

TRANSPARENCY: LIVING SO THAT JESUS CAN BE SEEN

(SKIT): *One Sunday as they drove home from church, a little girl turned to her mother & said, "Mommy, there's something about the preacher's message this morning that I don't understand." The mother said, "Oh? What is it?" The little girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. He said God is so big that He could hold the world in His hand. Is that true?" The mother replied, "Yes, that's true, honey."*

"But Mommy, he also said that God comes to live inside of us when we accept Jesus as our Savior. Is that true, too?" Again, the mother assured the little girl that what the preacher had said was true. With a puzzled look on her face the little girl then asked, "If God is bigger than us & He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?"

My message today is about how to live a transparent life – one where Jesus can be seen through us.

The Father Revealed – John 14:7-11

⁷ "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

⁸ Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

To be transparent is to be open and honest. It means 'easily seen through', (for better or for worse!); free from pretense; authentic and real.

It's this next definition that I want to highlight today. This is really interesting when you relate it to the life of Jesus: *Transparency is that unique property, which when possessed, allows the transmitting of rays of light through its substance, so objects situated beyond can be seen distinctly.*

This is what Jesus was claiming in the previous verses when talking to Phillip. He was saying that the light of His Father shone through Him so that God could be seen here on earth. Jesus was transparent.

But Jesus didn't intend to be the only one to transmit the light of the Father here on earth. Listen to His prayer to the Father in John 17:20-23.

My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are

one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

So what was God's purpose in us being one? Why is it that we are in Him and He is in us?

He prayed that we would be one so that the world may know and believe that God sent Jesus to save us. So that the world may know that love and hope that is found only in Him.

For Jesus to be seen by the world, we first need to be one – be unified. For us to become one, we need to learn the art of transparency with one another. Transparency starts here, amongst each other, and in our homes before we can truly be transparent in the world.

Question: **How can we convince people that our God is real if we ourselves aren't?**

That is what the world judges us on. They know when we're not being real and it's that very thing that has turned many away from wanting to know about God.

I'm going to show a video clip now. It is in a church setting, but could just as easily be a school, a work place – anywhere that you get a group of people really. You will see two types of people in this clip and you may identify with one or both of them. This is really powerful and quite sobering, but let's watch it then we will unpack it a bit.

SHOW YOUTUBE CLIP – STAINED GLASS MASQUERADE, BY CASTING CROWNS.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzmLxTRALX0&feature=related>

Isn't it amazing what happened when 1 or 2 individuals decided to put down their masks? It had quite a ripple effect.

Have you ever come to church feeling like mud, but you walk in the door and pretend life is great, you paste a smile on your dial and say "fine" every time someone asks how you are? Why do we do that?

Is it because we are afraid of others seeing that we're not really all together? That seems kind of weird, since none of us is perfect anyway yet we cover up our imperfections out of shame. I think sometimes we fool ourselves into thinking we are the only one that struggles in a certain area, or we are the only ones who feel that way. It's all a big lie!

Isn't that what the devil wants us to believe? Then he can keep us isolated and we fight on our own, rather than being united and 'one' as Jesus desires so that the world will see Him.

'Divide and conquer' is a basic war strategy. Divided we fall, united we stand!

Would it really be that bad if instead of saying "Fine", we were to say "actually I'm feeling a bit out of sorts today so I would appreciate your prayers"? If someone wants to know more than you want to share, just say you can't really talk about it but you appreciate their concern. We can be transparent with one another and still feel safe.

We do all need however, for our own spiritual and emotional health, to have people that we can be transparent with on a deeper level – it might be a spouse, close friend, family, Pastor and Elders. It might be your connect group.

WHAT TRANSPARENCY IS NOT:

1. Being a dump truck and just spilling out everything that is going on in your life to every person you come across. We all know people who are ‘transparent’ in this way. But actually it’s usually all about attention – they feed off your reaction to them. Real transparency is being prepared to talk about what’s going on and then dealing with the issues.
2. ‘Ripping someone to shreds’ under the justification of being real and honest. We are encouraged to speak the truth in love. We need wisdom in our honesty!

I love Paul’s example of transparency in Romans 7v15-25

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do— this I keep on doing.

