

Religious Without Being a Christian

by Winkie Pratney

The sermon discusses the difference between being religious and being a Christian, and how people can serve God for the wrong reasons, leading to counterfeit conversions.

Duration: 53:59

Scripture: Matthew 13:3-9, Matthew 13:23, Matthew 19:16-22, Mark 4:3-8, Mark 4:20, Luke 8:5-8, Luke 18:18-23

Topics: "False Conversion", "Genuine Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the sower, which is repeated three times by Jesus. He identifies three kinds of counterfeit conversion - the religion of fear, the in-crowd, and the carnal Christian - and contrasts them with genuine Christianity. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the motives behind one's faith and warns against superficial or insincere conversions. He also references the story of a rich man and his two sons to illustrate the difference between genuine care and selfish motives.

Transcript

The following message given by Winky Prattney is entitled, How to be religious without being a Christian. This morning I want to speak about how to be religious without being a Christian. We have a lot of books on how to be Christian without being religious, and I think it's high time we had some messages on how to be religious without being a Christian.

A lot of times you, as you go out from door to door, will meet young people who you could call sinners. But those are not the ones that bother me, and not really the ones that bother God. I've been to both secular universities and also to Christian, quote-unquote, Bible colleges and colleges.

And you see, I have really had a better time sometimes in non-Christian universities and colleges than I have in Christian colleges. And the reason why is this. In a secular university you know who your enemies are.

They all are. I have never forgotten a young lady in New Zealand talking with a man who was supposed to be a deacon in the church. And she had just given her life to the Lord.

And she was really excited, she was really happy. And he said to her, how is it with your soul? She said, I'm so happy I can't sleep. And he said, don't worry, you'll soon get over it.

I thought to myself, what a tragedy. Number one, that it should be a man who is supposed to be a man of God who said that. And secondly, that all too often in so many lives of young people who say they have decided with Jesus it should be true.

I've spent a lot of time talking with young people who call themselves atheists. I've never really met an atheist yet. I've met a lot of kids who call themselves atheists.

I guess I could have called myself that too some years back. But I've spent about three hours talking to some young people and there is one argument I just cannot really answer for them. I can answer for myself, I can't answer for other people.

And that is this. A young man said to me, Winky, I believe what you say is true, it makes sense here. And you're speaking to me here.

But he said, I want to ask you a question. Could you show me three other people who are living like you? Who are living this Christian life. He said, I have read the Bible, I know what the Bible says.

I'm not dumb. Growing up in a church, he said, I can see what the scriptures say a Christian is supposed to be like. Show me some people who live like that.

And I think people have a right to see that. It is no good for us to say, listen, don't look at me, look to Jesus. I'm full of sin and iniquity and all kinds of wickedness, rottenness and depravity.

But you have to look at Jesus. The sinner has every right to say, I can't see Jesus, I can only see you. And if he can't help you, what makes you think you can help me? Our parable is told of the Lord Jesus coming back to heaven after his resurrection.

And all the angels lined the heavenly boulevards and their wings bowed in adoration. And Jesus came in triumphantly, the holes in his hands, the task completed. And one small angel came to the Lord and he said, Lord, who have you left behind to carry on your work? Jesus said, I've left eleven men.

And the angel said, what? Eleven men? Not those eleven men you're working with before. Not those guys. He said, yes, eleven men.

And this little angel nearly freaked out, if an angel can freak out. He said, but Lord, what say they fail you? You know what they were like. What say they fail you? What alternate plan do you have for the evangelization of the world? And Jesus looked at that angel with eternity in his eyes and he said, I have no other plan.

Just eleven men. They must not fail. And they didn't.

And that's why we're having a crusade here this morning. Listen to this letter from a young lady. I smoke, I drink, I enjoy playing cards for money, gamble, I pet.

I haven't gotten the limit yet, but God only knows whether I will. My family doesn't seem to know that I am bad. Of course, they don't know or won't appear to know that I do all these things.

But are parents deaf and dumb? You may as well know why I can't go to church anymore. Maybe I'm a good girl, but I sure feel rotten. And I certainly can't pray anymore.

Sometimes after an exceedingly wild party, I drop on my knees and say, God, forgive us all. You understand, my crowd is not tough. Just the guys and girls of the best families I was brought up with.

What puzzles me is the old people all saying they have faith in us. And you preachers standing around telling us how fine and good we are. Sometimes I'd like to kidnap you and take you to one of our parties.

I guess your next sermon after that would be about sin. And that's what we need to hear. Here are some of my questions.

Did my mother do the things I'm doing? Did my older sisters? Am I wrong in thinking that I am a rotten girl? Is this the way of the world? Shall I go to heaven or shall I go to hell? Does God care? Do you preachers know that young people do these things? Please write something to quiet my mind or I will go mad. In the remainder of this day, we're going to talk about four kinds of ground that seed fell into. And in the book of Luke and the book of Matthew and also in the book of Mark, you'll see a parable.

