

Getting to the end of Ourselves: Authentic to be Accepted

Don't you hate false advertising? Nobody likes it when someone advertises one thing and delivers another. In fact, if you're in the business of selling something and you engage in false advertising you may find yourself in a lawsuit.

In 2010, Dannon advertised their Activia brand yogurt, claiming it had clinically and scientifically proven health benefits. The company even hired a popular celebrity to promote the product's supposedly "clinically proven" health benefits. During this ad campaign, Dannon charged more for its Activia yogurt line than what comparable brands cost. Eventually customers stopped believing in the advertised health benefits, and a [class action lawsuit](#) was filed against Dannon. The company settled with the consumers who filed the claim, agreeing to pay up to \$45 million dollars in damages. Dannon was also ordered to limit health claims to those that are factual.

In 2010, Kellogg's engaged in an aggressive advertising campaign claiming that their popular Rice Krispies cereal had the ability to boost children's immunity, as it contained "25 percent Daily Value of Antioxidants and Nutrients – Vitamins A, B, C and E." The Federal Trade Commission found the company's claims to be questionable, and ordered Kellogg's to stop making false claims of improved immunity. This action by the FTC came just one year after Kellogg's was investigated for making false claims that its Frosted Mini Wheats had the ability to increase children's attentiveness. After the FTC examined the clinical studies touted by Kellogg's, which purportedly showed a 20% enhancement of attentiveness, it found that the studies showed only 1 in 9 children actually received this benefit from the cereal. Kellogg's was ordered to stop this deceptive advertising campaign.

New Balance was accused of false advertising in 2011 over a shoe that it claimed could help wearers burn calories, [according to Reuters](#). Studies found that there were no health benefits from wearing the shoe. The toning shoes claimed to use hidden board technology and were advertised as calorie burners that activated the glutes, quads, hamstrings, and calves. Plaintiffs in the lawsuit claimed to have been harmed and misled by the shoe company. On August 20, 2012, New Balance agreed to pay a settlement of \$2.3 million, [according to The Huffington Post](#).

The Sugar Association asked for an investigation into alternative sweetener Splenda's "Made from Sugar" slogan. It complained that the tagline was misleading, and that the sweetener is nothing more than "highly processed chemical compound made in a factory," [CBS reported](#). In 2007, a resulting lawsuit led by the makers of rival sweetener Equal, settled against Splenda. Equal was looking for \$200 million from Splenda in the settlement for unfair profits. However, the exact amount of the settlement remains confidential, [according to NBC](#).

People have come to expect that the advertising or packaging of a product should be an accurate representation of the product. We don't like false advertising.

Well, what if we applied this thinking to ourselves? To the way we live.

Some people seem to think it's asking too much to expect people to show others who they really are. In other words, to be authentic, genuine about who we are as a person.

Being authentic is a struggle for many people because **we fear rejection**. And we want others to see us at our very best, because then people are more likely to accept us and possibly even admire us. As a result, we find ways to disguise our faults and weaknesses. Fear is the enemy of transparency. We reason that since we don't like our flaws, others will like them even less. So, we put up a front to try to cause others to think we are better than we truly are. False advertising!

As we have seen in the previous lessons in this series, Jesus comes on the scene and **His teaching is countercultural and counterintuitive**. And we are challenged to examine our thinking about how we live as citizens in the kingdom of God. Once again we go to the Sermon on the Mount in Matt.5 where Jesus has a lot to say about the **difference between the outside and the inside**. He says what really matters to God is what's on the inside.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Matt.5:8

Jesus would have us to know that the path to real fulfillment and blessings is found when you stop trying to convince people you're something different than you are. In other words, stop all of the false advertisements about yourself. To do this we **must become pure in heart so that the inside matches up with the outside**.

To be pure in heart we must get to the end of ourselves and stop worrying about putting up a front for others. We cannot be fake and pure in heart at the same time.

If any one word captured what religion was all about for a Jew in the first century, it was purity. To be pure was to be clean & not infected with the wrong things. This was highly valued. But the Scribes & Pharisees defined it almost completely in terms of things other people could see. It had become a matter of keeping rules.

