



## TIME OF GRACE®

# *Skeptical Faith: Aren't Christians Hypocrites?*

## Study Notes

### *Summary*

Jesus had some harsh words for the Pharisees and teachers of the law at his time because they were pretending to be something they were not. He could read their hearts and see their hypocritical thoughts. God sees what's in our hearts too—the times we are also hypocrites. And that's why Jesus is such a great gift to us! Because of him, we are forgiven, declared to be God's children, and heirs of heaven.

- A hypocrite is someone who \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Matthew 23:1-13:** <sup>1</sup> Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: <sup>2</sup> “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. <sup>3</sup> So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. <sup>4</sup> They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. <sup>5</sup> Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; <sup>6</sup> they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; <sup>7</sup> they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others. <sup>8</sup> But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup> And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. <sup>11</sup> The greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup> For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. <sup>13</sup> Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!”
- **Genesis 2:25:** Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.
- **Matthew 23:37:** Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Read all of Matthew chapter 23. Why did Jesus call the Pharisees and teachers of the law things like hypocrites, snakes, a brood of vipers, and blind guides? Why is this sort of attitude dangerous for believers?
2. Like the teachers at Jesus' time, we sometimes forget what it means to follow Jesus. There are many examples of things we can become legalistic about. And these can turn us away from the important things we actually need to focus on. Can you give any examples?
3. Can you think of times when you've portrayed yourself to be something different on the outside than you are on the inside? As a child of God, where does your identity come from? From what you do or what others think of you?

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read Romans 1:19,20; 2:14,15; Hebrews 11:3; Ecclesiastes 3:11.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Skeptical Faith: Aren't Christians Hypocrites?**  
Matthew 23:1-15  
April 25, 2021

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Hey, everyone, Pastor Mike here from Time of Grace and I'm pretty excited today to be joined by my colleague, my friend, my former collegiate classmate, Pastor Jeremy Mattek. So you might know Pastor Jeremy from our Grace Talk videos; he's been amazing at the Evening Encouragement videos. I know a ton of you love that; it breaks your heart when he takes a break from that. So we're super excited to have him here to learn a little bit about his story and he's going to preach to us today so we're going to get to hear a great message from Pastor Jeremy about hypocrisy.

Jeremy, before we get there, lots of people have met you, they've heard you tell stories about family and your past and what you do, but for those who – people who are watching, listening for the first time, tell us a little bit about yourself.

*Pastor Jeremy Mattek*

Yeah, thanks, Mike, really, really grateful to be here; really grateful to be involved with Time of Grace and the great ministry that's going on. I've been serving in ministry since 2004, which is when I graduated from the seminary, and I spent my first 14 years in ministry serving at a congregation on the urban northside of Milwaukee. It's kind of basically where my kids grew up; that's what they – I think they will always consider their home. We have – Karen and I – have five children; right now they are ages 12 through 19, so they are rapidly growing and our house, within a few years, will be a little bit emptier and emptier, but it's been a great joy doing ministry alongside of them every step of the way.

For the last three years, I've been in central Wisconsin at a congregation serving among a team of just wonderful pastors.

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Wow, five children! How does that work?

*Pastor Jeremy Mattek*

Yeah, they work hard to keep us young.

***Pastor Mike Novotny***

I bet they do; I bet they do. Well, thanks for sharing a bit of that. I first met you in college in Minnesota, we both played tennis, we both played soccer. You were a senior when I was a freshman, right?

***Pastor Jeremy Mattek***

I believe so. Yeah, I think so.

***Pastor Mike Novotny***

Wow.

***Pastor Jeremy Mattek***

I do have a few years on you.

***Pastor Mike Novotny***

That was just three or four years ago, if I recall, right?

All right, so we're in a series called Skeptical Faith, so we're kind of diving into the deep end of tough questions, why some people stay away from the church and stay away from the Christian faith, why they're not really interested in reading the Bible. And today's message that you're going to share with us is about hypocrisy. You hear that; the church is filled with hypocrites.

So for you, personally, what makes you passionate about trying to counter that objection or get over that hump that a skeptic might have?

***Pastor Jeremy Mattek***

Jesus, himself, addressed it and he saw it in two different ways that I think are really important for all of us today. One, he saw the pain that results when somebody's the victim of a hypocrite. It can be a very sharp, deep, long-lasting wound. When you believe that a person that you're interacting with is one way, like someone you can trust, someone who loves you, but it turns out to be the exact opposite and sometimes that happens within the church. It happens throughout the world but it also happens within the church and so there's some deep wounds within the church that Jesus wanted to call out.

