

Hypocritical Oath

When I was young, I could never understand why doctors took an oath to be hypocrites. I wasn't all that sure what a hypocrite was, but I knew it wasn't good. Why would people who are supposed to help us promise to be bad?

Later I learned that it's actually the *Hippocratic Oath*, and is named after Hippocrates. He lived about 2500 years ago in Greece and is considered the founder of western medicine. The oath is rather lengthy, but this portion gives an idea of what doctors were actually promising to do: *"I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone."* That sounds a lot better than promising to be a hypocrite, which the Random House Dictionary defines as *"a person who pretends to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess, esp. a person whose actions belie stated beliefs."*

Jesus spoke out against hypocrisy quite a bit. This week, let's study what the Bible has to say about avoiding hypocrisy so that we can worship our God truly and honorably.

Monday – Saying One Thing, Doing Another

"Hypocrisy desires to seem good rather than to be so." Arthur Warwick, 17th c. English pastor and writer

1. Please read Matthew 15:1-9. Has Jesus' accusation ever applied to your relationship with God? When?

Text Insight: The word "hypocrite" comes from a Greek word relating to acting and means "to play a part."

2. In Matthew 23:1-4, what did Jesus tell his followers to do when it came to the teachings and examples of the religious leaders? What does this mean for your life right now (today)?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Matthew 23:1-38. How did the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and religious leader make Christ feel? What damage did it do to their relationship with God?

Tuesday – Worship Turned Upside Down

"A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling 'darkness' on the wall of his cell." C.S. Lewis, 20th c. Anglo-English writer

1. Please read Isaiah 29:13-16. How would you describe the people in this passage? Why does Isaiah introduce the imagery of the potter and the clay?
2. What more do you learn about these people in Isaiah 65:1-5?

Text Insight: The Israelites were prohibited from eating pork (Deut. 14:8), and the unauthorized use of incense had dire consequences (Lev. 10:1-5).

3. Look at Isaiah 29:16 and 45:9-12. What did God say his creation was doing wrong? What is our response supposed to be according to Isaiah 64:8?

Making it Personal: How do you act toward God, your creator? Ask him to guide you in honoring him as your maker and Lord.

Wednesday – Wisdom and Wonders

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 9:10

1. Please read Isaiah 29:13-16. What type of wisdom and intelligence do you think is the focus of verse 14? What did God promise to do with his wonders?
2. What is the role of miracles (wonders) and wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25? What surpasses each of them according to verses 23-25? How does this lead us to worship God correctly?

Digging Deeper: Read Psalm 111:1-10 and describe how it guides us to value God's works, wonders, wisdom and grace properly.

Thursday – True Worship

"If we are going to worship in Spirit, we must develop a spirit of worship." Michael Catt, American pastor

1. Please read John 4:19-24. What do you think it would be like to talk to Jesus face to face about your ideas of proper worship styles? What do you think he would say in return?
2. Many in our day equate worship with music. As important as corporate worship (in song) is, we must never limit our conception of worship to just that. In Romans 12:1-2, what insights do you gain about true worship? What role does the body play in worship?

Digging Deeper (optional): Compare the practical worship of Acts 4:32-37 with the false spirituality of Acts 5:1-11. What is the conclusion of Acts 5:4? What does this tell you about the spirituality of Barnabas's act of worship?

Friday – True Messiah

"Jesus was God and man in one person, that God and man might be happy together again." George Whitefield, 18th c. American evangelist

1. Please read John 4:25-26. Why do you think the woman said what she did? How would Jesus' answer have affected you if you had been that woman?
2. How did the Apostles worship through their daily activities in Acts 5:12-32? Would you have done the same if you had been in their shoes? How?
3. What wisdom did Gamaliel exhibit in Acts 5:33-39?

Making it Personal: Does your wisdom and decision-making leave room for God to work his purposes even when (like Gamaliel) you may not know what his purpose is? How can you improve on this?

For the Weekend: Compare the insights on worship found in Matthew 15:8-9 and John 4:23-24. Ask God to guide you in worshipping him in spirit and in truth.