

Spiritual Progress Through Total Honesty

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being absolutely honest with God as the key to having our sins cleansed and walking in fellowship with Him. Through examples from Scripture, it highlights how honesty leads to profound encounters with Jesus and the removal of guilt, discouragement, and the desire for competition or impressing others. The message stresses the significance of honesty in personal relationships, including with spouses and children, as a reflection of walking in the light and experiencing God's forgiveness and presence daily.

Scripture: 1 John 1:7, John 8:44, Revelation 22:15, John 4:23, Luke 19:1, Proverbs 12:22, Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9, Psalm 51:6

Topics: "Honesty with God", "The Power of Transparency in Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

I want to share something today which I hope even the children will understand and something that will help us throughout this year. We can sometimes hear, you know, very complicated doctrines from scripture and sometimes it can go over our head, but I want to read from 1 John chapter 1 and verse 7 and we want to try and understand this in a very simple way. It says here, if we, on John 1 7, if we walk in the light as God himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

Now first of all, I want to say that there is only one way our sin can be cleansed. It's too big a problem for it to be cleansed in any other way. You know, you can do penance and do all types of things to serve God and that will not cleanse your sin.

The only way is judgment and Jesus had to take that. When he speaks about the blood of Christ, it means the death of Christ because when he poured out his blood, he died. There's an Old Testament verse that says the life of a man or his flesh is in the blood.

When the blood goes, he's dead. So whenever it speaks about the blood of Christ, it's talking about the death of Christ. Why did Christ have to die? Why did God have to send his own son all the way here to die? Because there's absolutely no other way for our sin to be cleansed and so if I want my sin to be cleansed, here's the condition.

So that's the wonderful thing. One, I'll tell you that in a moment, but the blood of Christ, the death of Christ, cleanses me from all my sin, everything I've ever committed my whole life, known, unknown, unconscious, conscious, everything. All means, A-L-L means conscious and unconscious.

The things I remember, the things I don't remember. The second thing mentioned in this verse is we can have fellowship with God. Once this sin is taken out of the way which hinders us from having fellowship, we can have fellowship with God and fellowship is the most wonderful thing.

It's being very intimate with God. It's like talking to God as a close friend, always walking with him in all of life's journey. Any small problem you can tell him, any big problem he can tell him and he solves it.

So with these two wonderful promises, one that my entire guilt is going to be removed, that itself is a great thing, and then secondly to have fellowship with the one who runs this universe as my father. What is the condition? There's only one condition. Isn't that good? If we walk in the light, not if we keep his commandments.

That would be a very big condition. How in the world can I ever know whether I have kept all his commandments? If we walk in the light, then these two wonderful promises are mine. All my guilt will be removed and I can walk in fellowship with God as my heavenly father every day.

So what does it mean to walk in the light? And I'll tell you in very simple terms. It means being absolutely honest. That's all.

What do people do in the darkness? Something they don't want others to see. When people don't want others to see something, they turn off the lights. Thieves will come in the darkness.

So light is something that exposes everything. So it means being absolutely honest of everything that I know. There may be a whole lot of things I don't know.

That doesn't matter. So I want to tell all of you, even little children and grown-ups, the message is the same. If you are willing, and listen carefully because it's not so easy, I'll tell you.

If you are willing to be absolutely honest to the best of your knowledge of everything in your life with God, not with man. We are not like Roman Catholics going confessing our sin to men. Only to God, not even to your wife or husband.

To God. To be absolutely honest about everything. You can be absolutely sure that your past is taken care of and you can walk with God every day.

I have proved it in my life for many, many, many years. So I'm telling you from experience. And once I understood this, it removed condemnation from my life.

It removed guilt. It removed discouragement. It removed competition with other believers to try and... I'm not interested in showing that I'm better than anybody else.

That's finished long ago. And also desire to impress. I remember the early days when I used to preach as a young... I started preaching when I was 21 years old and I had a great desire to impress.

I must say something that people will remember when they go away. It's gone from my life now. I'm not interested in that.

I want to speak in a simple way that people will get something. And honesty. Honesty, my brothers and sisters.

Don't think it is easy because if there's one poison that the devil has put inside us, it is to be dishonest. It's there. Jesus said once in John 8, chapter 8, verse 44, that the devil is a liar.

And he also said he is the father of lies. Do you know what's the first sin mentioned in the Bible? It was not taking part in the forbidden tree. No, that was second.

Which was the first sin mentioned in the Bible. It's the devil telling a lie to Eve, saying you won't die if you eat that fruit. That's the first sin.

Then Eve went and committed the second sin, which is taking the fruit. So the first sin mentioned in the Bible is telling a lie. And do you know what's the last sin mentioned in the Bible? I'm sure these things you'll remember now.

Revelation 22, verse 15, the last word that is lying. Isn't that interesting that the first and last sin mentioned in the Bible is lying, being dishonest. So that's why I tell parents the most important thing that we need to teach our children is to be honest.

If they do something wrong, never mind. Be honest. They can learn arithmetic and physics and chemistry later, but first of all, honesty.

And if you're more interested in your children getting good marks in chemistry and arithmetic and all those other things, and you're not interested in them getting 100% in honesty, I'll tell you right now, you're not going to bring up a good child. That child will go astray. Teach them from the earliest.

I used to teach my children from the time they were one year old. You got to be honest. You must speak the truth.

Most important, disobedience to parents and dishonesty. But there's two most serious things for me in bringing up my children. So be honest.

And I see in Scripture that Jesus really valued honest people. I don't want to turn to all those places. You know it in John chapter 4 how the woman of Samaria, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to go to Samaria and say, go and sit by that well.