And I want you to look it up. It's a very interesting story. It's a story of a sower who went forth to sow.

Now, I'll give it to you in one gospel and you can look it up in all these other ones. You start in Luke and I'll start in Matthew, all right? Matthew chapter 13, chapter 4 of Mark, Luke 8. A story of about a man who went forth to sow. People didn't do it by automation those days.

They just went out, pachow, pachow, pachow, throwing food seed in all kinds of different places. This man went out to sow and he sowed some seed. And the Bible tells us that seed fell on four different kinds of ground.

The first kind of ground it fell on was hard ground. Seed just sort of sat there like that. Have you ever been, somebody's had a grass lawn and people walked up and down on it for so long it just makes a big old pathway right through the lawn? Solid ground.

It's really hard. And if you throw seed on it, it just sits on the top. And of course, there's nothing birds like better than seed just sitting up on top there.

So they come along and eat it, clunk. And that's the end of that particular kind of sowing. That's the hard ground.

And then, Jesus told a story about another man who went out sowing things. And this man sowed his seed and it fell on stony places. Now stony places is kind of a weird ground.

It's really all kinds of rocks and stuff down there and it's just a little bit thin layer of topsoil. Just a little witty bit. Just enough you like to cover over the top of that rock.

And the seed falls into the ground and it's soft and it goes down here. It gets lodged a little bit in the rock. But instead of growing as it grows up, it grows up very, very fast because you see the topsoil is all loaded with all kinds of nutrients in that.

But the roots are going out. They can't go down because of the rocks so they just go out along the top of the ground and sucking all the moisture out of the top of it, see? And as long as the ground stays wet, the plant is fine. And that effect, it grows far faster than the other plants.

It shoots up, boom, just like that. It's got all these super nutrients and all that and it's growing up real fast. But unfortunately, the sun comes out.

And when the sun comes out, it begins to dry up the top part of the ground. And the Bible says because they had no root, they dried up and withered away. And that plant died.

It never made it. And then the last story was the story of a seed that fell into ground and the ground is pretty rich. It must have been rich because there were a lot of other plants growing.

But unfortunately, the plants it was growing around happened to be weeds. This one started off well. But nobody took the trouble, unfortunately, to get the weeds out which grew around it.

And the weeds strangled this plant to death. It choked. And that was the end of that plant.

And then the last story was the story of some plants that fell into good ground. They sent down roots and as the roots went down, the shoots went up. And they brought forth fruit.

Some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold. I believe that parable repeated three times by the Lord Jesus is a parable that tells us about three kinds of conversion. Three kinds of counterfeit conversion.

And one genuine. I have called these three kinds of counterfeit conversion the religion of fear, the in crowd, and the carnal Christian. Quote, unquote.

On this side of the line, number four represents genuine Christianity. Do you know how many people are supposed to be saved every year in the United States alone? One million people. One million people.

If that is true, I wonder why this country is going to hell faster than any other time in its history. And something hurts in my heart when I see the quality of some of the young people who call themselves by the name of Jesus. And they think it's high time we started looking at what God says real Christians look like.

We have heard so much about what the sinner looks like, nobody knows what the counterfeit Christian looks like because the Bible tells us a great deal about people who seem to love God, but are not real. This morning we are going to talk about the religion of fear, the hard ground. That's why I call it how to be religious without being a Christian.

I'm going to give you, first of all, some wrong reason for serving God, so you can get an idea of this. The Bible tells us there are only, I'll just give you a simple outline of what genuine Christianity is like. There are only two ultimate choices we can make in life.

We can either live for ourselves or we can live for God. It is just as impossible in the Bible to live for yourself, holy and fully, and to live for Jesus Christ, holy and fully at the same time, as it is for me to walk out that door and walk up to this blackboard at exactly the same time because you see there are two opposite directions. If I'm heading this way, I'm looking that way, I'm going that way.

If I'm heading this way, I'm going this way, I'm looking towards that way and I can't go there and there at the same time. And the whole difference between Christianity and religion is that in religion a person is not saved from selfishness. But in Christianity, genuine Christianity, Jesus saves us from sin.

The Bible calls selfishness, or we call it, the Bible says this, all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way. And you can always tell, genuine Christianity saves people from their selfishness and brings them in love with God. False Christianity keeps people selfish and they never really love anybody else except themselves.

Let me give you now some motives. I want you to think about two kids who have been growing up in a house. Their dad is, well he's a rich man, let's say.

He's got a billion, ten billion dollars, like the man in the Volkswagen commercial. And they all live in this house together, him and his two sons. One day, Dad gets real sick.

