

Beware of Good Liars

by Francis Chan

We must separate our cultural influences from biblical truth and cultivate a sacrificial spirit in our lives, recognizing the value of human life and dignity and desiring to be a picture of Christ.

Duration: 27:55

Scripture: Matthew 7:15, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Galatians 1:6-9, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Timothy 4:1-2, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 4:1, Jude 1:4

Topics: "Discerning Truth", "Sacrificial Love"

Description

This sermon challenges believers to examine their beliefs and mindset, urging them to align their thinking with biblical truths rather than cultural norms. It emphasizes the importance of sacrificial love and compassion, drawing attention to the persecution faced by Christians in India and the need for believers to prioritize caring for the marginalized and oppressed. The speaker warns about false teachers who subtly introduce destructive heresies within the church, urging listeners to discern truth from deception and to live according to biblical principles.

Transcript

I read a stat this week about Christmas. It's from the National Retail Federation that retail spending is down this year. Holiday retail is down by 1% from last year, just 1%.

So we're only going to spend \$437 billion in holiday retail this year. The average American will spend \$832 just for Christmas Day on decorations, food, and presents. \$832.

Meanwhile, on the planet, there are 3 billion people who make less than \$2 a day. So those 3 billion people, if they work every single day of the year, they will make \$732 full-time every day that 3 billion live on less than that. \$730 working all year, we spend \$832 on one day of stuff we don't need.

It's crazy. But it becomes normal to us. We just go, well, we live in America.

That's what we do. You guys, I hope that we as believers take these things into account and live differently. I was challenged a couple of years ago, actually by one of the professors at our college, as to some of my thinking on some of the things I think about, and we were talking about a certain issue, and he goes, well, how much of your beliefs are American and how much of your beliefs are biblical? Aren't they the same thing? It was weird.

I never really was challenged that way. I just thought, well, isn't this true, and isn't this true, and isn't this true? And it was just a challenge to wipe away all of your culture and the baggage from how you grew up, because we all have baggage, right? Depending on the home we grew up in. I mean, didn't we all grow up in messed up homes? Everyone grew up in a messed up home except for my kids.

No, I was thinking that, too. I was thinking, man, I had a weird life, and my kids have to kind of deal with that. But really, we all have these different upbringings, and then our culture, and being American, and even growing up in different churches or religious backgrounds we grew up in, it's very easy to just get into a mode of thinking, well, this is normal, this is right, and we just go with it, rather than separating ourselves from all of that.

As much as we can, and saying, God, let me just open up this book. What conclusions would I come up with if I just opened this book? If I just took all of my morality, all of my thoughts, my whole mindset, which is clearly biblical, not from my upbringing, not from my church upbringing, not from being American, not from whatever culture you come from, just putting that all aside. I mean, this is the wrestle in life.

I've had to do this over and over and go, well, I was always told this, I was always done, you know, everyone tells me this. Well, put it all aside, and that's why we talked about last week, get alone with this book. Get alone with this book.

I've been talking about this for a while. Get alone with this book, because you won't, until you do that and get alone with God, you don't realize how much you are influenced by other things. And so suddenly, it makes sense to us to spend that amount of money on one day when half of the world is living off that amount for the whole year.

It just, it's normal to us. But I'm saying, would it be that if we just had a biblical mindset, if you just started with Scripture? A lot of this is on my mind, because I talked to a buddy of mine, and I've talked about him before. John is a friend of mine from Northern California, and he introduced our church to Pastor Nayak from India.

And if you remember, it was a little over a year ago. Remember in India in 2008, in the Orissa area, they just had those crazy riots, and they were just killing Christians. They would just go into cities and kill every Christian they could.

They would burn down their homes, and so now there's about 50,000, we talked about that, about 50,000 Christians who are displaced because of their faith. The radical Hindus came and just burned down everything, and every time they try to rebuild a house, it gets burned down. So they're just out in the jungles and whatever else.

And we talked about that. Well, he just came back from another trip, and we were talking about it. And it was good, because we were able to give some money, and the foundation of the orphanage that we're building is there now.

And he says, you know, by March, April, we should have a home. And he says, you need to know that it should fit about 150 or so, which is a drop in the bucket. But the focus, he says, is most of the widows and the orphans are from pastors, because they'd go into town, they'd kill the pastor first, of course, or the missionaries.

And so he says, the whole time I was there, he goes, I was talking to the widows, to the pastor's wives, and to the kids of these pastors. And they're the ones that are gonna be housed in this place. And, you know, it hits close to home, because I am a pastor, and I think, wow, you know, that's just nuts.

That's my wife, that's my kids. And, you know, the way he described it, he says, you know, he's talking to these widows, and he didn't realize how bad the persecution was. He says, in most homes, you know, they just came in, just floods of people with machetes, and they would just basically chop off the arms and legs of the pastors, and so they would die pretty quickly.

