

# Test Yourselves to See if You Are Spiritual

by Santosh Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the dangers of religiosity over true spirituality, highlighting the importance of personal sanctification, humility, and genuine discipleship. It warns against being more concerned with appearances, reputation, and evangelism without focusing on inner transformation and discipleship. The message stresses the need for humility, control of the tongue, and a deep understanding of unworthiness before God, rather than seeking praise or recognition from others.*

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 3:7, Matthew 23:12, James 1:26, Luke 18:9, Matthew 23:15

**Topics:** "True Spirituality", "Humility in Discipleship"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Happy Mother's Day to all of our mothers. I was, a few weeks ago, the Lord, just the middle of the week, I forget what day, thank you, of the week it was, the Lord laid a burden on my heart specifically for you sisters and especially moms with children in the home, but all your sisters. I think sometimes you probably face things that us men don't realize.

For those of us men who go work, whether it's inside the home or outside the home, we have pressures that perhaps the world can understand, but I just felt like, I got the sense that some of your sisters experienced pressures that the world doesn't understand and it might be easy to forget that. The Bible tells us to live as husbands, to live with our wives in an understanding way as with weaker vessels, 1 Peter chapter 3. Otherwise our prayers will not be heard and so I asked the Lord to give me a deeper understanding of how to pray for you all and to, there are probably many things that you all do in the home that we couldn't do. We recognize that.

I know that. As a married father with children, many, most of the things in the home I couldn't do. Now it's not because I don't want to or I'm lazy, anything that I can't do, I try to help with, but recognize the unique gifts God has given you sisters and I want to encourage you just in the faithfulness with which you serve, not only in your families but also in the church, to press on.

The world is full of vying for that which is big and great and visible and the churches should be the exact opposite of that in every area. Churches are full of people, you know, world is full of churches that want to become bigger in size and more well-known, more popular. We should be the exact opposite of that, not against growth, but that should not be our ambition.

The world is full of women that want to be big and famous preachers, authors and things like that. Again, if God calls them to do that, the Bible says that a woman should never teach or exercise authority in the church, so that we believe and stand for, but within the boundaries that God has drawn, women can do some tremendous things for his kingdom. The last two hymns we sang were written by godly women and what a blessing it is to see the revelation that God gave them, staying within their circle.

And for hundreds, thousands of years after that, Madame Guillaume lived in the 1700s. We're blessed by her words. But in a world that's full of things that are contrary to God's word and churches that are imitating how things are done in the world, we must be an example, we must be a testimony, that we stand for the word of God, not in a legalistic way, not in a judgmental way, in humility and quietness.

And what a blessing it is, dear sisters, that you all in this church are exemplifying that quiet looking to God and saying, Lord, you've drawn a circle around my life, I'm gonna be faithful within that. I tell you, in eternity there are going to be some tremendous surprises. Remember how James and John wanted to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus in the kingdom? And Jesus said, the Father gets to decide who that will be.

And I've often thought, you know, I aspire for that only because it'll make me closer to Jesus, not because you guys will be looking at me on some throne or anything like that. I want to be as close to Jesus for all eternity, that's it. And if the right hand and the left hand of Jesus is where I can be close to him, then sure.

Even if it means it's some lowly place where you can't see me. What do you think the throne of heaven looks like? It's glorious, it's amazing, and yet it's humble. I don't think we can understand it.

I don't even want to say more on it because I couldn't do it justice. That God with all his glorious majesty seated on his throne, Jesus is a servant. You'll see a servant sitting on the throne.

It's the exact opposite of what you'll see when you go to the White House or some other palace, Buckingham Palace or something like that. But I've often thought that, will it be the most famous preacher? The one who did the most miracles? No. It'll be the one who became most like Christ in their spirit of lowliness.

And it shouldn't surprise you if there are two sisters sitting on either side of Jesus. It won't surprise me now. I'm not saying who it will be or anything like that.

But mostly for us men to learn an example from our wives in the quiet, simple way in which they just go about serving. Think about the sisters who go down and set up for our lunches and clean up afterwards. Let's learn from them.

Jesus said we can learn from the children even. Unless you become like little children, you will not even see the kingdom of heaven. So God bless you dear sisters and especially you mothers also on this day.

I hope we remain in gratitude for you every day. I'd like you to turn with me to 2nd Corinthians chapter 13. Last week I was speaking on the difference between religiosity and true spirituality.

And for a few weeks now the Lord has impressed on me that this is a very, very serious thing and something that I think we should be aware, I believe we should be wary of at RLCF. Because the great danger is that in our pursuit of holiness, like I said last week, in our pursuit of holiness, the devil will show us an alternative route. He'll say you can become like God like this.

It's the age-old temptation. God doesn't want you to become like him. You can become like him this way.

And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil today is the way that avoids the cross. The cross in my own life. The way of brokenness.

The way of denying myself, taking up the cross and following Jesus. That's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil today. When I avoid that.

And even though that's written in the first pages of the Bible, I believe that Christians today are still falling for that lie of the devil. And I was reading recently in Romans 1 and 2. And you look at how depraved things got. You read Romans 1. The horrible perverse things that it describes there.