The two kids are always around him. One kid doesn't really care very much about his father but what he does care about is ten billion dollars. See, so what does he do? He says, oh Dad, I'm so sorry to hear that you're sick.

What can I do for you? What can I give you? Can I bring you lemonade in bed? Can I give you posts and cookies? His dad, of course, is favorably impressed. Now, how long does this dad live? Well, he lives about thirty years after he's sick. This kid is standing around there saying, hey Dad, I'm really sorry you're sick again, and then to himself, I really wish you'd hurry up and die.

The other kid really does love his father. He also brings him posts and cookies and lemonade, but for a different reason. Can you see it as possible for thirty long years, for people to hold up and do exactly the same things for two totally different reasons, and the core of one would be totally wrong and the other one would be totally right.

God talks about the whole of mankind in one of those two categories. And there are some people who serve God for the wrong reasons. And I'm going to give you some of those reasons today.

I've heard so many young people talk about on the streets that we witness to, who say, I don't want to serve Jesus, Christianity is a crutch. And I wonder why they got that idea. I wonder why they got the idea that Christianity was a crutch.

Is it possible that maybe people who call themselves Christians presented Christianity as that? Because in the Bible it is not a crutch. It never has been. It is the absolute necessity, just like life comes from breathing and eating and sleeping.

No crutch. Here are the two motives that are not Christian. It is possible to live by both of these, and we're going to talk about, The first one is serving God for the good things that Jesus can do for you.

And here's the first one. A new trip to try. I have never ever go out witnessing like this and say, listen, you've tried everything else, why don't you try Jesus? He's a wonderful trip, man.

He'll do these things for you, make you feel good, he'll make you feel groovy, he'll really turn you on, he'll blow your head, and he'll do all these things. It is possible that Jesus will do all those things, but that better not be the reason why a man gives his life to God. You must understand that Jesus is not a new trip to try.

I don't know where we got the idea of try Jesus. He is not on trial. He never has been on trial.

I don't see God going around saying, oh, I wish that somebody would try me. I really do. You know, I'm standing here on the wings, rubbing my fingers saying, oh, if only somebody would try me, I'd really do all

these cool things.

I see a hurt God who holds the universe together, and men in rebellion against him, and God in great kindness and great mercy continually putting aside the rightful anger, he feels, of a bunch of rebels who've broken his heart. Can a man come up and say, all right, I'll try you, Jesus. That might be a cool thing to do.

And if you don't work fine, I'll go back to the Galak and Leeks of Egypt. All the Israelites knew how to do that. Oh, Moses is going to take us out.

Praise God, glory, and let's go to Egypt. Out of Dubai, near your Egyptian feet. And then suddenly the Red Sea, and here come the Egyptians with the tanks and bazookas and everything over the fence.

Oh, well, we didn't really want to go. It was Moses' fault. This guy was him.

I'm coming back. Hi, Joe. I remember you.

You know, I used to live with you. Put that bazooka down. What a dumb thing.

I have, so many kids have said this, that kids are beginning to believe it. So you know what they do? They try Jesus. And Jesus is not interested in being tried.

He wants surrender or nothing. You can't come to God and say, listen, I'll try you out for a little while. You can say, the real Christianity, the Bible is this.

Oh, God, I've had it unless you can help me. Jesus is not a new trip to try. He is not on trial.

And then there's another thing too, the prosperity, the prospect of prosperity. And that goes up very well today in a materialistic society. And this idea, Jesus is a marvelous person to help you get rich quick.

If you really want, you're poor, right? Well, here's a cool thing you can do. Give your life to Jesus, and he will make you rich. Be a millionaire for Jesus.

See, this is the cool thing. That would be awfully fun to do in the Bible. I hear so much of this.

You give Jesus one dollar, and he'll give you ten back. God is not a bank. He never has been.

This prosperity prospect, David Ravenhill told us this story once, of this little old lady who was sitting in the front row of a businessmen's meeting, and they were preaching, one guy was preaching about how he first, he only had a dollar, and he gave his dollar away, and to the Lord's work, and he only kept ten cents of it. And the Lord gave him three hundred dollars, and then he gave away two hundred ninety-nine dollars, and kept only one dollar. And the Lord poured in five thousand dollars, and then he gave four thousand five hundred away, and you know, he just kept this five hundred, and God gave him a million dollars.

And then he's done this, you know, and now he's a billionaire, and he's standing there preaching away. And I gave away my other million dollars, and then God has given me six billion more, and he's building all this thing up. And this little lady sitting right in the front was not very impressed.

And then he talked about the last fantastic thing he gave away. The little lady in the front, and now he says, Now, praise the Lord, I'm a billionaire for Jesus. And the little lady said, I dare you to do it again.

I'll tell you what God wants. He wants your heart, and if he can't get your heart through your money, he wants you to throw your money away. There was a young man who came to Jesus, who had everything he needed, except he didn't have eternal life.