Also, just for each individual, hypocrisy is the type of sin that if you are guilty of it, it often needs to be pointed out to you. Our hearts are such that they can very subtly slip into hypocrisy without us fully realizing what's going on at the time. And by the time somebody points it out to us, a lot of damage has been done. And thankfully, Jesus responds to all of that with just the biggest heart, both for the victims of hypocrites and also for those who are living with some

hypocrisy in their own hearts. But Jesus extends a lot of grace and it's a powerful grace that can heal all of the wounds that hypocrisy can create and I'm eager to share that.

***Pastor Mike Novotny***

Yeah, I don't know about you, but I'm pretty excited to hear what Pastor Jeremy has to say. I hope you enjoy this message. Thanks for watching and may God bless you.

***Pastor Jeremy Mattek***

The day before I started kindergarten in my new school, I'd never gone to school before, it was going to be my first day of school ever, and the day after we got into the new town where I'd never been, where I knew no one. So we got into town one day and the next day my parents threw me on a bus as I was wearing my brand new blue raincoat and got off the bus, stepped into a classroom with kids that I didn't know, seeing a teacher that I'd never met; it was a very unfamiliar experience, very scary. And so, imagine my surprise when that first week of school, I received an invitation to a birthday party; one of the kids in the class invited me to his birthday party. And I didn't know him very well at all but I thought that'd be a lot of fun so I decided to go.

I went to the birthday party which took place just a few days later and we had a lot of fun at the birthday party. We played a lot of games, we swam in the pool, had some cake, had some ice cream, and then it was time to open the presents. And we all sat down, everybody brought out the presents that they had brought the birthday boy, and he took the first one and he opened it up and inside was a G.I. Joe action figure toy; very exciting. Then he put that one away. Then he took the next one, opened it up, and inside was a G.I. Joe action figure toy; very exciting. Not the same one, a different one, but still, G.I. Joe. He put that one away. Took the next one, opened it up, and inside was a G.I. Joe action figure toy. Again. A third one. He put that aside and gift after gift, present after present, I think you know where this is going; it was the same thing – a G.I. Joe action figure toy every single time until he got to the last gift, which is the one that I brought for him.

I did not get him a G.I. Joe action figure toy. Yeah, he had the present in front of him, he opened it up, and inside was the model airplane kit that my mom and I had bought for him the previous day. I knew I didn't quite fit in with everybody else, but I didn't think too much of it. He said thanks, he seemed to like it, and we went on and had a great time with the birthday party. And I didn't think anything more of it until a couple of days later when we're back at school, a number of the other boys who were at that same birthday party, they came up to me and they said, "Hey Jeremy, do you know that the only reason you were invited to that birthday party was because your dad is the new pastor of our church and he thought that he kind of had to invite you? But none of us really wanted you to be there; we would have been okay if you weren't there." And then they walked away.

You know what kind of person I met that day? A hypocrite. Now, you might think that seems kind of harsh to call a five-year-old a hypocrite but a hypocrite is basically just somebody who

pretends; that's it. Somebody who pretends. And for a number of days, he and a lot of the other boys at that party had pretended that they were happy to see me, pretended that they were having a good time with me, pretended that they wanted to be around me; they were pretending. By definition, hypocrite. And you can find those, unfortunately, at birthday parties that five-year-olds attend.

You know where else you can find them? In church. You can find them in church. In fact, the fact that there are hypocrites in church is one of the reasons that many people choose not to come to church because it's often a painful experience when you meet one. And they look at the church and they look at hypocrites, they see the people who are pretending to be one thing when they're really not; pretending that they're up here or over there or in comparison to where you are, they're higher or greater or smarter or better and it turns them off to the church. They don't like to look inside any place, much less the church, and see hypocrites. And they're not alone because Jesus doesn't like seeing hypocrites in the church, either. If you look in just the New Testament and all the verses in the New Testament, there are 17 times that the word "hypocrite" comes up in the New Testament. And I'll give you one guess as to who it was that said all of them. It was Jesus, who knows that there are hypocrites within the church, who understands the pain that they can create within relationships and in people's lives and who wants us to not be afraid of seeing them. And he wants us to be equipped in how to move forward if we have been them or if we happen to meet them.

He meets up with some hypocrites in Matthew 23. This is what it says: "Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves aren't willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at the banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplace and to be called 'Rabbi' by others. But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father and he's in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!'"

Hypocrites. If you have ever stepped into a gathering of people who call themselves Christian and have been made to feel that you don't belong here, that we don't want you, that you're not one of us, that until you become like this, we won't love you, there's not an explanation that I can give you that will make you feel better about that experience because there's no good explanation for it. You were the victim of a hypocrite; maybe many hypocrites. And I'm sorry that happened because it shouldn't have.

