



# the credibility gap

## WEEK 1 - HYPOCRISY VS. LOVE

### OVERVIEW

This message will set up the concepts of the series and look into one of the biggest reasons the credibility gap has widened so catastrophically in our culture: the hypocrisy of those who claim to follow Jesus but whose lives demonstrate a devastating lack of love. So many people in our culture have been burned by the church, experienced spiritual abuse, or been astonished at so many Christians' disregard for issues of injustice. If we want to reach those in our lives who are distasteful of the Church, we must demonstrate our commitment to the self-giving love of Jesus in every aspect of our lives and create a community of healing for those who have been wounded.

*Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.*

James 1:27

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are the orphans and widows in our society today (James 1:27)?
2. Have you experienced behavior that would make you question someone's credibility? If so, explain how.
3. How does Barry define the Word of God? How does this help us better understand James 1:19-27?
4. Why do you think Paul considered love the greatest of all virtues? *Three things will last forever - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13*
5. Barry lists five ways to close the credibility gap: Love, Surrender, Redemptive Faith, Grace, and Wonder. Discuss how Christians could show these to make a difference in the world.
6. If someone in your life questions the credibility of Christians, what is one thing you could personally do to begin to close that credibility gap?

### QUESTIONS FOR PRAYER AND SELF-REFLECTION

1. How have I acted out of selfishness or favoritism or a lack of compassion recently? And how can I make it right?
2. How have I ignored the needs of the suffering? And how can I act differently right now?
3. Since Christ is within me, what is one act of self-giving love I can take right now to show that faith is alive?

### RESOURCES

[gracechurch.us](http://gracechurch.us)