But he says, in some places, you know, the widows, the wives were talking about how they tied their husbands to a tree, and tortured them for three days, slowly breaking every bone. It was, he says, it was so evil. It was, you know, like we read about the Romans, and how they devised crucifixion for Jesus.

They thought, okay, what's the most painful way, and the way they would torture people? It's like, we don't want them just to die. We want to torture them. We want it to be a slow death.

We want it to be a picture to everyone else. It's that same type of mentality that's going on in certain parts of India right now, with the Hindus that are saying, look, just convert back to Hinduism. Get away from Christianity.

Just deny Jesus Christ, and none of this will happen to you. It's meant to be a public display, to scare these people away from Jesus. And so here are the men who died for this, who says, you know what, I'm not backing down, and here are their families that are left behind.

And, you know, as he was describing this to me, you know, I was just a wreck. I'm just, you know, I'm waking up in the middle of the night. I'm up at three in the morning, just praying for these families, because I just forget, you know? And you go out and buy, you know, some more clothes, or whatever else, you know? You just, and understand something.

Man, I get so sad about that, but then there's this other side of me that gets so fired up with a desire, a desire to help. Like everything in me starts, my mind just goes immediately, like, wait a second. Let me just think purely biblically right now, which is, I didn't even have to work at it, you know, in this case.

I mean, my heart just directly went to, wait, the way I understand it, if here's a widow and her kids, and her husband died for the sake of the gospel, and they watched their dad suffer for the Lord, then I need to be thinking about them far more than I think about myself. And it's not about giving them my leftovers. I start thinking, wait a second.

They deserve a home more than I deserve a home. And my mind starts going, wait, maybe I need to sell my home. Is there a cheaper way to live out here so that I can care for them? And it's not a guilt thing.

It's not like, oh, this is what I ought to do, and this is what I have to do as a Christian. No, everything in my heart just goes, I would love to live for that. Like, it gives me a purpose to live.

Like, I'm gonna live for their sake. I wanna make their cause known. I get excited about coming and bringing it before you.

You remember when I came back from Uganda with Dave Phillips and Children's Hunger Fund a few years ago, you know? And I told you about that jungle I was in and these kids, and I was just going nuts.

But it wasn't like this, it was a bummer. It was a sad thing.

But there's also this desire in me as a believer that goes, man, I wanna do something for them. I wanna, you know, and then to go back and see these orphanages and see these schools that we build and see these kids in uniform and dressed up, and you just go, man, what a great thing to live for. Look what happened there.

And so when I hear this situation in India, everything in me just goes, okay, I wanna do this, I wanna do this. What do I, I want to sacrifice. I want to lay down my life for these people because, and the thing is, is they're not even asking for any money.

They didn't ask for money for this orphanage. You know, I'm hearing about it. I'm like, is there anything we can do? And here's their response, just pray.

Just pray for us because we pray for you. I get emails from India from these orphans that tell me that they're praying for me and for Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley. Think about this.

Widows and orphans in India who've been persecuted around the jungle, some are in refugee camps, they are praying for us here in Simi Valley. Cornerstone, specifically Simi Valley. That is one of the most humbling things to me.

Like, are you kidding me right now? I don't need your prayers. You know, you almost feel like that, don't you? Like, you know what, let me pray. The truth is is they probably pray for me more than I pray for them, and that disgusts me.

I just go, how can this be? How can they have this desire for prayer? Okay, but here's the thing. And I read this article, and before my buddy went out to India, I go, okay, you've gotta substantiate this because this is almost hard to believe. It is hard to believe.

I believe it, I believe God could do it, but I'm reading this article, I'm going, come on, really? And so he went out there, he says he interviewed 18, 19 different people on this issue, and he goes, it's common knowledge out there. Okay, here's the story. This year, what's been happening, according to this article, by, I'm trying to think of the name, Restoration India, something like that, Mission Restoration India.

They're talking about some of these places where these, the area where the Christians were persecuted the worst, that lately there have been these herds of wild elephants that have, this is a very strange thing even there, and they have come to certain cities, the cities where the fiercest persecutors were, and they would just come into the city, they said like these little baby elephants would come in and they would leave, and these big elephants would come in, and they would just trample over certain homes, and they were the specific homes of those persecutors. And they're talking about these other instances where people are coming to persecute the Christians, and then these elephants show up in these towns and drive these people out and trample over them. And I'm reading this going, gosh, that feels biblical, you know? It feels like, but it's just, you know, I'm very skeptical of things.

I'm like, come on, really? Go ask people, is this real, or is this just someone trying to, and they swear by it. They go, no, in that area, they literally have labeled these elephants the Christian elephants. You know, seriously, they say that's what, but it's, you know, as I read that, I'm like, but I don't see things like that.

