

# Sincerity

## I. Introduction

### a. HASSAN STORY

- i. The rocks were not genuine. Even though they looked genuine and felt genuine, they were fake misrepresentations and therefore not sincere.

### b. Sincerity defined

- i. Sincerity is one of the key undergirding supports on which the whole framework of character stands.
  1. *Literally, to be sincere is to be genuine. It means to be free from pretense or deceit.*
  2. To be sincere is to be “the real thing.”
    - a. Hypocrisy is saying that we are one thing but doing something else. Hypocrisy is a misrepresentation of the “real thing”.
  3. Sincerity is something that you are. You can practice hospitality, you can practice service, you can even practice evangelism, but sincerity is something that you are. You cannot practice sincerity without actually being sincere.

### c. Sincerity in church and society

- i. In the world today, the lack of sincerity on the part of the church and the individual believers has caused great harm.
  1. People inside and outside the church see hypocrisy when we do not live what we say and when we act contrary to what God’s word teaches. This is why it is so horrible when those who profess Christ, deny him by their actions. They are not being genuine and they are not being sincere.
    - a. Without sincerity, my preaching is meaningless. If I speak and preach, but I am not sincere, if I am not genuine, then I deceive myself, I deceive those who listen, and I misrepresent what a preacher in Christ should be.
    - b. Without sincerity or genuineness, how can I say that I love my wife?
  2. When we are not sincere, when we are not real, people see right through that façade and see us as fake.
- ii. Why would our coworkers want Jesus when we never show them the real Jesus?
- iii. Why would our friends want to hear about Jesus when we have never sincerely portrayed Christ to them through the lives we live and the words we say?

### d. Afraid to be sincere.

- i. We live in a world that is afraid to be sincere. People are afraid to be genuine about their faith, their beliefs, and their convictions. Leaders are afraid to sincerely proclaim the truth of scripture.
  1. I am being completely sincere when I say:
    - a. That I believe every word this Bible says
    - b. That hell is real
    - c. I sincerely believe that I need to show Christ to a lost and unbelieving world.

### e. The necessity of sincerity

- i. Jesus talked about those who were fake.
  1. Mark 7:6-8, **“These people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”**
    - a. The Pharisees of Jesus day were much more concerned with their personal convictions than with the priorities of God.

- b. Unfortunately, in our day, that same battle rages on.
  - i. Studies and research shows that people leaving the church have two distinct perceptions about the church experience.
    - 1. Christians say one thing but live something entirely different.
    - 2. Christians are insincere and concerned only with converting others.
  - ii. Research shows that the most common reason for leaving the church was that “church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical.”
- f. Before we start drawing any conclusions or inferences, let us look at scripture and see what the Bible has to say about sincerity. Whenever we look at behavioral characteristics and lifestyle, we must first align our mindset and worldview with what the scripture says. This isn’t Pastor Nathan’s opinion; this is the authority of scripture.
- g. Remember that sincerity, is to live a life that is real, genuine, and without misrepresentation. So let’s look and see what that life looks like.

## II. Sun Tried

- a. The Bible is rich with the imagery of the potter and the clay. There are direct allusions to God as the potter, and there are subtle references to his work within us as the master potter. Today I want us to explore one of those subtle references of God’s work in our lives are the master potter forming us into who he wants us to be.
- b. Philippians 1:9-11 Unpackaged
  - i. Overview: Philippians 1:9, “**And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.**”
    - 1. Relation of the parts
      - a. Paul prays that the love of the Philippians church may abound in knowledge and insight. It is not to grow without guidance, infrastructure, or boundaries. It is a love that is to grow under divine knowledge and wisdom.
      - b. He prays that their love might abound in knowledge so that they might be genuine, and sincere.
      - c. The result of a sincere life that is characterized by divine love is a filling of the fruits of the spirit, fruits that flow out of the centrality of Christ in the believer’s life.
      - d. The ultimate purpose is the glory and praise of God.
  - ii. Philippians 1:9, “**And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight**”
    - 1. “Love”
      - a. A biblically defined love
        - i. Exemplified and lived by Christ
        - ii. 1 Corinthians 13, Paul details the different points of love
      - b. This is not a self defined or simply a romantic love; this is an all encompassing love.
    - 2. “Knowledge”
      - a. This word is in a more intensive form, detailing that the learner has a more active part in the acquiring of the knowledge. This knowledge is not passively obtained, but actively pursued.
    - 3. “Depth of insight”

