

## 9 – I WILL NOT DECEIVE MYSELF OR OTHERS

## 10 – I WILL KEEP MY FOCUS ON MY LIFE AND MY GOOD

Final Week of the 5-Week Series, "The 10 Commandments of Abundance"

September 6, 2023

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Okay; you ready?

So what is self-observation? And why is it important? And why should we maybe be practicing that as a spiritual tool?

See, I believe that self-observation is when we pay attention to our thoughts, feelings and actions. Because we tend to be on auto-pilot, so it gives us no sense of control; no opportunity for change. If we are just responding to life from an unconscious place, we tend to do that day after day, week after week, year after year. And as a spiritual being, we miss the opportunity.

[Phone rings] Jesus? [Congregation laughs] Man, if he's calling, I'm answering! Right? [Congregation laughs] I hope it's not my phone in the back ... Oh, well. Here we go.

So what happens with self-observation is that we have the opportunity to start paying attention -- without judgement -- on what we're thinking; what we're feeling; what we're doing. And in the act of observing it -- even if we don't try to change it -- just the act of observing our own behavior actually creates a moment of change. Because the moment we see what we're doing, we can really ... In that moment, we have an infinite opportunity to make a new choice. But if we continue to act from an unconscious place, then we're stuck in the old patterns, the old habits, the old ideas over and over again. And there's no room for movement; there's no room for change.

So part of pretty much every spiritual process is the need and the awareness that we need to be able to observe ourselves. We need to watch ourselves being us. And sometimes it's scary! Have you ever noticed yourself being you and it's like, "*Oh, my gosh! Who is in charge! That boy needs adult supervision!*" Right?

And what happens over and over again is that, when we can just observe -- when we create this observer as we watch ourselves and our behavior and our thoughts and our feelings -- as we watch ourselves, we can then make a new choice.

Because first -- our first job -- is to remember who we truly are. And as we remember who we truly are, we can then begin to see: Does this behavior, does this thought, does this feeling line up with my true identity? Is this expressing the best version of me? And from that point of view, we can make a change. We can go in a new direction.

And one of the things that's so important that we remember: That when we're involved in self-observation, it's fundamentally important that we be willing to expand our self-love. Now why is that? Because unless we also expand our self-love, all we're actually going to do is give ourselves more ammo for beating ourselves up. Has everybody had that experience? When you observe yourself and you think, "*Man, I am just a wacko here!*"? Right? "*This isn't working; I'm making bad choices. I'm thinking crazy thoughts. I feel terrible. And now I'm just going to beat myself up for all of those things!*" Instead of just saying, "*Oh! Isn't that adorable?*"

Let's say that together, shall we? [With congregation] "*Isn't that adorable?*"

One more time: [with congregation] "*Isn't that adorable?*"

And when we open our heart and can just observe our behavior and not get all bent out of shape -- but we can just observe our behavior -- when we can do it in love, then we can make a new choice. Because what would love have us do? What would love have us think? What is the feeling that we would link with love?

And as we choose that, we actually move into a higher level of being. Because the reality is that you were created in the image and likeness of God. And that's no small thing! And for most of us, that's our greatest project: that we don't fully believe that we're created in the image and likeness of God. Because we were taught at such an early age that we are broken or "less than" or not enough that we can't hold both.

So through the process of self-observation, we can begin to see all the ways that we believe that we are "less than." And then we make a new choice. And that choice actually frees us. It sets us free from all the destructive thinking that we have embedded in our consciousness, in our awareness.

*"I am created in the image and likeness of God."*

Will you say that with me? [With congregation]: *"I am created in the image and likeness of God."*

So this is the fifth week of a five-week series that I've been doing on the 10 commandments. And today we're going to focus on Commandments #9 and #10. And the ninth commandment is: "***Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.***" Right?

And I want you to really hold that for a minute. That one of the commandments that was so important -- you only get 10! One of the commandments that was so important is that we not bear false witness. Like, that's so important that we refrain from saying things about other people that aren't true.

Now, if we are asked to refrain from saying things about other people that are not true, can we imply that saying things about yourself that is not spiritually true is just -- or even more so -- problematic? And I want you to see, over and over again in your life, how many times you have borne false witness against yourself! How many times have you thought: "*I'm no good. I'm 'less than.' I'm broken. I'm lazy. I'm terrible.*" Whatever it was, right?

And we bear false witness so often about ourselves that we then find it relatively easy to bear false witness about others. That you won't do to another what you're not already doing to yourself.

And so tonight, I want us to really look at all the ways that you tell yourself that you are "less than." Because if we're going to live our greatest life -- if we're going to fully express all that God is within us -- we have to get our arms around this behavior that allows us to say things about ourselves and about others that is less than the highest spiritual truth.

And just because you believe it ... Even when you believe that you're "less than," it's still not true!

