

Should YOU Stay Away From Church Because of Hypocrites?

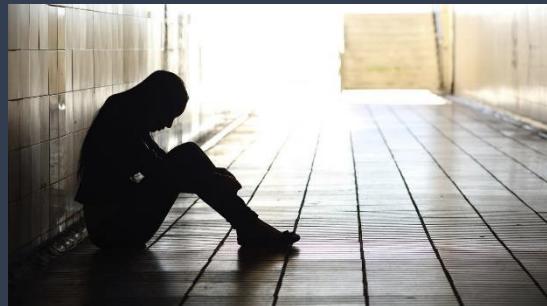
Rev. Sylvester Herbert

It is not infrequent that you hear the expression: "There are too many hypocrites in church." Some people use this as an excuse not to become a part of the church. Others feel that this is justifiable reason to limit their association with the church, or worse yet, to stop attending church.

Who is a hypocrite? It is someone who pretends to be what he / she is not. It is a superficial attitude of holiness or right living. This kind of pretentious living is clearly sin. But should we disassociate ourselves from the hypocrites so we can be more holy? Here are some truths from the Scriptures to guide us in this matter:

1. No church is perfect, not even the churches mentioned in the Bible. In the New Testament epistles we are exposed to church life which shows all kinds of people who are a part of the assembly. There is not even a hint that the holy

believers in Corinth should stop attending church because of the unholy goings on in that particular assembly. Two women in the Philippian church, Euodias and Syntech, were not getting along (Philippians 4:2-3). Presumably, when the church came together to worship they were present and they participated in the religious exercises. No doubt, each thought the other was a hypocrite. Perhaps other members in the church saw both of them as hypocrites. When Paul's letter was read to the congregation, and they were present, hopefully they would have been challenged to put their differences aside and live the way Christians should.



2. Some people whom we call hypocrites are struggling Christians who need to be nurtured in the things of God. Engaging people in order to point out inconsistent behaviour and to restore them can prove immensely helpful if they are teachable (Gal. 6:1).

3. Everyone, especially the hypocrites, needs to hear messages that challenge hypocrisy. These messages remind us that God hates hypocrisy (Titus 1:16); that all sin including hypocrisy will be judged by God (Eccles. 12:14); and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). If we come to church we will hear such messages. If we stay away, we will miss the very messages we need to hear.

4. Hypocrites, like everyone else, have needs which the church can help to meet. Too many of us feel that the only thing the church should be doing is to call out people's sins and to make sure they are ready for heaven. Of course, the church should be doing this but there are other things the church should be doing like (a) teaching rules of "fair play" to make organized social life better (James 2:1-9); and (b) providing support systems for the vulnerable in society (Gal. 6:10; Heb. 13:1-3).

5. Hypocrites can successfully transition from hypocrisy to full blown commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Pharisees in New Testament times were known for their hypocrisy (Matt. 23). But several of them came to faith including Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Philippians 3:4-15; I Tim. 1:12-15). Who can tell when and where hypocrites will encounter God? We should not rule out the house of God when the people of God come together.

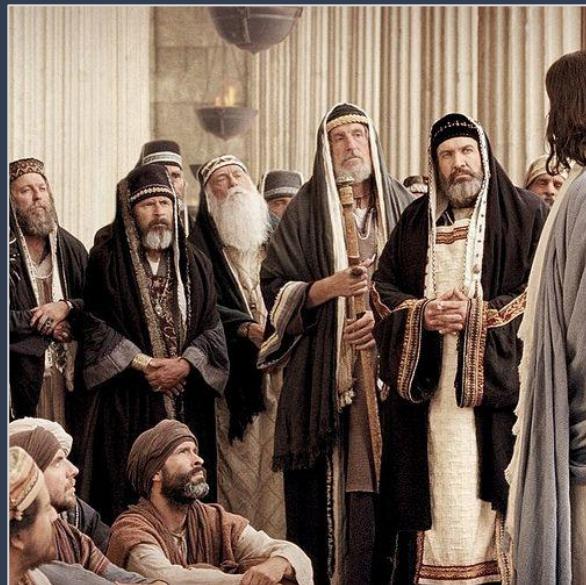
working? They are at sporting events enjoying the

Hypocrites, like everyone else, have needs which the church can help to meet.

game like everybody else. Should we stop attending these events? They are at the barber shop and the beauty

salon. Should we refuse to go to these places? They sit beside us in public forums. Should we therefore withdraw from these gatherings? No one would seriously answer "yes" to these questions.

To allow hypocrites to cause you to stay away from church is to let those who pretend to be Christians keep you from knowing more about God. Why allow such people to determine the extent of your faithfulness to God? Why not become a fully functional member of the local church and demonstrate to others, especially the hypocrites, what it means to live an authentic Christian life? ♦



If truth be told, you will find hypocrites everywhere. They are on the job. Should we change jobs, or stop