

Practicing What We Profess

Introduction. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court striking down the constitutionality of *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, 2022, our elected leaders, as well as the liberal news media were trying to garner support for abortion.

Speaking to the NAACP national convention in Atlantic City, N.J. in July 2023, Harris commented on this issue saying that people don't have to "abandon" their faith in order to support legalized abortion. Later, she made similar remarks regarding "reproductive rights" at a roundtable discussion with New Jersey State legislators. She said, "I think it's important to note that you don't have to abandon your faith or your beliefs to agree that the government should not be interfering with her decision, that woman's decision, over her body and her life," Harris told state legislators. "The government should not be interfering, and no one has to abandon their faith or their belief to agree that certain decisions are not the government's to make, and that is one of them."

Pro-life activist Abby Johnson succinctly criticized Harris with this tweet: "God doesn't support the slaughter of His innocent children, even if politicians do." The Bible and those who believe its divine revelation can't accept that God sanctions abortion because the Bible recognizes that the unborn baby in the mother's womb is a human being (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:13-15). My faith doesn't allow me to sanction, support, or practice something contrary to my profession.

Now this isn't a lesson about abortion, but abortion is such a "high contrast" subject that it makes the point easily for us. If all of us can readily agree on the point of abortion, then what about "low contrast" subjects? It's extremely useful for us to ask in other areas of our life, "Are we consistently practicing what we profess to be truth?" Let's examine the danger of hypocrisy and then talk about some concrete ways to evaluate whether we practice what we profess or not.

I. The Danger of Hypocrisy

- A. Hypocrisy is the pretense to being what one really isn't, especially the pretense of being a better person than one really is. The word is based on the Greek which originally meant to give an answer.
 1. A hypocrite in classical Greek could be an interpreter of dreams, an orator, a reciter of poetry, or an actor.
 2. Originally a neutral term, "hypocrite" gained the negative connotation of pretense, duplicity, or insincerity.
- B. Hypocrisy in the narrower sense of playing a role is highlighted in the New Testament, especially in the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 7:1-5; 15:1-9; Luke 12:1-3, 56; 13:15; 20:20).
- C. On occasion our own actions have the potential to drive others toward unbelief. Try as we might, we still sin, sometimes appallingly. There always have been stories of graphic hypocrisy and sordid misconduct on the part of Christians (cp. Acts 5:1-11).
- D. Such hypocrisy and misconduct are hard pills to swallow even for fellow Christians.

1. Yet put yourself in the place of the person who already is struggling with doubts, not only about the system of belief, but about God as well. From their vantage point, when the system “fails” (i.e. when its adherents are unable to conform to it successfully in their own lives), then what should be said about the God behind the system (Proverbs 25:19)?
 2. This also provides ammunition for those who are searching for what they consider to be legitimate reasons not to believe in God (1 Timothy 5:14).
- E. While we acknowledge the devastating effect that can result from the hypocrisy of believers, and while we make no attempt to justify or excuse such conduct, at the same time we have to recognize the fact that it’s unfair to blame God for the blunders of humanity.
1. Rejecting God because of hypocrisy in the lives of some of His followers can become a two-edged sword.
 2. It’s contradictory for an unbeliever to attempt to justify his unbelief by pointing out hypocrisy in someone else.
 3. By suggesting that a believer is a hypocrite, the unbeliever implies that there’s a system of belief that, when properly adhered to, would legitimize the conduct of the believer. Where does that leave the unbeliever?

II. What Practicing What We Profess Really Means

- A. Cameron Conway was right: “We have to get over the trap of thinking that collecting popular Scriptures, Christian catchphrases, dank-Christian memes, or simple pleasantries is enough to sustain our faith and life. We can squirrel away all of the quotes and verses that we can, but it’s irrelevant if we don’t do something with them.”
- B. There are a lot of illustrations we could go over, but you’ll get the point with the following ones. Profession of faith apart from faithful practice is mere pretense.
- Low contrast
1. Really loving Jesus, not just singing, “Oh, how I love Jesus” (John 14:15).
 2. Forgiving others, just like the Lord has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32).
 3. Husbands sacrificially loving their wives just as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25-30).
 4. Wives respecting their husbands and their God-given leadership role (Ephesians 5:23-24, 33).
 5. Worshiping on the Lord’s Day, and not just attending church (John 4:23-24).
 6. Applying the “Golden Rule” in all our relationships (Matthew 7:12).
 7. Faithfully persisting in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18).
 8. Resisting conformity to the world through spiritual transformation (Romans 12:1-2).
 9. Actually confessing our sins, instead of saying, “IF I have sinned” (1 John 1:8-10).
 10. Not just talking about “the light,” but “walking in the light” (1 John 1:7).
 11. Knowing God, not just knowing about God (Jeremiah 24:7; 1 John 4:8).
 12. Being “doers of the Word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

Conclusion. Kamala Harris may believe that we can conscientiously support something contrary to our faith, but she's mistaken. Likewise, we're also mistaken to think that we can be pleasing to God by a mere profession of faith without its practice. Faith leads me to embrace, exercise, and employ God's Word, not abandon it.

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