

How to Have the Power of God

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being honest and humble before God, using the story of Jacob wrestling with God as an illustration. It highlights the need to be alone with God, earnest in seeking His blessings, and honest in admitting our faults. The transformation that comes from God when we are humble and honest is compared to the change in Jacob's name to Israel, signifying a new nature and identity as a Prince of God.

Scripture: Genesis 32:28, Genesis 32:30, Malachi 4:2, James 4:10, Matthew 18:4

Topics: "Honesty before God", "Transformation through Humility"

Description

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Transcript

Praise the Lord. I'm glad you could be here this morning. I was told to be very close to the mic today.

I don't know whether you've been, whether you're convinced that Jesus was a very strong, powerful man, because he could speak to 10,000 people without a mic. Have you ever thought of that, when you read about, there were 5,000 men and women and children whom he fed? And I've often wondered about that. I know he stood a little high up on a hill or something, but still, to speak to 10,000 people, I say, Lord, I want to keep myself fit to serve you.

I see so many people, you know, I just want to give you a little exhortation. I see many brothers, when they testify, they whisper so softly as if they're ashamed. I want to encourage all of you to be bold.

We may not be able to speak to 10,000 people, but at least we can be bold when we testify about Jesus Christ. Never to be ashamed. It's so very, very important.

It's one of the things I prayed for. I remember when I was converted at the age of 19 and a half, and I was in the Navy. I was a naval officer.

And I had a burden to share the gospel with others almost as soon as I was converted. So I would give out tracts when I was traveling in a bus or a train, and sit reading a Bible so that if anybody was interested, they would come and talk to me. Then I wanted to stand and preach on the streets.

And I knew that my colleagues in the Navy, juniors, seniors would all see me standing there like some vendor selling something. And it wasn't easy. So in the beginning, I never stood outside the naval base to preach.

I would go far away where nobody knew me. And I would preach and I said, Lord, I come back home and say, Lord, I'm a coward. I'm afraid to boldly proclaim you to those who know me.

And I thought how Jesus when he hung on the cross, he was not ashamed to be stripped and beaten. And I said, Lord, I never want to be ashamed of you. You were not ashamed to hang on a cross half naked for me.

Why should I ever be ashamed to testify that you saved me from sin? I don't know if there's anybody sitting here who's ashamed to let people in your office know that you're a disciple of Jesus Christ, not just a nominal Christian like many are. Are you ashamed to let your unconverted relatives know that you're not just a Christian by name, but one whose life has been transformed by Christ? And you know what I did? I said, Lord, I don't have the courage. And I'm not going to believe that you have filled me with the Holy Spirit until the day comes when I can stand right outside the naval base where everybody knows me and I proclaim that Jesus Christ is my savior.

And it didn't come overnight. I prayed many times. I said, Lord, I know that disciples also, you read immediately after the resurrection, they saw Jesus Christ risen.

Imagine if you had been there. Sometimes when you read the Gospels, you must put yourself there. That's what I do when I read the Bible.

I put myself there. I imagine Jesus healing a blind man in front of me, how I'd feel, or Jesus feeding the 5000. And I'm sitting there watching it.

And I put myself there and I see Jesus risen from the dead. I saw him crucified three days ago. And I see him risen from the dead.

And I would think, boy, I would be completely changed just seeing him. But they were not changed. And I was not changed.

Those disciples saw him risen from the dead, the most amazing miracle that ever took place in the history of the world. And yet the next day, they had locked the doors, afraid of the Jews. And I said, Lord, I'm like that.

I can talk so much in the church, sing so much about Christ risen from the dead. But I'm ashamed to tell those who know me well, that I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. They think I'm a fanatic.

I was more afraid of the opinions of men. I cared more for their opinion than the opinion of God. Now I want to ask you a direct question.

Are you more interested in the opinion that your relatives and other human beings have of you? Are you interested in the opinion Jesus has about you? We are all cowards when it comes to witnessing for Christ.

And I said, Lord, I see and I read in the Bible that those disciples were ashamed. The next day he came, they were still ashamed.

40 days he was on earth. And all those 40 days, whenever they saw him, they were encouraged when he was there. But when he was gone, they were scared.

They'd lock the door and stay inside. Don't let anybody know I'm a Christian. Because they'll persecute me, they'll make fun of me.

And a lot of us are like that. I know I was like that. And then I read in the Acts of the Apostles that on the day of Pentecost, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

And they didn't take one month to become bold. They did not even take one second to become bold. Just like Jesus said in Acts 1.8, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will receive power.

Now today, unfortunately, unfortunately, many people, I don't blame them. They are my fellow believers. But many Pentecostals and Charismatics connect the Holy Spirit to speaking in tongues, speaking in some unknown language that God gives.

He does that. I know he gave it to me. So I use it only in my communication with God.

I never use it in public. It's the language God has given me to communicate with him when I don't know what to say. And I'll tell you why he gave it to me.

I said, Lord, I want to praise you. I want to praise you with all of my heart all the time. I challenge you to do this.

Try and praise God for one minute, 60 seconds. Privately, when you're by yourself, do this homework. Try and give thanks and praise to God for 60 seconds without repeating yourself.

If you say, I praise you, don't say that again. If you say, Hallelujah, don't say that again. If you say, I worship you, don't say that again.

I tell you, you will not be able to go even for 60 seconds. You will keep on repeating yourself. A lot of people, when they praise God, they're just repeating themselves.

Lord, we praise you. We thank you. Lord, we praise you.

We worship you. The English language or any language is not enough to praise God. That's why God gives us another language to praise him.

But if you're not so interested in praising him, all you're interested in is receiving, receiving, blessing, give me, bless me with this, bless me with that and heal me with this and do this for me and do that for me. You don't need to praise. There are a million things you can ask God for.

If you're really asking, asking, asking, asking, we're always in need. But if you've gone beyond asking and saying, Lord, I want to be grateful. I want to thank you.

I want to praise you. I'll tell you, you'll get stuck in one minute. You won't know what to say.

You're just repeating the same old phrases. That's the time when you begin to have a burden. Lord, how can I ever praise you? That's the reason God gives us the gift of another language.

