

Pleasant Valley  
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon  
Wichita KS 67204  
(316) 838-4195  
www.letjesusleadus.org

## Schedule of Services

### Sunday

Classes . . . . . 9:30 am  
Worship . . . . . 10:30 am  
Evening . . . . . 6:00 pm

### Wednesday

Classes . . . . . 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

# Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

August 17, 2008

## Sinner or hypocrite?

by David King

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Lk. 12:1-3).

There are sinners, then there are **hypocrites**, a particularly despicable breed of sinner. There's little shame in being called a sinner, because all of us are imperfect. But to be called a hypocrite is a real insult. What's the difference between the two? When does an ordinary sinner become a hypocrite?

First, a sinner acknowledges his imperfections; a hypocrite hides them. When we honestly admit our flaws, especially to ourselves, we are at least being truthful. When we pretend these failings do not exist, or try to excuse or defend them, we are compounding our crime with deceit. This is well illustrated in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who both prayed to God (Lk. 18:9-14). The Pharisee sought to highlight all his good qualities, and conveniently overlooked his faults. The tax collector, on the other hand, cut straight to the bottom line: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." There's something refreshing about a person who is honest about himself, and doesn't try to "fake" perfection.

Because he acknowledges his imperfections, a sinner makes progress toward improving his character and overcoming his weaknesses; a hypocrite, however, really has no

intention of changing. How can he? If he won't even acknowledge his shortcomings, he can hardly be expected to deal with them. As the sinner grows older, he becomes wiser, more mature, a truly better person. A lifetime of grappling with sin in your life will do that. The hypocrite just becomes more adept at practicing his fraud.

Finally, a sinner is patient with other sinners; a hypocrite tends to be harsh and judgmental. Because the sinner confronts his own sins, he is painfully aware of how difficult it is to fight temptation and overcome his faults. So he is sympathetic toward those who are fighting their own battles with sin. He does not excuse the sins of others—after all, sin is still sin, a violation of God's law—but he understands the nature of the struggle, and is willing to extend mercy to those who are still engaged in the fight. But in the fantasy world of the hypocrite, sin is easily overcome—after all, he has accomplished it—so he expects others to get with the program, too. Of course, by highlighting the failures of others, the hypocrite makes himself look better—another tactic in his campaign of self-deception.

The irony in this contrast is that the hypocrite—the one who goes to such great pains to hide his flaws—is usually seen as the phony he is, and is despised for it. But the person who admits his faults and tries to deal with them is respected as the genuine article.

Oh, there's one more difference we should note: A sinner can find grace with God; a hypocrite can't.