And it says it's simply because they didn't treat God as God. They didn't treat his word as holy. So I believe it's a danger.

I want to make one point here. And that is that, you know, I'm not hung up about the word religion and spiritual. Are you religious or spiritual? The book of James does say this is pure and undefiled religion.

He uses that word. So don't get hung up about that. What I mean by religiosity is the form of spirituality without the power.

The biblical word for that in 2nd Timothy 3 is the form of godliness. But I believe in today's language we understand what religiosity means. The term.

That means that you've got a good outward appearance of Christianity in terms of where you go to church and what your family's like and what principles you stand on. You read the Bible. You pray.

And you're a good upstanding Christian. But inwardly you lack the power of God. You really lack the life of Christ in you that's causing you to be changed every day.

Paul said in 2nd Corinthians 4 that he was changed daily. Today I would like us to examine ourselves and together let's look at a few tests that we can look into our own hearts to see whether we're really just religious or if you really are spiritual. There are probably many tests.

I hope the Lord will show you some in your own life pertaining to your own tendencies. But here are some I saw in scripture. But before that we read in 2nd Corinthians 13 verse 5. Test yourselves.

Did you know that there's such a word in the Bible, a verse in the Bible that says you must test yourself? 1st Corinthians 11 says let every man examine himself. Test yourself. For your children who go to school or even school at home you have to do tests every now and then right? It's usually a test given by your mom or dad or by a teacher at school and you're given that test.

In the Christian life nobody is going to give you a test. Now maybe for your children who are at home your parents will give you a test to see how you're doing. They'll ask you how was school or something like that.

But as you grow older it will be up to you. If you don't test yourself in the area in which we're about to read, you can just go on thinking life is good. What does he say? Test yourselves to see if you're in the faith.

Now is he talking to unbelievers or to Christians? He's talking to a church that he himself planted. A church in Corinth and this is the second letter he has written to them. He dealt with a pretty serious sexual issue in the church in the first letter.

By the time he writes the second letter things have gotten better. They've dealt with the problem. They obeyed his instructions and they set the matter right.

Then he says in chapter 11, I'm concerned that now you're going to be drawn away from simple pure devotion to Christ. So he says test yourselves to see if you be in the faith. This is a message for Christians not for unbelievers.

Test yourself. Examine yourselves. He repeats himself.

Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? Do you recognize that Jesus Christ is in you? Now he's not asking have you asked Jesus into your heart? And you say oh yes I did on such and such a date 1995 or something like that. No. Is Jesus Christ in you? Unless you fail the test that Jesus Christ is in you.

Have you heard of such a sermon for Christians? Let's read that carefully again. Do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you fail the test. But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

So test yourselves. Test yourselves when he says to see if Jesus Christ is in you. That means that you actually have spiritual life in you.

Not just the language around it. So here are a few tests that the Lord has been using in my own heart. I thought I would share with you and I hope that he will show you more in your own life.

The first is if you secretly love self and money but you talk about loving God. Let's turn to 2nd Timothy chapter 3. If you secretly love self and money but you talk about loving God. That means the language is there.

You come to the meeting and even at home. What comes out of your mouth is all religious language. But in your heart and this is an area that God has kept private.

That's the thing. For most spiritual, the reason spirituality is so rare and religiosity is so common is because to be spiritual you have to pay attention to the inside. What are you like on the inside? It doesn't matter if the whole world thinks that you are a wonderful Christian.

Who are you? Test yourself. Don't test yourself by what people think of you. What reputation you have in the church.

You must test yourself by what you know about yourself. About the thoughts that dominate your own life. Your own mind throughout the day.

Use that as the gauge. Say Lord I know when I am around my brothers and sisters in the church or the children or on a Sunday morning lots of religious talk comes out of my mouth. But when I am by myself I

find myself just thinking about money all the time.

You are probably religious then. I find I am thinking about myself. I am just self-centered in my thought.

Oh how they treated me or this or that about myself. If you secretly love self and money. But talk about loving God and you are religious.

2nd Timothy 3 it says in verse 2 that you know it says verse 1 the last days difficult times will come. Men will be lovers of self and lovers of money. And he says in verse 5 holding to the form of godliness.

So they will still say I am a Christian. I am a conservative. I go to such and such a church.

I go to RLCF. We believe in the new covenant. I hear good sermons and I listen to a sermon every day.

And I have the Bible on audio playing and all this stuff. But secretly in your heart you love money. You love yourself.

And that self-centered, money-centered person inside direct dictates the decisions you make and what you spend your time thinking about and how you make choices on this earth. That song go back and meditate on it. If you need the words we will post it and share it with the church.

You can find it online that Amy Carmichael wrote. The subtle love of complacency. Subtle love of comfort on this earth is such a danger.

The love of self and the love of money. And I made the statement at the end of the message last week and I will say it again. True spirituality is interested in the kingdom of heaven more than heaven itself.

Many Christians, they say I am a Christian. I want to go to heaven. That could be a love of self.

Because who wants to go to hell? It is a miserable place to go. And you could be a self-loving person saying I want to go to heaven. Because I mean it is like offering kids.