And he knew he wanted something like that, so he came to Jesus. And he was rich, and he was young, and he was a ruler. He came to Jesus and he said, Good master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life? That tells me he was something else too.

He was a goody-goody. You ever met those kind of people? They always do the right thing when you do the wrong thing. Always wear the right clothes when you wear the wrong ones.

He always did the right, you know, he was a goody-goody. What good thing must I good do to do, have eternal life? Good master. And the Lord said to him this, Why do you call me good? There is one good and that is God.

Man, when Jesus said that, this is his implication. If you call me good, I must be God. Are you willing to follow through with that? If you call me good, I must be God.

He said, If you'd enter into life, keep the commandments. The guy said, Which one? And that tells you another thing about him. He was smart.

Jesus gave him a list of commandments. The commandments are broken approximately 3-7 or 4-6, depending on where you put the Sabbath. You can put it out here.

This lot are man to God, and this lot are man to man. These ones concern our relationships to each other. These ones concern our relationships to God.

Jesus left out all of these, and he left out the Sabbath, and he left out this last little one here. And the last one was a little commandment that starts with, Thou shalt not covet. If you're a little Jewish kid, that's the first commandment you ever saw, because you see, they used to do them on the pillars of the house, all the way down, see, to the bottom.

So when you're a little kid, the very first commandment you see is the bottom one, see. And as you get, that's, you know, the Jewish really know about this commandment, because they, you know, they grow up, as they get bigger, they learn the other one. This rich young ruler said, Which commandments do I have to keep? The Lord said to him, Alright, you don't steal, you don't lie.

You honor your father and your mother. You don't commit adultery. You stay sexually clean, in other words.

He said, you do all these things, and he laid it all out. And he left out the last one. And that kid was thinking to himself, I wonder why he left that last one.

Have you ever come home, and you've done something wrong, and your mother knew you'd done it, and you knew that she knew? Do you ever happen to, you come home, and when you come in the door, you're dreading what's going to happen to you, and your mother says to you, Hello? You say, Hello? She says, You have a nice day at school? And you say, Yes. She says, Lovely day, isn't it? And you say, Alright, get a level with it. I wonder what this character felt, when Jesus went all the way down the line, and then missed that last one out.

That sort of feeling, And listen, some of our witnessing plans would never work on the rich young ruler. One of them goes like this. How many lives does it take to make one liar? And you hold a finger on his nose.

The character sees a finger sticking up, tells him, One. Oh, yes. One, see? Tells him.

And then you say, Alright, how many sins does it take to make a sinner? One, he says. And then you ask him this question, Have you ever told a lie? And then he says, Yes, of course. And then you say, Aha, then you're a sinner.

And then you get on with the business of getting him to say it. You try that on the rich young ruler. Jesus said, Don't bear false witness.

He said, Oh, He said, I kept from my youth up. You can't understand. How many lives does it take to make a liar? One.

How many sins does it take to make a sinner? One. Have you ever told a lie? No. What? You must have told a lie.

That must be a lie. I told a lie. You've got to trust me.

Jesus didn't contradict this young man. He was a very moral type of character, but understand, he was religious, but not Christian. He knew how to be religious, but he didn't know how to be a Christian.

And he said, All these things have I kept from my youth up, but what lack I yet? And Jesus looked into his eyes, and Jesus said, If you'd enter into life, give up your God. Sell what you have. This young man is now self-serving.

What is he talking about? This must be some new kind of gospel I've heard of. I only want to be a Christian. I want to sell what I have.

Listen, man, you only have to accept Jesus. They told me that down the road. If I come up and I accept Jesus, that's fine, that's cool.

What is he talking about? But Jesus himself is preaching here, and he doesn't make mistakes. And Jesus said, Sell what you have. And suddenly in the back of his mind, it clicked.

Got it. Of course. What is the use of taking my gold-plated surfboard around Nazareth? They've got lousy beaches there.

That's dumb, of course. I sell all I have. I turn it into assets.

I take my Mastercard, my Bank of Jerusalem card, and I use all these things. And for goodness sake, very simple. And I know, of course, I just buy what I need.

That's a brilliant idea. Of course. They had me worried for a second.

And these things in the back of his mind. And I know, I'm going to be Jesus' treasurer. Christian crusades incorporated.

Rich young ruler, treasurer. I just see it in boards in his mind. And then he's sitting there smiling.

And then Jesus says, and give it away to the poor. Oh, you've got to be kidding. Listen, I have a friend, and he joined a church down the road, and they said, Oh, we've been looking for you.

We've needed a treasurer for a long time to get our church out of the holes line and the dotted line, baby. I'll tell you something, friends. Jesus is a lot more honest than some preachers I know.