- a. Unity of insight, or to get the whole unified picture of what is going on. This is a love that takes in the complete picture. This is a love that takes into account the different forms and activities of love. It is a love that takes into account compassion, tough truth spoken in love, confrontational love, sacrificial love, community love, and servant love. Paul is not just highlighting one form of love, but rather the whole picture. He says, “I want your love to be complete and well rounded by scriptural standards.”
- iii. Philippians 1:10, “so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,”
  - 1. Biblically defined sincerity
    - a. Ελικρινησ
      - i. This is a compound Greek word (ηελι and κρινω), with the first word meaning “*the shining or splendor of the sun*” and the second word meaning “*to judge, or to discern.*” The word together literally means of something that is genuine and able to bear scrutiny under the full splendor of the sun.
        - 1. Clay vessels in ancient times were held up to the sun to see if there were any defects or cracks that could not be seen by the naked eye. When the prospective buyer held the vessel up to the sun, the sun’s light would expose any imperfections.
        - 2. Sometimes a seller would put wax within the cracks or defects of the vessel to hide its imperfections. However, when the vessel was used, or simply after a period of time, the wax would melt or fall away, and the vessel would be useless.
    - b. “Sincere”
      - i. It is from this illustration that we get the English word, which is actually a Latin word, “sincere”. Sincere literally means, “without (*sin*) wax (*cere*)”. To be sincere, is to be genuine, or without wax.
        - 1. In past history, clay vessels were often stamped with the word “sincere” to denote that they were genuine and not defective.
        - 2. The word “sincerity” and the Greek word for “sun tried” carry the same illustrative meaning.
        - 3. In the NIV, Ελικρινησ, is translated “pure” which is a similar concept, but it would also be accurate to translate it as “sincere”, and might even be more true to the original illustration of the Greek text.
- c. Becoming a “Sun Tried” follower of Christ.
  - i. The sincere Christian is a sun tried vessel.
    - 1. The life of the believer is under the radiance of the light and righteousness of Christ, exposing sin, self, and the imperfections of the sinfulness of our flesh.
  - ii. When checking the genuineness of a clay vessel, the first step, is to make sure that it is “sun tried”. It needs to be discerned and judged by the full splendor of the sun’s light.
  - iii. The first step in becoming a sincere Christian is exposing our life to the light of the Son of God and let the radiance of His righteousness expose our life.

1. Most Christians never make it beyond this point. The thought of stepping out of the shadows and letting Christ expose what we are, terrifies us. It is easier to be a clay vessel that is kept in the shadows than to be honest about whom we are and expose our imperfections that we know are there. We have spent so much time hiding the cracks in our life, we don't dare to try and lose control and chance letting people see the real us.
  - a. What we get is a life of fear, knowing that our life is not what people see. We are a fake, and we know it and we live day to day making sure that the real us is never revealed.
  - b. We think we are protecting others, and ourselves but in reality, it is a sinful sense of self-control and deception. Instead of freedom in Christ, we are in bondage to self.
2. How do we "sun try" ourselves before the radiance of Christ?
  - a. First – We admit that we need to start measuring our life by what Christ expects and what the Bible dictates than by what we think or some psychology book says. We will never be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ until we allow our life to be defined by Christ.
    - i. Again, most of the time we think that we can hold up our façade and that we do not need anyone in our life. We can handle it.
  - b. Second – We immerse ourselves in the teaching and learning of scripture. How can we know what Christ desires us to be unless we first know what He has written?
  - c. Third – We engage ourselves in the accountability of the Christian community, which is the church.
    - i. This is perhaps the scariest part for the desiring to be "sun tried" Christian. This is the stage where we allow other people to see our imperfections and allow them to speak into our lives.
      1. This requires that we let go of our perceived control of our image.
      2. This requires that we let go of our pride.
    - ii. This does not mean that we expose the inner working of our lives to the entirety of the church, but it does mean that we pursue discipleship, accountability, and humbly submit to the leadership of the church of Christ.

### **III. Without Wax**

- a. As we are to expose our lives to the radiance of who Christ is, we must also be Christians without wax.
- b. The sincere Christian is a vessel without wax.
  1. The sincere Christian recognizes who he is before God, a broken and cracked vessel, humbly needing the grace of heaven to perfect us for his use.
  - ii. Remember that sincere means "without wax".
    1. Wax is that agent that masks our imperfections, defects, and weaknesses. It masks our self-love, our pride, and our sin.
    2. Pursuing Christ allows that wax to melt out of our lives. This is the process of sanctification. The process of destroying that in our lives that is not like Christ so what we might be clay vessels fit for his use.

