

LIGHT UP YOUR WORLD
Stories for *Easier* Evangelism (Part 7)
COMMON BARRIERS (Lsn. 2) —

“The Character and Conduct of Christians”

INTRO: We have established from God’s Word that free choice and a sin nature have left all mankind lost and estranged from God. Our choice to sin brings evil, suffering, and death. God is not to blame for the pains of this world – WE ARE! Helping the lost to understand this breaks down one of the two most common barriers today in reaching people for Christ – the character and conduct of God. A second barrier exists: The character and conduct of Christians. Brennan Manning observed ... Some Jesus followers are not always Jesusy! Truth-be-known many non-Christians hold higher expectations of Christians than other Christians do. Raise hand if you know an unbeliever “former” believer who walked away from God due to unchristian behaviors of a Christian. Who hasn’t been hurt, disillusioned, abused, by a professing believer, perhaps even a pastor? All of us have! Way too often have Christians we trusted made choices that betrayed that trust. Easy to conclude that a relationship with God in Christ doesn’t work, at least for some; ultimately blaming God.

It is imperative for the sake of lost or those who walked away for Christians (followers of Christ) to behave like Christians (to actually follow Him). Look at Titus 2:1-9 ... Why? v. 10 to make Jesus look good. We are to shine as lights in our world but when Christians fail to act Christianly our light is dimmed. So, what’s the problem? What’s the answer to hypocrisy among believers?

I. THE PROBLEM OF HYPOCRISY (Matt. 23)

- A. Defined – Hypocrisy occurs when we claim one thing but live another (23:3). Gap between profession and practice (Matt. 7:21-23). My growing up testimony . . .
- B. JESUS’ RESPONSE? Lk. 12:1-3; Matt. 23. He really didn’t like it. *Hypocrite* found 17 times in the Gospels – all by Jesus. What did He say? “Woe” (7 times) – Word of condemnation and judgment. Jesus had zero-tolerance policy for hypocrites. *Jesus has unlimited grace for a sinner in need of forgiveness but no tolerance for hypocrisy* (v. 33). Why do Christians sometimes behave unchristianly and damage the reputation of Christ?

II. REASONS FOR UNCHRISTIAN CHRISTIANS

- A. *Maybe They’re Not Really Christians* (Titus 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:5, 8; Matt. 7:21-23; 1 Jn. 2:4) – Some who claim Christ are not really Christians. ILL: Shane @ State Farm. May be members, baptized, carry Bible, etc., but never truly trusted Christ for forgiveness and transformation. Jesus warned in Parable (Matt. 13:47-50). Following Jesus is what

makes us Christian. Jesus defined Christians as those who follow Him (16 times).

- B. *Maybe They’re Baby Christians* (1 Jn. 2:12-14). Some are simply new in Christ and undeveloped in their walk (Heb. 5:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:2). Babies are messy. Salvation is an event followed by a process (lifetime). Transformation is a lifelong journey. Always becoming but never arriving in this life.
- C. *All Believers are Imperfect, In-Process Christians* (Phil. 1:6; Rom. 12:1-2). All Christians are a work-in-progress. Sanctification is a process. No believer reaches perfection in this life (free choice, sin nature). What we need to remember.
 - 1. We are all “dust” (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Ps. 103:14; 2 Cor. 4:6-7). All too quick to point our finger at others who sin, but way too slow to look at ourselves. Look at Matt. 7:1-5 . . . All have “speck” (dust) in our lives. We are weak and vulnerable - and we still sin in ways that hurt others and embarrass Christ. *We’d be less shocked and offended by other people’s sin if we were more aware of and more honest about our own.*
 - 2. Shake off the Dust! (Acts 13:44-52). How did Paul and Barnabas act when mistreated by hypocrisy of others (believers?)? They didn’t walk away. Why? They knew that a person (church, God) didn’t hurt them, but a “bag of dust” just like them did (v. 51); so, they were able to move on “filled with joy and the Holy Spirit” (v. 52). *They refused to let the sins of others keep them from the goodness of God.* He didn’t let us down, people did – we are all dust. Matt. 10:14.

ILLUS: Served bad food at a restaurant . . . never go to another restaurant or eat again? Unfair to judge Jesus based on a few faulty followers. *The fact that all Christians follow Jesus poorly at times, doesn’t mean He isn’t worth following!* LISTEN! Hurt, disappointment, betrayed, abused, etc. All suck. Shake it off with God’s help – forgive and move on. *Never let the sin of another person keep you from living in the goodness of God.*

ILLUS: Mozart . . .

CONC: Becoming a Christian doesn’t make us perfect (only in heaven) but it does make us an imperfect (dust) work-in-progress who is totally forgiven. ILL: We are His marketing ads . . . do all we can not to be fake advertising! Christians who are authentic live the Good News before sharing the Good News!