He knows that if he does not get your heart, he's not getting you. And he's not interested in your money, and he's not interested in your possessions. He's interested in your heart.

And if he can't get your heart, if it's down something else, then he wants you to say goodbye, and I want you to know that. Serving Jesus is not a prosperity trip, and if you believe that, you go to Red China and preach it. It's easy to preach that here.

Go behind the curtain to Romania and preach it there. Preach on how Jesus can make you prosperous, as long as you're a Christian. And I'll tell you something, Jesus sometimes strips everything a person has and leaves them with nothing but himself and God to get his heart.

And Jesus is not a prosperity prospect. If you want to become a very, very rich person, then write a book on how to spend God and you'll make a million dollars overnight. Everybody wants to spend God, but God is not interested in people spending him.

He wants to spend them. There is another one, we'll just throw it on the end for you to think about. I call the benefits of heavenly insurance.

And the heavenly insurance policy goes something like this. You know, it must be a pretty rotten thing to live a life not knowing that everything's taken care of in the next world. It really is a rotten thing, see? After all, you've got your health taken care of, you've got your car insurance taken care of, you've got your medical insurance, you've got all these different things taken care of.

But just think about the next world. You haven't got good insurance in there. You know what you need to do is give your life to Jesus.

And if you do, man, then it's all set up. I thank God for the astronaut that was a Christian. They said to him, did you, what did you think about God when you were up there? Did your thoughts turn back to God when you got in an emergency? He said, I have made my peace with Micah a long time ago.

My religion is not a fire escape. Thank God for men who like that. Listen, this is a weird thing.

But, uh, the great God is not to be peddled as some celestial Santa Claus who we come to and say, oh dear Santa, I need a yacht, I need a this, I need a that, and I thank you that you'll give me all these cool things. Goodness. And you know what God says? You ask and you receive not, because you ask and you miss.

You might receive, you spend it on your own selfishness, on your own lust. Please turn the tape over for the remainder of Winky Prattney's message. This is side two of Winky Prattney's message, How to Be Religious Without Being a Christian.

Just as much as hope, and I think us preachers are to blame, all too often we have laid out this, do you want peace? Do you want happiness? Do you want joy? Do you want to have a cool life and come to Jesus? That's not what Jesus said. He said, do you want death? Do you want to be stripped of everything

you have in order that you may find true treasure? Do you want to, do you want to know that you are really breaking God's heart? Do you really want to know what my cost is? All kinds of people, they followed Jesus, listened to him, great multitudes went after him, and the bigger the crowd got, the more he said, listen, if any man come after me and hate not his father, his mother, his brothers, his sisters, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And many went back and walked no more than they said, this is too hard of Christianity, forget it.

But that was God's time, and he had real Christians. Heavenly insurance is another lot of things to think about. Christianity is not a thing of fear.

Now Jonathan Edwards preached one sermon like this, that scared people silly. He preached about the great God who dreadfully abhors you, who dangles you much as you would dangle a spider over a candle flame. And then when he finished preaching, people screamed out and grabbed chandeliers and they thought the floor was going to open up and swallow them.

And Jonathan Edwards only preached that sermon. He didn't preach very many others like that, because Jonathan Edwards was not really a fantastic preacher. He was a great man of God.

He spent about eight hours a day in study. But see, he just read a sermon like this. And he's a little cross-eyed.

And he read them in a monotone. But see, that happened to be a kind of message that people needed in those days. It scared them silly, really did.

Scared them skinny. I know God has sometimes used fear to awaken people to his claims. The Bible tells us Noah was moved by fear.

He built an ark. But listen, God doesn't save people by scaring them into heaven. Never has.

I know a girl who came to me. She was being flippant. I said, young lady, I want you to make a choice.

You give your life to God or you stay with your mouth. I'm finished. She said, ah, let me think about it a little bit.

She went out and got in a bug, drove away. I got a call at two in the morning. She said, well, I was driving on the freeway and a wind hit my bug and it somersaulted.

I turned about five times over, smashed total right off it. I'm still all right. And she was shaking.

She said, I need to give my life to God. That's cool. But, I do not believe that God scares people into heaven.

And I do not serve Jesus and neither does any Christian in here. Because if we don't, he'll send us to hell. There are other reasons for serving God.

Now, it is true, if you don't follow Jesus, then there is fire. The Bible is very clear about that. But that's not the reason why a man ought to serve God.

Not for you. Here's another one. Um, the, the fire escape.

When the earthquake came here, man, boy, there was a lot of Christians who became Christians within 15 seconds. I've been here all the time. God says, Oh, really? I was listening to the radio.

I thought it was so funny. After the earthquake, the crime went down like this. And, uh, the commentator said it was probably because we had more policemen out and not through any change of heart on behalf of the criminals.

