

# (Basics) 15. a Son or a Servant

by Zac Poonen

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*True spirituality is about putting God's glory first and serving him with the spirit of his Son, not just about seeking our own gain.*

**Duration:** 12:59

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Prayer Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the difference between being religious and being spiritual. He emphasizes that a religious person can still have self sitting on the throne of their heart, even if they engage in external religious activities. Jesus wanted people to come to an end of themselves and see God, so that God could give them His own nature. The speaker also highlights the importance of putting God's glory, name, and will first in our prayers, rather than focusing solely on our own needs.

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## Transcript

And we want to think today a little more about what we were looking at in our last two programs, and that is the difference between being religious and being spiritual. A person can be religious and still be very, very selfish and self-centered and think all the time in terms of his own profit and his own gain. But when a person becomes spiritual, he cannot be self-centered or selfish.

He thinks not in terms of what he is going to gain, but in terms of what God is going to gain, how God is going to be glorified. Do you remember the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples to pray, which is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer? Our Father who art in heaven, followed by six requests. And three of those requests, the first three in fact, concern God, His name, His kingdom, His will.

And the next three concern ourselves, our physical material needs, daily bread, our need for forgiveness, our past life, that is, forgive us our sins as we forgive others, and our need for deliverance from sin in the future. But notice that Jesus taught his disciples that the right way to pray was putting God's glory and name and honor and His will and His kingdom first, and putting our own needs secondary. Now if you were to examine your own prayer, I mean, think of the way you have prayed to God, even if it is half a minute prayers or one sentence prayers or any type of prayer or long prayers.

What have you basically prayed to God for during, say, the last one year? When you spend time in prayer or you make short requests to God, what are you actually asking God for? And if you are honest, you will discover how much your prayers are centered around yourself and your family. That's about it. And that is

an indication of the way you live also.

How do you spend your money? How do you spend your time? And you may find the answer to these questions that your life is so wrapped up only around yourself and your family, and to ease your conscience, you give a little time to God, maybe on Sunday, maybe on a Wednesday evening, and you feel that you are spiritual because you have given a little time to God, and maybe because you live an upright life. But true spirituality is a lot more than going for two meetings a week. In fact, a man can be spiritual even without going for any meeting a week, if he is locked up in a prison, for example, and he is not able to go for a meeting, or if he is in a hospital, sick, and he can't go for a meeting.

He can still be spiritual. But you can't be spiritual if you are seeking your own. A religious person goes through religious acts to ease his conscience, but deep down in the center of his life, self still sits on the throne.

And that's why Jesus said, you can't be my disciple unless you take up the cross, deny that self which is sitting on the throne, Luke 9.23. Unless you deny your self, life, dethrone it, kill it, and follow me, you can't be my disciple. He said there, you got to do it every day. And so we see that a religious person can still have self sitting on the throne of his heart, and go through every external activity.

He may go to every meeting, he may go to six meetings or seven meetings a week. He may engage in evangelism, he may even be a full-time worker, who has given up his job and maybe travels to some difficult place to preach the gospel. And he may be just religious.

Jesus once said to the Pharisees, who were religious people in his time, He said, you travel land and sea, you cross land and sea and travel here and there to make converts. And what do you accomplish? You produce people exactly like yourselves. And they have become double the children of hell.

In fact, they would have been better off if you had left them alone, because you made them like yourselves, self-centered, thinking that they are spiritual, when they are only religious. A lot of conversions are like that, even in Christendom today. People are converted to a form of religiosity.

They never become spiritual, because self sits on the throne. They are never taught to take up the cross every day. Think about yourself.

Has anybody ever taught you what it means to deny yourself every day, to take up your cross every day? And yet you read Luke 9.23, what does it say there? He says, unless you do that every day, you cannot be his disciple. You cannot follow him. It is impossible.

He said that in Luke 14, verse 27 too. You cannot be his disciple, if you don't follow him, if you don't take up the cross every day. The religious man is thinking like this.

This is the way his thought processes work, when he becomes a Christian. What can I get from the Lord? Can the Lord give me forgiveness of sins? Yeah, I want that. Can he give me healing? Yeah, I'd like that.

Can he give me heaven after I die? Yeah, I want that too. Can he bless me? Yeah, I want that. Can he bless me materially? Boy, I would love that.

