



44: NAZIS, CALVINISTS, WOMANIZERS, AND THE WIZARD OF OZ (Luke 11:37-54)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was certainly a man filled with the Holy Spirit and surrendered over to Jesus Christ. I've been listening to his book "The Cost of Discipleship" again lately, and am reminded of his unwavering commitment to following Jesus with everything. Bonhoeffer took his call to follow Christ so seriously that his life ended in martyrdom by the Gestapo under Hitler's Nazi Germany.

Instead of reading or watching all the random stuff out there about people who are currently appropriating Bonhoeffer to our time, I'd really just recommend reading or listening to his writings- the stuff he wrote directly- and being inspired to surrender all to Christ like he did. You'll be challenged and blessed for sure!

Bonhoeffer surely stood against a hypocritical German Christian Church that was under the evil spell and manipulation of Hitler.

The population of Germany in 1933 was around 60 million. Almost all Germans were Christian, belonging either to the Roman Catholic (ca. 20 million members) or the Protestant (ca. 40 million members) churches. The Jewish community in Germany in 1933 was less than 1% of the total population of the country.

The attitudes and actions of German Catholics and Protestants during the Nazi era were shaped not only by their religious beliefs, but by other factors as well, including:

- Backlash against the Weimar Republic and the political, economic, and social changes in Germany that occurred during the 1920s
- Anti-Communism
- Nationalism, and
- Resentment toward the international community in the wake of World War I, which Germany lost and for which it was forced to pay heavy reparations

These were some of the reasons why most Christians in Germany welcomed the rise of Nazism in 1933. They were also persuaded by the statement on “positive Christianity” in Article 24 of the 1920 Nazi Party Platform, which read:

"We demand the freedom of all religious confessions in the state, insofar as they do not jeopardize the state's existence or conflict with the manners and moral sentiments of the Germanic race. The Party as such upholds the point of view of a **positive Christianity** without tying itself confessionally to any one confession. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit at home and abroad and is convinced that a permanent recovery of our people can only be achieved from within on the basis of the **common** good before **individual** good."¹

Can you see how manipulative words like this from the Nazi party really were? They played on the Germans' sense of Protestant, national identity far more than appealing to the ways of Christ. Their idea of a **common** good was the agenda of the Nazis and the Nazis alone.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York from 1930–1931, and during that time attended Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, becoming deeply interested in the issue of racial injustice, did not stand with the massive majority of the German Christians of his time. He was a pastor, and a prophetic one at that.

In 1933, a group called the German Christians (Deutsche Christen) began to promote the nazification of German Protestantism through the creation of a pro-Nazi “Reich Church.”² The ideological and theological extremism of the German Christians provoked a backlash among more moderate Protestants, leading to the formation of the Confessing Church in May 1934.³ In April 1935, the Confessing Church was under increasing pressure from the Gestapo. Most church leaders refused to openly oppose

¹ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-german-churches-and-the-nazi-state>

² <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/dietrich-bonhoeffer>

³ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/dietrich-bonhoeffer>

the Nazi regime and criticized their colleagues who did. As a result, more radical, discipleship focused Confessing Christians like Bonhoeffer found themselves embattled on all sides.⁴

Bonhoeffer began to train young clergy at an illegal Confessing Church seminary, Finkenwalde, which was closed by the Gestapo in September 1937. Bonhoeffer spent the next two years secretly travelling throughout eastern Germany to supervise his students, most of whom were working illegally in small parishes. The Gestapo banned him from Berlin in January 1938 and issued an order forbidding him from public speaking in September 1940.⁵

And it's texts like the one we're looking at today that gave Bonhoeffer the courage to stand against religious hypocrisy all around him and walk in bold imperfection, faithfully, in the ways of Christ. I hope this will be true of all of us- that we reject unbiblical, loveless, unfaithful, duplicitous, phony religion in favor of genuine discipleship. It's truly a narrow path, in contrast the wide path of destruction that Jesus spoke of. (Matt. 7:13)

To give some context before we dig in, this passage, Luke 11:37-54, contains Jesus' most direct rebuke of the Pharisees and scribes, a significant portion of the Jewish religious leadership. The difference between Jesus and them had become a chasm, and this exchange deepened their resolve to remove him.