But I said, I bet a lot of the crooks were scared on 6 o'clock in the morning. Ah! And then the last one. See, there's all kinds of cool things you can, I've got all kinds of men come up to me and open their services and I say, Oh, when I was in the war, the bombs were falling and I said, Oh, God, save me and I'll do anything you want.

And I said, what are you doing now? smashed out of their minds. Listen, you can't make fire escape promises to God. Let me tell you a really strange thing.

I would be happy in hell if Jesus sent me there. One, I deserve it. Thoroughly deserve it.

Know that. Know that for sure. Secondly, I am not serving Jesus so I can get to heaven.

I don't know much about heaven. I've read a bit in the Bible about it. I'm sure it's not a place where people play hearts and stuff.

The Bible doesn't tell us a great deal about it. Which tells me something about Jesus and it's that, that's not the reason why we ought to serve him. And I'll tell you some people in the Bible that were willing to go to hell if it could mean that others could be saved.

And one of them's name was Moses. God had worked so long with Moses' people and God said, I'm going to destroy this people. Moses, stand out of the way.

I'm going to take you and I'm going to make you a great nation. I'm just going to wipe this people off the face of the earth. And you know what Moses said? Oh God, if you can't spare them, take my name out of the book of life you've written.

Blot my name out of your book. He said this, my soul for theirs. I'll go to hell in their place.

If you, if you can't spare them, send me to hell too. That was his love for his people. He said, oh God, take my name out of your book.

And you know what God said? Moses, send me to sin against the Himalaya. Take out of my book. Moses is ready to give his soul.

And I'll tell you something, he's going out witnessing. You love the kids enough to die for them. And you'll see some results.

The world is not impressed with feelings. It is impressed with a genuine love that comes from the heart of the man who's in love with Jesus Christ and he loves people and loves God more than he loves himself. And Paul, remember the apostle Paul? I wish that I'd be a curse for my brethren's sake.

Paul said, if I can go to hell, for them I would go. God could take me and say, Paul, I'll tell you what, if you will take these people's punishment in hell, then I will save them. Paul said, send me, I'll go.

That is real salvation. I have a funny feeling today that most young people who say they really serve God, put in a tight corner would say, well, that's not fair of you, God. Look, you took away my murder card.

I'm not going to serve you anymore. I'm finished. I've had it.

I thought you were going to be cool and now look what's happened. Some kids don't need to be sent to hell. They just need one little sneer from somebody.

You kiss me. You know? I don't know what you're talking about. Kiss me.

I know some girls, their boyfriend leaves them. I've got it. I'm going to be a Christian and I'm going to be a junkie.

I'm going to be a prostitute and I'm going to shoot up now just because you took my boyfriend away from me. Goodness me. What kind of Christianity is that? God should be disappointed if things happen to you.

But if you say you love Jesus and you put him first, put your money where your mouth is. Now friends, I'm going to give you a basis of why we ought to serve God and then I'm going to give you briefly some signs of a lady who married her husband out of hopeful fear but she didn't really love him. Happiness comes as a sort of a byproduct of getting what you originally set out to get.

Now let me give you an illustration. Say my goal in life was to make \$10,000. Now I can work towards that thing.

This is my goal. I work towards it and when I get the \$10,000 I'm happy. Yay! I got my \$10,000.

See that's the thing. But on the other hand, if I wanted to buy a \$10,000 automobile and I get \$10,000 I still haven't got what I'm working towards. See? So that's kind of only a side thing.

I'm saying yay I got it but I still haven't got my car. When I get the car, when I get the goal that I've been aiming for then the happiness comes. Now listen.

There's one thing you can't use this thing on and that is with God. Some people want happiness. So they try to use God in order to get happiness.

But what is happiness? Happiness is just if you don't have an object of happiness happiness is just like the pot of gold in a rainbow. Some idiot told me when I was a kid there was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. So I was waiting for a rainbow.

Yay! Rush across and the rainbow moved on. You just keep on moving around. And I said I'll go around the other side of the field and get that rainbow man and rush around and it still moves away.

A sneaky rainbow. I never did find that pot of gold. And happiness is just like that.

If you search for happiness and try to use God in order to find it you'll never find it. It just keeps moving away and moving away and moving away. And some kids do not really serve God.

They serve happiness and they are trying to use God in order to do it. And you know what God says? Then you shall find me if you search and seek for me with all your heart. God must be loved for his own sake.

Not for what he can do. God is interested in you. He loves you for your own sake.

Not simply for what you can do. And so it must come back and return. God must be loved for his own sake.

If God is our goal. If God really is the thing we are aiming towards or the person that we move towards. When we have God we have everything we want.

But if something else other than God popularity, pleasure, happiness, peace. If that is our goal we will never find God who said you must seek me. Set our hearts on God and all those things come as side benefits.

