

Russell Kelfer

Hypocrisy: the Reasons, the Results, the Remedy

537-A

Series: The Beatitudes



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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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We have been dealing with the concept of a pure heart, the sixth Beatitude. As you may remember from the last lesson, the heart is who we really are. It is the real thoughts we think when we think no one knows what we think. It is the real feelings we have. It is how we *really* feel about God. It is how we *really* feel about our parents. It is how we *really* feel about our loved ones. It is how we *really* feel about the circumstances that have come into our lives. It is the *real* choices we would like to make if there were neither restraints nor consequences. That is what goes on in the heart. According to the Scriptures, this is what God looks at when He sees you and when He sees me. His desire is that those thoughts and feelings and choices become increasingly pure.

To be pure means to be free from hindering admixture of evil. It is to be free from false adornment and false motivation. It is to be free from encumbering restrictions. It is to be free from confusing, useless stain. It is to be free from decay or corruption. In spiritual terms one who is becoming pure in heart is one who is increasingly becoming transparent, free from hypocrisy, increasingly pure in his motivations, increasingly needful of a clear conscience, increasingly free from double-mindedness, and increasingly holy in his thought life.

In the last lesson, we began our study of the comparison between a transparent spirit and hypocrisy by watching Jesus in Matthew 23 as He made the presentations of the Hypocrite of the Year Awards. Seven scribes and Pharisees were called out on the stage of life for special recognition of their performances before a live audience on the stage of spiritual pretension. I could not help but be somewhat edgy as I witnessed the proceedings. Somehow I kept wanting to run on stage and say, "Lord, I deserve that one." And I do. In fact, the truth is that if you knew how rotten my heart is, you would all be gone by now. Maybe some of you feel the same way. You may feel as though you are tired of the playacting spirituality, deceiving others until you literally deceive yourself.

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In this lesson, we will wind up our look at hypocrisy by examining the problem from these three perspectives. The title of the lesson is “Hypocrisy: The Reason, the Results and the Remedy”. The Reason will pose the question, “Why are we such phonies”? The Results will expose the effects it will have on our lives. The Remedy will examine how we can become more real.

What is hypocrisy? Our first concern is why? Why do we playact? Why do we pretend to be what we really aren't? Or better still, why aren't we becoming in the heart what we represent ourselves to be? I believe there are two parts to the answer. The first part has to do with the conflict that takes place in our hearts between the Holy Spirit and the flesh. Paul exclaimed, “Woe is me. The things I want to do, I don't do and I do the things I don't want to do. Oh wretched man that I am.” Paul tells us that he is having a hard time living with himself because of the conflict that is going on in his heart. We are born with a diseased heart. It is deceitful and terminally evil. Nobody can understand it. This is how the Scripture describes our heart.



If you have a piece of paper, draw three hearts. On the first one in the right-hand corner, put a crooked line and leave an 1/8 of an inch inside the heart that is different than the rest. Shade the rest of it and write, “Dirty Heart.” In the little part that is different, put a cross in it. When you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, the Holy Spirit injects a serum into your heart called truth. It is a real truth serum. The truth injected into your life begins to change your heart. Now the Holy Spirit is injected into your heart and desires to cleanse your heart day by day, hour by hour, and minute by minute.

In the second heart, draw a jagged line about a 1/3 of the way

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down and shade in the bottom 2/3, and write “Dirty Heart.” In the top third, put a cross. This is what is happening as the Holy Spirit begins to make inroads in your life as purity of heart is beginning to saturate certain areas of your life. But you are still not pure and holy experientially. Germ warfare is still going on in your heart.