Do you want brussel sprouts or ice cream? No, I like brussel sprouts. It is actually one of our favorites in our home. But if you think of something that is really tasteless like a horrible acidic medicine or ice cream.

Well of course, yeah. Every self-loving person will say yeah give me that which tastes good. And heaven could be that ice cream.

That the devil has painted in front of our eyes and given us this picture of what heaven is. And imagining that I can get there with my love of self still here. That is a lie.

Ask yourself today. Are you more interested in the kingdom of heaven today? Here on earth? The kingdom of heaven is within you, Jesus said. The kingdom of heaven is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Are you interested in that? Then you are a spiritual person. But if you just want to go to heaven, you got the form. You don't want the burning.

You want the streets of gold and the crown on your head. That is a lie of the devil. The kingdom of heaven.

You can test yourself today to know if you are really in the faith. If Christ Jesus is really in you. By whether you are taken up with the kingdom of heaven.

More than what will happen to you after you die. You know Paul had many co-workers. Many of them were good.

Some of them like Demas fell away. But look at what he says in Philippians chapter 2. Philippians chapter 2. He says in verse 19. I hope in the Lord Jesus to save and send Timothy to you shortly.

So that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. Because I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. Paul says I don't even have one person.

What about Titus? What about Epaphroditus? I don't know. I don't want to read too much into it. Because they also seem to be very godly people.

But Paul said he picked out Timothy as the one person whom he said I don't have anybody who's got the same spirit that I have. Not the same religion. Well of course all these others have the same religion that Paul had.

They believe in Jesus Christ. But the same spirit that Paul had. This is spirituality.

The spirit that is concerned for the welfare of others genuinely. Like I really don't care about myself. I care about my brother.

I care about my sister. I care about my wife. I care about my children.

Not because they are mine. But because I want to build them up. I want what will benefit them.

And look at what he goes on to say in verse 21. Not even out of a desire for them. Because he says for they all seek after their own interests.

Not those of Christ Jesus. If you're only seeking your own interests. Not the interests of Christ Jesus.

If in any situation your thoughts are directed by how will this help me. More than how will this glorify God. You're a religious person.

Yeah I know you go to church and you pray over your job and you pray over your meal and all that. But that meal is self-centered. That job is self-centered.

That pursuit that goal is self-centered. With the Christian veneer polished around it. That's religiosity.

Sincerely concerned for the welfare of others. For your welfare. Seeking after the interests of Christ Jesus.

If you love self. But you talk about loving God. Then you're religious.

Now if you just love self. And you don't even talk about loving God. Then you're a worldly person.

But a lot of people think well I'm not. I'm no longer worldly. When I was unconverted I used to be.

I used to talk about the worldly things. And interested in worldly things. But the danger is that once we are born again.

The devil says okay I couldn't keep them in the world. Now they're sitting in churches instead of sitting and watching football on Sunday morning. Now I've got to find some other way to get them to avoid the cross.

So let me give them a way by which they can just talk about God. But inwardly they just love themselves. They love appearing spiritual in front of others.

They love all those other things. They love themselves. They love money.

But they've got the language. Now they are the same inwardly dead people just sitting in the church instead of sitting at the football stadium or sitting out in the bar or something like that. That's a lie.

What about the love of money? Let's turn to Matthew chapter 6. It's very easy for us to think that because we may not be millionaires and billionaires. We don't love money. That's another lie of the devil.

There are probably very very rich people who don't love money. As much as there are also very very very poor people who love money. The love of money has nothing to do with how much you have.

And that's again the lie of the devil. I think well I can think of somebody who has more money than me so I must not love money as much as he does. No.

The love of money is like layers of an onion. You peel it off and you realize it's there. It's more deep rooted than you realize.

And it has nothing to do with how much money is actually in the account. The bank account or how much you have saved. Matthew 6 Jesus said first of all no one can serve two masters.

For either he will hate the one and love the other. Let's take God's word. I know you've heard this verse before but imagine if you were reading this verse for the very first time.

That you'd never had a Bible in your hand before. And for the very first time somebody gave you this and said this is the word of God. Every other book will perish.

This will never perish. And what God says here will never perish. And God said you're either loving me and hating money or you're loving money and hating me.

That's it. There's no other option. If you love money even a little bit you hate me.

With all the polish around it and all that. He says but if you love me then there will be a hatred for money. No matter how much you have.

No one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. God and mammon.

You cannot. Oh but the devil will say did God really say you shouldn't eat out of the tree. Did God really say you cannot love God.

What about all those other preachers that seem to have some good things to say about God and they talk about devotion to Jesus. But they talk about money and they love money. And they want you to give money to themselves like I've said it like we say often.

Thank God we don't have a donate now button on our website and maybe we never will. I don't know. I'm not against that but you see for most churches the focus of dependency is on money.

And I'll tell you this the danger is that it can become a replacement for the Holy Spirit. Do you realize that if we were completely broke didn't even have a building to sit in barely had clothes to keep us warm but we had the Holy Spirit within us that would be all we need. That's what the early church had.

They met in caves running for their lives but the Holy Spirit was in their midst. And today we have churches that are interested in making the building expanded and of course yeah they talk about the evangelistic work they're doing and they're reaching out so and so and reaching out so and so. They love money.