Set our hearts on the side benefits and we will not find God or those side benefits. How many kids do you know now who know how to be religious without being Christian? Now let's talk about value for a second so you'll see why God has said trust me. And what is the real basis of a man serving God? Now most of you girls wore some things today.

Some dresses of some description. Now you came along dressed in the particular dress that you dressed in today because you figured this is the most valuable thing I can wear for the particular crusade. Now when we mean value we don't mean all expensive.

You guys are going to clean a car you probably wouldn't put on a tuxedo to do it. You may, you may be different but you know you probably think that the most valuable thing I'd wear to clean a car is the oldest thing I have so you'd wear that. But on the other hand if you go into some special function you probably wouldn't wear your overall and canic suit and stuff like that.

Of course you may be different again but can you see that every decision you make in life is based on what you believe is the most valuable thing for that situation. Now some of you ate breakfast this morning because you figured I've got to eat something I'll die of a stomachache. So you, other people didn't eat breakfast because you said if I eat breakfast I'll go to sleep.

So you didn't do that. All of you make decisions. You sat on a seat some of you sat here because you figured it's more valuable to sit here.

And some of you sat in the back because you figured there's no other room to get in and I can breathe outside the door anyway. Valuable, you all make that decision. Alright.

Imagine now that you've been sent out to buy some crowns for a king. I want you to see that it is the value of the crown that obligates you to buy it. It is the value of that thing that says to you buy me instead of the other one.

Alright. That simple. Two crowns.

One looks ugly. See. And the other one looks, stars coming out of it.

And you look at it and you say I like that one. And the value of that crown says buy me, buy me, taste me, taste me. You know what it says.

Do you see this thing? Now, let's say this looks very beautiful, very well done, but you find this is only made of cardboard. And this is really, really gold. It's kind of battered up in that, but you figure, what would

you buy then if it was only two crowns? Well, you'd buy the gold one.

You figure it's better to buy an expensive crown and get it beaten back into shape than this thing which is only cardboard for the same price. See, the, the change of looks now, but you know one more thing about this crown. You know it's more valuable because it's made of a better kind of substance.

All right? Can you see again the value obligates you to buy this and not just the outward appearances of it? Now, what say a king had sent you to buy the crown? And he had told you what to do. He said, buy me a crown. That's a command.

Here's your king. Buy me a crown, he says. Buy the best one that you see.

And he gives you a thousand dollars. Can you see that you will still choose the crown on the basis of how valuable it is even though the king has commanded you to do that? Now, listen. God commands us to love him.

He makes it a command because it is absolutely necessary. But the reason why we ought to serve God is not because he gave us a command to do that. Any more that I could say this to you, you will love me now in the next five seconds.

Hurry up! Nobody can command, can command something unless behind that there is that sense of value. And listen, God must be loved for his own sake. He has said, choose me, put me first.

But he has said that because he really is the most valuable person in the universe. He has said it because he really is the one single being in the universe who is most lovely and most valuable. And the Bible tells us what the kingdom of heaven is like.

It's like a merchant man who goes looking for pearls and he comes across a pearl that he has never seen before, anything like this. It is a pearl of great price. It is the purest pearl.

It is a pearl without price. And he sells all this other stuff that he has collected to get that one pearl. Why do you surrender your life to Jesus Christ? Because you see he is the most valuable, lovely being in the universe.

And he is worth serving above all other gods. The man who came and found the treasure hidden in a field and it might have been an ugly looking field full of weeds but he found the treasure and when he found the treasure he said, I am going to sell everything I've got. The Bible tells me something about repentance.

It says that goodness of God leads you to it. Why do I love Jesus? Because he broke my heart with his love. Is he the most valuable person in the universe? You say, I don't think so.

I think God is actually selfish. I really do. After all, what is a person going around ordering people to love him and stuff unless he's selfish? You say that God wants us to serve him, right? Right.

You say that God wants people to be unselfish, right? Right. Then God asks us to serve and love him. Therefore God is selfish, right? Wrong.

Why does God ask you to serve him? Simply because he is the, no, because he knows he's the most valuable being in the universe. Look, here is God's being. He upholds this whole universe that you're a part of.

He holds the whole thing together. Observe. Now, the reason why my hand didn't go through this chair, one, because my karate is not very good, and two, not because a solid hand collided with a solid chair, but the energies that bind me together bound that chair together.

And what you actually saw was a collision of two energies. And who is the person who holds the energies together? The Bible tells you who that is in Colossians. He is before all things, and by him all things consist, and that word means all together.

God holds together the very structure of the universe that you're a part of. He pulled away his chair from the universe that had fallen apart, and God looks at our whole universe of which you and I are a part of. He looks at all this universe.