It's the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14, it's only to talk to him. He who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks to God, not to men. That's besides the point.

That's the one part that God, they received, but that was not the main thing. The main thing that happened on the day of Pentecost was they opened the doors. They were never behind closed doors after that.

And I said, Lord, that's what I need. I don't need a powerful exhortation. I don't need to go for another meeting.

What I need is to experience what those disciples scared for their life of ashamed to stand in public, afraid to be in public, afraid to let other people know that they were disciples of Jesus Christ. I said, Lord, that's what I am right now. Ashamed to let my colleagues in the Navy know that I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ because they were all non-Christians.

They'd make fun of me. They'd laugh at me. And I was ashamed of people laughing at me.

And I tell you, most Christians are like that. And I said, Lord, I know what changed those disciples. It was not some powerful exhortation they heard in a meeting.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit. And I said, Lord, I will not believe that I'm filled with the Holy Spirit till I've become bold to be a witness anywhere, everywhere on the streets where people know me, where people don't know me. And until that day comes, I will not believe that I'm filled with the Holy Spirit.

Even speaking in tongues is not enough for me. And I tell you, God did it. The day came in my life when I could stand right outside the naval base with my sailors who worked under me, walking by, officers who were senior to me walking by.

And I was standing there and they must be thinking what's happened to Jack. He's become a madman standing out in the streets. I couldn't care less.

And I learned to preach on the streets because I was so young, 21 years old. They would not allow me to preach in the church I was attending. They were all 40, 50-year-old men.

How would they allow a 21-year-old to speak? So they would never allow me to speak. I learned to preach on the streets. Out there, I learned to be free from the opinions of men, free from what people thought about me.

I want to encourage you, my dear brothers and sisters, never be ashamed of Jesus Christ. If you look into your heart, you'll find that in your heart is the same being ashamed of Christ like I was. I don't despise you.

Not at all. I had the same sickness myself. How can I despise you for having a sickness which I had myself? But I want to tell you that Jesus healed me of the sickness of being ashamed to witness for him, to those who hated him, to those who made fun of him and who would make fun of me.

I tell you, if you can experience that during this conference, at least a passion to seek God, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you would have received the greatest thing of all. It may not happen while you're here, but when you go home, you go before God and say, Lord, you've got to meet with me. I remember in India

when I was preaching on this, one young person heard me and went home and locked the door in a room in the house and said, Lord, I'm not going to get out of here until you fill me with the Holy Spirit.

Now, don't imitate that person. You never get anything by imitation. That person didn't what the person originally felt like doing, but the Lord saw he was passionate and God met with him.

I remember another brother, we had a meeting for a number of leaders in India. There were about a hundred of them and we spoke about being filled with the Holy Spirit and God met with some of them and this brother could not come for that meeting, but he had the tape and he heard it and he said, Lord, I could not go for that meeting, but you can speak to me here in my house as I listen to the tape and God met him right there. You know, in the Old Testament, we read of a time when Moses gathered some leaders together and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak God's Word and there were two of those leaders who were out inside their home.

They hadn't been out there and God met with them over there. So, I want to tell you that God is more eager to fill you with this Holy Spirit, to make you a witness for him, provided you're not going to be ashamed of witnessing for him. It's like, you know, the fullness of the Holy Spirit is like God giving you a million dollars.

If you're going to use that million dollars just to waste it on yourself, he won't give it to you. But if you say, Lord, I want to use it for you. I didn't want to be filled with the Holy Spirit to get some name or fame or any such thing.

I had zero desire. Even today, I have zero desire to be famous, to be well known in this rotten old world. You want to be famous in this rotten old world with unconverted, godless people who are all on their way to hell? Do you want their good opinion? If so, shame on you.

I say, Lord, I want to be popular with you. I want you to be proud of me. I don't care what this world, this rotten old world thinks of me.

I have no desire to be famous in this world. A lot of Christian preachers are interested in being famous in the world. I don't believe Jesus was ever interested in that.

He was only interested in doing the Father's will. So that's what I want to say as an introduction to you, dear brothers and sisters. Instead of just getting a lot of points from different sermons that we preach, I want to encourage you to really seek God and say, Lord, I want to change life during this week here.

I don't just want to get a lot of information in my head and a lot of notes in my book. That's all good. It's very good.

I'm not against that. But Lord, give me a passion in my heart. Let me go from here with a passion to love you with all my heart, to love my fellow believers as you love me, and to hate the devil and fight against him for the rest of my life.

Imagine that and to go home and do my part to build the body of Jesus Christ, the church. And maybe in your place where there's no local church, God may use you to start one. I feel I was the last person on earth who was ever fit to build a church.

But God uses those who are unfit, incapable, those who feel they are weak, not those who feel they are strong. I want to show you one example from the Old Testament before we go to our study today, and that is in the book of Genesis. It's a story of a very crooked man.

I don't mean physically crooked. He was a cheat. His name was Jacob.

He cheated his brother of the birthright very cleverly. And when his father was going to bless his older brother, he cheated. His brother was hairy, so he put on some animal skin so that the hands would look hairy.

And he fooled his blind father to get the blessing. And he had to run away from home because his brother wanted to kill him for cheating him of the blessing. And he ran away to his uncle's house, Laban.

And Laban made him look after the sheep. And you read that the story, I don't know how he did it. But he cheated his uncle of all the sheep and took a lot of the sheep for himself.

You read that story that he was a cheat. I don't think there's anybody in the Bible you read of who cheated people so much. And one day God met with him.

Does God meet with crooked people for cheating others? I think it's because deep down in Jacob's heart, he saw a need. Even those who cheat others and are crooks, they do it because there's an empty space in their heart. The reason why you lose your temper and get upset with people and cheat people, I'll tell you, I won't be angry with you.

I won't despise you. There's an empty space in your heart which can only be filled by Jesus Christ. And when that is filled by Jesus Christ, you will change.

You will never change by listening to messages. And God saw that in the heart of this crooked man, Jacob, there was an empty space. That's how he was cheating everybody, trying to get something for himself.

And one day we read in Genesis chapter 32. Turn with me to Genesis 32 in your Bible, verse 24. Jacob was left alone.