Now I'm not here. I really believe it. Nobody can tell you whether you love money or not.

We might be able to see evidences of it by how you live your life and how you make your choices but only you and God and the devil know whether you love money. That's it. Not even your spouse.

You could be a wife who's not even the breadwinner in the home let's say and love money. Oh yes. Doesn't matter who you are.

You could be a child growing up as a teenager and already the love of money has found a root in your heart perhaps because of the example of your parents. That's why we preach against that in this church and we'll continue to do so and oh that children that you'll grow up as much as we want you to be educated and learn the things that you need to know on this earth. Oh that you will cry out in your heart Lord preserve me from the love of money and let that be your cry until the end of your life.

Do you think that if God freed you from the love of money in some area you don't have to pray for that anymore? You don't think the devil will bring some other area? He wants you to come to the place where you don't love God. That's it. And if you can get a little bit of the love of money into your life he knows that the hatred of God has already come in.

Let me make it plain and simple. You are a hater of God if there's a little bit of the love of money in you. Now you might think okay how do I know if I have the love of money? Let's continue reading.

For me it's the next page but for you it might not be. It's the very next verse. For this reason I say to you don't be worried about your life and I have found that one of the surest ways to test the love of money in my life is to see if there's anxiety in my life.

If there's anxiety for even one second in my life that's one second that I had the love of money in my life. Worry. Oh how is this going to work out? Anxiety.

And I'm not here to condemn you please brothers and sisters and children even. I see it in my own flesh and I hate it the more I see it. And I hope that in what I'm sharing today that you will be called up to a higher life.

Even if you see that many people around you even so called Christians are living lives that are plagued with anxiety and worry. Where anytime something else comes up there's worry immediately there. And you sit worried for five minutes or ten minutes or an hour or a day or a month.

That's a month that you love money. You love mammon somehow. For this reason I say to you do not be worried about your life as to what you will eat or what you will drink nor for your body as to what you will put on.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Talks about the birds and the lilies. Verse 30 If God so clothes the grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace will he not much more clothe you? You of little faith do not worry then saying what will we eat or what will we drink or what will we wear for clothing. What does that mean? You know it means that how will I make it? How will I have enough to live and to provide for myself and for my family including my children's education so that they can live and provide for themselves when they grow up.

For the Gentiles verse 32 eagerly seek these things for your heavenly father knows that you need all these things. Oh your heavenly father knows what you need. This week and the weeks to come and the months to come and the years to come.

But seek be different from the Gentiles. That's what he's saying but verse 33 be different from the Gentiles in this. How are you different from the rest of the world? Is it because you read the Bible and you pray to Jesus? No.

Prove that you're different from the rest of the world by the fact that there's no anxiety in your life. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. So he says it again.

So do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Seek to be freed from the love of money.

If you secretly love self or money but talk about loving God you're a religious person not spiritual. Secondly if you are quick to find fault with others but you justify yourself. Let's turn to Matthew chapter 23.

If you're quick to find fault with others you immediately see the glaring fault in your wife or your husband or your children even or other brothers or sisters or your boss. But you justify yourself whenever you see something in you or somebody points out something in you. Then you're a religious person not a spiritual person.

Matthew 23 verse 4 says the Pharisees they were experts at being religious. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. Matthew 23 verse 4. They lay heavy burdens on others but they won't lift even a finger to help them.

They're quick to find fault. Immediately they see a fault in somebody. There's a saying I heard.

It says before you flare up. I think my parents used to have that in our home. Before you flare up at someone else's faults take time to count ten faults of your own.

Before you flare up at someone else's faults wait and count ten of them. Not their faults. Your own.

We say that again. Before you flare up at another's fault take time to count ten faults. Ten of your own.

And after you've counted ten of your own say okay I see that in that person. Immediately I see that fault. Maybe a sin even.

You say Lord show me my fault. He looked beyond my fault and saw my need. We sing in that song.

We say Lord make me like that. I want to look beyond their fault see their need. Now we're not going to sweep sin under the carpet.

If you've been in this church even a few times you know that we don't condone sin. We don't believe in sweeping sin under the carpet. We'll stand for that.

However let's examine ourselves. Let's see Lord I want to see the fault in my own life. Show me my sin Lord.

I am the sinner. Show me what a great sinner I am. And after you've counted ten of those what that will do if you truly repent you will see the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

And you'll find more of that joy and say Lord I'm not done with ten. I probably have about a hundred more faults of my own. Continue to show that to me.

And you see how that brings us slowness in our lives into pointing a finger at others. Finding fault with them. Because I've counted.

I see Lord I've been so loved. I'll risk loving too. I want to live as one who's been forgiven.

1st Corinthians chapter 11. I believe that one of the reasons that there's sickness. You know there's many reasons for sickness and a lack of health and disease and whatever.

Some of it is just because of the nature of the world we live in. And the world is under a curse. We're not.

But the flesh that we live in. We're still in flesh. That is under that curse that God.

God didn't curse man. You know that right? He cursed the ground. And so there's there's a curse that's upon the earth.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse. However as long as we're in this body we'll still experience sickness and death. Right? We know that.