The Pharisees and scribes were not the majority on the ruling council of Judaism (the Sadducees were), but they did have great influence there. While the Sadducees basically followed the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy), the Pharisees developed an extensive tradition of oral law, applying it to every area of life; this factor made them the strictest of the Jewish religious sects. Though small in number (estimated to be over 6,000 at this time), as a lay movement they represented one of the more powerful influences on Judaism. The scribes were scholars who tried to determine what following the law meant. They were respected by most Jews.⁶

Let's look at the text chunk by chunk;

37 *As he was speaking, a Pharisee asked (Jesus) to dine with him. So he went in and reclined at the table. 38 When the Pharisee saw this, he was amazed that he did not first perform the ritual washing before dinner. 39 But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and evil.*

⁴ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/dietrich-bonhoeffer>

⁵ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/dietrich-bonhoeffer>

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40 Fools! Didn't he who made the outside make the inside too? **41** But give from what is within to the poor, and then everything is clean for you. (Luke 11:37-41)

The setting of this section is a meal, where many significant discussions occur in Luke's gospel account (cf. 5:29; 7:36; 10:38; 14:1; 22:1; 24:42). The catalyst is Jesus' failure to wash his hands in preparation for eating. Jewish practice often noted this action in the Old Testament and followed it, though it was not included in God's law (Gen. 18:4; Judg. 19:21; cf. Mark 7:1 - 5). Jesus knows what his host is thinking, so he addresses all of the Pharisees about the question.⁷

I heard once of a pastor who required all of his small group leaders to become five point Calvinists, and if they didn't agree to that they were removed from leading them.

Now nowhere in the Bible does it say that someone needs to be a five point Calvinist to be a legit Christ follower. Five point Calvinists can surely argue that the five points of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints are Biblical.

- **Total depravity** states that humans are born in sin and are incapable of believing in God on their own.
- **Unconditional election** states that God chooses people to be saved based on his will, not on any merit in the person.
- **Limited atonement** states that Jesus died for the sins of the elect, not for the sins of the whole world.
- **Irresistible grace** states that God draws people to believe in Jesus, and those who are called by God will be saved.
- **Perseverance of the saints** states that those who are elected by God will persevere in faith and be eternally secure.⁸

But one could also argue that these five points aren't entirely biblical.⁹ To expect someone to be a five point Calvinist without debate is like the Pharisee expecting Jesus to perform a ritual washing that was more based on the Pharisaical tradition than the Scriptures. We don't need to add anything to the Bible! We can let it stand on its own! Of course there will be things that are 100% clear in it, and things that are grey areas. But we certainly don't need to add things to the Scriptures and then try to force others to obey them.

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⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Points_of_Calvinism

⁹ I'm a "3 & ½ point Calvinist" if you're curious what that means, ask me sometime!

Jesus said that the Pharisees cleaned the outside of the cup and dish, but inside there was the filth of extortion and greed. In the language of 11:33 - 36, they were dark inside; they had not taken in light. In mentioning “greed,” Jesus seemed to have in mind the leadership’s use of resources (Matt. 23:16 - 22; Luke 20:45 - 47), while moral integrity was the issue in reference to “wickedness” (Gk. *poneria*). His rebuke sounded like the prophets (Isa. 1:10 - 17; 58:4 - 8; Amos 5:21 - 24; Micah 6:6 - 8), whose call for integrity in relating to those around them served as the basis for Jesus’ rebuke. He was committed to challenging these people who claimed to represent God and his ways.¹⁰

The urban dictionary defines “fronting” as “Acting like you are more, or you have more than what really exists.” Please keep in mind that religion can definitely be or become a front for people. Church attendance, giving offerings, leading and attending discipleship groups, leading Bible studies, doing good deeds, having personal devotions, being evangelistic, being missional, and attending prayer meetings can all really be a “front”, if we haven’t let Jesus fully clean the inside of us! And that’s what Jesus wants from us more than anything- our inner life. For in Christ, we died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:3) Jesus cares about our prayer life when no one is looking (Matt. 6:5-8).

In a healthy Church community full of disciples of Jesus, no one should have to front. If someone is struggling with lust, they should feel safe to talk about it with safe people. If someone is struggling with their sexual identity, they should feel safe to talk about it with safe people. If someone is struggling with (FILL IN THE BLANK) they should feel safe to talk about it with safe people!

Too often our conversations in the Church devolve into religious surface level subjects. Too often we interrogate one another’s sins instead of shepherding one another towards Christ. We’d do better to care about the deep things of Christ and care for one another deeply!