He had sent all his family away. And you know that is what is needed. God meets with us when we are alone.

That's why it's very important that every day of your life, you have at least a few moments alone with God. Even if you're married, alone. I find for myself, the moment I get out of bed, my life is busy.

It was busy when I had children and it's busy even after my children have grown up and left home. Something or the other is there. And with the churches, I have responsibility for their so many mails to reply and life is busy.

So the only time I can get alone with God is just when I wake up before I get out of bed. It's a wonderful time to be alone. Or if you wake up in the middle of the night, be alone.

You're not able to go back to sleep. Wonderful time to talk to the Lord. Instead of tossing around in bed, talk to Jesus.

Best thing to do. That's what I do. And he'll put you to sleep.

I'll tell you that. And Jacob was alone. God meets with people when they want to be alone with him.

If your life is so busy that you never get time to be alone with God. Why do I say when you're alone, when you're wake up from your bed and everybody else is asleep? Because in India, many homes are so small. A lot of our work in India is among poor villagers.

And I've gone and sat in their homes. They don't have any chair or table in their home. Everybody sits on the floor.

They sleep on the floor, eat on the floor. And I've gone and sat there. I've slept on the floor.

I've eaten on the floor. I've identified myself with these dear brothers and sisters. And their entire house is one room.

That is sitting room, bedroom, dining room, everything. And they sleep there, all of them. I think Jesus home was, he was a poor carpenter's home.

Joseph was a carpenter and Jesus had four brothers and two sisters and a mother. There are eight people. Well, they didn't have eight rooms.

No. They all slept on the floor. That's why Jesus used to go off early morning into the wilderness to get alone with God, the Father.

And I remember and I live in a city, I say, Lord, there's no wilderness nearby to go. That's when the Lord opened my eyes. You can be alone when you wake up in the morning or when you wake up in the middle of the night.

Be alone. And you don't have to open your mouth. God, you can speak to God in your thoughts.

God hears you. You know, the wonderful thing about praying in your mind is that the devil can't hear you. I don't want the devil to hear my prayer.

When I speak out loud, he hears my prayer. I mean, not that it matters, but when I'm praying to God in my mind, nobody can hear me. The devil can't hear me.

I can resist the devil in my mind and he will flee from me. Develop the habit of communing with God in your mind through you can do it throughout the day. It's a wonderful way to live.

Start that habit during this weekend. So Jacob was alone and God came down in the form of a man and wrestled with him, it says in verse 24. I don't know what that means, but he was breaking him, this strong man.

And when Jacob fought and fought and he was winning, I mean, you can't win against God, but God limited himself in the form of a man and allowed Jacob to struggle with him. God could have struck him down with one blow, but he allowed Jacob to struggle with him to teach him a lesson. Jacob, the problem with you is you're not yielded.

You're struggling against me. I wonder if God's saying that to some of you, you're struggling against God in some area, you're not yielding to him. And you know what God did? He dislocated a bone in his thigh,

just snapped it and Jacob could no longer wrestle.

He was physically incapacitated. He was physically, his leg was broken. And then this God was in the form of this man said, okay, let me go.

It was getting to be dawn, it was in the middle of the night, they were doing this. And that's the time, David, you see, sorry, you see Jacob saying some of the most blessed words he ever said to God in verse 26, words that we should say to God too, Lord, I will not let you go till you bless me. Imagine if you say that to God, I will not let you go, Lord, till you bless me.

I don't care how long it takes. That's how I prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I said, Lord, I don't care how many days it takes.

I'll pray today. I'll pray tomorrow. I'll pray next week.

I'll pray next month. But I will not let you go till you fill me with the Holy Spirit. Those are the people who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus told them to wait for the Holy Spirit, they did not know it was only going to be 10 days. It could be 10 years. He said, wait and pray till you're filled with the Holy Spirit.

They kept praying one day, two days, they didn't know nothing's happening. And I saw a cartoon once, some of these cartoons are funny, of all these people praying in the upper room. And one of them, after nine days, saying, hey, I'm tired of waiting, I'm going home.

And he goes home and next day, he realizes the Holy Spirit fell on them. And he missed it. Yeah, I will not let you go until you bless me.

Do you have that attitude today? I will not let you go till you bless me. Dear brothers and sisters, if you can develop that attitude, it'll change your life. And then the next thing to learn there is, the Lord asked him, what's your name? As if he doesn't know.

And I don't know whether you know the meaning of Jacob. You know why he was called Jacob? Because he was a twin with his brother Esau. And they were both in the womb of their mother, Rebecca.

And these twins were being born. You know the story? These two little babies were coming out of the womb and the second one, Jacob, grabbed the leg of the one coming out. I don't think anybody's ever seen delivery like that.

The twins being born and one is hanging on to the leg of the other. It's as if saying, hey, you can't go out first. I got to go out first.

That's how he was born. And so they named him Cheater, Supplanter. One who wants to take the position of another.

Jacob, that was his name. Deceiver, Grabber, Grabber. Grabbing the wrong thing.

His name was called Grabber, meaning Jacob. Because he came out like that. Somehow the guy still beat him.

Esau came out first. And you know, here it may not matter so much in the world today. But in Israel, the elder brother got all the property.

He inherited the father's blessing. The others got what was left behind. And particularly the blessing of God always went to the eldest.

That's why it was so important. And Jacob said, this guy cheated me. And throughout his life, he said, how can I get that blessing back? And that's why he tried to get it by giving him some soup one day.

He said, give the blessing back to me. And so when God asks him, what is your name? He says, Grabber. Translated Grabber.

So what I learned from that is the guy was absolutely honest. And so the first thing he was absolutely earnest. There's some lessons we can learn here.

Number one, you've got to be alone. God won't meet with you when you're in a crowd. All of you need to have some time when you're alone with God.

Don't expect God to bless you, fill you with the Holy Spirit, if you don't take time to be alone with him. And as I told you, if you're in a very crowded house, like in some of our Indian villages, and there's nobody, no room except one for everyone to sleep in. You can be alone when you wake up and everyone else is asleep.