He looks at his own being, and he sees the most single, important, and valuable thing in the universe is his own being. And God chooses unselfishly his own because on the basis of value, he must choose that which is best. God sees he is the most valuable being in the universe, so he unselfishly chooses his own being.

Listen, if there was a God bigger than God, that God needed, God would say, worship him, not me. But there is no bigger, no greater one than the God that put this universe together. So he says, choose me.

Now, do you see this? Do you understand why we say that serving Jesus is not a religion of fear? It's when the love of God, God shows himself to you, he breaks your heart with his love. You see, he is lovely and I am rotten. He is valuable and I have ruined everything I have and he cares about me and I don't deserve that.

And if he is that kind of God, I'll serve him and follow him and love him and worship him for the rest of my life. That's Christianity. Not of hope, not of fear, but love.

Not serving him so dad can give me a billion dollars when he dies, but because I really care about him, he is worth serving. Therefore, the Christian, when he witnesses, does not witness because that's the thing to do if you're Christian. If you don't do it, you're pretty miserable for a Christian.

He does it because he enjoys it. I can tell if you've been in love. I really can.

And I can tell when a girl loves God, or a guy loves God, I love to talk about him. Sit down. You say, do you have to witness all the time? What is this religious thing, man? You can go out and go bowling.

Do you have to go Christian bowling? It's like saying, oh, baseball, you have to talk about baseball. He's excited about baseball. He's thrilled about baseball.

And everything you talk about if it's bananas, it'll turn into baseball. Christian loves Jesus Christ. He can't help talking about him.

Sit down and say, listen, how'd you like to go out? Yeah, that'll be a cool thing. You know what Jesus said to me today? Oh, this is a religious fanatic. Right.

I love Jesus Christ. I don't do what I do because somebody told me, you've got to do that, otherwise you're not a very cool Christian. I read the Bible, I know what Jesus wants me to do, and I know how lovely he is.

And I do that because I know he's worth serving. He's a beautiful person, the greatest beautiful person in the universe. And looking at the whole rest of the churches, they say, that's not very popular anymore, this is a thing we intend to do, and I know what God has said, I'll do that.

Who cares about the consequences? Set your heart, if you're going to serve God and love him, then you go right against the rest of the world that crucified him. But faith is not a religion of fear. God brought this to me so beautifully.

I had hurt God earlier in my Christian life, I really wanted to serve him, and then I cheated on a test, and so I thought, I might as well give up. I was on my knees, I said, this is no good, can't do this, this Christian life is, you know, really, I'm going to give up, I was about to, you know, throw this sponge in. And I was praying, and nothing seemed real anymore, and I was on my knees and I was praying, and I saw in my mind a guy running, he was running in a race, and he was running way out in front, and he had a shoelace undone.

And he stood on his shoelace and he went smack, right on his face in the mud, just bang, as hard as he could see. And around the corner of all these people, And so, they sent him out. They were going to send him out to play there.

And the day before this, this kid's dad died. His father was the only one in the house. And the coach came in and he said, I'm sorry son.

He said, I heard your father died and I'm sorry. This was the only game that we had for you. And he said, I'm really sorry you weren't able to make it.

And the kid said, listen, coach, I want to play. I want to play tomorrow. He said, I never wanted to play any other time like I want to play tomorrow.

And the coach couldn't believe it. He says, what do you mean? He says, don't you want to go to your father's funeral? He said, yeah, but I want to play. I want to play first.

And the coach, he said, alright son. Put this kid on. He played.

Like lights went on inside him, see. And then he played so good that at the end of the game, that actually drawn with those guys with the eyes in the middle of their head. They actually threw even with them.

And his mates in the team lifted him up on the shelf. They cheered him right off the field. They never seen him play anything like that.

And the coach said to him, I can't understand it son. He said, how did you become a light on that football field? What happened to you? He says, well, I never could get excited. He said, I think there's other boys that have their dad there cheering them on and that.

And my mother has been dead for a long time. She said, my dad is a Christian. He never came to any football game.

The coach said, was that against his religious convictions? He said, no coach, he was blind. But today, for the first time, my father watched me play. And listen, you're the kind of man who kneels alone, or the kind of woman who kneels alone with God.

Father sees. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, so many young people are serving you because they feel I have to.

I feel if they don't, they're going to get into trouble from heaven. Or they're serving you for what they can get out of you. But I ask you'll give every young person in this place a real picture of who you are.

Of just the kind of person you really are. So that we'll not have religiousness without Christianity. You have never been a crutch.

But you really love men. And you really love women. And I pray that today we look deeper into your book and find out what genuine Christianity is all about.

You'll give us a hunger in our hearts to know you and to make you know us. As we go out, kids shift out during the week into different places. I pray they'll understand and know who you are.

They won't do things simply because their friends do them, but because you see, you watch, you know them, and you love them. This message is a good blessing in Jesus' name.

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