While our outer man is decaying our inner man is being renewed. So part of that being spiritual on the inside not being religious is that we recognize our outer man will still decay. We might have sickness.

However there are other types of sicknesses. James 5 talks about a sickness that is a result of unconfessed sin. Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray let the elders lay hands over you and pray for you.

That's why whenever we pray for anybody who asks for healing and we anoint them with oil we always ask is there any unconfessed sin in your life? If there is then we could pray and it's a prayer because the sin has not been confessed. If you confess that sin immediately you might experience healing. Another thing is if you haven't forgiven somebody else if you hold on to unforgiveness in your heart God won't forgive you and that sickness could remain.

So there are some sicknesses that are related to that. Here's another sickness that is a result of a person judging others. 1st Corinthians 11 verse 30 for this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number are dead even died because he says verse 31 if we judged ourselves rightly we would not be

judged.

These were a bunch of people that were busy judging others and finding fault in the others and say that oh that brother's like that that sister's like that my wife's like this my husband looks like that and that's the problem in our home. We have this sickness in my home because my husband is like this or like that or my wife is like this or like that. He says if you judged yourself rightly you wouldn't be judged.

Look at that for this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number have even died. So test ourselves first on this you know if you're quick to find fault with others but you justify yourself. It's becoming popular I don't know among Christians today to post publicly whether it's on Facebook or Twitter or whatever just point the faults with others and a lot of it I I'm not here to judge anybody but I recognize that a lot of that comes from maybe wanting to vent.

You've got this stuff this somebody treated you badly or something like that and it's not to condone the fact that they did that bad thing maybe but the devil will kill two birds with one stone by allowing that bad thing to have been done to you and then for you to judge them over it and to have a bitterness towards them over it or worse to spread it across the whole world and I'll tell you the internet is one of the most I believe the Lord's using the internet for his glory by the way but the devil's also using it for his kingdom and the devil's allowing a lot of things to spread that might not otherwise spread because of the internet so be wary of it when you see somebody post something or share something gossip can spread a lot more quickly on the internet than it used to before the internet because now you just spread from one person to the other and then they go person to person but now with the internet you could spread gossip and for an evil speaking and slander much more quickly be wary of it dear brothers and your sisters children be wary if and when you do have access to the internet and your own accounts and such be careful how you use it because the devil will allow sin to spread and don't be a part of it have nothing to do with those unrighteous evil works so that's judging others justifying ourselves Jesus said in Luke chapter 16 about the Pharisees if you find when somebody points out a fault in you immediately there's a ah but you didn't understand me or you don't know the whole story or that no maybe they don't but just realize that it doesn't matter what that person thinks if somebody points out a fault in you you go and judge yourself in the light of God and if God shows you that that person was right then you'll be freed of it if God shows you that that person is wrong then you just ignore what that person has said take everything I tell you you know a lot of people send hurtful to have done in the past say hurtful things about me and all that I tell you honestly as I've matured as I've sought to become more spiritual and less than religious I take everything that people say about me and I say Lord you show me is it true is it possible that what this person has said about me could actually be true and I don't see it I'm not talking about like usually if it's somebody who loves me my wife my children you all brothers and sisters when you come to me and point out something in me I value that because I know you love me I'm talking about people that aren't in my life that maybe have they're not vested in my life they don't they're not interested in building fellowship but they want to point out false in others when I receive such criticism and and even slander that's spoken about me I hear about it I say Lord is it true because you can use even my enemy to point out something that's on Christ like in me can't he of course he can't what if God said you know I want to test Santos she was really spiritual I want to send his enemy to say something to him to see if I can use his enemy to point out an area of on Christ like this because Santos always prays Lord show me if there's any on Christ likeness in me but do you add to that but only let it be from so-and-so and so-and-so no there's no condition to that God may say okay you really want that I'm gonna send an enemy to you or I'm gonna allow you to find out about something somebody who hates you has said about you now what will you do with that you don't have to be