There are precious times I've had when I'm awake and alone. And no, my wife is sleeping there next to me, but she's asleep. And I'm sure that she finds like that herself when she's awake and I'm asleep.

Alone with God. And grabbing hold of him and saying, Lord, I will not let you go. There are lessons here.

Till you bless me, I will not let you go. Till you fill me with the Holy Spirit, till you deliver me from this wretched habit. Some of you are seeking deliverance from some simple habit in your life.

Are you a slave to dirty thoughts and pornography? Are you a slave to anger? Let me tell you something. You can try for 100 years, you will not be free from it. Because the flesh, your sinful nature that you inherited from Adam is so strong.

I have the same sinful nature as you. I defeated me. The Holy Spirit is more powerful.

The Holy Spirit fights against your sinful nature. Let me show you that verse before we proceed. In Galatians chapter 5, it's like a promise.

And it's wonderful to see these promises in Scripture and claim them. Like I often said, a promise in Scripture is like a check. Don't keep it in your drawer.

Take it to the bank and cash it. Put your name behind it. Sign it.

So here's a promise for you. Put your name on it and take it to the bank of heaven and say, in Jesus name, this is mine. Galatians 5.17. So instead of flesh, say your nature, your wretched nature, which is leading you into sin.

Galatians 5.17. Your nature is fighting against the Holy Spirit. And thank God for the second part. The Holy Spirit is fighting against your nature.

Isn't that good to have somebody helping us in our fight against our sinful nature? Against your self-will that is so strong. That's what the flesh means. And these are in opposition to one another.

The two greatest enemies in the world today are not Russia and Ukraine. It's the Holy Spirit and your nature. They are in opposition to one another.

They are fighting against each other. I thank God that the Holy Spirit is fighting against my nature. He's on my side against this wretched nature that I hate.

That makes me lose my temper. That makes me get irritated with people. That makes me have wrong attitudes to people.

That makes me unforgiving towards others. That makes me lust in my mind. That makes me tempted to do all types of wrong things.

That makes me cheat the government in taxes. That does all types of wrong things. That keeps bitterness in my heart forever against somebody and ruins myself.

If I keep bitter against you, I don't harm you. I harm myself. And that's how the devil makes fools of Christians.

Thank God the Holy Spirit against that. Against every part of that nature. Anything in me that makes me unloving, unkind to others, selfish, only think of myself.

Even in a home, a husband and wife, they can be so selfish and not think of the other person. Demanding. What a lot of husbands are so demanding on their wife.

You must come up to the mark or the food is not cooked well enough or the clothes are not washed properly or the house is not kept Demanding, demanding, demanding. It's a filthy part of the nature we've inherited from Adam. The Holy Spirit's against it.

Thank God he's against it. If you really want to overcome, you got a friend to help you, the Holy Spirit. It says that these are opposition to one another.

And if you allow the Holy Spirit freedom, it says here, you will not be able to do the things that you want to do. What a wonderful promise that is in the last part of verse 17. That's what it means.

You will not do, you will not be able to do the things that you want to do. That you please, that you like to do. That's a promise from the Holy Spirit.

I will help you so that in the coming days, you will not be able to do the things that you're wanting, that you've been doing all these years. Contrary to the will of God. It means whatever your nature wants to do.

The Holy Spirit says, I'll help you that you will not do that because I will restrain it. But I won't do it without your permission. You know, sometimes we think that, Oh Lord, I wish you could just take over.

He doesn't do that because you know, if you allow, if you say God could take over your life, you'd become a robot. There are people who have made mechanical robots nowadays controlled by computer systems inside there. They made to shape like human beings and you can program them to do anything.

You can program it in this shape, make a robot in the shape of a three-year-old child. That when you come home from office, it'll open the door and say, hello, daddy. So happy to meet you.

It's a robot. Do you want a child like that? Or do you want a naughty child who disobeys you sometimes, but comes lovingly, hugs you and says, dad, I love you. We want a child.

We don't want a robot. I want to tell you, God does not want robots. That's why he will not take over your will.

He will leave you with a free will to sin till the end of your life. But you won't sin if you allow the Holy Spirit to take over. Do you know that even after I become like Jesus and I go to heaven, I'm going to have a free will.

That's the question that some people ask. If I have a free will in heaven, am I going to sin there and go to hell from there? No. So what does it mean in heaven? Will I become a robot that I'll automatically do God's will? No.

In heaven, let me tell you this. I will have complete freedom for millions of years to disobey God. Just like the head of the angels disobeyed God and became the devil.

Then what is the safety for me in heaven? I'll tell you. Because by then I would have become like Jesus 100%. Jesus lived on this filthy earth for 33 and a half years with a completely free will and he never disobeyed his father.

If he had lived here for 33 million years, he would not have disobeyed his father because the nature of Christ was so pure. There was zero disobedience in it. That's the nature I'm going to have in heaven.

I'm not going to be a robot in heaven. I'm going to have a completely free will like that highest angel had. He sinned, but I will not sin.

I will not sin for millions and millions of years because I've become like Christ. This is the wonderful thing about heaven. And God wants to begin that work now on earth where I have a free will and I don't disobey God.

I don't even disobey God in my thoughts. The moment that the dirty thought comes in, I reject it. It just gets knocked off.

What a wonderful promise. Galatians 5.17. The Holy Spirit has come to fight against your nature to help you. And if you allow him, come take over Lord, you will not be able to do the things that you want to do.

Isn't that a wonderful promise? I thank God for it. And I've begun to experience it in my life in a little measure, more and more as I grow older, that what my selfish nature wants to do, I don't do. What my selfish nature wants to speak when somebody irritates me, I don't speak.

How in the world is that? Whereas informally I would speak. The Holy Spirit has taken over. Well, a little taste of that, a little picture of that in Genesis, back to Genesis 32.

It's a lovely passage of how God met with this crooked man, this cheater, this grabber. We are crooks, we are cheats, and we are grabbers. That's how we are born.

You know how little, you've seen a little baby, small baby, just a few weeks old. Try and put your finger in its palm, it'll grab it. Haven't you seen that with babies? How does it learn to grab so early in life? It's nature, got it from Adam.

