

1 I believe in Jesus but the church is a load of hypocrisy

I believe in Jesus but the church is a load of hypocrisy – that's an objection to Christianity that makes me sit up!

I believe in Jesus too - but I don't always live up to him!

Does that make me a hypocrite?

A hypocrite is someone who pretends. I don't *pretend* Jesus has the truth or is the truth – *I know it* - but I try also not to pretend I fall short of him.

It's hard!

If someone says they believe in Jesus, but his followers are hypocrites, they're partly right. They'll need advising that if *they* follow Jesus they *too* will get called hypocrites. It goes with the calling.

Jesus gives us a vision. We try to live up to it - and we fail.

Where would we be though without the vision Jesus gives?

Having *his* standards is like having your alarm clock set half an hour ahead to make sure you're never late!

Jesus taught things that would keep us on our toes, pressing forwards towards his perfect standard.

Forgive your brother or sister from your heart he says (Matthew 18:35). *Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart* (Matthew 6:28). *Do not worry about your life* (Matthew 6:25).

I regularly confess I fall short. Jesus teaches we should. Every church service includes confessing your failings. Jesus never said his followers would live up to him, but he did say they should strive to *be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect* (Matthew 5:48).

In the Bible we read how people who cheated other people came to Jesus and were forgiven, people who'd stolen, who'd sold their bodies for sex – all came to Jesus and were welcomed.

Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 4 says *God is rich in mercy*. If someone tells me they believe in Jesus but Christians are hypocrites I'll tell them how the mercy of God covers my sins.

I'll tell them of the God and Father of Jesus who loves sinners and gives them not what they most deserve but what they most need.

I believe in Jesus but the church is a load of hypocrisy. To fully answer this objection we need more than to defend Christians. We need to defend the institutional church.

If the church falls short of Jesus it's also true that Christians need the church. We read in Matthew 16 verse 18 how Jesus founded the church. *I will put together my church* he said, *a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out.*

We need that energy. If you believe in Jesus but ditch the church, your belief won't go far. The first believers told how *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers* (Acts 2:42). The writer of Acts goes on to say how *many wonders and signs* were evident in the church, how *believers were of one heart and soul* and with *great grace upon them* (Acts 2:43, 4:32, 33)

As a Christian I want that grace! I want to come close to Jesus!

Whatever people say about hypocrisy I'd ask them to tell me how I could *better* get close to Jesus than through the church?

Where else can I hear God's word expounded? Or encounter the Lord by praying with other believers? Or welcome the promised Holy Spirit?

Where but in the fellowship of the Christian church can I receive the spiritual food of the precious body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion?

A great evangelist had a fireside chat with a young man who insisted you could believe in Jesus without going to church.

Having reminded him that faith in Jesus grows up in a community, the evangelist reached down for the fire tongs and took hold of a brightly burning coal.

As he held it aloft the two men saw it change from red to orange to black. The young man was in church the next Sunday!

Even if there *is* hypocrisy in the church *Jesus* is there also, among his people, waiting to warm their souls.

That's the best answer we can give. It's Jesus' own answer. *Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them* (Matthew 18:20)

Total 746 words - just over 4.5 minutes to read

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