

The Discipline of Transparency

by Todd Atkinson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of transparency in our relationship with God, as exemplified by Peter's encounter with Jesus.

Duration: 37:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 5:1-11

Topics: "Spiritual Disciplines"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of discipleship and how Jesus trained and taught his disciples. The sermon focuses on the process of discipleship and how it applies to believers in the present day. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and working with God in this process. The sermon also includes a reading from the Gospel of Luke, specifically Luke 5:1-11, where Jesus performs a miracle by filling Simon Peter's nets with a large number of fish.

Transcript

Good morning everyone. Nice to see you. If you're new here today, there's nothing strange in the punch.

He was just joking. Okay? So, wouldn't do that to you. Just a couple of brief things before we turn to Luke chapter 5. One of them is that, please keep in mind that next Sunday evening we have something special.

I'm aware that Thanksgiving weekend is not the best weekend to have special services. I'm aware of that. It just happens that a friend from Florida who's coming to minister, it's just the only date he could give us.

So, we're going to have a service next Saturday night. You know that we don't do that all the time. It's going to be given around the theme of healing, and particularly healing of the heart.

But you come. If people have broken bodies, come. We're going to pray for people.

If you have friends and just feel like they'd be willing to come with you, come. Assure them they'll be loved and respected and prayed for. If you or people, again, you know, just know they've just been through devastating life experiences and what they really need is a healing on the inside, then bring them from near and far.

And so, we're just going to have a service where we're going to celebrate that part of Jesus' nature and just pray for one another. Just love one people. So, that's going to be next Saturday evening, October the

11th, 7 p.m. here in the sanctuary.

The second thing I just want to draw to your attention is that, in part, for this weekend, Thanksgiving weekend, we're hoping to fly Drew Kuzma back from Scotland to come and join us. Just over a year ago, we laid hands on him and his family and sent them off to Scotland. Do you remember that? And so, we want to be able to welcome him back.

So, if anybody would like to, just raising a bit of money for that, if anybody would like to make a contribution to his flight, just drop in to see Marcia and drop in a little note under her door to say, and we'll be happy to receive that and give a tax receipt for that. But, that way he'll just feel like as a body that we've kind of joined together and bring him back for a few days and let him see everybody and be encouraged by that as one of our missionaries. Well, I'd like to turn your attention to the Gospel according to Luke.

If you're new here this morning, we have been working through a series yes, it is a series. I can't avoid that stigma. On how Jesus walked with His disciples.

What kind of relationship was that? What did that look like? Jesus walking with His disciples. And the process whereby He trained them and taught them and formed them is what we call discipleship. And we believe that the same process is at work in our life.

He's training us. We're His disciples in this century. And He's at work in us, teaching us, training us, forming us.

And so, how do we identify that? How do we recognize that? How do we work with Him in that? And so, we're doing that study. We're concentrating from the Gospel according to St. Luke. So, if you just want to know more about that, in the back table there, there's letters outlining everything that we're doing in the last couple months and why we're doing it.

There's going to be all the sermon notes from the last three or four Sundays are back there. So, please help yourself. You know, if you're just coming in right now, you think, these people feel like they're heading a direction and I'm coming in a bit late to it.

So, we want to help avoid that. So, please get that material. It's for you there.

Let's take a reading from the Gospel of Luke. We're going to begin at verse 5, chapter 5, verse 1 and we'll read through to verse 11. Let's just appreciate God's Word as it's publicly read.

Hallelujah. So, Lord, just prepare our hearts and let us hear Your voice today and see You more clearly. Love You more dearly.

One day as Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret with the people crowding around Him and listening to the Word of God, He saw at the water's edge two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon who would later be called Peter, the Apostle Peter. And he asked him to put out a little from shore.

Then he sat down and he taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch. Simon answered, Master, we have worked hard all night.

We haven't caught a thing, but because you say so, I will let down the nets. When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them.

They came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man.

For he and his companions were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. So were James and John, the son of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, Don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid, Simon Peter. From now on, you'll catch men. So they pulled their boats up on the shore and they left everything and they followed him.

May just God bless this public reading of the Holy Scriptures. Amen. I think if you want to understand what Simon Peter felt on this day, then you've got to think of your own story a little bit.