In the third heart, draw a jagged line in the bottom 1/4 and shade that in with the “Dirty Heart.” In the top 3/4 put a cross. Hopefully as you enter the mature stages of your life, that is what God sees as He looks at your heart. You may think, “When God looks at my heart, He sees total purity because He has overlaid the blood of Christ on my heart.” Positionally, that is true because you are completely whole in Christ. However, experientially, that is not so. There is still dwelling within you that desire to do evil. The warfare goes on day after day after day. The principle is that we should become increasingly pure in heart. Not all of us do, so there is conflict. There is a battleground. The fact of the matter is we have a dual nature. Some are upset with that and call it the flesh and the spirit. Some say it is the old man and the new man. We will not be concerned with theological semantics. You call it anything you want. The main idea is that there are two forces vying for control in the real you, which is the heart that lives within you.

THE REASONS

You may say, “I want to stop being bitter.” You may stop showing bitterness, but your heart keeps sending up the bitterness signals. You can mask it and playact. Why? I think there are three reasons:

- 1- It is easier to change your behavior than your attitudes.
- 2- We live in a performance, religious-oriented world that says if you just do the right things you will be acceptable.
- 3- So many Scriptural commandments have to do with behavioral responses such as, “You shall not...” “You shall...”

We first learn to express the externals of the Christian life. That is as it should be. When you become a Christian, by God’s grace you stop committing adultery. The Scripture says in Exodus 20:14, “You shall not commit adultery,” and you stop as you should. The Scripture says in Ephesians 4:28, “Let him that steals, steal no more,” so you quit stealing by God’s

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grace. The Scripture says in Proverbs 6:16,17, “Seven things God hates, God hates a lying tongue,” so you quit lying, and that is good, that is what we ought to do. The Scripture says in Ephesians 5:24 and 28, “Love your wife as Christ loved the church, and love your wife as you love your own body.” You quit beating your wife. That is good. The Scripture says in I Corinthians 6:19, “The body is the temple of God,” so you quit using drugs. There are many examples we can look at. This is the work of the Holy Spirit purifying your life.

This is the right progression. You should by grace stop committing adultery, stealing, lying and beating your wife. But here comes the problem. You stop lying, and the church is impressed. The world is impressed. Soon, we become impressed. Because they are impressed, we are impressed, and we begin to think that God is impressed. But if the intent of your heart is still deceitful, you are still as big of a liar as ever. Now you just compound the lie with hypocrisy.

You may quit beating your wife, but you may still have a bitter spirit towards her. Now you just beat her in your heart, and you start beating her emotionally with your words and actions. You may stop committing adultery, but your eyes look after another man’s wife. Jesus says therein lies the problem. He tells us to clean the inside of the cup, that shiny, self-righteous vessel of yours, so that it will be able to be filled and used.

The first problem that we must recognize is that the battle between God’s Spirit and Satan’s is very much in progress in our lives. God’s control is for the heart, for out of it comes the issues of life. We need to come to understand the dual nature.

The second reason for hypocrisy is even more important to understand than that. It is that man desires to be accepted. The Christian wants acceptance in four ways.

1- He wants to be accepted by God. He thinks the way to do that is to do good and behave himself.

2.- He wants to he accepted by himself. The way to do that is to deceive himself into believing he is not that bad after all.

3- He wants to be accepted by the world, so he walks the gray line of compromise while waving a flag of religiosity.

4- He wants to be accepted by the church, so he behaves as though he was what others think he is.

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Acceptance. We all want it. Before we became Christians, we all were faced with this problem. We looked in the mirror and decided that we were ugly. We wanted to be pretty, so we became hypocrites and tried to fool ourselves, and we tried to fool others. We wanted to be good, but we knew we were bad. We became hypocrites. We pretended to be what we were not. We wanted to be successful, but we were not, and again we tried to fool ourselves and others.

Then Jesus came into our hearts. All of the problems we face in this physical realm are because we set standards we can't reach. As we watch television, we see Miss America. Even the girl on the shampoo commercial who is washing her hair looks like Miss America. There is never anybody even on a deodorant commercial who doesn't look handsome or beautiful. The whole point is that the world bases everything on physical talent, physical ability, and physical appearance. Here we are, Plain Jane and Weak Zeke. We become Christians. All of a sudden we read the Scriptures and realize that the ground at the foot of the cross is level. Plain Jane can be just as spiritual as Miss America. Weak Zeke can be just as spiritual as an All-American, and maybe more so, because he doesn't have all the physical attributes to stumble over. As a matter of fact, God uses our weaknesses, so that we can get that much more excited about Him.

