

# Wonder

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Matthew 5:8*

Love is not a feeling; it is an action. And like most actions, it can be faked. Those who claim to be doing good for others often have motivations that are actually harmful to those they claim to serve. Homelessness is a good example of this. How is allowing people to sleep on filthy streets in dangerous settings compassionate? How is helping people use drugs “safely” loving? Or in more ethically challenging examples, is it more loving to allow women with unwanted pregnancies to terminate them or to require them to carry them to term? Is it okay to promote Christians remaining in homosexuality to make them feel “welcome” in the church?

What these have in common is a failure to recognize the true motivations at work. They are clothed in the language of compassion, but at heart they are hateful. Love does not seek harm to another; it seeks their best interest. And when we dig down to the core issues at heart in these actions, we do not see those promoting them seeking the best interest of those caught in these conundrums. Mostly what we see is a motivation of greed and power. Those who promote these solutions often use them as a source of funding that allows them to stay in power. Even those who have promoted such ideas in the church have been exposed for their acceptance of funds from those with political agendas. (See *Shepherds for Sale: How Evangelical Leaders Traded the Truth for a Leftist Agenda* by Megan Basham.)

Love requires purity of heart. In the Greek this word means *clean* and is used with the meaning of free from impurity or evil desire. As explained by Bible Hub, “A pure heart is reflected in a life of integrity, where our actions align with our professed beliefs. This integrity is a powerful testimony to the world of God's transformative power.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the question that is posed to us here by Jesus is, what is motivating your actions towards others? Why do you do the things you do? Foundationally our love for others should spring from our love for God. But practically, our actions towards others should spring from a desire to see the best done for them. We must love with a heart of sincerity.

What makes this difficult is that it often requires behavior that is outside of our comfort zone. It requires that we forgive, that we hold our tongue, that we control our reactions when we are angered, that we judge ourselves before we judge others. These are actions that desire the best for others, above ourselves. It requires that we not justify our own sin.

This requires spiritual introspection. Proverbs 4:23 says, “*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*” Our personal blind spots keep us bound in our own hypocrisy if we do not seek the Spirit's guidance in showing us the wrong motivations of our heart. Jesus described this in the parable in Luke 18:9-14, of the Pharisee and the Publican where the Pharisee's fake sense of spirituality was directly tied to his spiritual blind spots.

A lack of purity leads to a lack of joy. Not only in the problems that ensue in our relationships due to hypocrisy, but also because of the distance it places in our relationship with God. Instead, Jesus tells us, that joy is found in a heart that seeks to rid itself of every shadow of sin through the cleansing sunlight of God's Spirit.



# The Joy of Holiness

*The real thing, not a cheap substitute.*

## Perfectly Clean

Embedded in the definition of pure is the concept of perfection. *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect,” Matthew 5:48.* Pure silver, for instance, is silver that has no impurities.

In **Psalm 66:10**, what is necessary to achieve purity?

According to **Hebrews 9:22, 27-28**, what did God require in order for something to be spiritually purified? How did Christ fulfill this requirement?

How does **1 Peter 1:22** say our hearts are purified? (See also **1 John 2:3**.)

Beyond salvation, what does **1 Peter 1:22** say changes in us? (See also **1 John 3:16-18**.)

In Jesus’ call to perfection, He is stating an aspirational goal for Christians, not a promised reality in this life. The process whereby we become more perfect as we grow spiritually is known as *sanctification*. Paul describes this process in **Romans 12:1-2**. What steps are required?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ to change
2. \_\_\_\_\_ of worldly patterns – *models, fashions, customs, values*
3. \_\_\_\_\_ – *fill and change your mind with God’s truth—true inward change (metamorphosis)*

Inherent in this process is a rejection of outward assimilation, the patterns of behavior the world around us unthinkingly adopts. The power of the sanctification process is an inward metamorphosis. Just as a caterpillar’s body is broken down in the cocoon into liquid and completely rebuilt into a butterfly,<sup>ii</sup> so sanctification should be a process that completely rebuilds us into something new. A holy life that is beautiful before God. Resisting the world and renewing our minds is not easy work. It takes a lifetime. What suggestion does Paul give in **Philippians 4:8** to help us train our minds?



## Perfectly Authentic

What is the opposite of being real? While it might be easier to afford cheap knockoffs, we generally find that they are too good to be true. Fakeness is not a quality that satisfies, particularly when it comes to people. Nothing is more despised than those who are inauthentic, who pretend to be something they are not. In our journey of sanctification, hypocrisy is a stumbling block because it seems like an easier path. Rather than open ourselves to the work of God in changing our hearts, we rely on our own strength to outwardly appear like we are truly spiritual. Is this possible according to **Proverbs 20:9, 11**?

What happens when we aren't authentic in our spirituality? (v. 11)

How does fake spirituality prevent spiritual growth according to **Proverbs 16:2**?

What effect does fake spirituality have on our relationships with others according to **Proverbs 27:14-17**?

## In our Love for God

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus contrasted fake spiritual behavior with true spiritual behavior. Note down the characteristics of each:

Spiritual Activity	Inauthentic Behavior	Authentic Behavior
<b>Giving</b> Matthew 6:1-4		
<b>Prayer</b> Matthew 6:5-8		
<b>Fasting</b> Matthew 6:16-18		



What stands out in each of these areas about the problems of inauthenticity in our lives?

Charity:

Prayer:

Fasting:

How does a motivation of duty rather than love for God hurt our Christian service?

## In our Love for Others

In **Matthew 7:1-5**, Jesus highlights judging others. This verse is frequently quoted out of context, especially by those seeking to use it against Christians who point out egregious sin in society. How does the context of verse 5, challenge this usage?

Jesus is calling for us to be authentic in our use of constructive criticism. Note the differences:

<b>Constructive Criticism</b>	<b>Inauthentic Behavior</b>	<b>Authentic Behavior</b>
<b>Characteristics</b>		



Underlying Motivations		
Outward Attitude		
Response to Criticism		

How does Jesus’ description of hypercritical people help us understand how we should react to their criticism?

## Perfectly Transparent

In Psalm 139, David reminds us that we are completely known by God. There is nothing we can hide from Him. God looks into our life as if we were clear glass—He sees every flaw, every sin, every poor motivation. What does this lead David to pray in **Psalm 139:23-24**?

Spiritual reflection and self-reflection are necessary in order to be authentic. As we reflect upon our personal motives, what are some signs we should be aware of that indicate we are veering off track?

### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> <https://biblehub.com/matthew/5-8.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/educators/resource/butterfly-life-cycle/>