Instances in your life and mine where there was someone that you desperately wanted to make an impression on, but you tried so hard to impress him that it backfired and all went bad. Or maybe a life situation that you wanted to leave an impression and you left an impression all right, but it wasn't the impression that you wanted to leave. And we've all got stories like this.

How I wish we would tell more of those. But I think you've got to kind of bring those stories to mind if you want to understand what Simon Peter felt on this day. Because there's no one in the entire world that he wanted to impress more than Jesus.

But it was a day where at least at first it all went bad for him. I'm afraid I've got more stories than time would permit to tell along those lines. Because they seem to find me.

But I remember once when I'd finished preaching in Calgary and I think I was about 22. And we just had a wonderful service. And the Lord would just seem to be there in power.

And at the close of the service, I came down and there was just a semi-circle of people who were kind of waiting to speak to me. And so just the first one step forward and I just started to speak. And it was just one of those days where the Lord was just there and everybody's kind of speaking in hushed tones.

And just out of the corner of my eye I see a young man that I'd known from summer camp. And he sees me and he begins bounding across the place. He's jumping right over pews.

And he's kind of like an oversized puppy dog. But one of those enormous dogs that knocks over everything in their path. And I can see him and I'm a little worried because I can tell he's going to be completely oblivious to the kind of dynamic here.

He's not going to realize someone's speaking to me and he probably shouldn't barge in. He's never going to think that he should take his place. And there's a whole kind of atmosphere here that he is going to ruin.

I just don't realize how seriously he's about to ruin it. So he comes bounding across the place and just like I thought doesn't take his turn or wait for me to finish a conversation. He just runs right up beside me like this.

Puts one hand on the front of my stomach, one on the back. Todd, good to see you. And gives me the world's biggest squeeze.

You know before you preach there's a lot of pressure that can build up in the stomach. I'll tell you the most ghastly sound I now know on a suit jacket what the little vent in the back is for. The world's most enormous sound came shooting out of me.

And all this semicircle of people just looked shocked. And a very kind of dainty lady-like person said, lady-like lady said, did Todd just do what I thought he just did? Because up until that occasion everybody thought that I was like the queen. That I don't do such things.

Well, in one foul blow, the myth was broken and I remember just turning to him and I said, thanks for nothing. And you know just that little bit of, you know, kind of limelight and I lost it immediately. But don't you have stories like that? Okay, not exactly like that.

I know some of you are thinking, Todd, you're not supposed to tell flatulent stories from behind the pulpit. I just couldn't think of any others. But we've all got stories that we tried to make an impression on something.

Or we wanted to leave a great impression on a situation and it all turned out wrong. And I just think you've just got to get in Peter's skin this day and you've just got to realize that's what he's feeling. He desperately wants to make an impression on Jesus.

And yet he ends up saying, depart from me, I'm a sinful man. Let's remind ourselves of the story a little bit. Jesus is teaching near this lake.

Probably because the crowd is pushing in upon him. He climbs into one of two boats. The fishermen had been out all night fishing.

Caught absolutely nothing. So they're there just cleaning their nets. He climbs into one of the boats and then he asks Simon Peter, he said, would you push out a little bit from shore? I don't think they pushed out far because he's just doing this to continue speaking to the crowd.

But at least he's put a little buffer now between him and the crowd. When he'd finished speaking, he said, Peter, I'd like you to push out into the deep. And when they get out into the deep, he says, I want you to put down your nets for a catch of fish.

To which Peter says, Lord, we have worked hard all night. I mean, there's no fish here right now. I mean, we've been there for hours.

And we're not going to catch anything. However, at your word, because you've asked me to, I'll do it. Of course, you know the story how they catch so much fish they have to call reinforcements in.

Other boats have to be able to come into the way. And they catch so much fish that both boats are in danger of being capsized. And it's at this moment that Peter falls flat, whether it's his face or his knees, but he falls at Jesus' feet.

His entire body language is of brokenness and humility. And he says this, depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man. And so the question I want to ask you this morning is wherein was his sin? You know the story as well as I do.

We've been reading the Gospel of Luke. You've been reading it through many times. So where do you find his sin? Depart from me.

I'm a sinful man. And he doesn't mean just a little bit. I mean, he is broken.

He is stricken. He is humbled. He is confessing, Lord, depart from me.

I am a sinful man. So again, the question, wherein was his sin? First number of readings, I think, wow. Outwardly, it doesn't appear like he did anything wrong.