That is why Jesus called these religious folks “foolish people”.¹¹ He was righteously provoking them into really considering what was really important, namely, the things of God!

Further proving the point, Jesus also called on them to “*give from what is within to the poor*”. This figure meant that a person should give energy to the care of the heart, like a person who might perform the venerated act of offering alms to the poor. That is, one

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should be sensitive both to God and to others. Alms was an honorable religious act, so this attention to the inner life was honorable as well. In doing so, the inner life would be clean.¹²

But they didn't get it, so Jesus had some additional challenges to give these religious leaders;

42 *"But woe to you Pharisees! You give a tenth of mint, rue, and every kind of herb, and you bypass justice and love for God. These things you should have done without neglecting the others. 43 "Woe to you Pharisees! You love the front seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. 44 "Woe to you! You are like unmarked graves; the people who walk over them don't know it."* (Luke 11:42-44)

Jesus offered three rebukes. The first treated tithing, even of the smallest herbs, as the Old Testament called for (Deut. 14:22 - 27; 26:12 - 15), while ignoring justice and love. The complaint was like that in verses 39 - 41. They should've been sensitive both to tithing and to their character.¹³

When men view women like objects, they only value them for the way that they look. A "womanizing" type of guy might try to get a woman to go on a date, he might say flattering things to her, he might buy her presents, he might take her out for a nice dinner, but does he really love the woman or does he just love the way she looks and want to get something physical from her?

By the way, I've met guys who call themselves Christians and behave like this, totally ignoring Jesus' teaching on adultery and lust in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:27-30). I've also seen this behavior ruin people's reputations and lives. It's not good to go down this road! I highly recommend pursuing genuine discipleship in the area of sexual self-control- on every level!

Jesus was saying that the Pharisees tithed as a way of trying to flatter God. They wanted to get something out of God. In a sense they were metaphorically "womanizing" God, do you catch what I'm saying? But Jesus' ultimate question was; "do you really want to surrender completely to God, to know and love God as He really is?" Jesus' ultimate question to us is the same! We don't get to play around with God and placate Him to try and get Him to give us what we want! We surrender to the Lord, and we follow His lead in everything by faith.

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But ***hypocrisy*** was not the religious leaders' only problem. There also was the issue of ***pride***. They loved the front seats in the synagogue and the special greetings they received on the road. Such privileged attention led to an elitist mentality rather than to the commitment to serve.¹⁴

In the recent movie/musical "Wicked", a fictional preliminary tale to the classic "Wizard of Oz", The film starred Cynthia Erivo as Elphaba Thropp and Ariana Grande as Galinda Upland.¹⁵ Elphaba were enemies turned friends but were also two completely different characters and personalities. Elphaba was a green skinned outcast who was made fun of by many, and mistreated even by her family, but deep down had a depth of character, an ambition for what was right and just, and a profound level of competency and talent. Galinda was a good looking, popular, well received person that was obsessed with her looks, image, and reputation. She lacked a certain level of competency and talent but attempted to make up for the lack of it by maneuvering and manipulating others into her favor.

In the end of the story, the Wizard of Oz himself, along with his cronies, wanted to offer Elphaba a coveted title. But Elphaba realized that the Wizard was a corrupted, duplicitous political figure, and Galinda ended up receiving the Wizard's offered title and accolades while Elphaba became vilified, thereby becoming the Wicked Witch of the West!

The error of the Pharisees, the religious leaders, was Galinda's error. They wanted recognition. They wanted to be known as "holy people", instead of taking on the reproach of Christ. They wanted the everyday people of Israel to look up to them and really moral, significant characters. Outwardly, they put on a religious show. Inwardly, they would have sang right along with Galinda:

*It's all about popular
It's not about aptitude
It's the way you're viewed
So it's very shrewd to be
Very very popular like me!*

Why do you call yourself a Christian? So that people will like you? Look up to you? Think you're "moral"? Think you're "special"? So that you'll get a title in the Church? So that people will know you're a Direction Team Leader? Coordinator? Chair of the Board? Elder? Deacon? Worship Leader? Treasurer? Pastor?

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¹⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_\(2024_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_(2024_film))

Do I desire for people to look up to me as a pastor, or do I desire to be a faithful pastor of God's people, pointing them to His presence, and seeking to imperfectly honor Him in every way? There's a difference, brothers and sisters!