condemned about it but go and judge yourself if you judge yourself you'll be happy and you won't be judged the Pharisees on the other hand it says in verse 14 of Luke 16 Luke 16 verse 14 the Pharisees who were lovers of money we already heard about that and they were like I said the experts had been religious we're listening to all these things and was scoffing at him and he said to them you are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men but God knows your hearts you are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men all be wary of it dear brothers and sisters be wary of the the instinct that wants to justify itself and say oh you you know I but this but that making excuses for your sin have nothing to do with it it's the spirit of religiosity it's the spirit of the Pharisees for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God now the reason that the Pharisees justify themselves the reason that the religious people justify themselves is what I was is the third thing I want to say and that is if you crave a reputation as a godly person if you crave a reputation as a godly person you want to be known among others that's what Jesus just said about the Pharisees if you want to be known as a godly person more than actually being a godly person whether people realize it or not think about it even in our church do you want to be known as a spiritual person like oh he's got a knowledge of the word or he you know he knows this verse knows that verse known as a godly person do you care about the reputation of others you probably religious Jesus said in John chapter 2 look at this amazing verse you know Jesus's life is an example for us in every area and he lived among people where religiosity was at its height in Israel the Pharisees had had refined religiosity and legalism they become experts at it and then came the true spiritual person Jesus Christ the word become flesh so here he says in John 2 verse 24 you know okay look at this in verse 23 when he was in Jerusalem in the Passover during the feast many believed in his name he started to get a reputation as a rabbi as somebody worth following somebody to believe in observing his signs which he was doing he did many miracles and many people were taken up with the miracles that he was doing and then it's look at what it says about Jesus do you really want to be spiritual let's say God used you in some miraculous way to be a blessing to somebody to even perhaps do a miracle to heal somebody genuinely what will be your response when everybody is like do you hear what he did he did that miracle he laid his hands on that person and that person actually had his eyes opened not this half-baked miracles that's going on in Christendom today real miracle now is the test will you be religious or spiritual verse 24 Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to them he says I know you guys are believing in me now but I see what's in your heart because he knew all men and because he did not need anyone to testify concerning man for he himself knew what was in man one of the reasons that Jesus came down to this earth according to this verse was to say I know what's in your flesh I know what's in my flesh and I won't know what's in your your flesh and so when Jesus heard the praises of the people he says don't try to pretend I know what's in your flesh I know that that those words come from flesh that's rotten sinful flesh so it means nothing to me now can you look at the praises of people and say they're just coming from men from women from dust the the the opinion of God is what matters he's eternal that man or that woman that praises you will fade like the grass all flesh will fade but the Word of God abides forever God's opinion of you is the only thing that matters if you crave the opinion of people as a godly person as a Christian as a as a godly person probably religious recognize that the opinions of the that the people whose opinions you seem to be affected by are just flesh that's why Jesus says I can't entrust myself to you I entrust myself to the father and if you entrust yourself to him we'll have fellowship together but your praises and your criticisms I take it before my father he's the only one I trust so do that both with criticism and with praise tell you brothers and sisters honestly my heart I do that when I receive criticism when I hear about criticism when I receive praise I say Lord what is your opinion of me that's the only thing that matter those words those glorious words that people said about me it'll fade heaven and earth and all those words that they said about me will fade but the Word of God will abide forever the fourth thing I say

is if you're more interested in the word than in the word becoming flesh in you if you're more interested in the word the Bible the Word of God a lot of people stand for it must be this translation of the Bible or that translation of the Bible you're more interested in that than that word actually becoming flesh in you that's the most important thing if you're more interested in the word than in the word becoming flesh in you you're probably religious tell you this is important because we we do preach the word we say we must preach the word in all its accuracy but I'll tell you why we want to be accurate with the word is so that we have the fullness of Christ in us in all its life so you know like you've heard us say more than you know a lot of people talk about going reading going through the Bible what about the Bible going through you you've heard Zach say that that's the most important thing did the entire Word of God go through you did it become life in you because they had the word for thousands of years and they became Pharisees they became religious people and then everything changed when the word became flesh Jesus came and says this is what it actually looks like on the inside so what's the result of loving the word you know for example long prayers I call them sermon prayers where there's a lot of scriptures reciting the prayers now I do believe in praying the Word of God I believe that praying promises but there's a reason for it but I've heard a lot of prayers that are sermons they're being prayed so that people can hear my sermon that I prayed in this prayer oh it's Christian was full of it their prayers that they pray but and they're full of you know it's a little sermon that got preached and people got impressed with this prayer that was preached that was really really a little sermon pray God's Word but pray it as a promise claim God's Word if you will but pray to God oh that you will pray to God and more and more it's it's a battle I'll tell you brothers and sisters because we have full Christendom is full of religious prayers full of religious prayers people who pray and they seem to be godly but they're just religious and if you're a spiritual person you can you can discern that fairly quickly but right pray to God and say Lord I want you to pray I want to become more like you so that even when I'm in public I can pray a truly spiritual prayer and it's getting better in my life I want to be honest with you if you've been here for a few years and you compare the prayers I used to pray in front many years ago with where I am today I'm not asking you to to you know to say I'm good or bad or anything like that I'll tell you I examine myself I've learned even as I lead us in prayer during our times of praise to be let more more free where I'm praying to God and say Lord I want you to move through this prayer doesn't matter whether they were impressed by it or not I that's the connection point I want to make whether I use whether I fumble over my words and I mess up or anything like that Lord you know my heart and I want you to hear that prayer I don't want to just impress people by praying a little sermon in my prayer oh then we will pray such prayers whether in secret and and in our prayer meetings if you have to pray in public Oh pray pray like that another aspect of religious you love the word is that intellectual Bible studies you know we there used to be people in this church who who were upset that our Bible studies were not as intellectual and what I mean by that is they thought that it should be a study where everybody says whatever comes to their mind instead of listening to a prophet speak you know what the book of Acts says how our meetings should be let the prophets speak first two or three and then let others pass judgment and we believe in that we're not interested in everybody thinking they're a prophet and yeah we believe in the gift of prophecy but there are certain ones that God has given to be the prophets in the church I tell you whether we're listening to a video or listening to a prophet who's physically present it doesn't matter do you believe that God wants to move and have a prophet speak even through a video and now I believe God will get religious people offended by that and allow them to leave as he has but don't be taken up with that oh that you will discern that where a prophetic word is coming from more than just ah let's just have a Bible study and you say I think this means that I think this means that this is what I went through this week and the devil will get in and find a foothold in those Bible studies and destroy him with religiosity will end up like the Pharisees did you know what the Pharisees did they sat around and