Outwardly, there doesn't appear to have been any sin. Jesus asked him to put out a little bit from shore, and he did. Jesus asked him to put out into the deep waters, and he did.

He was asked to let down his nets, and he did. So again, the question, where is his sin? And if we can't find it outwardly, it makes us ask the question, what's happening inwardly? What's happening in Peter's heart that makes him feel like this? Well, he'd been fishing all night and caught nothing, so there's some things that we can know that he was feeling. Number one, he was certainly feeling weary.

He says to the Lord, I've worked hard all night. I'm tired. He's not at his best.

You can know he's probably a little bit disappointed. He says, Lord, we haven't caught anything. We've worked hard all night, and we haven't caught a thing.

So he's definitely disappointed, possibly even inside feeling a little bit offended. Offended that someone was trying to tell him his business. Because if there's one thing this man felt confident in, it's fishing.

And if there's one person he doesn't want to get advice about over fishing, it's a carpenter. So there's something churning. We don't know exactly what it is, but we know that it's foreboding enough, the currents in his heart are strong and negative enough that he really made him feel awful.

And it really did feel, when he said, Lord, I'm a sinner. So Peter, here we find Peter going through all the motions. He's keeping up appearance.

He's doing everything he's asked to do. And he is following all of Jesus' instructions. But his heart isn't in it.

He doesn't actually think anything is going to come of this. He doesn't actually think that this is a good idea. He thinks that he knows more about the Lord than fishing.

That this is a stupid ideal. It's not going to avail anything. And all of these undercurrents of his heart is that he is keeping up appearance.

He says, I'll do this because you asked me, Lord. But down inside of here, he feels the exact opposite. So there's an enormous chasm between his public appearance, the way he looks, and what's really happening deep down inside of his heart.

We know that he wasn't expecting anything. And it says this. He says, depart from me.

I'm a sinful man. For he was astonished at the catch of fish. In other words, that's the last thing he expected to happen.

And notice what he says. So go away from me. You ever feel like that? Depart from me.

I'm a sinful man. Go away from me. The older translations say, depart from me, Lord.

You know, I think that as long as Peter can hide what he's feeling down here, as long as he can hide what he's thinking down here, he feels safe. But now he feels afraid. How do we know that? The Lord says to him, first thing is, don't be afraid, Peter.

He thinks that because of what's going on the inside of him, if that gets out, he knows he's not right down here. What he is thinking, what he is feeling is not right. And he just thinks, if that gets out, Jesus will not want to have anything to do with me.

The one person I want to impress more in the whole world, and if he finds out this, he will not be very impressed at all. And I think in some ways that that is true of all of us. Sometimes there can be a big difference between our outer person and our inner person.

There can be a lot of distance between the us that people meet, and the us that people greet, and that they befriend. And sometimes we can even be in close proximity to people. We can even be in house group situations with people.

We can have shared and journeyed years with people, and yet we always keep this buffer between us and them because we're ultimately afraid. As Peter was, do not be afraid. We're afraid that if they were to see this, and if they were to know what happens down inside there, that they might not like us nearly so much.

They might not like us at all. They wouldn't have us in their cell group. They wouldn't fellowship with us.

They wouldn't want to be our friends. And so we need to hear the voice of the Lord speaking to us, because if you feel like that at a human level, and we all do, there's a fear of being found out, a fear of being exposed, a fear that if someone could find out all our innermost secrets, would they feel the same way toward us? But if we feel that only on a human level, the truth is we still feel like this in our relationship with God. One side of our brain tells us, well he knows everything about me anyways, but there's still another side of us that would like to keep hidden up, and keep covered, because we feel afraid and we don't feel as safe as we'd like to.

We think that if he gazes on our inner imperfections, that he will want to drive us away and have nothing to do with us. But notice this. Who said to who, depart? Jesus never said to Peter, depart from me, for you're a sinful man.

Jesus didn't say that. It's Peter that said depart from me. And at this kind of crisis point of imperfection, we feel the same.

We think the Lord is going to want to say depart from me you sinful man, I want nothing to do with you. And really the surprise is that it's us saying that. Depart from me Lord.

You're probably not going to want to have anything to do with me. If you knew what I struggled with on the inside, you're probably not going to want to have anything to do with me. If you knew the despair, if you knew the self-loathing, if you knew the adulterousness, if you knew the crazy desires, if you knew the fantasies, if you knew it Lord, if you knew the temptations, if you knew the self-hatred, if you knew how materialistic I am, if you knew the hatred, if you knew the anger, if you knew the unforgiveness, if you knew what I really think and the way I really am, you'd want to depart from me.

