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A Key to Spiritual Growth

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Hypocrisy is a sin most of us spot in others without seeing it in ourselves. It's like bad breath. If somebody else has it you want to keep your distance. But nobody can tell if their own breath is sweet or sour. We've all got areas of inconsistency or outright sin that we can't see in ourselves. That's why our family and friends need to feel safe pointing them out to us.

A Plastic Pearl

If we don't welcome constructive criticism from others, we run the risk of becoming as inauthentic as a plastic pearl. The religious leaders of Jesus' day had developed an elaborate system of rituals (masks) that enabled them to appear better on the outside than they were on the inside. Over time they convinced themselves they were truly righteous people since they so diligently obeyed all of their man-made rules. They made it their job to judge and condemn others for the very sins they unknowingly committed.

Jesus unleashed his harshest words on them because they professed a high ethic but didn't put it into practice. He told them, "You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." (Matthew 23:27-28).

Look in the Mirror

The next time you look in a mirror, take a moment and ask yourself, "Do I have weaknesses others can see that I can't or won't face. Weaknesses I pretend are absent or under control? Am I the kind of person my family and friends feel safe correcting? Or am I so defensive others are afraid to point out my flaws?"

If after gazing at your image you're not sure, ask your spouse or a friend, "Do you see weaknesses in my character that you don't think I know about?" Becoming like Jesus demands we seek to be the same on the inside as we appear on the outside. Achieving such character isn't a solo act; it requires the support of family and friends. While the process may be painful, it's worth it.