You know, if someone's going to bear false witness about you, there's two reasons they do it, right? Just two! One is out of malice. You know, if somebody's going to bear false witness about you, they might be jealous or they might be feeling petty, or whatever. And they're going to say, "*Well, did you see her do that? Or did you hear what this guy did over here?*" Right? Or, "*Did you hear what that guy the fourth cubicle down did or what he said?*" I mean, the reason we bear false witness is because we want to attack, and we don't want to do it straight out. We want to come about it sideways.

And the other reason that we bear false witness about others is that we have an inaccurate perception of them. And so we don't really think we're bearing false witness; we think we're being accurate.

And I want you to see how often you do both of those things to YOU. How often do you believe and you take yourself out because, to believe too much of yourself -- to believe too much in who you are as a

child of God, as an expression of the Divine -- is so threatening to our mindset of who we think we are that we take ourselves out.

And what if tonight you decide that you're going to hold a new image of you?

**See, the ninth prosperity commandment is: I will not deceive myself or others.** I will not deceive myself! I will not see myself in a way that's deceptive. I will not deceive myself as broken or "less than." I will not hold that about myself any longer! Because we actually believe that it's spiritually appropriate to think less about ourselves! And this is crazy! I mean, it is crazy!

How many of you were raised in a family that taught you not to get too big-headed? Not to think too highly of yourself? Not to be too impressed with yourself? And you're created in the image and likeness of God; if there's one thing in your life you should be impressed with, it's that you were created in the image and likeness of God! It doesn't get any better than that! Like, that's not an ego statement. That statement is spiritually true -- that you were created in the image and likeness of God!

**And that's our fundamental spiritual responsibility; it is our first responsibility to see ourselves spiritually accurate. And to no longer bear false witness to who you are.** And that every time you see yourself diminishing yourself, or talking yourself down, or taking actions that are less than expressing the fullness of who you are, what I want you to see is that you're violating the ninth commandment! You're actually bearing false witness of who you are and who you've come to be in the world.

Romans 7:15: *"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want. But I do the very thing that I hate. Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree that the Law is good. So then it's no longer I that is doing it, but the sin that dwells within me."*

And I love this one! So every time I bear false witness, it's not me that's doing this! [Congregation laughs] It's the sin that dwells within me! Right? It's, *"The devil made me do it!"* Like, I'm not responsible for that!

I mean, I love Paul's logic, right? Like, he wrote it in such a circular way that he has no responsibility to bearing false witness to himself: *"Why is it that I do the things I do? I didn't want to do them, so it couldn't have been me that was doing that! It had to be the sin! It had to be something else outside of me that took over my behavior and made me do it!"*

Today, what I want you to see is: this ninth commandment really is maybe the most challenging of all the commandments. It's because you don't have a right to diminish yourself ever, ever, ever again. You don't have a right to take yourself out. To belittle yourself. To make yourself feel small or inadequate or broken or "less than." You don't have that right! That's a violation of one of the 10 fundamental spiritual principles is that: You will not bear false witness.

Now, we think about other people, but we only take out other people after we've taken ourselves out a million other times. If you don't believe that you're broken, you're not going to see anybody else as broken! Because you know the struggle of what it took for you to overcome that attitude, that belief in your brokenness.

And when you begin to see yourself from the point of view of God -- when you begin to see yourself from that highest point of view -- you won't take anybody else out! Because you know that it's a collective process of everybody rising together.

*"I'm created in the image and likeness of God."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I'm created in the image and likeness of God."*

See, today what I want us to really hone in on is that, to really live these 10 prosperity commandments, it requires a systemic change. It's not about just adding a few nice little principles around the edges. It really is about changing the fundamental way you see yourself.

What if tonight you made an internal commitment that you were no longer going to see yourself as broken? That you were actually going to hold the image of you from the highest point of view?

Now, we worry that if we did that, we would become arrogant, narcissistic, self-centered. And I think just the opposite is true! If you really see yourself as a God expression -- as a God creation -- I believe that we become very focused on also helping the people around us see themselves from a higher point of view. It doesn't make us egotistical; it actually frees us to be the best and the greatest version of who we are!

So if you had to make a list of all the things that are wrong with you ... Like, we don't write that stuff down, but most of us have an internal list. Most of us have a list of all the things we think make us broken, "less than," unlovable. Name it! And what if tonight you had to get rid of your list? What if you had to give your list back to God? And what if tonight you no longer got to talk yourself down? You no longer got to bear false witness? You were created in the image and likeness of God! And it just is that way!

Now, does that mean that you've never made an interesting choice? How many of you think that you've made some pretty interesting choices in your life? [Congregation laughs] Right? [Laughs] I've got a handful -- right? -- of interesting choices! But when they define us is when it becomes problematic. When we can't say to ourselves, *"Wow! That was interesting, right? I'm going to try to get my arms around that one! That was kind of interesting! I wouldn't choose that one again!"*

But it doesn't define us! See, the problem is when our choices ... When we begin to believe that our choices impact our nature. And that's a God thing! Your nature was God-given. And your nature can never be corrupted. If you've made every bad choice -- choice after choice after choice -- your essence is still intact! You are still created in the image and likeness of God.