I don't experience things like that. At the same time, I gotta go, well, I haven't been persecuted like that, and I don't believe in prayer like they do. They believe in prayer so much that they're spending their time praying for us in Simi Valley.

And so when I read those, part of me is like, what, really? And the other side is, well, it makes sense biblically. If I get out of my normal mindset and think biblically, I go, well, why couldn't God do that, and why am I doubting these things? But the thing is, like I said, they're not asking for money. It's just my heart to give it.

I want to. Like, it would kill me not to be able to build a house for these families. And so to me, it seems, from what I understand, and I was asking my buddy that's over there, I go, it seems like they more just want to know that we care, like their brothers in America care, and would actually take the time to pray for them and think about them.

And so in my mind, I think, yeah, let's definitely pray for them, but also, what a great way to show them that we care, that they could have some monuments out there to say, no, no, no, I want to show you my love through my prayers, but also through my sacrifice, and say, look, here, you're more important than me. Let me take care of your needs, and I'll sacrifice what I need to. I hope that that never sounds like a guilt thing to you, because it really isn't in my life.

I mean, if you give nothing, I go, I'll figure it out. I'll figure out a way, because I want to. I mean, isn't there something in you as a believer that desires that, that wants that? And it's no secret, this year, financially, we've been doing really bad as a church, first time in history, but I know with the economy, and then various reasons, we've had to cut a lot.

We've let go of several staff members, and then we've also had to start cutting missionaries, and those are difficult, difficult calls to make. I had to make one this week, and just go, Merry Christmas, but our money situation's been down, and the thing is, is we stopped passing the basket around, because I didn't want it to be a guilt thing. I didn't want you to go, oh, there's the basket.

I should throw a couple bucks in, because biblically, the Bible says God doesn't need that from you. It should be those of us who have a desire. See, I look at India, and I look at those things, and I go, man, everything in me wants to be a picture of Christ, where I don't want to just give my leftovers.

I want to, I want to sacrifice. I want to give something up myself for their sake, because that's just the desire that God puts in our hearts as believers. It doesn't feel okay to just throw a couple bucks in.

It has to be our desire, and so, while we've had to cut these different things, I've got to say, I hear about situations like this, and I go, okay, guys, we've got to do something. We've got to up the giving, not, not, I'm glad we cut them. I'm glad we streamlined.

I'm glad we're down to the bare bones and whatever else, and maybe God wants us to cut more, but I just hate when we can't give to things like this, because here's one other thought, and then I'll get on to the passage. These people in India, I mean, you remember in grade school or high school when you learned about the caste system? You know, you had the Brahmins, you had the whatever, and then you've got the lowest caste there in India. They're not even a part of the caste system, because they're so low, and they're called the untouchables, and so in the Hindu mindset, the idea is, well, they were born in that lower caste system.

They're reincarnated at such a low level, and so basically, a lot of, you know how a lot of countries will give missionary support, and the countries welcome it, but a lot of places in India, they actually despise it, because they look at the poor, and they say, well, they're getting what they deserve, and if they live a good life, they can be reincarnated into a, you know, higher caste system, and here we are at the top, the top 10%, the Brahmins, you know, who even believe, well, if they would wash our feet and drink the water, they can have their sins forgiven. You know, it's that type of attitude, because you're born into a different caste system based upon what you did in your previous life, and so they're looking at them and saying they don't deserve hospitals, they don't deserve schools, they don't deserve these missionaries coming and feeding them and giving them their necessities, and we're not talking about a small group of people, we're talking about that lower class system, about 300 million people. Okay? Roughly the size of America are in that untouchable class, where these people are, and then you become a Christian, and so there's not even a class for you, so you understand these people are dirt, and I just think it's something so good when the body of Christ in America says no, we're going to stand with you, and we don't think you're dirt.

We don't call you the untouchables. We call you brother, we call you sister. In fact, we'll lay down our stuff for your sake because we love you, and that's what Jesus did for us.

He didn't look at us as a bunch of gross sinners that were untouchable. He says, no, I'll come down, I'll lay down my life for you, and when we think about Christmas, and we think about what it's all about, that's a picture I want to paint. That's a person I want to be, and here's, in dovetailing this into my message, most of us grew up in a culture where the majority want to teach that, well, really, we all believe in the same God.

It's just, you know, it's all the same God. You guys, that doesn't make any sense. When you have opposing views, it can't be coming from the same God.

If one philosophy teaches that, you know what, if you're in that lower class, if you're poor, you're crippled, you deserve it, and another system teaches, no, if there are people that are living in poverty, and are crippled, and are the least of these, then it's your responsibility to lower yourself, humble yourself, and give up your glorious position, and go and be where they are. This whole idea of we all believe the same thing, when you have, you know, one religion that teaches that Jesus is the Son of God that died on the cross for all of your sins, and another one that says, no, Jesus is not the Son of God, you got a problem here. You know, if one says he's God, and one says he's a liar, that can't be coming from the same God.