The Lord knew all that about Peter and yet never once did he say, Peter, depart from me. Sometimes because you feel that, you project it onto Jesus. I feel like this about myself, so therefore he must feel this way about me.

So all these years growing up, you know, when I first became a Christian at the age of 15, probably until I was 21 I felt like such a failure, so I projected it onto him. If that's the way I feel about myself, then he must feel that way about me too. And he didn't.

It took a long time for those myths to be broken. Jesus knew all that about him, but he's going to walk it out with him. I'm not departing from you, but together we'll walk out your sin.

Together we'll walk this out. Peter feels possibly a little bit embarrassed too, because there's maybe not a lot in life that he was confident in, but if there is one thing that he felt that he had mastered, if there's one thing that he felt was an area of strength, it's fishing! And yet, somehow the Lord wanted him to feel weakness even in his area of strength. Because we tend to want to say to the Lord, well, you won't like me for these reasons, for my weaknesses, but here's my strength, Lord, I'm sure you'll really love me for these reasons.

And that's a false relationship. So the Lord wanted him to get humbled even in his area of strength, that even in his area of competence he had to be broken. Because if the Lord could love him when even in his strong areas he's been shattered, how much more his weak areas? How much more of the areas he's struggling with? Don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid of being found out, Peter. Peter, don't be afraid of being weak. That's what he says, don't be afraid.

Peter, right now you feel like a failure, you feel weak, you feel incompetent, don't feel that, Peter. The fear of falling short, the fear of failure. You know, Peter didn't realize what was coming, but we realize what's coming, because after this whole incident, right after Jesus says, do not be afraid, what's the next thing he says? It's in your text too.

Don't be afraid, from now on you will catch men. Does that phrase sound familiar? Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. This is actually Peter's call.

This is like his ordination service. This is the moment where Jesus and him connect in that strong discipling way. This is the very moment where he begins his path to train to be an apostle.

So here's the question, of all the things that could have happened on this day, why does these things have to happen? It's like before he could really engage with his call, there's some things that had to have happened. Before he could realize the call of apostleship that was on his life, and that he could really give himself to that, there were some things that had to happen. Number one, he had to feel like he could be completely exposed for Jesus and loved for that.

Or else, you know, they'd begin a false relationship. Peter would walk with Jesus, and he would keep up appearances, and he'd think, this is great, as long as he no one ever finds me out, he'll still like me. But every single day, he's going to have to be vigilant so that the real him doesn't come out.

Once you start on that journey, the hard thing is you've got to keep it up. And that's a false relationship. So Peter, it's like Jesus' way of saying, listen, I've got a destiny in your life.

I've got this amazing call, so why don't we start right? I know everything about you. And I'm going to create a scenario where I even let it all come out. And when you see that I embrace you just as strong, and I love you just as much, in your worst moment of weakness, Peter, you could have a thousand nights like this and I'd still love you.

Yes, you thought I was talking nonsense. You don't think that I know what I'm talking about, and now you found out I do know what I'm talking about. But if a thousand more times you do that, I will still love you.

A thousand more times I will still love you. And there's other instances in the Gospels where Peter's will came up against Jesus. And once again, Peter thought he knew better than Jesus.

Jesus says, I'm going to depart. Wicked men will crucify me. And it says he stood up and rebuked Jesus.

Once again, their will comes clashing. Peter, you're going to have to learn again. I actually know what I'm talking about.

But if a thousand times you do that, you're still my disciple, you're still my apostle, and I will love you. But a thousand times I'll show you that I know better. A thousand times I'll show you I know what I'm talking about.

And a thousand times you'll eat a little humble pie. But I love you. Here's the big call.

I mean, the story only makes sense if you realize what the end, and you have to read it from the beginning. It's his big call. It's his big day.

But before that could happen, there were some revelations that needed to occur. You know, what about you? What about me? Your call. Your big day.

Are you struggling with some of the same things of Peter in your heart? I'd really love to walk with the Lord, but except for these areas of my life. I'd really love to walk in closer fellowship with people, but if they only knew of this side of me. What happens if we could just be a little bit like the Lord? That'd be a nice thing.