Grab, grab, grab. When we grow up, grabbing, grabbing things that belong to other people, grabbing, grabbing and destroying our lives. Young men want to grow up and grab a girl just because she's good looking, but she's got a nature so selfish, their life is miserable, within one year later, he's disgusted and he wants to divorce her.

This grabbing, grabbing, grabbing, it destroys your life. Even in marriage, it destroys people. God wants to deliver us from this Jacob nature, grabber, to open our palm.

So you have to admit it first. You got to be alone with God. You got to be earnest with God saying, God, I won't let you go until you bless me, till you change my nature, till you fill me with the Holy Spirit.

And then the Lord will ask you to be honest. You know, when the Bible says, if we walk in the light, you know that verse in 1 John 1 7, if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. You cannot have fellowship with God if there's darkness in your life.

And you say, well, you mean, Zack, that I got to be perfect? No, no, no, you don't have to be perfect. Walking in the light does not mean being perfect. Let me define for you walking in the light today.

It means being honest, not being perfect. So let me paraphrase 1 John 1 7 for you. If we are honest with God, if we are totally honest with God, that's what it means to walk in the light.

Because the people who do wrong things, they do it in the darkness. Thief goes into the darkness. People murder in the darkness.

They commit sin in the darkness. When a person is committing a sin, nobody wants to shine a, they don't like somebody shine a flashlight on them. They hate the light.

All people are doing something wrong. They're doing it in the darkness. They're doing it when nobody's watching.

That's darkness. They hate the light. To walk in the light means I'm not hiding anything.

I'm honest. It doesn't mean you're perfect. It means you're honest.

Lord, that's right. What you're saying about me is right. I have that dirty thought.

I've got that dirty attitude. I've got a wrong attitude towards that person. Admit it.

What is your name? Jacob. Grabber. Cheater.

Deceiver. Liar. Hater.

Tell the Lord your name. That means admit what you are. Don't just say I slipped up.

No, that's your nature. Not I accidentally grabbed. I'm a grabber.

Not I for a moment grabbed. I hated that person. No, you're a hater.

The Lord asks, what's your name? Be honest. And we try to pretend, no, I'm a Christian and all that. You'll never get God to meet with you if you don't walk in the light.

I believe the most important lesson that I have learned in my life is that the first thing God requires from me is honesty, not holiness. Honesty. Holiness is miles away.

Honesty, I can be now. Even a prostitute can be honest. What are you? Prostitute.

I'll forgive you, my girl. That's what the Lord says. What are you? Thief.

I can deliver you from this habit of stealing. I don't care what it is. Luster.

God says, I'll deliver you from lusting. But he will never deliver you if you don't admit that your name is Jacob, grabber, luster, cheat, liar. That's what it means to walk in the light.

You know, when somebody points out something wrong in you, don't you find in yourself a tremendous desire to defend yourself and say, no, no, no, that's not what I meant. Even when your wife tells you, that's not, see what you said just now to me. No, no, no, that's not what I meant.

We have this tremendous desire to defend myself, to say, my name is not Jacob. And that's why God never meets with you. You know why God met with this man? When he said, what's your name? He admitted, Lord, I'm a grabber.

And then you know what happens to this man? Genesis 32, verse 27. What is your name? Lord, I'm a grabber. You put your name there, whatever you are doing, whatever sin you're doing.

Don't just call that sin, say that is what you are. If you stole something, don't just say I stole, say Lord, I'm a thief. If you got upset with somebody, don't say I'm sorry, I got upset, say Lord, I'm a very angry man.

That's what I am. That's my name. I say that to you because you know, we like to give nice names to our sins.

Nice, pleasant names that don't look so evil. I'll tell you this, I've learned through my life in these years, that any sin in my life, I must call it by the dirtiest filthiest name I can find for that sin. Try that habit in future.

When you confess your sin to God, don't give it some decent name. Lord, I slipped up in my thoughts. No, Lord, I'm a dirty, lustful man.

That's what I am. You'll be delivered. That's what happened to Jacob.

He got delivered because he was absolutely honest. So the reason I'm saying that is because God does not demand from us something impossible. Be holy.

Lord, I can't do that. Be humble. Lord, even that I can't do.

Be honest. Yeah, that I can do. Is there anybody in the world who cannot be honest? Honest means to speak the truth.

Say what you are. You remember the woman caught in adultery? They brought her to Jesus and all those religious Pharisees. See, religious people are like that.

There's a lot of difference between religious people and spiritual people. World of difference. Religious people are like hell, people of hell.

Spiritual people are heavenly. And you see the contrast there in that story of the woman caught in adultery. If you're not familiar with that, it's in John chapter eight.

We read in verse three, the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery and set her in the center of the court. Now, and they said, Lord, this the teacher was for this woman was caught in adultery in the very act. They went into the room where she was committing adultery and grabbed her.

What about the man who committed adultery with her? Where was he? You know, the Old Testament law, if you read that way back in the Deuteronomy 22 or wherever it is, the law said, if you, if a man is committing adultery with a woman, both of them must be brought outside the city gates and stoned to death. That's how God got rid of adultery in the nation of Israel. So the first question that comes to me when I read this is, why didn't the Pharisees bring their man? Why did they bring only the woman? You know, we live in a world where it's always the woman who's pushed down and terrorized and made made guilty and the man somehow the men escape.

And why didn't they bring the man? Maybe he was a friend of theirs. Let him go. Let's catch this woman.

The world is like that. That's the first thing you see wrong that Jesus saw that they didn't bring the man and he knew he must be a friend of theirs. And we're like that.

We like to cover up the faults of our friends and expose the other person who did wrong. Haven't you seen that? Your child has a fight with some other child and who's wrong? Of course, your child is never wrong. He's such a saint.

He's the other child who's always wrong, right? I remember once when little children fight, all little children fight, five, six year old, they fight with each other. And my little boy was playing with some other friends on the road outside our house many years ago. And they were just having some scrap.

I don't know. I don't even remember what the details were. And I don't know whether they were arguing with each other or shouting at each other.

