

SO, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

1. What do you think of when you hear the word **hypocrite**?

2. If people tell you they don't attend a church because it is full of hypocrites, what do you say to them?

3. What do you think—**T (true)** or **F (false)**?

Christians—

- should act differently than non-Christians.
- should talk differently than non-Christians.
- should dress differently than non-Christians.
- should have different priorities than non-Christians.
- are hypocritical to some degree.
- act like Christians if they are truly saved.
- aren't perfect—just forgiven.
- are trying to obtain a perfection that just isn't possible.
- have no special "Christian" behavior.



4. Place an **X** on the scale below, where you see yourself.



I'm very hypocritical

I'm very Christian-like

5. Which is worse, being a **hypocritical Christian** or **not being a Christian at all**? Why?

6. Read and summarize each passage below in your own words.

Matthew 6:1-8

James 1:22-25

SO, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? [h y p o c r i s y]

THIS WEEK

One of the most difficult things for young people to do is correlate their actions to their beliefs. They may express high ideals, yet be unable to carry them out. They rarely notice this trait in themselves, but are quick to point it out in others. This TalkSheet gives you the opportunity to analyze how your youth group and other Christians live up to their Christian beliefs.

OPEN

To start, you may want to try this. Read each of these scenarios and ask the group to decide which one is the most hypocritical. Then make a list of why or why not some are worse than others. What if the people in these situations were Christians? Does that make being a hypocrite worse? What's the difference between lying and being a hypocrite? How do these situations rate on a scale of 1 to 10—ten being extremely hypocritical?

- Stacy is an avid athlete—the star player on the women's basketball team. She excels in taking care of her body, eating right and exercising. Everyone knows that she is a fitness guru. Even though she thinks doing drugs is wrong, she drinks at parties on the weekends—with a few cigarettes once in a while, too.
- Hosea isn't a virgin, but his new girlfriend wants to know what he's done in the past. He doesn't want to bring up the past, so he lies and tells his new girlfriend that he's never had sex. He thinks he's protecting her from getting hurt.
- Hanna goes through money like water. She has exhausted her allowance from her parents and owes at least 20 bucks to each of her friends. But she's been showing up at school with new clothes. Now her parents and friends are wondering what's going on.
- A few of Scott's friends are into Internet pornography and joke about what they see on the web. He's not into that but agrees to go along to a strip club this weekend. After all, he thinks they're two different things.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Ask the kids to share their first thoughts when hearing the word hypocrite. What hypocritical behavior they have encountered?
2. How would your kids respond to this situation? What would they use to defend the church? You may want to role-play the situation and debate each side with your group.

3. How did your kids answer these? What do these questions say about how they see Christians? Take a vote on their responses and discuss each point with the group.
4. To keep this from getting personal, ask your kids where the average Christian teenager may fall on the scale. Why? What about their friends? If you ask some to share where they put themselves, ask for volunteers.
5. What do these passages say about hypocrisy? How did your kids summarize the verses?

THE CLOSE

Close the discussion with a challenge to your group members to practice what they preach. Leave room to talk about God's forgiveness. Also, you may want to discuss tolerance—within reason—for other Christians. God doesn't expect others to be perfect and they shouldn't either.

Communicate that it's easy to fake others out and to pretend to be something they aren't. But God knows their hearts. He knows them better than they know themselves—they'll never fool him.

MORE:

- On a large whiteboard or poster board, draw two columns labeled CHRISTIAN and OTHER. Brainstorm with your youth what characteristics or stereotypes there are of Christians and others. Discuss how Christians are portrayed in the media—on TV shows and movies. How can your kids live in the world without making others feel inferior? How would their lives be different if they weren't Christians?
- What can each of your kids do during the next week to put their faith into practice? Ask them to write their ideas on a 3x5 card (kind of like a pledge) and give them to you. Then, a week or so later, go through the cards and talk about how they did. What was easy or hard about living their faith? What long-term changes can they shoot for?
- God makes it clear that Christians aren't supposed to judge others. Check out and discuss Matthew 7:1-2, Romans 2:1, Romans 14:10, and James 4:11. What do these verses warn about judging?