*"I am God's creation."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I am God's creation."*

Alright. So number nine says that we will no longer deceive ourselves or others. And I will share myself and others, and allow myself to be an open expression of God. Number nine.

Number 10. **Number 10 is: Thou shall not covet.** Exodus 20:17 says this: *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his manservant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey, or anything else that is your neighbor's."*

[Laughs] You know, it's been a while since I've coveted my neighbor's donkey. [Congregation laughs] Right? And we think, *"Oh, that's just easy, right? My neighbor can have all the oxen he wants, and I'm pretty much good with that ... as long as his oxen don't come into my yard, we're good to go!"* Right?

But what I want you to see: Have you ever been on Facebook and said to yourself, *"I wish my vacation had been that good!"*? Right? Or, *"I wish I would have had my family experience look like that."* Or, *"I wish my life or my thighs or my whatever looked like that."*

And what I want you to see is that, for many of us, *"Thou shall not covet"* is really something that we have to pay attention to in our world today. I don't think over the last several thousand years this has really changed that much! In fact, I think it's actually gotten harder! Because we actually can compare ourselves more and more and more with other people than we ever had before! If you lived in a small

village somewhere in the Middle East, and there were 20 families around you, there would only be 20 people you could compare yourself to. But now on Facebook you have hundreds and hundreds of people to compare yourself with! And you can always find somebody who, when you compare yourself to them, you feel like you come up short!

And what if tonight the real opportunity here is to allow all of your desires -- all of your wants and needs -- to be God-focused? That, instead of looking at *"Thou shall not covet, coven, coven ... Thou shall not cov ..."* Say it! [Congregants: *"Covet!"*] Covet! Thank you! (Instead I will say): I will keep my focus on my life, my good and my desires.

*"I will keep my focus on my life, my good and my desires."*

Will you say that with me? [With congregants]: *"I will keep my focus on my life, my good and my desires."*

See, envy is the feeling of discontent or resentment. It's a longing aroused by someone else's possessions, their qualities or their luck. And tonight, the real blessing of this process is: The more we allow other people's stuff to distract us, the more it moves our focus off our internal relationship with God. Like, if you see somebody with the latest shiny bell or whistle and you think, *"Man, I gotta get me one of them! I might need two! I might need one in red and one in blue!"* Right? What happens is: Now our focus is external instead of internal.

And our spiritual life really is a journey of moving more and more into ourselves and asking ourselves the question: What is it that I really desire? What is it that I really need? What is it that I really want? And it's not always out here!

You know, it used to be ... When my mom was a kid, she would tell us, they couldn't wait for the Sears Roebuck catalog to get there so they could pick out what their desires were for Christmas. Right? And she'd go through page by page, she would tell us, looking at all the stuff and all the toys. *"Look at all that stuff!"* And I'm thinking, *"How easy is that?!?"* Two hundred pages! We can go on the Internet, and we can get two billion pages of things that are desires that we could have!

But the problem is still the same: It's looking outside yourself instead of looking within yourself. And really being aware of what your soul wants and needs to be the best version of you.

Tonight, what if you could only look within for every desire? Because desire's not the problem! Every great thing that we've done in our life -- every great thing we've done in the world -- is because a desire led us to create more, to express more, to live a greater, happier, more wonderful life. The problem becomes when we keep looking outside ourselves instead of really listening to the Spirit of God within us!

We live in an infinite universe. You can have whatever you want! But we waste so much time and energy creating the things that we see "out there," instead of really listening to what the Spirit of God wants to give us from within our own soul.

So tonight, what do you want? What does your soul want? And are you willing to truly listen to what the Spirit of God in you wants to give you to move your life forward?

As you trust the God in you; as you listen to the God in you; as you believe in the God in you, everything that you want and need will be provided! But if your focus moves externally, there's no peace out there. Because there's always the latest and the greatest and the newest and the best. And when we live out there, it's constant work to get whatever the next thing is.

So what does your soul want?

See, the two things I want you to hear tonight is: I want you to hear me clearly say that your number one job is to be able to see yourself the way God sees you. To hold that vision for you. And the second thing I want you to hear me say tonight is that: Every time you look within, God knows exactly how to meet your needs. God knows exactly how to provide for you. God knows exactly what the highest and the best is for you.

If we keep our focus "out here," it's kind of willy nilly. But if we keep our focus within, then everything that we need is provided.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul just to you. And I want you to see yourself in a new way tonight. I want you to see yourself from the highest point of view. I want you to let go of all images that you're "less than" or broken or unlovable. And I want you to see yourself as a magnificent expression of God. And then when you can really hold that you're magnificent -- that you truly are magnificent; that you are a magnificent expression of God -- what's the greatest level of good that you can imagine for you? What does your soul really want? What do you truly long for?

And tonight, I want you to hold that. To see yourself in a new way and to create your life from the inside out. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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