And after that, I asked my son, there's only five or six years old. Why do you speak like that? He said, dad, well, he spoke like that to me. I said, but we are Christians.

I said, now we've got to go to his house and apologize. And you know how children are. Dad, will you apologize to me also? I said, I'm not bothered.

You have to apologize to him. So I went there and knocked at the door. And the father opened the door.

And I said, my son wants to say something to your boy. And that little boy came and my son said, I'm sorry for arguing with you or shouting at you. And that other boy graciously accepted.

Thank you very much. Even though he was fighting too. And we came away.

And you know what my son said? Dad, he never apologized to me and he was yelling at me first. I said, son, we are Christians. We follow Jesus.

He doesn't. Today, my son is serving the Lord. Where's that boy? I don't know.

I hope he repented at some time. But if he grew up like that, if he grew up like that, I'm sure he's serving the devil today. Learn to take the blame.

And don't worry whether the other person takes the blame or not. Teach your children to be honest and take the blame, even if the one who creates the problem does not accept their fault. Your son will grow up to follow Jesus.

Your daughter will grow up to follow Jesus. So very important. What is your name? Lord, my name is Grabber.

Cheater, liar, arguer, the one who gets angry always. That's what I learned from this. Anyway, this woman was caught in adultery and brought before Jesus and they wanted to accuse him.

There was a law in the Old Testament. You know, I told you that it's in Deuteronomy 22, which says you've got to bring them both out and stone them. And it says here, it's very interesting.

Jesus stooped down, verse six, and he was doodling on the ground. He was waiting to see, will these people get convicted of their own sin before blaming this woman? He gave them some time to be aware that they themselves were cheats and liars and probably committed adultery with numerous people in their mind. But they wouldn't admit it.

And they kept on persisting. Verse seven, Lord, what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? He doesn't do anything. Then finally, he straightens up and says, okay.

Yeah, she's got to be stoned, right? The law says that among all of you 20 people standing here, whoever has not committed any sin, any type of sin, you take the first stone and throw it at her. And that's all. I've got nothing more to say.

And he kept on doodling on the ground. And when they heard it, verse nine, they went out one by one, beginning with the oldest ones. Now, why is it that they went out? I mean, they could have been, some of them could have said yeah, Lord, I've not committed any sin.

What do you think would have happened if one person stood there and said, yeah, I'm free from sin? He was afraid they knew that Jesus could see through people. There are times in the scripture where it says some people were thinking something and Jesus would say, why are you thinking like that? And there are passages like that in scripture. It amazed me.

You know, the Holy Spirit gives such revelation. And these guys knew that if any one of them said, I've not sinned, Jesus would have made a public list of all their sins. And they'd be ashamed that he knew that Jesus would know their private life so thoroughly because he was in touch with the Holy Spirit.

Then they say, we better not hang around here. They went out one by one, every one of them, they knew they'd be exposed by Christ. If they dared to say that they had no sin.

And then there was one person who had no sin. Jesus. The Old Testament law, by the way, that law given to Moses was given by Jesus himself when he was in heaven before he came to earth.

He was the one from heaven who told Moses, write down. If a man and a woman commit adultery, they must be taken outside the city and stoned to death. Who gave that law? Jesus.

Now, 1,500 years later, the same Jesus has come to earth and they are quoting that same word to him. They did not know that this person was sitting there is the one who gave that law 1,500 years ago. They thought he was just an ordinary prophet or something.

And Jesus knew it because he gave that law himself, but he didn't obey it. Jesus was one who was determined to obey everything in God's law. He once said, I've come here to fulfill the law.

There was nothing written in the Old Testament law that Jesus did not obey. He obeyed everything in his thoughts, attitudes, a total purity. But when it came to punishing others, he was merciful.

He had come to establish a new covenant, which is different from the unmerciful old covenant. That's why he broke that old covenant. He would break it permanently finally when he died on the cross, but he broke it here.

And he said, I've come with a new covenant. I will not obey that law to stone her to death. I'm coming to change her life, not to kill her.

But then there was another law, number two. The first one is what he gave to Moses 1,500 years earlier. The second one was what he gave right there.

He was without sin, throw the first stone. He disobeyed that also. He did not throw the first stone.

I love that. I said, Lord Jesus, make me merciful like you. Make me merciful like you.

When I see others who have done wrong, you have forgiven me so much. How can I be hard on any human being? You know, the Bible says as a father, we have to punish our children when they do wrong. And I took that seriously.

You know, there's a proverb in the world, spare the rod and spoil your child. Spare the rod and spoil your child means you don't punish your child with a rod. That child will go up wayward.

Yeah, and the book of Proverbs also says that, use the rod and save your child from hell. So I remember when my children did something wrong, they were children of Adam. They were born as children of Adam and they had all the nature of Adam, just like all other children.

And when they did wrong, I as a father had to punish them. But it was not easy. Sometimes I'm sorry to say I did it in anger, because I did not have victory.

Over anger in the early days. And if the punishing was right, the anger was wrong. Well, they were small, seven, eight years old.

So after punishing them, I would lock myself up in the restroom, in the toilet and weep before God. Lord, I punished them, but not in the right way. I got angry.

Please help me. Bring me to the day where I can obey your word without losing my temper. You know, that's what I mean by honesty.

Don't just say, well, they had to be punished. God's word says that. That's true.

But do you admit before God that you did it in anger? That part was wrong. And if you don't admit that, you'll never get victory. I admitted it.

I want to tell you in Jesus name, a day came in my life and the Lord delivered me from anger because I was always honest. I don't know how many times I got into that restroom and confessed my sin. My children would see me going and locking myself up in the restroom.

They didn't know initially what I was going in there for. Why is dad always running into the restroom after he's punished us? But when they grew up, they understood. And I'm sure it blessed them to know that dad also makes mistakes.

And when he makes a mistake, he confesses it before God. It's good for your children to know that you're not perfect, that you also make mistakes. So you say, why didn't you apologize to them straight away? Well, if I apologize to a six year old after beating him, he'll think I'm sorry for beating him.

I'm not sorry for punishing him. He can't distinguish between my sinning before God and punishing him. So I said, Lord, I owe them an apology.