²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;

²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

²⁵ Thanks be to God— through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

This is the amazing Paul who had everything to lose by being that real about his struggle with sin, but still chose transparency over putting on a mask and pretending he had it all together. Jesus was seen in Him even though he wasn’t perfect, because he never justified or tried to hide his imperfections – he was real about them but kept trying to do better.

Transparency is like a window to your soul. What hinders that visibility?

1. Dirty windows

If the windows in your home are not clean, you can’t see in and out of them very clearly and when the sun shines on them you see all the dirt!

We need to care about what we take in that could dirty our soul – like what we watch or listen to and what we get involved in. We need to clean our windows regularly by keeping short accounts with God and others.

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

It's interesting that we chuck out the confession bit as something that Catholics do. But where did they get it from? God's Word! Yes okay, they threw in a few extras like penance and hail Mary's that are not biblical, but does that mean we throw the whole lot out? God knew there is power in telling someone what is going on in our lives – firstly, there is a lot of power in the shame of a secret that is broken when you tell someone, and secondly, there is power in agreement in prayer! Something to think about!

2. Tinted Windows

These are designed for privacy from the outside or to limit the intensity of the sun that shines through them in order to protect the contents inside from damage. You can see clearly out of them but cannot easily see in from the outside.

Are the windows to your soul tinted? Do you feel the need to protect what's inside?

Our windows can become tinted if we have had our trust broken so to achieve transparency here is about learning to trust again, little by little. Start by inviting trusted people in – perhaps just into the 'kitchen' until you can trust enough to take them deeper into your house, or your soul.

3. Boarded Windows

These windows are totally blocked to protect against storms. Back in the 1696, people boarded up some of their windows because William III introduced 'window tax'. People were taxed according to how many windows they had in their house. By boarding some of their windows up, people were able to pay less tax.

Are your windows boarded up so you don't have to pay the cost? Or are they boarded to keep you safe from storms?

There is a cost to transparency and there is the potential for storms if your windows are left unguarded. There is also a risk—someone might find out I'm a sinner in need of God's grace. Gasp!

But there is a greater cost if we are so closed up and protected that no one can see in. We won't know that unity with the body that God designed for us. We won't know what it is to be unconditionally loved and accepted, and we won't have the support we need from fellow Christians to get through this sometimes very difficult life.

And if we don't know that unconditional love and acceptance, both from our Christian brothers and sisters and from God, how on earth can we take that out into the world? How can the world see through us and see Jesus if we can't be real?

Is Jesus in disguise when He walks with you? Or is He able to be seen in your life?

It comes down to being congruent. What do I mean by that? I mean being consistent inside and out.

Agreement between what you believe and what you do. Consistency between who you are here at church and who you are out there in the world.

If you squeeze a lemon, what comes out? Would you get grape juice or lemon juice? LEMON JUICE. What comes out when we get squeezed? And would that depend on where we are at the time? If you get squeezed and there's not much of Jesus that comes out, don't spend your life trying to hide what really comes out, get it sorted. Get help. Jesus is into transforming us – He doesn't expect us to be overnight wonders!

We hide because we have this standard that we think we should attain, and if we're not there yet we feel ashamed and don't want anyone to know. Look again at the great Paul – how together was he?

Wouldn't it be great if every time we got squeezed, Jesus came out? Maybe in the next life...but we can keep working towards that can't we? Can we learn to say to one another here "I'm being squeezed at the moment and I don't like what's coming out, can you please pray with me?" Wouldn't it be better if the ugly came out here where people can pray with us and help us rather than out there in the world where they need to see Jesus?

I love what Jesus said in John 5v19: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

In Jesus' life, whatever He said or did, it was the Father that was constantly coming out of Him.

This is my prayer, whether it be here at church or out in the world. That when stuff happens I would be able to respond as Jesus would. I want Him to be more and more visible in my life which means I need to become more transparent.

I want to finish by saying one more thing to you all: **YOU HAVE PERMISSION HERE TO JUST BE YOU, WHATEVER IS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW, YOU'VE GOT FAMILY WHO LOVE YOU – LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER!**

Let's unite together and make the commitment to be a transparent family of imperfect believers who want Jesus to be so big in us that He is seen in our lives wherever we go.