

I hate to admit this about myself

Written by Bill Perkins

I hate to admit it, but I'm a hypocrite. You see, I've become skilled at hiding my flaws behind a mask of superiority while condemning the same sins in others.

Riding My Bumper

For instance, the other day a driver was tailgating me. "Can you believe that guy is riding my bumper like that?" I said to my wife, who was riding in the passenger seat.

"The guy is rude!" I exclaimed.

Annoyed, I tapped on my brakes. Not enough to slow my movement, but enough to get the driver off my tail.

He got the message, flashed his lights, flipped me off AND moved closer to my bumper.

Because I have little patience for rude and dangerous drivers, I slowed down. As we crawled along I smiled, knowing my passive aggressive driving would serve as a painful punishment for the guy behind me.

The Church Parking Lot

A few minutes later I pulled into the church parking lot, with the tailing car behind me. We parked on opposite sides of the lot.

My wife was not a happy passenger and asked me how I could get mad at someone else for driving rudely, when I did the same thing myself.

I had a single word for her comment, "Ouch!"

Like Bad Breath

Of course, I'm not writing about rude drivers. I'm writing about how I can judge someone else for the very thing I do myself. The driving example is just one instance of how I'm hypocritical. Hypocrisy is one of those sins most of us can 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, "Even so you outwardly appear righteous to people, but inwardly you're full of hypocrisy and iniquity. 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we wouldn't have joined them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'" (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.

Just the other day someone was tailgating me and instead of tapping on my breaks or verbally venting, I asked myself what would Jesus, feel, think, say and do in that situation. I then prayed God would bring my life into alignment with his. Amazingly, connecting with Christ this way helped me maintain my cool.