The Bible is so clear, it says that there is truth. I mean, I feel like, I could be wrong, but it feels like it was in my lifetime that this idea of relativism really took off again. Because when I was a kid, I didn't see that.

There was truth, and there was true and false. We used to do these tests, true and false, T or F, and you could kind of fake it and put one in between and hope, you know, no, it was an F, you know, but whatever. There was a truth, there are things that are true, and there are things that were false.

And as time went on, it was weird, I kind of watched people just go, no, in certain things, there is no true or false. Everything's true depending on your perspective, and what's true to you is truly true. And that never made sense to me.

No, if one person says he's God, and one person says he's a liar, only one of them can be right. And that's, you know, that's exactly what the Bible teaches. There will be true prophets, and there will be false prophets.

And in 2 Peter chapter 2, in verse 1, he says, false prophets also arose among the people. And he says, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed.

And in their greed, they'll exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. Okay, he says here, but there's false prophets.

False prophets have always been, here's 2,000 years ago, false prophets. Okay, not every religion is true, not every prophet is true, and not everything that comes out of the mouth of someone who calls himself a pastor is going to be true. There's truth, and there are lies.

But the thing I want you, the thing we've got to get through our heads though, okay, false prophets arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies. Okay, the key word that I want you to look at is secretly. There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.

We must change our idea of what a false teacher looks like. We have to change this mindset that, oh, it'll be obvious who's the false teacher. It's those who worship Satan, and they got the satanic Bible out, and they got skulls all over their face.

It'll be obvious. No, no, what's he saying? He goes, no, there's false teachers inside of this church, and he goes, they're going to secretly, secretly, Jude 4 says, they crept in unnoticed. I could be a false teacher, and what's sad is, I could get a bunch of you to follow me.

You could be sitting next to a false teacher. It's not going to be obvious. They secretly bring this in.

They secretly, they creep in unnoticed. They're in there. I love what Frank Mastronardo said a couple weeks ago, when he said, the road to hell is marked heaven.

That was such a great statement. You know, my kids, my little ones have been watching this video of Tom and Jerry. Remember them? I used to watch them as a kid, and it was like, wow, all these memories.

It was some Tom and Jerry movie where they're in this great race, Tom and Jerry, and some bad guy, and some old lady, and they're racing around the world. Maybe you've seen it. There's this sign that says race path one way, and then quicksand the other way.

So Tom, you know, clever Tom, he flips them around. The race is this way, and the quicksand's over there, so everyone goes to the race path and ends up in quicksand. It's just that whole twisting, and I thought of that when Frank was saying, you know, you've got to understand, here's the road, the path, the Bible says, which is wide.

He says that the path to destruction is wide, and many are going to enter through it. And the road to heaven is going to be narrow. But what are we taught? We're taught the road to heaven is wide.

Everyone goes to heaven. You ever been to a funeral where the guy didn't go to heaven? You know, according to the guy up front, anyways. It's just, no, everyone goes.

So you just wonder if someone didn't twist that sign around. Because this path, it's this idea, they secretly bring it in. See, I don't think it's going to be so obvious.

I know it's not going to be so obvious. The Bible tells me some of you in this room are false teachers. You give counsel to your friends not based upon Scripture, but based upon the teachings that you were brought up with.

And you start going, well, you know what, God's not going to care if you do this, if you do that. You're not thinking biblically, you're just going with your mindset. Yeah, you can leave your wife.

I mean, if my wife acted that way, I'd leave her too. But you'll come to church, and you'll look like the rest of us and everything else. It's just crazy some of the advice I hear people give each other.

It's no big deal if you guys love each other to live together or to mess around or this point. Oh, you can watch that movie. I mean, come on.

It's not like porn. That's okay. Did you get that from the Bible, or are you just teaching people stuff that you think in your opinion? And the thing is, it says that they'll secretly bring in destructive heresies.

Destructive. Destructive. The word for destructive is referring to an ultimate destruction.

It's talking about hell. It's not this little thing that's not going to hurt you. It's a heresy that will ultimately lead you to hell.

And they're going to be nice people, and they're going to be in the churches, and they're going to secretly come in and creep in unnoticed. And it says, even denying the master who bought them, bringing upon them swift destruction. It says it'll get so bad, they'll even deny the master who bought them.

You know, let me back up a little bit. This idea of this false teacher, the reason why I say let's be aware of it is because biblically the Bible says they come in unnoticed, and it also says that they disguise themselves as angels of light. If you look at 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians chapter 11, 2 Corinthians 11, 13, for such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

For no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

So he says, okay, think about it.

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