hurt in that environment, it can feel like something sacred was broken.

The Bible never dismisses that kind of pain. God sees it. God cares about it.

And Jesus stood against the very kind of hypocrisy that often causes those wounds.

Questions for Reflection

Have you ever experienced church hurt or disappointment from someone in spiritual leadership?

How did that experience affect your view of faith or the church?

How might Jesus respond to someone carrying that kind of pain?

Prayer Prompt

God, You see the wounds people carry.
Bring healing where pain still lingers.
Help us become the kind of church that reflects Your grace
and compassion.

Thursday

The Failures of Christians Do Not Invalidate Christ

Scripture Reading

Hebrews 12:2

Reflection

One of the biggest mistakes people make when thinking
about Christianity is confusing the followers with the founder.

Christians fail. Every one of us does.

But the truth of Christianity does not rest on the perfection of
Christians. It rests on the character of Christ.

When a doctor makes a mistake, we do not conclude that
medicine itself is false.

When a teacher fails, we do not abandon education.

The real question is not whether followers sometimes fall
short.

The real question is whether the leader and the message are
still trustworthy.

When we look at Jesus, something becomes clear.

Jesus never excused hypocrisy.

Jesus never ignored injustice.

Jesus never pretended people were better than they were.

Instead, He exposed hypocrisy and invited people into a better way of living.

Questions for Reflection

Why do you think people sometimes judge Christianity based on Christians rather than Christ?

What stands out to you about the character of Jesus in the Gospels?

How can focusing on Jesus reshape the way we view faith?

Prayer Prompt

Jesus, help me fix my eyes on You.

Remind me that my faith is built on who You are, not on the failures of people.

Teach me to follow Your example.

Friday

Transformation, Not Image Management

Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 3:18

Reflection

The goal of the Christian life is not image management.

The goal is transformation.

Image management focuses on appearances. It encourages people to carefully control what others see while quietly ignoring what God sees.

Transformation moves in the opposite direction. It begins in the heart and gradually reshapes the outward life.

It changes how we speak.
How we respond to conflict.
How we treat people.
How we make decisions.

Authentic faith grows when people stop pretending and start pursuing real change. And that process is usually slow.

Not perfectly. Not instantly. But honestly.

Over time, the grace of God begins to close the gap between what we believe and how we live.

Questions for Reflection

Where do you see God working to transform your life right now?

What would it look like for your faith to shape your everyday decisions?

How can you pursue honesty instead of appearance in your spiritual life?

Prayer Prompt

God, continue the work of transformation in my life.
Help me care more about who I am becoming than how I appear to others.
Let Your grace shape my heart day by day.

Small Group Guide

Opening Question

When you hear someone say “Christians are hypocrites,”

what do you think they usually mean?

Bible Reading

Matthew 23:1-7

Discussion Questions

Why do you think hypocrisy damages the credibility of faith so deeply?

In the message, Ed said that hypocrisy is not just something that exists somewhere out in the church but something every believer wrestles with. Why is it important to begin with that kind of honesty?

What stands out to you about the way Jesus confronts hypocrisy in Matthew 23?

How does the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14 reshape the way we think about righteousness?

What is the difference between weakness and hypocrisy?

How can a church create an environment where people can be honest about struggles instead of pretending to have everything together?

Practical Challenge

This week take a few quiet moments to ask one honest question before God.

Is my life moving in the same direction as my faith?

Do not answer defensively. Answer honestly.

Then invite God to continue the work of transformation in

your life.

Closing Prayer

God, thank You for meeting us with grace instead of condemnation.

Help us live with honesty before You and before one another. Shape our church into a community where people encounter Your mercy and experience real transformation.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ASKING FOR A

FRIEND

Because someone you know is wondering