But when they're 18 years old, I'll give them a consolidated apology for all the years when I beat them in anger. But I can't tell them now because they'll misunderstand it. They can't distinguish between the anger and the punishment.

So what I learned from this is Jesus is merciful along with his strictness. He's always merciful. This woman, he disobeyed what the command he gave to Moses to stone her.

What he himself said, being without sin, stone her. He wouldn't do that. And he says, have anyone, nobody condemned you? He says, no one, Lord, I don't condemn you.

That doesn't mean your sin is not serious. It's very serious what you did. I don't condemn you.

I came here to forgive people. Go and don't sin again. You know, in John chapter eight, verse 11, we can say you have the full gospel.

A lot of people call about themselves full gospel church, full gospel church. Well, here's the full gospel in one sentence. That's what the Lord says to us.

I don't condemn you. That's the first part of the gospel. All your past is forgiven, blotted out in the blood of Jesus Christ.

But that's not the full gospel. There's another part of it. Don't ever sin again.

The church that does not preach that second part is not a full gospel church. Most churches are half gospel churches. They preach the first part.

Oh, Jesus forgives you. He forgives you. He won't condemn you.

All your sins are blotted out. The blood of Jesus, the blood of Jesus. Oh, it does wonderful things, cleanses you.

Absolutely right. 50% of the truth. The full gospel is what does he see after that? From now on, verse 11, don't sin again.

Lord, that's an impossible command. Well, impossible for man. That's what drives us to seek for the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you take seriously, you know why many people don't seek earnestly for the power of the Holy Spirit? They want to preach powerfully or speak in tongues or do something that will get them honor. There are numerous people I know who heard me preach and said, boy, I'd like to preach like that. See what honor Brother Zach gets here and there and everywhere.

Boy, Lord, give me power to preach like that. You think God will give it to you to seek honor for yourself? Never. God doesn't give us power to glorify ourselves.

If you have a passion that Jesus Christ should be exalted, he will anoint you. I told you how I sought God and said, Lord, I'm sorry that I'm ashamed to preach about you where people know me, but bring me to that place where I'll never be ashamed of you. And God brought me to that place.

That's when I knew that he had filled me with the Holy Spirit, that I could stand right in front of people and proclaim Christ and stand up for the truth in my office and do what was right and not do what was wrong and never do what was wrong, even if it offended my senior officers. I had to do a number of things in the Navy where my senior officers would ask me to do something wrong. And I had to say to them, sorry, sir, I'm a Christian.

Now in the Navy, when you disobey a senior officer, you know what the imprisonment is? In the world, if you disobey your boss, you're sacked, you're fired. In the Navy, you disobey your senior officer, you're imprisoned. That's the punishment in the Navy for disobedience, because that's military rule.

And I knew that I'd be facing imprisonment if I disobey my senior officer. But I said, sir, that is against my conscience, I will not do it. And they knew that what they were asking me to do was wrong.

Sometimes they would march me before a senior officer. And I would tell them the same thing, sir, I'm a Christian. I can't do that.

And amazingly, every time there happened to be a going to prison. But those are the days I was only 23 years old. But God was testing me whether I'd be bold to stand up for what was right.

Even if it meant losing my job. I remember once, the secretary to some businessman in his office. He was in our church and asked me, Brother Zack, what shall I do? If I'm sitting with my boss in the office? And the phone rings, you know, those old phones, which are you put it up and pick it up.

And this is years ago. And the phone rings and my boss tells me, if he's asking me say I'm not here. What should I do? I say you pick up the phone.

And he says he wants to speak to your boss, put the phone down. Don't answer it. It'll ring again.

He'll ring again. He thought the phone got disconnected and he'll ring again. Now tell your boss, sir, I'm a Christian.

He's going to call again. Please ask somebody else to answer this phone. I cannot say that you're not here.

I will not tell a lie. There's a solution to every situation if you want it. And God will tell you.

I remember one man who spoke straight to his boss like that and he was afraid he'd lose his job. It was in some other situation where he said, I can't do that, sir. I'm a Christian.

And he was taught he would definitely be fired from his job. And it did not happen. His boss said, boy, here is an upright man in my office.

I can trust him more than I can trust anybody else. And he gave him a promotion. You know what God can do? Miracles for you.

When you stand up for what is right. Never, never hesitate, my brother, sister, to stand up for what is right. Teach your children from the youngest age to apologize when they do something wrong, to stand up for what is right.

The Lord is merciful. But he also says, don't sin again. From now on, don't sin again.

Okay, I must, we must get back to Genesis 20, 32 and see the conclusion of this wonderful story. Genesis chapter 32. God said to him, what is your name? Lord, my name is Grabber.

I'm a cheater. I'm a crook. I'm a crooked man.

That's my name. And see what the Lord says. Jacob, Grabber, cheater, deceiver.

Genesis 32, 28. Today, I'm changing your name. For us today in the new covenant, it is like saying, you're saying, Lord, this is my nature.

I'm a cheater. I'm a grabber. I'm a deceiver.

I'm a liar. And the Lord says today, I'm changing your nature, not just your name. What a wonderful thing.

That's the reward for honesty. You come before God and pretend that you're a holy man, you'll never become holy. You come before God and say, Lord, I'm a grabber.

I'm a cheater. I'm a deceiver. I'm a liar.

I'm an adulterer in my mind. The Lord says, I'll change you. That's what he says there.

I will change your name today. You are going to be Israel, which means a Prince of God. El is the Hebrew word for God.

Israel, Prince of God. Isn't it amazing? He would never have had that new name if he had told a lie. Lord, I'm supposed to be the elder brother, but this brother of mine cheated me, came out of the womb first.

No, no, no. I'm a grabber. I'll change your name.

And even today, that nation is called Israel, the descendants of this man. Even today, there's a nation called Israel, Prince of God. Because, look at the word God says, you have struggled with God and you have won.

Can you win in your struggle with God? Can you struggle with God and win? Think of it. Who won in this battle? God broke that man's thigh bone and weakened him. Who won? Everybody knows it's God who won.

When I see the humility of God and you see the attitude that God has, when you're honest, my son, then you have won the battle. Your name has changed. It's like a father, you know, a father wrestling with his little boy.

