

Digging Deeper During the Week!

Hypocrisy (pretending to be something we are not) is worst when it is found in the area of our faith. *Simulated holiness destroys our sense of peace and the power that flows from intimacy with God!*

Monday Pretenders Talk About Giving But Don't!
7-Apr Proverbs 25.14

Giving is a matter of honor. When we lead others to believe that we give and do not, we are simply pretending.

- Our verse here in Proverbs illustrates the emptiness of talking about giving without actually doing what we promised. What would motivate someone to brag about what they give without actually giving it?
- How could such an activity – empty boasting – damage the work of God at your church? What can you do to prevent being such a pretender? How will that bring help to our church ministry?

Tuesday Pretenders Seek a Loophole to Giving!
8-Apr Mark 12.13-17

When it comes to money, people can create all sorts of rationales for not giving to anything other than them selves. This reveals their heart.

- Jesus is being testing by a team comprised of the 'super-spiritual' and the 'super-patriotic.' Each viewpoint is summarized in the questions they ask Jesus – 'do we pay taxes to Caesar (patriotic) or not (spiritual)?' Why do people veil their greed in religious speech?
- Jesus pointed out that our responsibilities to others, including government, are not muted by our faith. If you were to apply what Jesus says in this passage to your own situation, what would this passage say? What responsibilities do you need to fund?

Wednesday Pretenders Deny the Power of Godliness!
9-Apr 2 Timothy 3.1-9

Pretenders look much like real followers of Jesus on the surface. But when one scratches that surface, their life's evidence becomes clear ...

- What are the characteristics of pretenders, according to this passage (1-4)? If you were to identify one key difference between a pretender and a partner with Jesus, what would it be (5)? What are we encouraged to do when we discover a 'religious pretender' (5)?

- These 'religious pretenders' have a trademark style of work (known as an 'M.O.' in police circles). What do you see as at least 5 of the key elements to the 'M.O.' of these religious pretenders (6-9)? How can you avoid such perilous people (1) and their lifestyle?

Thursday Pretenders Regard Traditions More than God's Word!
10-Apr Matthew 15.1-11

Traditions that nullify the Word of God are dangerous and hypocritical, as Jesus clearly shows in this passage.

- Jesus shows how the scribes and the Pharisees had placed 'human rules' (traditions) into practice that would contradict the direct statements of the Bible and call them more important (1-6). Jesus calls this religious pretending ... why do you think this is so?
- Coming to the center of the issue, Jesus focuses on the heart. How does the heart of the religious pretender fail the intimacy test (8)?

Friday Pretenders Profess Faith but Do Not Practice It!
11-Apr Ezekiel 33.30-33

Religious pretenders are often very faithful in their worship, listening to the message from God with kind attention. In this passage ...

- God tells the prophet Ezekiel that his faithful listeners were flawed in one specific way. What is that way?
- How do the people regard Ezekiel? What kind of things might these people say to and about him? Can you see the pretense of this life?

Saturday Pretenders Judge the Motives and Actions of Others!
12-Apr Matthew 7.1-6

Judging others is one of the favorite past-times of the religious pretender; for in judging another, one feels superior.

- The measure of judgment in life is explained with clear coldness in this passage. What is that measure? How can this affect your life? What is the problem with judging others listed here? If we see in others our own failures and judge them, what does that say of us?
- There is a peculiar verse (6) here. In context it tells us that there are some people (religious pretenders) who seem not to listen to this truth. However, there is a procedure to dealing with the failures of others. What is it (5)? If you were to apply this verse to your own life, who would it deal with first and what would you have to do?

"I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead." Philippians 3:13 (NLT)
© Dr. Matthew Lee Smith, 2008