In fact, Jesus describes these religious folks, and by proxy, potentially all of us, as being like **death** for others, since they are like an unmarked grave over which people walk without knowing. This should put a chill down our spines. We don't want to bring death into people's lives, we want to bring God's life! These religious leaders are ironically the conductors of spiritual uncleanness, because they do not model real spirituality. Such leadership is destructive, so Jesus pulls no punches in condemning it.¹⁶

The fruit from the knowledge tree of good and evil looked tasty, but it brought death. It's possible to appear religious, holy and righteous, and yet be a bringer of spiritual death, an "unmarked grave that people walk over yet don't know it". People can think a ministry leader, pastor, deacon, elder, or every day Christian is the real deal, but they can really be duplicitous and have corrupted insides. Let it be our prayer: "Jesus, from the inside out, clean us out!"

The conflict and dialogue continues in Luke 11;

45 *One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things you insult us too."* **46** *Then he said, "Woe also to you experts in the law! You load people with burdens that are hard to carry, and yet you yourselves don't touch these burdens with one of your fingers."* **47** *"Woe to you! You build tombs for the prophets, and your fathers killed them."* **48** *Therefore, you are witnesses that you approve the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their monuments."* **49** *Because of this, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,'* **50** *so that this generation may be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world —* **51** *from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. "Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible."* **52** *"Woe to you experts in the law! You have taken away the key to knowledge. You didn't go in yourselves, and you hindered those who were trying to go in."* (Luke 11:45-52)

Someone at the table came to the Pharisees' defense. A scribe noted that if Jesus insisted on condemning the Pharisees, he must include the scribes also.¹⁷

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And how did Jesus respond? Passive aggressively? Nope. Jesus continued to issue challenges boldly and poignantly- directed right at the individual and his crew, who conversely was trying to defend **himself** and **his** crew, but to no avail when faced with the Son of God Himself. Jesus in fact didn't just challenge these guys, He issued divinely inspired words of eternal damnation on them!

Jesus issued three more rebukes, this time with the scribes in view. The first rebuke may have referred to outright hypocrisy, where the leadership required of others what they would not do themselves. Or it was a more subtle form of hypocrisy, where they offered no aid or loving support to help those who had great burdens to bear. Jesus complained that they called on others to bear the weight of tradition on their back, but did nothing to help them carry the load. In effect, Jesus called on them to be more considerate and compassionate.¹⁸

What's the point of reading, meditating on, studying, and knowing the Bible? So that one can shove their knowledge of it down other people's throats? That's what Jesus was accusing the experts in the law of. They studied and studied and studied, becoming super knowledgeable. But knowledge puffs up, and love builds up. (1 Cor 8:1b)

Contrary to the approach of some religious people, reading, meditating on, studying, and knowing the Bible is supposed to lead to people being fully formed disciples of Jesus who have, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus being more and more formed in them, and that they begin to **live** the Bible!

But this can't happen unless people meditate on the Bible with a view to allowing it to cut through their sin, expose them, and lead them to repentance and sanctifying change. Do we read the Bible, not allow it to speak to us, but use it to get all amped up about the sins of others, get puffed up on that self-righteous knowledge, and then go out into our daily lives and load the people around us with burdens that are hard to carry, and yet we ourselves don't touch these burdens with one of our fingers?

If we're really living out a life of discipleship, we'll live out the Bible and the Lord will work through us to lift the burdens off of others that are hard for them to carry! The burdens of anxiety, financial troubles, depression, worry, suicidal ideation, despair, anger, rage, malice, gossip, slander, hatred, greed, selfishness, addiction, and foolishness! That's the kind of stuff that the Holy Spirit can heal and remove from people! He wants to use us in that ministry constantly!!! All the time!

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The condemnation Jesus had towards these experts in the law became even stronger when a historical tie to the past was made with a twist. Jesus noted their forefathers' building of tombs for the prophets. He argued, using a rhetorical picture, that they approved of what their fathers did. To them, the best prophet was a dead prophet, but they didn't want to heed what the prophets said! They were like their ancestors, who not only built the tombs, but helped to put the prophets there by denying their message! They killed the prophets, and yet the scribes honored the tombs they created in their memory.¹⁹

The same sort of story repeats today in so many different forms. A great leader of God's people emerges, a movement of God happens in their lifetime. This person doesn't fit the norm and the status quo of their time but in fact is ahead of their time. They die, begging to the end of their lives that no sort of religion is built in their wake. This was the case for people like D.L Moody and A.B Simpson among many others.

