



HYPOCRISY: Why Millennials & Z's Are Leaving in Droves

"The hypocrite, certainly, is an atheist; for if he did believe there was a God, he durst not be so bold as to deceive Him to His face."

—Thomas Boylston Adams

1. **A Generational Crisis.** Twenty-somethings bailing out of churches.
 - The LifeWay Poll: 73% leaving churches because of hypocrisy and judgmentalism.
 - The inevitable Exodus: 85% of older white Evangelicals identify as conservative Republicans. 78% of those under 40 self-identity as Democrats, and 50% of them lean toward progressive or socialist. A built-in generational divide and reason for exodus when politics and religion merge in the culture wars that polarize America.
 - *Wall Street Journal Report* on changing landscape in Evangelical churches: 60% of attendees over the age of 50, while only 11% are under the age of thirty.
 - Bombshell takeaway from LifeWay Poll: Millennials and Z's aren't leaving so much because of Evangelical religious, social, or political stances, as the un-Christlike way they are fighting the culture wars. They see Evangelicals as hypocritical and judgmental. They also don't want to

fit in churches that don't share their social and political beliefs—or make their views a test of orthodoxy.

2. **The biggest *Hot Button* issue.** There is no complaint more important to answer than this, for it is the number one criticism of those leaving or staying away from the church: “The church is full of hypocrites.”

3. **Our three lens-approach from dealing with all hot buttons.**

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”
—1 Peter 3:15

- **Hopes.** The Bible has answers to every messy issue in life. We have to grab hold of them, hold onto them, and live by them.
- **Answers.** We must *prepare* them, they should reveal the hope we have from the Bible, and they must be reasonable.
- **Approaches.** How we present ourselves is as important as the answers we give. We should do so in the most compassionate and effective way possible.

4. **Using St. Peter's three-lens approach to hypocrisy [and judgmentalism].**

1) **Our Hope.** What does the Bible say about hypocrisy?

- **Matthew 6:5** *Hypocrites* The Mask-wearers.
- **Matthew 23:27** *Painted Tombs and Dead Man's Bones.*
- **Matthew 7:5** *Hypocrisy's Evil Twin Sister, Judgmentalism*
- **Matthew 23:18** *Shutting the doors to the kingdom*
- **The bottom line:** Jesus hates religious hypocrisy more than any other. So do nonbelievers. So should we. The issue isn't to fix the world's hypocrisies, but to fix ourselves first.

2) **Our Answers:** What should we *not* do in response to the charges that churches are a bunch of hypocrites or Christians are always judging others?

- **Don't DENY**
- **Don't DEFEND**
- **Don't DISMISS**

Our Answers: Here are a few that we can give.

- **"You're right!"**
- **"Jesus is standing with you on this."**
- **"Let's talk about what hypocrisies bug you most."**
- **"Could it be that you've hit on the very reason Jesus had to show up?"**
- **"Christians aren't perfect, they're just forgiven."**
- **"Christians will never be perfect this side of heaven."**
- **"Not all who profess Christ really belong to him."**

3) Our Approaches. The right way to present the right answers.

- **Show GENTLENESS [or Meekness]**
- **Show RESPECT [or Fear]**