

The Real Evidence of our Sincerity

Warren E. Berkley

What is your first impression of these stories? A young man explains that he places great importance on his health and that he wants to have clear, strong lungs. He is a habitual smoker. A lady speaks strongly about her commitment to her husband, while she is involved with another man. A member of the local church says that he would love to know more of the Word of God, but he spends several hours a day watching the television.

What do these stories have in common? They share this common point: sometimes what we claim verbally, we deny in our behavior. We may say what we think people expect to hear from us, but without sincerity of heart. It could be we are trying to convince others (and ourselves) that we are better than we really are. The words that we speak seem to send just the right message, but in our daily behavior we betray what we have claimed.

Some who came to John's baptism claimed a relationship with Abraham. Indeed, there may have been a genealogical connection, but apparently no evidence of kinship with Abraham was apparent in their lives (Matthew 3:9). They claimed something that was not evident in the way they lived. The Lord made the same point to the scribes and Pharisees in one of His last public discourses. He stated that they give the people commandments to observe but do not observe the same commandments (Matthew 23:1-3).

James made the point well when he wrote, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." Additionally, John said, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:6-10). The New Testament amply addresses the issue of sincerity.

The real evidence of our sincerity lies in behavior, not claims; in practice, not profession; in heart, not just in speech. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).