We decide now that we have an even chance in the game of life to be accepted, and that acceptance comes in the realm of the spirit. Now we can be accepted by spiritual standards when we couldn't by the world's standards. But we aren't spiritual yet, and we don't want to wait for acceptance, so we become hypocrites.

Let's look at "Double-Standard Danny" again. He was in the last lesson. Jesus said that he is an authority in your life that is a hypocrite. Do what he says to do, but don't do what he does. This is not a good commentary on Christian authority. I don't know how many of you will say this of people in positions of leadership in your life, but I don't want to ask those people who are under my authority. "Double-Standard Danny" is a leader. As a father, he wants acceptance from his children. In wanting acceptance from his son or daughter, he wants to appear to be the spiritual leader of the house, but he isn't. Therefore, he plays the game. The kids are never fooled. Real acceptance would come if he would sit down with his children and say, "I blew it. I really wish I had handled that better. Will you pray with me about it?"

That leads to acceptance.

The preachers of this world want acceptance. They want to be “Sammy Saint”, because that is what we expect of them. They have a hard time being real people. Yet, real acceptance is when you are around someone who is ministering the Word, and you know they are real. They share that they have the same heartaches and same problems that you have.

Teachers want acceptance. I go through this all of the time. Someone will come to me and ask me a theological question about a certain passage they have been reading. They ask me what I think it means. Talk about hypocrisy, I display it well. First of all, I usually don’t know where the passage is. Secondly, I usually don’t understand the question, because I only hear about ten percent of what people say to me. Thirdly, I am such a hypocrite that I get a painted grin on my face and say, “Oh, I’d like to look into that and get back with you.” I walk away and never think about it again. So when I tell you I’d like to research a question you have, it means I don’t have the foggiest idea what you are talking about.

Do you know what is the best thing to do when you don’t know the answer? You can just say, “I’d really like to help you, but I don’t have the slightest idea. If you find out, will you let me know?” That is real acceptance. We want acceptance so badly as Christians that we think the way to get it is to playact. We have it all backwards. Hypocrisy. This is two natures at war. We want to be accepted, so we pretend.

Let’s look at “Limelight Louie” from our last lesson. Jesus said that all he does, he does to be seen of men. He puts big Scripture boxes on his forehead and his wrist so that everyone will look at him and think he is spiritual. He wears big ropes dangling from his robe so that he will seem more spiritual than those with little ropes dangling from theirs. Every time he goes to a seminar, he sits in the front and raises his hand, because he always has the answers. He is the one who carries his Scripture verse pack in his front pocket, so you will know he is memorizing Scripture. He is the one who shows up at all of the growth groups and has all the answers before the questions are asked. He is the one who always calls you on the phone to tell you he has just solved another spiritual problem, and you didn’t know there was one. Limelight Louie. What is he looking for? Acceptance.

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“Dick Discippler” is cut from the same cloth. He won an award from the hands of Jesus. This guy makes one proselyte and then goes out to reproduce himself, and it is a big mess. Acceptance. If he can produce another guy that acts like him, then he must be O.K. If he can produce another guy to be in his organization or his group, then that makes his group O.K. Acceptance.

Only when you come to see yourself securely accepted and acceptable in Jesus Christ, can you really relax and become transparent in the spirit. Then you are really acceptable with God. This is what God really wants. All God wants is to see Jesus in you, not you in you. That is what the world wants. They are not impressed with your religiosity and certainly not with your hypocrisy. All they want to do is to see Jesus. This is all the church wants. What a breath of fresh air it would be for a bunch of Christians to be real Christians. That is what you need. You can live with yourself when you begin to trust yourself and quit wondering when you are going to show yourself for who you really are. Acceptance.