- iii. Paul said that he desires that the Philippians believers grow in love in knowledge and in depth of insight, and it is that divine knowledge in Christ that will melt away the wax in our life so that we can be completely open for the masters use.
  - 1. That divine knowledge of who Christ is will engender a deep humility in Christ.
  - 2. We will be a vessel exposed with all of our frailties and cracks, saying “God, you’re right, I can’t do this without you. All of these cracks in my life are beyond me ability to patch.”
  - 3. This is the place of recognition of who Christ is and who we are. He is perfect, exposing sin. We are fallen, unable to do anything apart from his grace.
  - 4. We must realize that we are all cracked pots, and that we need to give each other grace. Part of becoming a sincere follower of Christ, is recognizing that other people are cracked as well, needing the grace of God in their lives.
    - a. We are imperfect, yet being perfected.
- c. Being without wax, is allowing people into our lives, and letting them see who we are. More than anything, it is allowing Christ to show us our brokenness. When we are Christians who have wax patching up the holes in our life, we forget our weaknesses and start to think that we are doing all right, and this is one of Satan’s greatest tools. Satan loves to put wax in our life, making us believe that we have it all together, all the while the radiance of Christ is shining through our imperfections.
  - i. Remember that in our weakness, the strength of Christ is made perfect.
    - 1. 2 Corinthians 12:9, **But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”**

#### IV. Christ Formed

- a. A vessel unto Christ.
  - i. The sincere Christian is a sun tried vessel.
    - 1. The life of the believer is under the radiance of the light and righteousness of Christ, exposing sin, self, and the imperfections of the sinfulness of our flesh.
  - ii. The sincere Christian is a vessel without wax.
    - 1. The sincere Christian recognizes who he is before God, a broken and cracked vessel, humbly needing the grace of heaven to perfect us for his use.
  - iii. The sincere Christian is a vessel being formed by Christ, the master potter.
    - 1. The believer submits to the breaking of the will by the Father in order to be renewed and reformed according to his will and his desire.
- b. Clay in the potter’s hand.
  - i. The potter forms the clay to be exactly what he desires.
  - ii. Jeremiah 18:1-10, **This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Go down to the potters house, and there I will give you my message.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”**
    - 1. God can form us into whatever he desires. As the potter works on the clay vessel, his desire is to bring forth a vessel that will be able to stand the test of being sun tried. He wants to bring forth a vessel that is without wax. He wants to form a vessel that will reflect His creative will.
      - a. Sometimes however, that clay needs quite a bit of kneading. Perhaps it is too dry. Perhaps there is a hard lump. It needs to be worked out before the potter can form it into something useful.

- b. In ancient times, in order to prevent a vessel from cracking and to help it become sturdier, the potter would use various tempering agents. One agent that was used was animal dung. Animal dung doesn't smell nice, it is ugly to work with, but as it is worked into the clay, it helps the clay vessel to become stronger than it would have been. When the clay vessel is fired, it is less likely to crack.
  - i. God is forming us into who he wants us to be. He wants us to be vessels that will glorify Him. He wants vessels that will be sun tried. He wants vessels that will be sincere, genuine. As he forms us after him, sometimes it is a painful process that takes him kneading certain things out of our lives. Sometimes he uses trials, like the animal dung, to temper us and make us stronger. They aren't pleasant at the time, but they help make us into a more effective vessel for His glory.
    - 1. James 1:2, **Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.**
- c. As sincere followers of God, we are to be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes from Jesus Christ. When we sincerely seek Christ, when we seek to live a life that is genuine before Him, we are vessels that can be filled beyond measure with the fruit and blessings of righteousness in Christ (**Ephesians 1**). A vessel that is not sincere is not fit to hold the riches of Christ. But a vessel that has been reformed by the hand of God, is then useful to bring glory to Him.
- d. God wants us to be vessels that are sincere, **"to the glory and praise of God."**
  - i. All of this comes so that Christ might be glorified. There is no greater calling and no greater satisfaction than to be vessels that are sincere, genuine and ready to be filled beyond measure with the limitless riches that are in Christ.

## V. CONCLUSION

- a. Do we desire to be a sun tried, without wax, Christ formed follower of Christ?
- b. Perhaps you have never repented of your sins and given your life to God. As the sovereign God, the master potter has the right to toss any clay that refuses to succumb. He has been working on your life, patiently trying to bring you to him, but you will just not submit. His patience will expire, and he will cast aside that clay into everlasting hell. May that not be you.