What happens if we Christians could be a little like the Lord? And someone felt so safe with you that they could tell you anything. And they know that you would look at them with the same love and respect and appreciation as you did before you knew. Would that make people hide their sin? Would that make people more sinful? That kind of grace will always make it safe for people to get rid of their sin.

You know, 99% of the reason why we don't get rid of our sin? It's because we feel ashamed. It's shame. It's a weight of shame on us.

True grace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will always make it so safe that you could tell Him anything. You'd tell Him anything.

And you know that He would take that. And He would love you. And He would hold you.

I think that this is critical to our healing. What we're talking about these few months is not just discipleship. It's about the impediments to discipleship.

And I think we're touching on here about some of the major impediments to discipleship. Why don't people give themselves fully to discipleship? Because they feel ashamed. Why would the Lord want me as a disciple? And yet He calls you.

Maybe some of you need to hear the voice of the Lord to you today saying, don't be afraid. What are we afraid of? The same thing Peter was. We're afraid of being rejected.

I'd love to tell someone but if I do and they see the real me and they don't like it, the rejection that we could face. I'm just going to ask the Lord just to speak to our hearts. Close your eyes with me.

Since I started the service. Is this Tanner? The Lord's been speaking to me since I saw you and started this service. There's a call on your life.

Time to give in and run with that. From the time I looked at you at the start of the service, the Lord's been highlighting you to me. And to run with that.

So Lord, speak to us. Lord, today we're talking about discipleship. Would you show us the impediments to discipleship in our own heart? The impediments that there are to being as close to you as we'd like to be.

I'm just going to ask the Lord by the Holy Spirit to just start speaking to people here. Lord Jesus Christ, you are the one in the whole universe, the one who our heart feels safe with. And if we have not yet learned how safe you are, then this morning, reveal to us the safety that there is in your unconditional love.

Holy Spirit, just start to speak to people now, right where they sit. Jesus said to Peter, do not be afraid. What's your fear? The fear that you harbor that holds you back.

Come Holy Spirit. Just ask and just listen. You may know yourself well enough, you hardly have to listen.

Lord Jesus, speak to our hearts. What's been holding us back? The fear of what? I want you to hear the voice of Jesus speak to you about that area. And I want you to hear Him say, do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid of failure. Do not be afraid of abandonment. Do not be afraid.

Let the Lord speak to you. Number two, what's that side of yourself it's the least part of yourself you would want to tell somebody about? That part of yourself, it's the least that you would ever want anybody to know. You've kept it from people, you've kept it from Jesus.

Our discipleship is only so strong as that area, as we let Him in. So Jesus, we realize that we project you our good parts and try to hide our bad ones. And we cannot be divided like that anymore.

But if you could love us in the part of ourselves that we feel we don't even love ourselves in, just let Him in. Just let Him in. Say, Lord, I let you in.

Here's my anger, Lord. Come in. I'm not proud of it.

I lose my temper. I'm not proud of it, but here, come in. Come in.

I feel safe giving this to you. Here's my self-loathing, Jesus. I'm embarrassed about it.

Don't want to tell anybody, but I tell you today. Come into this place. Lord, here's what I suffer with, sexual temptation.

Here, Lord, I've been trying to keep this from everybody, even from you. Jesus, I let you into this part of my life because I cannot bear the weight of this, the burden of this any longer by myself. Where's Joe? I know this is a prolonged prayer time.

We don't do this every Sunday, but we're just doing a bit of business with God. We're doing a bit of business with the Lord. Before Peter could begin fully into his call, this is the very areas that the Lord went for in him because it's the very areas that would have held him back.

Lord, as we let you into these very delicate areas, I pray that the presence of your grace would be so strongly here that we'd feel like we could trust you with anything. Maybe you've always prided yourself on being such a really good businessman. You've been a good businessman, and now it just feels like you can't do anything to make it work.

Maybe the Lord's doing something there. Maybe you've always prided yourself on being a good husband or a good wife, and now it just feels like, despite your best efforts, your spouse is angry with you. You feel like you can't do anything.

Pride yourself on being a good parent. Now you have a child that is rebelling against you. You're really distraught.

It's hard to even worship because you feel like such a failure. Peter, here's Peter, right in the very area that he prides himself on, that he thought he had mastery over. The Lord met him right in that area.

When he couldn't come up with the goods, Jesus, would you meet us too?

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