Jesus is synonymous with transparency. When Philip came to Jesus he said, “Lord, we want to see the Father.” Jesus replied, “You do? You have seen him.” Philip answered, “You don’t understand the question. We want to see God.” Jesus replied, “I’m transparent. When you see Me, you have seen the Father. Have I been with you so long, Philip, that you have not realized that?” This was total transparency. When you saw Jesus eating fish, you saw God eating fish. When you saw Jesus resting, you saw God resting. When you saw Jesus healing the blind, you saw God healing the blind. Total transparency. Jesus said, “I always do those things that please Him.” He never pretended to be someone He wasn’t. He was simply God. He simply allowed God to be God.

Can you just picture Jesus? He had reason to call Double-Standard Danny on the carpet. Do you know why? He never did what Danny did. Can you picture Jesus calling the disciples together and saying, “Okay gang, sermon # 26 is on foot washing. I am going to stand here to show you some charts on the wall. You must clean between the toes and above the ankles. I want you to get this right. Now Peter, you go first. You take care of James.” No. How did Jesus do it? He asked the disciples to take off their sandals so He could wash their feet. No hypocrisy.

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Jesus sent the disciples out without a place to stay. He told them, “You are going to go out, and you will be the guests of the people where you go. If you need Me, I will be at the Inn in room 262.” No, that is not what Jesus said. He told them, “The Son of Man has no place to lay His head.” Jesus sent the disciples out as He told them, “You are going to be persecuted and some of you will die, and I’m going to be watching it all.” No. He went to the cross Himself, then allowed us the privilege of entering in part with His suffering. Jesus didn’t understand in His own life what it meant to have double-standards. He was transparent.

Neither did Jesus understand where “Limelight Louie” was coming from. Jesus, Himself, never stole the limelight. You and I would have built Jesus’ ministry by buying an advertisement in the *Jerusalem Times*. We would have taken prime time on the Jerusalem television stations and radio stations. We would have had billboards all over saying, “Jesus is Coming, Jesus is Coming!” We would have stood in the doorways and streets to promote His coming. Jesus just walked around being God. Everywhere He went there were people. He crossed over the lake to try to be by Himself, but the people followed Him. He would go off by Himself to pray, but the disciples followed Him and the people followed the disciples. Jesus just simply went about His life in the shadow of being God. He didn’t have to blow a horn or have a commercial. He didn’t have to have a promotion. He didn’t have to have a contest to see how many could come see Him on a given day. Transparent.

So there are two reasons why we are hypocrites. First, the flesh in us can be masqueraded so quickly, but the heart can’t be changed that quickly. It is so convincing that we become satisfied and think that God is satisfied, too. Secondly, we are hypocrites because we need acceptance so desperately that we pretend to be what we aren’t in order to be accepted by the few who are impressed by our performance. As they commend our spirituality, we too are convinced that we are O.K. So now we see what it means that the heart is deceitful and wicked, who can know it?

If those are their reasons, what are the results of hypocrisy. There are seven results that I have come up with.

THE RESULTS

Result 1- Hypocrisy deadens the conscience. I Timothy 4:1,2

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says,

Now the spirit speaks expressly in the latter times and some will become phonies, believing Satanic lies, speaking lies as hypocrites, their conscience having been seared with a hot iron. (I Timothy 4:1,2 paraphrased)

The literal word for seared is cauterized. Their conscience is being cauterized, and their nerve ends deadened. They watched the play so long, they believed it. We are not going to stop here because we dealt with it in two lessons back. But to just summarize, what God desires of the Christian is a progressively sensitive conscience. We ought to be much more sensitive to certain sins than we were a year ago. Satan's goal is to progressively deaden consciences. One of the methods he uses is the hypocritical life.

Result 2- Hypocrisy causes other people to stumble. Luke 12:1, in a loose translation, says that there were hoards of people tromping all over each other. Jesus turned to His disciples and said,

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.

Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

(Luke 12:1b-3 NKJV)

You may say, "No one will know what I've said. It won't hurt anybody." That is not true, because what nobody knows will be known. Jesus told them that hypocrisy is like leaven that will rise until all of a sudden, it is all over the place and everybody will know.

Result 3- Hypocrisy takes away the joy out of our Christian walk. Job 20 says,

"Do you not know this of old, Since man was placed on earth,

That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?

Though his haughtiness mounts up to the heavens, And his head reaches to the clouds,

Yet he will perish forever like his own refuse; Those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?' (Job 20:4-7 NKJV)

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No joy.

Result 4- Hypocrisy destroys your ability to be a leader.

Job 34:30 says,

Let the hypocrite not reign, so that the people will not be consumed.
(Job 34:30 paraphrased)

We have talked about the disheartening apathy that has come upon the American people because of the different moral crises in the White House, beginning with Watergate in the early 1980's. It has been hard to see men stand up front proclaiming the needs of the nation, then having their behind the scenes actions and words exposed. All of the filth, garbage and conniving has caused people not to trust anymore. Hypocrisy.

I honestly believe that now is the time, more than ever before, for you and I to agree to stop and pray for our national leaders. This is not a political speech, because I am not political in nature. But Scripturally, we are to pray for our authorities, and I'm not sure how many of us really understand the real problem. The real problem is that we have a man in the White House who proclaims to be a Christian. We will make no judgments of him, but we need to pray for him because God's reputation is at stake. This is an opportunity for God to be glorified and magnified or the name of God to be defamed. There is nothing weaker or more ineffectual than a Christian in the flesh. I believe that an unbeliever is a stronger leader than a Christian who is walking in the flesh. The only thing that gives the Christian power is Jesus. We need to be praying for our president that he will have the backbone and courage and the absence of hypocrisy to run this nation these remaining years. Only God knows what the future holds, but you and I have the responsibility that we haven't really lived up to. This nation doesn't need more cabinet meetings, it needs more prayer meetings. Sure, we have national concerns and crises, but we have a spiritual crisis that is much greater. This nation needs to get down on its knees and pray that God will work a miracle, and He would get all of the glory for it. Let's stop right now and have a word of prayer for the president.

Father,

Many of us forget as we go through life day by day how much easier it is to criticize than it is to pray. There is not one in this room who wants the job of being president of the United States, but Father there are a lot of us in this room

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who want you to be in charge of this nation in this crucial time. So Father, we just pause to lift up our president and ask Your Spirit to infuse him with power, authority, spiritual commitment and a transparent life. Change him and change this nation, because it is not too late. Whatever you do Father, may Jesus be glorified through it. Give us the grace as Christians not to criticize, but to harmonize with Your Spirit in prayer.

In Jesus' name. Amen

Result 5- Hypocrisy destroys your teachability. Job 36:13 says,

But the hypocrites in heart store up wrath; they do not cry for help when He binds them. (or corrects them).

(Job 36:13 NKJV)

Result 6- Hypocrisy produces fear. Isaiah 33:14 says,

The sinners (hypocrites) among My people shake with fear. "Which one of us," they cry, "can live here in the presence of this all-consuming, everlasting fire?" (Isaiah 33:14 TLB)

Many of you have read of people who have changed their names and taken the identity of someone else. Can you imagine what it would be like to live like that? You would always be wondering if this was the day you would be found out. Fear follows the hypocrite.

Result 7- Hypocrisy produces a judgmental spirit. Matthew 7:5 tells us that Jesus said,

Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:5 NKJV)

So there are at least seven things that happen in a hypocrite's life. We want to look now at the Remedies.

THE REMEDIES

Remedy 1- Decide what the issue is. I Samuel 16:7 tells us that God looks on your heart, not on your performance. Our hearts are rotten to the core as we see in Jeremiah 17:9. Our godliness depends upon changing our hearts as we see in Matthew 5:8 and I John 3:2. These are all verses that were referred to in the last two lessons. God's goal is to change your heart as we see in I Timothy 1:5,

Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart,

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good conscience and a faith that is not faked.