Then inevitably, after they've passed away, people build a religion based on their writings and practices, build statues of the founder, and paralyze the movement they've started, turning it gradually more and more into an institutional religion and/or denomination. As it's been said, it's true that all too often a mission becomes a movement, then becomes a machine, then becomes a monument!

Back to the text...

Jesus was confident that this pattern of rejection and persecution would continue with another set of prophets and apostles (cf. Jer. 7:25).²⁰

προφήτης (prophētēs), were proclaimers of God's utterances.²¹ ones who spoke for God and interpreted (and/or expounded) his will to humankind.²²

ἀπόστολος (apostolos)²³ in the NT were envoys, ambassadors, or missionaries. In the NT the term "apostle" was applied to one who carried the message of the gospel.²⁴

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²⁰ NIV Application Commentary Copyright © 1996 by Darrel L. Bock.

²¹ James Swanson, [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

²² Henry George Liddell et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon*](#) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1540.

²³ James Swanson, [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

²⁴ Hans Dieter Betz, [*"Apostle."*](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 309.

So Christ was not speaking here necessarily of the twelve apostles, rather, He was speaking of any missionary doing God's work among those who needed the gospel coming to proclaim that very gospel to these religious leaders leading to their rejection. Christ was not speaking of Old Testament prophets, but New Covenant disciples who carried the gift of prophecy into the midst of the dying hypocritical religious system of the time.

If one merely reads the book of Acts, they'll see all the missionaries and prophetic voices that challenged and enraged the religious leaders in the first century!

And today, in the Western religious realm, the apostolic and prophetic gifts (see Eph. 4:1-16) are still rejected by far too many. We love shepherds who love people in the body of Christ well. We love teachers who give what my friend Kyle Tennant calls that "brain tingle" feeling to people- teaching them profound theological concepts and stimulating their minds. We even tolerate or celebrate many evangelists who boldly proclaim the gospel message to people who need it.

But when we encounter local American missionary ("apostolic") types who go to build the Kingdom of God amongst people we are afraid of- the homeless, the addicted, those of different cultural backgrounds, those of different politics, those of sinful lifestyles we don't understand, the violent, the traumatized, and the criminal, we might love writing a check for them but certainly don't want them constantly in our midst reminding us of what we **aren't** doing for Christ!

And when we encounter prophetic type leaders who seek God on a deeper level than us, who have a more enriched prayer life, and intimacy with the Lord that is beyond us, too many of us simply cringe. When we hear prophetic types speaking the truth of God boldly and calling us to radical obedience, we try to minimize their words, misinterpret them, and might even cast them out!

Oh may we be open to all that is of Christ in each other! The apostolic, the prophetic, the evangelistic, the shepherding, and the teaching of Christ in each other! (Eph 4:1-16)

It is a terrible thing to be a generation responsible for creating an environment of rejection around Jesus.²⁵ He's the One we should truly give our all to!

In the strongest remark of all, Jesus condemned the scribes for being the exact opposite of what they thought they were. They believed they possessed the key of knowledge. But in fact, they were an obstacle to truth. Not only did they not enter

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through the door, but they stopped others from getting in. There could be no greater rebuke for teachers of religion.²⁶

Fellow Christ followers, fellow disciples of Jesus! Let's **never** be in the way of others getting to the Kingdom of God! Let's be the one to hold that door wide open for as many people as we can, even when satan is trying to punch us in the gut and trip us up as we hold that door! **KEEP... HOLDING... THAT... DOOR....!!!!** Ok, now I'm preaching to myself!

The scribes and Pharisees- these religious leaders, should have responded to Jesus' stinging challenges with repentance and renewal, but instead;

53 When (Jesus) left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to oppose him fiercely and to cross-examine him about many things; 54 they were lying in wait for him to trap him in something he said. (Luke 11:53-54)

These woes were a devastating condemnation of pride and self-assurance in the pursuit of piety. The neglected heart had become a blind and hard heart.

The obsessive pursuit of what is right can result in some serious wrong. The reaction is immediate. The scribes and Pharisees begin to "lie in wait" for Jesus. They hoped to catch him in some major error (their final effort in this regard would come in 20:1 - 40). If they could trap him, maybe Rome could get rid of him. The woes Jesus pronounced did not lead to repentance, but to hardness of heart.²⁷

It literally says here that the scribes and Pharisees "began to oppose Jesus fiercely and to cross-examine him about many things". Now when I think of "cross examining", I think of courtrooms.