But of course, the church isn't the only place where you'll find hypocrites; we really find them in any number of places. I have a very close friend who told me about something that he would do at work a number of years ago. He worked in the HR department of his company and he was

responsible for choosing who the company was going to hire into the new positions that were open. And he said that when he would sit down with the interviewees, it was pretty predictable how the process would go from the outset. You know, he asked them the normal questions and they had their normal response rehearsed about why they thought they should be a good fit and why they thought they should or would excel at this position and why they should hire them. And everybody had that part down pretty well. But after they got through all of that talking – talking about the resume and the credentials and work experience and family and lots of different things – then my friend would take out a blank piece of paper and he would slide it across the table to the person who was being interviewed and he would say to them, “I would like you to write down the username and password for all of your social media accounts and for any dating website that you belong to.”

And before I go any further, I feel like I need to give a disclaimer here that I am not condoning that and my friend now would not condone that and also the company that he worked for many, many years ago would not condone that either. This was – this took place when social media was kind of a new thing and businesses were still trying to navigate their way through how they’re supposed to use all of this new information that was circulating on the internet in a way to hire and identify the best candidates. I think it might even be illegal now to do what he was doing. But it wasn’t back then and, again, I’m certainly not condoning it. But he told me that it was an interesting experience because it did accomplish something, at least in the moment. He said that as he slid that piece of paper across the table, he knew pretty much right away, even before they said anything, even before they wrote anything down, who was worth hiring. He could tell by their reaction on their face. If they looked really scared, he thought that was probably a good indication that they were hiding something; that there was something about their life, something about their past, something about their present, something about who they were, that they didn’t want the company to know about. And if they looked scared, if they looked timid, if they were really, really hesitant to share that kind of information about who they were, what they do in their life, he thought that’s probably a good indicator that this person wouldn’t fit in this work environment.

Now if you were to think about that person who’s being interviewed for that job and if I were to ask you who that person is, what would you say? Would you say that that person is the individual that you will see – that you see on the resume? The person who was sitting in that chair, probably dressed pretty nicely, talking very politely, groomed very, very well. Is that who they are? Or maybe you would point to their social media feed and you would say, “No, that’s who they really are.” Their social media feed where they’re usually succeeding at something or they’re usually doing something very, very well; where they’re usually smiling and having a good time because those are the kind of things that people typically share on their social media feeds. Would you point to the social media feed and say, “Well, that’s who they are!” Or maybe would you point somewhere else? Would you point to who that person is when they think they’re not being interviewed or noticed by anyone? Who that person is when they’re all alone and they think nobody’s watching or evaluating them? How would you identify who that person sitting in the chair really is? And related to that, how do you identify who you are? Where do you point in your life to see your identity? Are you the person who goes out in public looking pretty nice, pretty well dressed, well groomed, smiling, telling everybody you’re fine when they

ask you how you're doing? Are you the person that you are when you go out with your friends or your family? The people who know you the best? When you can relax a little bit? Or is there another person that only you see? The person that you see when you look into the mirror? I mean, do you define who you are by looking at your best day or by looking at your worst day? By looking at how you act when you are well rested or when you're tired and overworked? Who you are is sometimes a very difficult question to answer but it's an important one because it helps us to answer another question; the question about how other people look at you. You know, how many people in the world right now know you? Like everything; exactly who you are and what you've done and what you struggle with?

And if the answer is not many or no one, then that leads to another important question; the question of then does anyone really love you? Do they love you as you really are? No pretending. If you consider those questions and if you don't come up with too many people who really, truly know you and love you exactly as you are, you're certainly not alone. I think that's probably the norm in the world. In fact, if you go in the Bible and if you look for an example of two individuals who knew each other so well and loved each other exactly as they were, you have to go back to the Old Testament, way back in the Old Testament, to the very beginning of creation when there were really, literally, only two people on the planet; Adam and Eve. At the end of Genesis 2, there's an interesting verse in there where it says, "The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame." When I'm taking a young couple through pre-marriage classes and prepping them for what they need to know about how to be married in a good way, how to keep their marriage founded on the rock-solid love of Christ's love for us, I read that verse to them and I ask them why do you think that verse is in the Bible? If you were God, would you put that verse in the Bible? Of all the verses out there, is that one that you would definitely want everyone to know? And they struggle with that for a little bit, typically; most often it's a question that they had never thought of and it's a verse that they don't consider very often. Nobody really picks that one for their wedding verse – the man and the wife were both naked and they felt no shame. But I push on – I push on the question a little bit and I ask why do you think that verse is in the Bible? And sometimes they give an answer and sometimes they don't. But then I ask them to just think about practically what it would have looked like with Adam and Eve in that situation. Adam and Eve were both fully, fully exposed in front of the other person; fully exposed. And yet, they didn't feel ashamed. They didn't feel ashamed. I mean, think about that from Eve's perspective. She's standing there, fully exposed in front of Adam, and she is not thinking: "Oh, I wonder what he thinks of me? Am I beautiful enough? Am I the right shape? Am I the right size? I wonder if he's comparing me to anybody else on the planet?" Of course, he wasn't; there was nobody else on the planet at the time. But she wasn't thinking any of those things. She looked at Adam and by the way Adam looked at her, even though he saw everything, she was confident that he loves me just as I am.

