

# Indecent Exposure

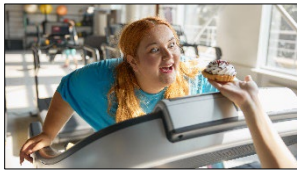
## Bringing Sin to the Surface

March 10, 2024

Today we're using the *trouble in our lives to seek and destroy the sin in our hearts*. Cuz, with God, even *adversity* works out to our *advantage!* Cuz *God is good* – and that's *how*

We know that all things work together *for good* to those *who love God* – Romans 8:28 NKJ

So, the big question is, if *everything good* hinges on our *love of God*: **How do you know if you're full of it?** Cuz you're full of *something!* *Everyone* has to *live for something* – cuz *something* has to give our lives a *purpose* – cuz we won't do *anything without* a good reason!



So, we *all* search for the most *reasonable* reason to *live* life, and *whatever* we choose becomes the desire of our heart. And as *each* life is lived in pursuit of *its* desire, **each reason reveals its quality by what it produces.**



And this idea was echoed by award-winning, best-selling novelist David Foster Wallace, who *lost* his life-long struggle to *find* that reason in 2008 when he committed suicide. And although he came *close* to making Jesus his reason *twice*, he *couldn't* bring himself to *commit*, and before his death, he hinted at his struggle in a now- famous *commencement speech*:



***“There is actually no such thing as atheism ... Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And ... pretty much anything you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things ... then you will never have enough ... Worship your own body ... and you will always feel ugly ... Worship power [and] you will feel weak and afraid ... Worship your intellect, ... [and] you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.”***

Doesn't it break your heart to see someone *so close!* Because he's *right* – *down here*, no earthly purpose has *ever* proven to produce the *one* thing we all *really* want out of life; more *life!* But that's *why* God's Word steps in to *spell things out* and remind us *how things work* in this world:

Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. – Galatians 6:8 NIV

Y'see, where David Foster Wallace *grew weary* and *gave up*, **Christian life continues by making the Spirit's desire our reason to live.** And that means it's *critical* to confirm that we're filling our hearts with what the *Spirit* wants! Just listen how *important* Scripture says it is:

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. – Proverbs 4:23 NIV

So, since it's absolutely *imperative*, how do we positively *know* we got the *right* stuff in our heart? Well, Scripture *just* told us! Cuz if *everything we do* – flows from our heart, we can look at our *lives* to discover what's filling our *heart*. To follow Scripture's analogy, **what we plant in our heart is what we grow in our lives!** And if we want to be sure *our* true desires are in fact, *Spiritual* seeds, all we have to *do* is **check the produce!** Cuz *your* life is producing *something* but –



The fruit of the *Spirit* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; [because it's a very basic principle:] – Galatians 5:22-23 ESV



No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. [Therefore,] Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. ... [And likewise,] A good man brings good things out of the good stored up *in his heart*, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up *in his heart*. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. – Luke 6:43-45 NIV

[So,] Be very careful, then, *how you live* – *not as unwise* but as *wise* [aka]... be filled with the Spirit, [cuz one leads to the other!]- Ephesians 5:15, 18 NIV



Get it? **Wise living and Spirit filling are two sides of the same coin!** Which means it *all* comes down to *quality* control in the *produce* department! But – if we need to have the *right heart* to see *eternal life*; and to see the *right heart*, we need to *have* the *right fruit*; that begs the question, **what's the best way to see our fruit?** Cuz love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control *aren't always* visible. That is, they're *hard* to see while watching *Netflix* or pumping *gas*.



Well, that brings us to what Aaron and Bruce have been talking about the last couple weeks: Facing our fears and testing our mettle. *To explain*, imagine I've got a glass of water and I shake it. What *happens*? It spills. *Why*? Well, our *instinctive* answer is, "**Water spilled because you shook it.**" But what if I had a glass full of *milk*? Would *water* spill out? *No!* Because *shaking* doesn't spill *water*, it spills *contents*. So, the *more correct* answer is, "**Water spilled from the glass cuz water filled up the glass.**" It's just simple logic: **You can only spill what you fill.** And when stuff gets *shaken*, whatever *spills* out *reveals* what *filled* it up. Well, same goes for *us!*

**Whatever fills us, spills from us when life gets shaken up.** So, if you're *concerned* with the contents of *your* container, that's *great news* cuz it's a golden opportunity to *see* what you're full of!

And in the same way – to return to the *Bible's* analogy – if we want to check our *produce*, **a little adversity shakes the fruit loose from our tree.**

So, are you *thanking* the Lord for giving you the *opportunity* to check your heart through all the *turmoil* in your *uncomfortable, unstable* life? Probably *not*. But that's *normal*, cuz *Christian curiosity* makes it *easy* to forget, **life isn't about questioning God, it's about God questioning us.**

And though it's *common*, that's a *huge* mistake! Because *our* hearts need to be *constantly* questioned to *root out* all the bad *seeds* we're growing into bad *trees*; *until* we get it *right*!