discussed the Torah they discussed the Bible discuss how this means that no let's go back to the original text and somebody else with a little bit more knowledge of the Greek so no no this actually means that that's what's going on in Christendom today don't fall for it brothers and sisters it'll lead you down the path of religiosity intellectual Bible studies another thing I find popular is quoting godly men and you think I'm spiritual because of it you know the Pharisees used to do that go back to Matthew 23 in in one place I think in Matthew 3 they say we Abraham is our father they they gloried in their connection to Abraham now let's let's face it you know we brother Zach has had a significant influence in our church but that will never be our glory our glory is Jesus Christ alone God has used him as in the gift of an apostle I believe and even as a prophet in this church but our connection is to Jesus Christ and in him alone we glory not our connection to any man and that's how you can become religious that's how denominations or we're connected with so-and-so he comes and speaks to our church so-and-so or we're connected we're affiliated with this denomination that founded by so-and-so this is humbug it's garbage every local expression of the church must be alive with the fire of God there that's what makes the difference and we welcome the influence of truly godly men but look at it says in Matthew 23 verse 30 that verse 29 woe to you religious people he's saying scribes and Pharisees hypocrites for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous and say if we had been living in the days of our fathers we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets in other words yeah if I was a part of Tozer's church I would have been a godly man we have Tozer's quotes today and if I was in his church no you probably wouldn't have you really don't know A.W. Tozer and other godly men like that or David Wilkerson in this country we love to have their quotes but we don't serve the same God we don't have the same fire radical hatred for sin that they did but you know I've been in churches where they have Tozer's quotes and I said no this is not a Tozer church Tozer would leave that church and he'd leave his quote on the screen let's be a church whether it's Tozer or Zach or Wilkerson or whoever Faber and John Wesley these are men that are help us shine the light on Jesus Christ himself that's what's important have you seen Jesus test yourself do you is Christ really in you that's what matters not just quoting some godly men another way that the use of the use of tongue Oh James says you know that verse James chapter 1 we live in a Christendom a religious Christendom where a lot of people are interested in speaking in tongues and I believe in the gift of tongues it's a valid gift today as well but I'll tell you what's more important is that whether you speak in tongues or not because God may give you that gift he may not he doesn't give it to everybody whether you speak in tongues or not what's more important is that you have control over your tongue if you don't have control over your tongue but you speak in tongues you're religious and I'll tell you what James says James 1 verse 26 if anyone thinks himself to be religious truly religious and yet does not control his tongue he deceives himself this man's Christianity is worth zero now you may say can such a person still go to heaven because they asked Jesus into their heart and they and they repented of their sins I don't know I'm not the one that decides who gets to go to heaven and who gets to go to hell God will do that but I'll tell you if Jesus says your religion is your Christianity is worth zero I don't want to take the risk and assume that I'm probably going to heaven when I'm not if Jesus through though if the Holy Spirit himself says your Christianity is worth zero yeah I know you did that other thing and you did that other thing and you shared that tract and you are went to this place and they even asked you to share something and you prayed and you're raising a godly home but your religion is worth zero because you can't control your tongue it's that's why we speak against gossip in this church so much because Oh God forbid that every any one of us sitting in this church would get to the end of our life and God say I drew a big zero over you filled out on every answer every answer in the test there's hundred questions you answered all of them but you got a zero Wow you think it's actually gonna happen I know it's gonna happen because I believe God's Word to people who thought they were Christians because