It's amazing to be led by the Spirit to go and sit somewhere and you don't know what's coming. And there this woman comes. You know, if you live in India, you know nobody goes to a well in a village to draw water at noon.

They all go there at five o'clock in the morning because they need water for the whole day. They don't have running water in their house. They go and draw it from the well and they got to take their buckets and other and fill it up and go early morning.

Why did this woman come at 12 o'clock at noon? Because she didn't want to be made fun of by all the others. They would point to her and say, oh that's the woman who's divorced five women and you know who's sleeping around with who she's with now. She didn't want to hear all that.

So the Holy Spirit led Jesus to go at noon. I read things like that and I said, Lord, I want to be led by you like that. I want to be led by you to places where I can bring somebody to Christ, where I can plant a church.

And I've had some amazing experiences like that. Most of the churches in India were planted like that. But God led me to go somewhere and not to go to some other place.

Please develop this habit. Say, Lord, lead me. And he went there and that woman, she asked him, do you have a husband? No, I don't have a husband.

Jesus said, I know. The one you're living with now is not your husband. Now she could have bluffed.

She could have said, I've been divorced five times and now I'm married to the sixth one. But it was not a legal marriage. How would Jesus know that? How would anybody know that these two people living there in some other town, whether they're married or not, we don't know.

But it was her honesty when Jesus said, I know the one you're living with now is not your husband. And because of that, do you know that Jesus gave her one of the most amazing revelations that are found in the Gospels in John chapter 4? Those who worship God but worship him in spirit and in truth. God is a spirit.

That verse has blessed me tremendously. It means I must not worship in my soul. What you hear and what you see today in a lot of charismatic churches is worshipping in the soul, which is mind, emotions, excitement.

God doesn't want it. Where did I learn it? When Jesus told that woman in Samaria, God's not looking for people who worship in the soul. That's Old Testament worship in the Psalms.

Excitement, banging the trumpets and blowing the trumpets and banging the drums and all that. No, it's worshipping in the spirit. And the only way I can worship in my spirit to God is by being absolutely honest.

I don't need any musical instruments. I don't need any drums. I don't need anything.

I must need I need absolute honesty. Jesus gave that revelation to a woman just because she was honest. I'll take another example.

You read in Luke 19. This was a poor woman. Does Jesus care only for the poor? Some people think like that.

No. He cares for rich sinners too. One of the richest men in a place called Jericho was a man called Zacchaeus.

Jesus cared for him too. Don't think Jesus cares only for the poor. Some people have got that idea.

Oh, God cares for the poor. I know he does, but he cares for the rich too. He didn't come for the poor.

He didn't come for the rich. He came for sinners. And there are lots of sinners among rich people too.

And he came to save them, whether it's a poor woman of Samaria or a rich cheating tax collector like Zacchaeus. He came for him too. And what is it that drew Jesus to Zacchaeus? He was an honest man.

Honesty again. Lord, I've cheated people, and I want to repay it. And I don't want to just repay what I took from him.

I think of all the interest. He was a tax collector. He knew that you lose interest when your money is gone.

So he calculated the interest, and just to be on the safe side, he added a lot more and gave it. And he said there are a lot of other people who might don't know where they are. I've lost track of the people I cheated, but I can't keep that money with me.

I'll give it to the poor. And that radical honesty. He could have said about the others, well, I don't know where they are, so I can't give it.

I'll just keep that money because I don't know where they are. No, I can't keep it. That's honesty.

I got to give it away because it cannot be in my bank account. It's unrighteously obtained. And Jesus, it's the only time in his life that Jesus said an amazing thing.

Salvation has come to this man's house. He never said that about anybody else. And he said it before Zacchaeus returned the money.

It would take many years for Zacchaeus to return all that, or many months at least. But Jesus said salvation has come. What I learned from that is, there's just two examples.

I can give you many more. If you look through the Gospels, you see many places where Jesus appreciated honesty, because the opposite of that is lying. See, that makes it very easy for us.

What does God expect from you walking in the light? Dear brother, sister, from today and throughout this year, decide to be ruthlessly honest. I was interested when Cliff spoke about the stolen stamp. You know, when I stole that stamp when I was about 12 years old, and I remember the struggle I had when I was 20 years old when God said, write that letter and apologize.

It was more difficult for me to write that and to repay the hundreds of rupees I had to pay back to the government. And then I used to think, should I ever speak about it? It's a pretty humiliating thing that you stole a stamp. But today when I heard that, I said, boy, I'm glad I spoke about it.

It helps somebody. It helps somebody to help someone else to think about the Lord. Yeah, I don't regret being honest.

And sometimes your honesty may humiliate you. Be honest. Husbands and wives, be honest with each other.

Speak the truth. If you did something wrong, I'm sorry I did that. It's my mistake.

I'm not asking you to confess all your past sins. We're not making husbands and wives into Roman Catholic priests who listen to each other's confessions. No.

What is blotted out by God in the blood of Jesus, don't ever bring it up before any human being on the face of the earth. What I mean is, tomorrow if you do something wrong, be honest about it. I'm not talking about

five years ago.

I'm talking about day by day. Be honest with each other. Be honest with your children.

If the way you spoke to your children was wrong, say, I'm sorry, that was wrong the way I spoke to you. Your child's heart will be drawn to you. So think about that, brothers and sisters.

The condition Jesus has laid down to have all our past forgiven and to walk in fellowship with them every day of our life is one simple thing. Be absolutely honest with God. Amen.

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