It's a lot like the story of the *bird* and the *lumberjack*. Y'see, this *logger* goes to mark all the trees to be *cut down* the next day and comes across this little *mama bird* *trying* to build a *nest* in one of the trees he's marking. And knowing that she's *unaware* of her mistake, his *compassion* kicks in, he spins his axe around, and *thumps* the tree until everything falls out and she flies away. But seeing that she started *again* in another *marked* tree, the lumberjack *follows* and knocks things down *again*. And after chasing her through a *dozen* different trees, the *bird* – who's *gotta* be thinking, **“Why does this lumberjerk love torturing innocent birds?!”** – finally flies up to a *rock ledge* where, *at last*, she could *nest in peace*! And the *moral* of the story is, **we're all up a tree until we build on the Rock!** Cuz the *fact* of the matter is, **every tree in this world is coming down** and the *effect* of that fact is, **everything built on them will be lost.**

And if we can't see *ourselves* making *that* mistake, it's actually incredibly *kind* to shake our *trees* until we change our *ways*. Cuz with *each* adversity, we're *prompted* to ponder, **“Where am I going wrong?”** And that's *the* key question that every fruit inspector needs to *obsess* over because:

There is a way that *appears* to be right, but in the end it leads to death. – Proverbs 14:12 NIV

It's *hard* to spot rotten fruit right away. Sometimes we mistakenly identify *anger* as *goodness* or *idolatry* as *love*; cuz us Christians *can be* a little *too eager* to confirm our eternal life. But it's *vital* that we *actually* get it right – not just *believe* that we got it right. Cuz as Paul points out,

My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. – 1 Corinthians 4:4 NIV

All your *fruit* can be *good* and you can still be a *bad farmer*. Cuz a crop of perfect *potatoes* doesn't make you a good *apple* farmer. *Apples* make you a good apple farmer! And in the same way, all the *patience* in the world doesn't mean you're *peaceful*. *Bad fruit* *isn't* the *only* sign of sin; **missing fruit also means we're missing the mark**. Because **the Spirit doesn't want any good seed to go unsown!** So, *thankfully*, God's committed to *constantly* shaking things up, to *keep* us questioning our ways, even when we think our fruit is fine. Just ask the epitome of adversity, Job. Cuz

[Job] was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. – Job 1:1 NIV

And *yet*, God agrees to let him *lose* all his *kids*, *wealth*, *health*, *comfort*, and *control* without warning. And in *response* to the tragedies, the good seeds in his heart are easily seen in his *speech*:

[Job said:] The LORD *gave* and the LORD has *taken away*; **[but,]** may the name of the LORD be praised." In *all this*, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. – Job 1:21-22 NIV

**[But, as the suffering went on, everyone started to ask why, and Job got testy:]** Oh, that I had *someone* to hear me! I sign now my defense, let the Almighty answer me – Job 31:35 NIV



Right there, *Ol' Flawless Fruit* himself, *shows* what he's *missing* by making a big *mistake*; he bases his case on all the fruit *he can see* – *without* considering the *possibility* of a deficiency he *can't* see. So, in the *middle* of his misery, *God* flips the script to kindly *remind* him *how* His plan works:

Then the LORD spoke to Job *out of the storm* ... "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me." – Job 38:1-3 NIV



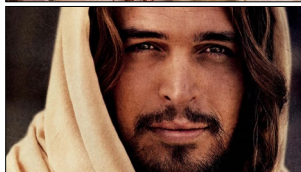
And after a couple chapters of questions way *above* his paygrade, Job *realizes*: **being righteous takes more than not doing wrong; it takes doing everything right.** The trouble is, *that's* impossible for us humans who *don't* know what it is we *don't* know! But, just knowing *that* –



Then *Job* answered the LORD: "I am unworthy—how can I reply to You? I put my hand over my mouth. **[Which was righteous!]**" – Job 40:3-4 NIV



Cuz in *that* moment, Job *learned* **it's not about what we know but Who we know.** Cuz only the Creator can *fully* understand His creation. So, **have you put your hand over your mouth?** Until we *stop* subconsciously believing we can do life *right*, we're challenging God's authority. And it can be seen spilling out in every secretly *selfish statement* we *make* and subtly *judgmental action* we *take*. But like Job, we have to empty ourselves of every desire other than God because **the closest we can come to knowing perfect is knowing Who is perfect!** And because that relationship *is* the Spirit's *#1* desire, Jesus came and gave us all the opportunity for the *same* one-on-one Job had with God.



Cuz y'see, Job lost *all* his *kids*, *wealth*, *health*, *comfort*, and *control*, but make sure you hear this: *So will you!* That's part of every single person's story down here! It's just a matter of *time*, but *everything* you've ever *worked* for *will* be lost, *everyone* you've ever *loved* *will* die, and you *won't* get to decide *when* or *where*. **The only choice we have in suffering is how to respond.** Because *that's its purpose!* It's our big God-given opportunity to see if *we're* growing the love of God that leads to life *before* we come face-to-face with death! So, I'll ask again, if *everything good* hinges on our *love of God*: **How do you know if you're full of it?** Well, that's actually the easy part:

Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. – 1 John 4:21 NIV

Cuz **if the love of the Lord is in your heart, it grows in your life as the love of others.** And your life will get shaken time and time again so you can check what you produce for any flawed or missing fruit! Maybe you'll lose your dream job to see if your joy was real; maybe you'll lose an argument so you can check the quality of your gentleness; or maybe you'll lose your control to see the state of your faithfulness. But regardless of what happens, **if your life isn't producing a sacrificial, selfless, and sincere love for others – you need a new tree!**

And that only happens when you **put your hand over your mouth, let God question you by your fruit, and then love Him enough to trust** that every time your life gets *shaken* – He's just leading you back into His presence as the only Rock where *you* can nest in peace!