The Pharisees went to extreme measures to show they were pure, and they also went to extreme measures to make sure others did the same. But Jesus challenged their entire concept of what was pure and clean.

In **Matt. 23:25** He told them they were too worried about cleaning the “outside of the cup and dish”, while the inside was filthy. Then in **Vs.27** He compared them to “whitewashed tombs”, which were clean as a whistle on the outside but filled with dead men’s bones and uncleanness on the inside.

Jesus leaves no doubt about what is most important where purity is concerned. He says it’s the inside that matters most.

The word pure conveys two primary thoughts. First of all it means to be **unmixed**, which suggests freedom from contamination. Whether you are talking about a food or a person, if it is pure it will be free from spoilage or adulteration. We might describe it as **wholesome**.

None of us would intentionally eat food that is spoiled or adulterated, lest we get sick. In the same way we should protect our soul by avoiding things that are spoiled and adulterated, lest we get spiritually sick.

Phil.4:8 -the antidote for impurity

When we consume what is wholesome we can be pure in heart and pleasing to God.

Proverbs 11:20 says:

“The Lord detests a crooked heart, but He favors those whose path is innocent.” CEB

The other meaning of the word pure is to be **sincere**. When Jesus talks about a pure heart, He is talking about one that is genuine and authentic. To illustrate this point we can look closer at the teaching of Jesus in **Matt. 23** where He speaks harshly against the Scribes & Pharisees.

- Vs.5 everything they do is so others will see them
- Vs.14 their prayers are for show
- Vs.28 outwardly appear righteous, but inside are hypocrites

These things are the very opposite of what it means to be pure in heart.

In **Matt. 6:1**, Jesus says more about purity of heart.

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

People who are concerned about being pure in heart are most interested in pleasing God because they understand that His rewards are eternal. On the other hand, people who are more concerned about the praise of men have no further reward.

We tend to think that we would never get caught up in seeking the praise of men more than the praise of God. Nobody interested in pleasing God sets out to do that. **Yet, it can overtake us subtly.**

For example, let's say I am teaching a children's Bible class and I use a **sticker chart** to keep track of attendance & participation in class. Every time a child attends class he gets a sticker. Every time he participates in class activities he gets a sticker. Soon the child is motivated by the stickers on his chart and begins to compete against other students for the most stickers.

At this point everything seems healthy and harmless about this situation. But let's say this child **begins to define his faith** by the number of stickers on his chart. If he misses a class his concern is about losing out on stickers on his chart. He is more concerned about outward appearance than serving God from the heart.

What started out as a good habit has been **converted to a belief that our faith is defined by things we do with no consideration of the heart.**

Even as adults, we can be guilty of thinking this way about ourselves and others. We look around at others and mentally give or don't give them stickers.

- That guy over there is using a KJV instead of one of the more popular translations (ESV –Especially Sinful Version; NIV –Nearly Inspired Version), so you dock him one star
- The lady over there attends a home bible study, so she gets an extra star
- Another guy is exceptional at serving in any capacity of worship, so he gets an extra star

- Another person attends worship sporadically, never brings a Bible, and doesn't dress very well for an assembly, so he loses a star.

What this illustrates is that we sometimes **evaluate ourselves and others entirely by outward appearances**, which is exactly what Jesus criticized in the Scribes & Pharisees.

They judged the inside by the outside. So, to them if you played by the right rules, it meant you were godly and worthy to pass their test. They even measured faith by the choice of clothing.

Matt.23:5

“But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.”

Phylacteries were leather boxes containing bits of parchment inscribed with scriptures. This concept was developed from the teaching in the Law of Moses where the Jews were instructed to let their hearts be guided by the word of God (**Exo.13:8-9; Deut 6:5-9**). The OT teaching spoke in terms of binding them as a sign on the hands and as frontlets between the eyes. The real meaning, of course, is for us to bury God's word in our hearts so we can take it with us everywhere we go.