And the same is true in the opposite direction. You picture Adam, standing there, fully exposed in front of Eve. She can see everything and he's not thinking, "Oh, I wonder what she's thinking about me? I wonder if she likes what she sees?" No, not at all. By the way Eve was looking at him, he felt no shame, no reason to be embarrassed, no reason to cover anything up because by the way Eve looked at him, he knew she sees me and she loves me.



Fast forward just one chapter in the Bible to Genesis 3 and you see something entirely different. When Adam and Eve had both crossed the line that they knew they shouldn't, then they covered themselves up. Then they started hiding and then God came walking through the garden and found them; he knew where to look, he knew where to find them. And he asked them – he said, “What are you doing? Why are you hiding?” And Adam said, “Well, I hid because I was afraid. I was afraid what you would think of me if you knew the truth.”

And do you know what else? Do you know who else in the world saw someone like that? Somebody who could see us at our worst and still give us his very best love? The hypocrites that Jesus was talking to in Matthew 23. In this chapter, where he does not hold back, he goes on to call them hypocrites and brood of vipers and snakes and blind guides. You go through the whole chapter but then you get to the end of the chapter and Jesus says this: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings but you were not willing.” They didn't see it. But if they kept their eyes open, they would have seen very clearly just how willing Jesus was to love them and be there for them, even if it meant hanging on a cross and not receiving any praise or good intention or applause from anyone. Jesus chose to be there so that every person whose heart is fully exposed in front of the God who knows everything could know; that the God who knows you will always love you. The God who knows your sin has declared it to be forgiven and no pretending. That's the truth. And that's a powerful message when churches share that message with every individual that walks into their building. It's a powerful message when anyone shares that kind of attention and love with anyone.

I want to take you back to the birthday party just for a moment. So I went to the birthday party, five years old, everybody got him G.I. Joe, I didn't; got him the model airplane kit. And then a few days later, the kids come up to me and tell me they didn't really want me there. A couple of weeks later, the kid whose birthday party it was came up to me and he said, “Jeremy, I'm wondering if you're doing anything this weekend? I'm wondering if you'd want to come over to my house again?” I said, “Okay.” And this time it was just the two of us; no other kids, nobody else around. I felt a little pressure to maybe bring a G.I. Joe toy but I resisted.

But I walked into his house and he showed me around again. And we walked by his bedroom and as we walked by his bedroom, I looked in and I saw his dresser and on top of his dresser was something. Do you know what it was? It was a model airplane; all put together from the model airplane kit that I had gotten him for his birthday. I don't know if he liked models, I don't know if he liked airplanes, I didn't ask, but I do know that he looked at me and he saw someone who needed some love, some positive attention, and that's what he gave me that day. And I haven't forgotten it.

In this world, you will have no trouble finding people who put you down, who want to make you feel worse about who you are in comparison to who they think they are. You'll have no trouble finding people who try to elevate themselves at your expense so that the world sees something different. Get to know the world, as broken and as troubled as it and we all are and love it. And love them just like Jesus just like Jesus loves us.

Let's pray.

Dear Father in Heaven, we're so ashamed that you know everything about us because all of our hearts are filled with so much regret about things that we left undone, good things that we left undone, are good. Bad things that we jumped into more quickly than we would have ever imagined and we can't hide these truths from you. But neither do you want to hide from us the truth of what happened at the cross. We were loved with a great, big, eternal, perfect love that puts us in the arms of our heavenly Father for eternity. What a great gift you have given us in Jesus! You put us all on the same level. You declare us all to be forgiven; you declare us all to be children of God and residents of heaven.

Thank you for that great gift. And as you have given it to us so freely, equip us to continue to give that gift over and over again and again to everyone around us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.