they said a prayer and they their preachers coddled them and and pat them on the back saying it's okay it's okay continue with your gossip and let this gossip just go unaddressed oh I probably receive more criticism for standing against gossip than any other sin I think in this church likewise but God takes it seriously I believe let's let's take it seriously number five if you don't think of yourself as just as unworthy to be accepted by God today as when you first came to him if you don't think of yourself just as unworthy to be accepted by God today as when you first came to him then you're probably religious second Timothy three talks about people who are boastful Luke chapter 18 I'll tell you this I am myself just as unworthy today to be accepted by God as I was the day I came to him as a wretched sinner he's cleansed me of all sin but the only reason I'm accepted today is because Jesus Christ righteousness are what cover me or clothe me I'm clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ the same righteousness of Jesus Christ that I was clothed in when I was first born again and underneath this wretched sinful Santos died and is being renewed to newness of life day by day it's becoming more Christlike but the fact that I'm becoming more Christlike every day does not make me more accepted by God today and that's what the Pharisees misunderstood they cleaned the outside of the cup and they thought well I'm more accepted by God today and this Pharisee's been a bit been a follower of God for so long and so and so is only so long so he's more valuable Luke 18 you know this prayer here was a wretched sinful man and a religious man sitting in the same church sitting in the same church a religious man and a sinner and at the end of the story one of them is truly spiritual the other is just as religious as he always was that's the that's the point of the story and the religious man verse 11 stood and was praying thus to himself God I thank you that I'm not like other people swindlers unjust adulterers maybe he used to be that Lord I used to be that when I was born again drunk swindler all those things whatever sins you did but now I've been a Christian for 10 years I thank you that I'm not like that anymore and then in walks that drunk that I used to be I thank you that I'm not like other people swindlers unjust adulterers or even like this tax collector over there in the back why am I not like him I fast twice a week I pay tithes of all that I get look at that I fast these religious things that I do I'm raising what what is that do you fast twice a week I don't know it's up to you do you tithe it's up to you well how much money you give but for us what is it today I have a godly home look at my children they're all well-behaved I go to a good church I'm seeking after a godly life and I'm not like those backslidden churches I left those churches to be a part of a living church all these things that are outward things but the tax collectors standing some distance away in the way of the back was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast saying God be merciful to me the sinner I tell you this man went to his house the tax collector justified spiritual rather than the other sitting in front and the great danger my dear brothers and sisters is that religious people will remain religious sitting in churches unless we preach messages like this against religiosity for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but he who humbles himself will be exalted sometime ago the Lord laid this thought of my heart I'll share with you I imagined myself going to heaven walking through those gates and just seeing all the people who are there and Jesus himself the man who won my salvation God my Savior my head I thought what would be my immediate thought and I realized my immediate thought will be Lord what am I doing here I don't deserve to be here when I get there I want you to know I believe with all of my heart I will be fully conformed into the image of Jesus because I believe Romans 8 verse 29 and I believe 1st John 3 verse 3 that says when I see him I will be like him I believe it with all my heart the devil cannot shake me from that foundation from that hope which is my destination this is predestination Romans 8 29 God has determined my destination that I will be fully conformed in the image of Jesus but knowing that standing there fully conformed into the image of Jesus I tell you I will say Lord what am I doing here I don't deserve to be here and it's not what sins I've done or what sins I've not done and maybe there's somebody else in heaven that's done more sins and I am I'll just recognize Lord even that one sin I did disqualified me from heaven

thank you that you've accepted me by the righteousness of Jesus I look at the righteousness of Jesus say that's the only reason I'm here I don't deserve to be here and for all in heaven all eternity I'll say I don't deserve to be here but I'm here full of joy full of gratitude for what God has done for me and I hope to live my whole life that way okay last one if you're more interested in evangelism than in personal sanctification not just your own personal sanctification but the sanctification of those whom you are trying to evangelize if that's the reason that you're evangelizing Matthew 23 verse 15 woe to you religious people scribes and Pharisees hypocrites because you travel around on sea and land to make one convert this is evangelism at its best like I said last week they traveled further than Jesus ever did the religious people of Jesus day did more traveling evangelism than Jesus did but Jesus built the church and how we will build the churches if we follow Jesus example if God calls you to travel sea and land that's great if he calls you to stay in your town or in your home do it but make a disciple build up the people that you serve to be disciples of Jesus Christ otherwise you'll make them twofold twice as much a son of hell as yourselves as a lot of people speaking about evangelism and talking about evangelism and even doing evangelism but making those converts twice a child of hell we are for evangelism I believe we should I thank God for some of you in our midst of God is called as evangelist all of us must be witnesses and some of you are you have the gift of an evangelist that's wonderful and I praise God but that gift of evangelist must lead to disciples whether they become a part of this church or other churches where they're really being led to discipleship that they don't become twice a child of hell how do you become twice a child of hell that you went and gave that person and the other side of town or the other side of the country the other side of the world a gospel that told him you can continue to love yourself and just say this prayer and ask Jesus into your heart but you don't really you're not really shown hatred for self and the hatred for money and becoming a true lover of God and when we do that we say do you really want to hate yourself you really want to hate money then give your life to Jesus and see what he will do to you and if that's the kind of evangelism that's happening may God do so and use us to do it as well and to lead other people to become disciples of Jesus not to think that they're on their way to heaven when they're really on their way to hell see that's worse see some people in the world there you know you hear this it's a disgrace to God but people in the world say I'm on my way to hell and yeah it's going to be one great party with all my friends in hell let them be what's worse than that you think it's possible to be worse than that yes that you tell somebody he's on his way to heaven but he's actually on his way to hell because we preach them another gospel yeah and our evangelism like I said last week must not be even because I feel sorry for the lost this that's going on in Christendom as well I'm I want to evangelize that person because I feel sorry that he's going to hell no I feel sorry that God's name is dishonored by the way he's living that sinful life it's the name of God that I honor and reverence so much that causes me to be an evangelist to raise the kingdom of to spread the kingdom of God when you see your co-workers swearing and cursing and all that does that bring a grief in your heart said Lord give me a prophetic word to lead that man that woman to be your disciple because I have a burden for your name not even because I feel sorry that he's going to hell this is how we will change the world your brothers and sisters it'll be it may not be big I tell you if you want to get people to go to heaven you can gather a multitude but if you want people to be taken up in the kingdom of heaven and to be as disciples it will be a small it'll be a narrow way and there will be few that find it but let's be among those few amen

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