



LINKS DAILY DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY | SEPTEMBER 25TH, 2026

Links Players

QUESTIONS REDIRECTED

CHEATING IS BAD ENOUGH; POSTING IT IS HYPOCRISY.

Every golfer understands the difference between playing badly and cheating. Playing poorly is one thing but signing for a score you didn't shoot is textbook hypocrisy.

Imagine two players competing in their club championship. Both hit drives into the trees, and both three-jack several greens.

The first golfer counts every stroke and signs for a 78. The second improves a lie when no one is looking, rakes back a couple of three-footers, and signs for a 74.

Both golfers hit errant shots. The first owned his failures. The second pretended to be better than he was.

This distinction helps us think about one of the most serious objections to Christianity: "That guy claims to be a Christian, and he's the biggest hypocrite I know."

Plenty of men who claim the name of Christ have been dishonest, sexually immoral, or simply in it for the money. It is also true that genuine followers of Jesus have experienced serious moral failures but later repented and returned to living faithfully.

Discerning the difference between a hypocrite and a flawed follower isn't always easy. Many of us know someone who professes to follow Jesus yet lives contrary to his teachings. At the same time, every honest Christian knows himself to be a flawed follower.

It is critically important to remember that failure is not necessarily hypocrisy.

If hypocrisy simply means failing to live up to what you believe, then every human being is a hypocrite. None of us lives perfectly according to our own expectations, much less God's standards.

The real issue is what we do when we fail. Do we own our failures? Do we repent and, by God's grace, seek to honor Jesus with our motives and behavior?

If you snap-hook a drive out of bounds, make a triple bogey, and write a seven on the scorecard, nobody calls you a hypocrite.

But when someone posts a number that doesn't reflect reality, that person hasn't merely cheated—he has played the hypocrite.

Jesus never ignored hypocrisy. He confronted it directly, often through parables. In one of those parables, Jesus describes two men who went to the temple to pray. One was a religious man. He presented God with his spiritual scorecard: "Look at how much better I am than everyone else."

The other man, a despised tax collector, would not lift his eyes toward heaven. In humility, he prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Surprisingly, Jesus said the tax collector "went down to his house justified"—right with God (Luke 18:14).

So, do the failures of genuine disciples invalidate Christ? Does the life of a hypocrite disprove the genuineness of faithful believers?

We easily recognize that a golfer who cheats does not invalidate the Rules of Golf. In fact, his cheating confirms that the rules remain the standard by which his actions are judged.

Similarly, when professing Christians behave contrary to the teachings of Jesus, they do not disprove Christianity. Instead, they verify one of Christianity's central claims: something is deeply wrong with the human heart.

Christianity doesn't ask us to pretend we have played a perfect round. Take the penalty. Write down the right score. Then bring that scorecard to Jesus Christ.

The good news of Christianity isn't that people are rewarded for posting a flawless round. The good news is that Jesus came to save sinners who finally stop pretending they did.

So, when someone says, "I can't believe in Jesus because there are too many hypocrites," we might answer:

"You're right—there are hypocrites. Jesus knows exactly who they are. But he also knows those whose hearts belong to him, even when they stumble.

Christianity isn't about pretending we've played a flawless round. It's about honestly admitting our score and trusting the only One who ever played life perfectly.

Prayer: Jesus! Thank you for forgiving my failures. Help me to help others discern the difference between failure and hypocrisy.

READING: Luke 18:9-14

1. On the golf course, what is the difference between honestly recording a bad score and changing the scorecard to appear better than you played? How does that illustrate the difference between failure and hypocrisy?

2. According to Jesus' parable in Luke 18:9–14, what made the tax collector right with God while the religious man remained condemned?

3. When you fail morally or spiritually, are you more likely to admit your failure and seek God's mercy—or hide it, excuse it, or compare yourself with others?

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