He can crush him in a moment, but he allows the little boy to win and pin the father down to the floor and says, son, you won. That's how I play with my grandchildren. I always make them win, whatever game it is.

You know why? Because then I can win their heart and turn them to the Lord. If I win, don't ever try to win with little children. Let them win.

And even when you play with other believers, let them win. Because you want to win them for the Lord. My aim is not to win a game.

Oh, no. I'm willing to lose every game in the world that I play with people if I can draw them a little closer to Christ. Think of eternal values.

So many people I've seen, I tell you, I've seen Christians, even Christians in CFC. You see the real nature comes out when they are playing a soccer game or some game. I'm so competitive.

If you want to see your real nature, go out and play football or some game out there in the field. You really see your nature come out. And when it comes out, admit it to God.

Lord, that's my name. I'm a grabber. I'm a cheater.

And say, Lord, change me. I don't want to win any game on earth. You have kept me on earth to win people for Christ.

So I'm willing to yield. If there's an argument on the field, is it a foul? Did you commit a foul or did he? Yes, I'm the one who committed the foul. I'm sorry.

Take the blame. What do you learn from the cross? What do you learn from the cross? I learned from the cross. Take the blame for other people.

Have you learned that? Or only that he died for your sins? What I learned from the cross is take the blame for everybody else. Raise your hand and say, I'm the one to blame. Isn't that telling a lie? Was Jesus telling a lie when he took the blame for us? Yeah, in a sense he was because he never did anything wrong.

But father? No, he couldn't call him father because he was a judge of the universe. God, you have forsaken me. I'm learning from the cross.

God had won here. But he had broken Jacob's thigh for the rest of his life. Jacob had to walk with the staff.

But God says, look at them. You have won, he says. Verse 30.

You have you have won. Verse 28. You have fought with God and you have won.

What does it mean when he says you have won? When God succeeds in breaking your pride. He says, my son, you won the battle. But you remain in your pride standing up for your rights.

He says you have lost. But when you're honest and say, I'm a grabber, I'm a cheater, I'm a deceiver. And you're broken, humbled.

God says you won. Now your name will be changed. You know, God's ways are not our ways.

In earthly battles is the one who struggles stronger and he comes out top, he's the winner. In our battles with God is the weaker one who wins. That's why Jesus said, it's little children who understand God better than anybody else.

He took a little baby and said, the kingdom of heaven is like this. These are the people who are number one in heaven. If you fight with a little two-year-old, who's going to win? As far as heaven is concerned, he wins.

Even though you pin him to the ground, he has won. Because he yielded, he submitted. And Jacob was thoroughly crushed and God says, you won, Jacob.

Your hip may be broken, but you won today. And your name is going to be changed. I want to learn that, that God can do anything to me.

And I say, Lord, I yield. And my name is changed, which means my nature is changed. That's what I want.

That's what I learned from the story. And Jacob said, verse 30, I've seen God face to face. And look at these beautiful words.

There's a spiritual meaning here. Verse 30, I've seen God face to face. Tremendous blessing to be able to see Jesus face to face.

And the next verse, there's a spiritual meaning in verse 31. The sun rose upon him. Aha.

Lord, I want that in my life. The sun of righteousness to rise upon my life. And I go out as a new man.

My name is no longer Jacob. My name is no longer deceiver. My name is no longer a man full of adulterous thoughts.

My name is no longer the one who gets angry easily. No. My name is a prince of Almighty God.

Do you want that life? What do we learn here? First of all, he was alone with God. He was earnest with God. I will not let you go until you bless me.

Get alone with God first. Get earnest and say, Lord, I will not let you go until you fill me with the Holy Spirit every day. Do you make me a fervent witness for Christ every day? Do you give me power to be a witness? And thirdly, be honest.

Be honest with him. Admit. And then humbly accept the new name he gives you.

You are more than a conqueror in Christ. God's ways are not our ways. He exalts those who humble themselves.

He lifts up the weak. He takes little children and says, the kingdom of God is like this. And the clever people can go to the end of the line.

These little children are the ones whom God chooses. Now, I hope what you learned from this whole passage is that God's ways are not our ways. He looks for people who are willing to be broken, humbled, honest.

Honesty and humility are things that always go together. You are as humble as you're honest. If you're an absolutely honest man with God and you're not even trying to deceive other people, then you are truly humble.

When you don't try to act spiritual, the world is full of Christians who are always trying to act more spiritual than they really are. I tell you that if you look at your own life, you'll find you always have a temptation when you speak to others, when you mingle with others to pretend that you're more spiritual than you really are. I heard a funny story of a preacher who was preaching up from the pulpit, pretending to be a very holy man.

And his wife was sitting in the front row and says, John, don't pray. I'm sitting here. I know what you are at home.

Thank God for such wives. There are people who know you. God knows you best.

Don't try and fool people with that you are more spiritual than you really are. Dear brothers, have a great passion to be 100% honest. It'll change your life.

Honest with God and never, never pretend. I'm not saying you should confess your sin to people. Never.

I'm not teaching Roman Catholicism. Go to the priest and confess or go to some man and confess. No, I'll confess my sin to you.

If I hurt you, if I slapped you or got angry with you, I have to confess to you. But most of my sins are between me and God. I confess only to God.

So I'm not talking about a foolish honesty before men. Honesty with God, absolute, total honesty with God, which will make you honest before people in the sense that you don't cheat them. You don't take advantage of them.

And I'll tell you this, if you take that seriously from today, God will say, I'll change your name. I'll change your nature. He does that even today.

Let's pray. If there's one thing that God spoke to you today, just say that to God. Say, Lord, thank you for speaking this to me.

And I want to follow up on that. I want you to do that in my life. I want it, Lord.

I'm willing to pay the price. Lord, I'm willing to pay the price. Send me the bill.

I'll pay it. But I want your best in my life. I don't want to live in the second best anymore.

I believe my dear brothers and sisters, I believe God has got a wonderful plan for your life. Don't miss out on it by being dishonest. Heavenly Father, help us, everyone here to have a changed life.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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