(I Timothy 1:5 paraphrased)

That is a good verse to memorize. Our job is to lay aside, and God's job is to change as we see in I Peter 2:1,

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy,
and all evil speaking, (I Peter 2:1 NKJV)

I want to pause for a minute and say that God cannot change your heart, if you have never asked Jesus into it. In a crowd this size or in the audience of tape-listeners, there might be someone who has been the ultimate in playacting spiritually. You are pretending to be someone that you are not. Maybe you have never actually invited Jesus in your heart. You may have been a deacon, a Sunday school teacher or been baptized two or three times. You may be trying to live the Christian life without Christ, and that is impossible. I want you to recognize that the ultimate in hypocrisy is to try to be a Christian without Christ. Right now all you need to do is to acknowledge your hypocrisy before God and open the door to your heart. Your heart desperately needs to be cleansed. Invite Christ to come into your heart.

I believe that everyone of us needs to decide once and for all that the real issue is the heart and drive a stake in the ground. You may want to go home and make a plaque or build an altar or type out a sheet of paper to commemorate your decision and change of heart. You may want to type up a paper for major surgery that says, "I do hereby on this date, release my life into the hands of Jesus Christ to do permanent surgery on my heart. I'm tired of living a hypocritical life. Effective today, I want an operation."

Remedy 2- We can pray for a transparent heart. You may think that is my solution to everything, but it is not my idea, it is God's. The Scripture says simply that you have not because you ask not. I believe that if you really want a transparent heart, you need to go before God and plead and pray and plead and pray. That is the only way you will ever get it.

You may wonder what God will do. He may very well turn up the burner of germ warfare. The warfare between the old nature and the new nature may intensify in order to draw the dross out. Things may be hotter than cooler. Things may get worse before they get better. Your hypocrisy may show up for what it really is. But that is the way it works. What do you do when the heat

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intensifies and things get worse? You pray more. You stay on your knees as an individual until God purifies your heart. We need to stay on our knees as a church until God purifies us as a people until we are literally whole, transparent before God, before the world and before each other.

The reason you pray is to shift the burden to where it belongs. You cannot change your heart. You may be able to change your behavior, but only God can change your heart. You are a doctor's assistant. God is the doctor. But, God has a 100% cure rate. Let Him do the surgery.

Remedy 3- We need to develop maximum exposure to the Word of God. The Scripture tells us to lay aside all hypocrisy as newborn babes and take after the Word of God as a baby takes after a bottle of milk. We have all seen a new, hungry baby take after a bottle of milk like a hungry teenager would take after a hamburger. The Scripture says that is the way we should be about the Word of God. It is supposed to go on the doorpost of our hearts. We are supposed to wake up in the morning saturating our life with the Word.

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. (Psalm 119:9, 11 NKJV)

Lay it on your heart. Saturate yourself with it until all you live, eat and breathe is the Word of God. We take in the Word about 1/3 of the time then we go home and watch a television show and filter and dilute the Word of God through all of that garbage. We then wonder why it doesn't come out transparent.

Remedy 4- Learn to identify and confess hypocrisy at its roots, not after it has already done its damage.

Remedy 5- Devote some time each day to realizing that the more transparent you become, the more accepted you are. The more accepted you are, and be honest that this is what you are really looking for, the happier you will be. Everyone of us wants to be accepted. The best way to be accepted is to become 100% transparent, up front with God, with yourself and with others.

In the next lesson, we will look at how to evaluate the motive of our heart. In closing this lesson, let's ask ourselves one more time, what is hypocrisy? It is a spiritual cancer that destroys

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a Christian from the inside out. It is a spiritual hardening of the arteries. It destroys our testimonies and our leadership. It takes away our joy. It makes us unteachable. It destroys our consciences. It takes away our peace. Most importantly of all, it breaks the heart of God. Many of us have successfully cleaned up our act. Now it is time for us to allow God to clean up our hearts.

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