I love good shows about judges, juries, lawyers, criminals, and innocent people. My wife and I watch Law and Order SVU, and the regular version of Law and Order regularly. They're so well written, and display the ethical and moral conflicts of our day and how they play out in fictional scenarios that relate to real life!

But when one knows the crime a criminal has committed, and knows they're guilty, isn't it hard to watch a defense lawyer make up a litany of lies in order to slander, falsely accuse, and trap innocent people, in order to try and manipulate a jury into believing that a guilty party is, in fact, not guilty?

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Well that's exactly what the Scribes and Pharisees were doing to Jesus. They had a wicked agenda and were carrying it out. They wanted **Jesus** to slip publicly so they could get away with all the inward, hidden sins that **they** were hiding from public view. They didn't understand that they were dealing with the sinless Son of God. Jesus, in fact, would never "slip", despite all their efforts to make Him do so.

Have you ever been "religiously interrogated" by someone? It's a pretty terrible experience. It's when someone thinks they're right, and speaking for God, but don't have a clue that they really aren't speaking for God at all. It's possible the person could even, in their flesh, devoid of the Spirit, be speaking for the devil and the demonic. It's the exercise of false accusation, with divine inspiration inserted in, which makes it much much worse, and much more painful and confusing for the receiver, if in fact they are a person of good conscience simply trying to do the right thing and fully honor the Lord in their conduct, both seen and unseen.²⁸

Now I'm sure you've heard of all different sorts of "radar" that people can have. Have you ever had to deal with someone that has "sin-dar"? I'm talking about someone that's "lying in wait for you", and just hoping that they'll catch you in some sort of sin. That's a really awful thing to have to endure.

Those of you who have grown up in overly strict religious homes, or overly strict homes in general, know what I'm saying. Did you walk on eggshells growing up, just terrified that your parents would catch you in something, and it made you a paralyzed sort of person that constantly struggles with irrational guilt? That's what this kind of thing produces.

So I'll say it to parents, let's not "lie in wait" for our kids, trying to constantly catch them in sin!

But I have to check myself before I wreck myself here. No doubt, I must confess that a while ago, one of my daughters was having a sleepover with a friend, and it was in the middle of the night. They were supposed to be sleeping. I heard them making noise and woke up. I walked down the stairs and stared at both of them for a few minutes, waiting to prove that they were up when they weren't supposed to be. They faked sleep. So I walked up the stairs, then I very quietly sat on the top of them, out of sight. I tried to breathe as quietly as possible and not move an inch, like a statue. I waited for five minutes. I heard the two whispering again, then stormed down as quickly as possible,

²⁸ In this video, Donald Miller describes this type of scenario in more current language: <https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1ABvKtzEDZ/>

“ha ha! I caught you!” The next morning my daughter got grounded from having friends over for a month and I gave her a very stern lecture about honesty.

I’m not saying I shouldn’t have done what I did to help my kid learn and grow. But it shouldn’t be a regular thing. We shouldn’t always treat our kids like they’re being interrogated for their sins.

I’m also saying that we shouldn’t do this to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. I get that distrust can develop in relationships for a variety of reasons, but we should do all we can to seek to build trust with one another, to forgive one another, to talk things out openly, graciously, and truthfully, and to seek the unity that can only come through the Spirit of God.

And most of all, may we accept the challenges of Christ! Ultimately we must read the text of Luke 11:37-54 as directed at us. We, self proclaimed Christians, should mediate on the text, putting ourselves in the seats of the Pharisees and experts in the law. We are not Jesus. This is the only way that this poignant text will have its intended effect, to challenge, convict, and move us toward the loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, self-controlled, powerful, majestic God of the Universe! Christ’s yoke is easy and His burden is light! He took our hypocrisy on the cross! He took our disobedience on the cross! He took our religiosity on the cross! He took our legalism on the cross! He died for all of it! He obeyed God perfectly, took history’s worst bludgeoning ever, and rose again from the grave. Why? To give us salvation!

And what do we do with that free gift? As Bonhoeffer suggested, we can’t help but believe, and as a response we obey, but we also can’t help but obey because we believe!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can “religious surface level” things get in the way of discipleship?
2. What does it mean to religiously “front”? What does it look like for individuals to have healthy transparency in a Church community without “oversharing” or “undersharing”?
3. What does it look like to helpfully, lovingly talk to someone about a “sin” they’re struggling with without “religious interrogating” them?