The Scribes & Pharisees decided this was something to practice in the literal sense. So they wore two black boxes, one on the forehead and the other on the left arm. Once that was established there was a **trend toward bigger boxes to show bigger righteousness.**

Then came the borders of their garments. The OT referred to garments having a border with a blue ribbon. The Pharisees decided that **wider ribbons** would make a bigger statement. They were all about appearances.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching us to **be authentic in our worship, our relationships, and everything else we do.** He spoke several woes to the Scribes & Pharisees in **Matt. 23** and we need to take notice ourselves.

Woe to you if you equate outward appearance with eternal standing.
Woe to you if you judge someone's faith by your own sense of style.

Woe to you if you turn the walk of faith into a red-carpet fashion show.
Woe to you if you spend more time primping for assembly than you do in prayer & study.
Woe to you if you look at others like you're sitting in a first class seat and they are sitting in coach.

I will admit my guilt in some of these areas in the past because we have a tradition that must be protected, right. When tradition becomes more important than people, **we may not be pure in heart.**

A couple years ago Millie and I were having a spiritual conversation and one of us misspoke & coined the term "gospital". This seems to fit the point being made here. God wants the church to be a place of worship that is more like a hospital for the hurting (gospital) rather than a first-class seat on a train bound for heaven.

In **Matt 6:5-6** Jesus gives another example of an impure, unauthentic heart.

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

For many of the Jews, prayer have become a formality that had little meaning. As one example, they were to recite the **Shema** every morning before 9am and every evening before 9pm. It didn't matter where you were at when the time came, you stopped and said your Shema. **It had become what we would call a vain repetition.**

The second prayer that every Jew had to repeat each day was called the **Shemoneh Esreh**, which means "eighteen" because it was a group of 18 prayers. They were to say these scripted prayers 3 times a day.

The Jews had many other special prayers for many other occasions. It was a convenient system, since everything was prewritten. All they had to do was provide the mouth.

Jesus saw things differently. He said we need to be pure in heart when we talk to God. This is probably easier in private than it is in public, like a worship assembly. In public we have a harder time being ourselves and in our prayers we can be **guilty of talking more to the people in the room than to God.**

Prayer can become nothing more than a **performance**. We can be more concerned about what others think about us than we are about the words we are saying to God.

On the other hand, we can fall into the trap of thinking that we have to use certain language when we pray to God. For example, a person may come to believe that **formal language** should be used in prayer (Old KJV words). Another person may believe that certain phrases should be used in prayer (guide, guard, & direct; partial quotes of scripture).

Can we use formal language and certain phrases in our prayers? Certainly, but the point is we must be speaking from the heart in our prayers. God simply wants us to talk with him. And talk is simple communication that doesn't need to be dressed up. Just be authentic, pure in heart.

It is challenging to be authentic, pure in heart. **Our tendency is to try to appear to be more than we really are.** Our instinct tells us to keep our sin concealed, put a big smile on our faces, and give the impression that we have all the answers.

But getting to the end of ourselves by being authentic and pure in heart is the only way we will ever experience the real life available in Christ.

Conclusion

So, if you want to have a pure heart, do something about the impurities in your life. Be sincere with God, and with others, and He promises to purify and cleanse you.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **1 Jno1:9**

The scriptures teach of a special connection between clean hands and a pure heart.

“Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...” Psa.24:3-4

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you doubleminded.” James 4:8

In the OT, washing your hands wasn't just something you did before eating. **It was a symbol of spiritual cleansing.** As an example, when Solomon was building the temple he had five washbasins placed on the south side of the temple and five on the north side. Before entering the temple, people would stop and wash their hands as a reminder that they were cleansing themselves in preparation for doing this work on behalf of God.

Each of us can go to a sink and with soap & water wash the impurities off our hands. We can cleanse the outside, but only God can cleanse the impurities from our heart.

The promise of Jesus is that as your heart becomes pure, you will receive an incredible blessing: **you will see God.**

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Mt.5:8

Your relationship with God will not be based on performance and pretense; but will be authentic. He will see you just as you are, without the pretense & performance. And you will see Him.

Friends, can you think of a better offer than that?