Can he anoint me so that I can be a mighty, famous preacher, going around with my picture here and there in Christian magazines? I would like that too. Now, do you think such a man is spiritual? He may be

talking about a lot of Christian activities, but his goal is something for himself. He's seeking his own name, his own fame, his own gain, his own prosperity, his own blessing, everything for self.

Self sits on the throne of his life. He's got a form of godliness though. He may be a full-time worker.

But a lot of people in full-time Christian work today are doing it for their own profit. If those people were in secular jobs, they would not be earning even half of what they're earning in Christian work. It's brought them profit.

They're doing business with God. Jesus turned such people out of the temple in his day and his time. People who sought their own, who appeared to be selling sheep and doves to help people to sacrifice in the temple, but who are actually just thinking in terms of their own profit and gain.

Do you know the amount of religiosity there is in Christendom today that goes undetected, disguised as Christian work? Oh, there's such a lot of that. A spiritual man, on the other hand, is not thinking, what can I get out of the Lord? He thinks, what can the Lord get out of me? What can the Lord get from this one earthly life that I have? What's the maximum that he can get? Now, I believe if you're honest, as you listen to this program, you can ask yourself, what is your attitude towards the Lord? Are you always thinking, what is the next thing I can get from the Lord for myself or my family? Or is your attitude, what can the Lord get more out of my earthly life before I leave this earth? What more can he get out of me? I want him to have everything of me from head to foot, and I want my life to be just spent for him. What can he get out of me? There's a lot of difference between these two attitudes.

And both people may sit next to each other in a Christian church, and you may not be able to distinguish between the two, because it's a question of hard attitude. Both may go out in evangelism. Both may go out to serve the Lord.

And both may sacrifice. And yet the fundamental motive underneath may be totally different. You know, it's motive that determines spirituality, not the action.

Jesus went to the synagogue. The Pharisees went to the synagogue. But do you think they were both equally acceptable to God? Jesus studied the Bible.

The Pharisees studied the Bible. Do you think they were equally acceptable to the Father? Jesus went out to preach. The Pharisees went out to preach.

The Pharisees were full-time workers. Jesus was a full-time worker for three and a half years. But do you think they were the same? There was a vast difference.

In fact, in the Gospels, we constantly see this contrast between Jesus and the Pharisees. It's the contrast between true spirituality and religiosity. It's the contrast between living according to the spirit of the new covenant, the new agreement God has made with man, and living according to the letter of the law.

And there's a vast difference between the two. When Adam sinned, you know what he did. He covered himself with fig leaves.

And fig leaves are a picture of religiosity, with which a man tries to make himself presentable before God and before men. You know what Jesus did when he saw a fig tree covered with fig leaves? He cursed it. He cursed it and the whole tree withered up.

And that teaches us that there is a curse on religiosity. He came looking for fruit in that fig tree. He didn't want just leaves.

Fig trees were not created just to have leaves. And God did not create man just to be religious. Yeah, there are religious activities, but underneath it all, if there is not a spiritual life, then God's not interested in it.

There's a curse over it. What is it that God gave Adam? God stripped him of those fig leaves and gave him a covering of skins. He killed an animal and put a skin over him.

It's a picture of God giving us his own nature. The fig leaves, the dress of fig leaves was what Adam manufactured himself. He tied up the fig leaves and made a dress for himself and he tried to cover himself.

God said, throw that away, I don't want it. Maybe good fig leaves, that's okay. They were not rotten fig leaves, but it was still not acceptable.

God said, I'll give you a dress. And God gives us the nature of Christ. That's what that skin of the animal means.

And yet we can ask, why did God keep people under the law for 1500 years? To show man the emptiness of it. He never intended that man should live under the law all his life. God left man under the law to show, that is not the way.

You'll never attain to my nature that way. He wanted man to come to an end of himself. That's what the law was meant to accomplish.

And those people who did come to an end of themselves, they began to see God. And then God is able to give them his own nature. And that is throwing away the fig leaves of religiosity and giving us the nature of Jesus Christ.

The nature of Jesus Christ means that we serve God in the same spirit with which Christ served the Father. Not as a servant, but as a son. Beloved friends, God has called you, not to be his servant, but to be his son.

And to serve him with the spirit of his Son.

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