

Osaka International Church
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Title: "True Spirituality"

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Key verse: Galatians 2:20 – "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (NASB)

Good morning, everyone. It is good to see you all again. The title of my message today is "True Spirituality." I have taken this title from a book written by one of my favorite authors, a man I have mentioned to you several times before: Francis Schaeffer. He was my favorite Christian author when I was in my 20's and his books helped shape some of my perspectives on living the Christian life. His book entitled "True Spirituality" in many ways outlines the heartbeat of my Christian life, and that is why I wish to share the basic ideas of that book with you today. Last year, I presented a sermon to you on this book and today I would like to share that message with you again, though I have made a few changes to my original message. In many ways, this book "True Spirituality" outlines the heartbeat of the ministry that Francis Schaeffer started in the 1950's, after he had gone through a period of deep spiritual distress and a rethinking of his whole approach to Christian faith and Christian ministry. After ten years as a pastor in America and five years as a missionary in Europe (in Switzerland), he began noticing a problem in his own life and in the way his fellow Christians were living and ministering. What he noticed was a certain lack of reality ... that what the Bible said ought to mark the lives of Christians was not very much in evidence in the lives of himself and his contemporaries. After this period of spiritual crisis and searching the Scriptures and rethinking his approach to the Christian life, he and his wife left their mission agency and they began a brand new ministry there in Switzerland. Francis and Edith Schaeffer called this ministry "L'Abri Fellowship." The word "l'abri" is a French word meaning "the shelter," and they intended the ministry to be a place of shelter where both Christians and non-Christians could come to ask questions and get solid answers from the Bible. Modern philosophies and modern skepticism present various challenges to Christian faith, and Schaeffer designed this ministry to be a place where people could find honest answers to honest questions. Many people have visited L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland and also the second branch in England and have found help there. I myself studied twice at the England branch, in 1986 and 1991, and I found there a place where I could solidify a firm foundation to my Christian life.

Before I give you the framework of "True Spirituality" that Schaeffer described in his book, I would like to mention one of his most famous lectures, in which he outlines the basic foundational concepts of his ministry, because it seems to me that these make for a good foundation for any Christian endeavor. The lecture is entitled "Two Contents, Two Realities," (though it also has an alternative title: "Form and Freedom in the Church"). You can find the text of this lecture online (for example: <https://lausanne.org/content/form-and-freedom-in-the-church>). Let me tell you the two contents and the two realities, the foundation of Schaeffer's ministry:

The first content is this: Sound Doctrine. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God to mankind. The Bible is God's word to us, it is the source of our knowledge of God, and we must stand on the central teachings in the Scriptures. We must reject any liberal theology that would say the Bible is something less than this.

2nd Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) – "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

That is the first content: Sound Doctrine.

The second content is something I mentioned a few minutes ago: Honest answers to honest questions. Thoughtful answers from the Bible. Too often, Christians have not wanted to engage in answering some of the tough questions that people have. Too often, when a Christian or a non-Christian has a deeply troubling question, they are told to, quote: “Don’t ask questions, just believe.” I think that is not helpful and it’s not responsible. L’Abri Fellowship was founded as a place where all honest questions are dealt with in a loving and respectful way, and answered with Scriptural insights.

1st Peter 3:15 (NASB) – “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect.”

Two contents. And two realities.

The first reality is this: True Spirituality. This is what Francis Schaeffer discovered during that troubling period in his life when he was questioned his approach to the Christian life and Christian ministry. This is the main topic of my sermon today and I will come back to it in a moment.

Galatians 2:20 (NASB) – “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

The second reality is this: The beauty of human relationships. Human relationships. Beauty. Christianity is not just truth – it is also beauty. And there is nothing more important on this earth than human relationships. The Bible teaches us that men and women are made in the image of God. We are each unique and special in God’s creation. Modern man wishes to detract from this truth and say that mankind is just another animal, evolved from lower forms of life. No – we stand against this idea. Men and women were made in the image of God, able to have a relationship with God and also to relate to each other. Every human being is unique and special in God’s sight, and every human being should be special in our sight as well.

Genesis 1:27 (NIV) – “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

That is a brief description of Francis Schaeffer’s two contents and two realities. Next, I would like to move on to a description of Schaeffer’s conception of True Spirituality.

Here is the outline of today’s message:

Part 1 – The starting point of the spiritual life.

Part 2 – A caution against legalism and a caution against anti-legalism.

Part 3 – The heart of God’s law.

Part 4 – Rejected, slain, raised.

First, let’s look at Part 1 – The starting point of the spiritual life.

You can hardly live a truly spiritual life, in the Christian sense, without first having become a Christian. And how does one become a Christian? Is it by being born into a Christian family and being raised in a Christian environment? No, not that way. That might be helpful in showing you the path to Christ, but that alone won’t make you a Christian.

How about by trying to live a good life and doing good deeds? Again: this is not the way to become a Christian, according to what we read in the pages of the New Testament.

The way to become a Christian is to accept Christ as Savior. John 1:12 (NIV) – “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Colossians 2:6 (NASB) – “Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

John 14:6 (NIV) – “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The way to become a Christian is to receive Jesus, to accept Him, to believe in Him. And Jesus is the only way to God the Father. Salvation comes through the door of faith, faith in Jesus.

John 3:16 (NIV) – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Let me tell you a bit of the story of how I came to accept Christ. I have told you before about the excellent Sunday School program I attended as a child, and the excellent summertime Christian education programs my mother sent her sons to. That was where I received a thorough explanation of the whole Bible story. As important as this input was, that is not enough, just to know the gospel story. During my teenage years, I recalled something important that I had heard in those earlier programs: that there will come a day when you need to make your own decision to follow Christ. It's not enough just to be raised in a Christian environment. As I heard one preacher later put it: “There comes a time when you have to MAKE IT YOUR OWN.” You need to decide to own this gospel message yourself, to put your faith in it, put your faith in Jesus Christ. I recalled this principle during my teenage years, but I hesitated to act on it for a variety of reasons.

It wasn't until my college years, after I had struggled through some nagging doubts about whether Christianity was true or not, that I finally made my own decision. During those years, I had read some useful apologetical books answering various questions that are often raised against Christianity. Those books were useful to some degree, because they had helped to remove some roadblocks to faith. But I realized that being intellectually persuaded that Christianity is true was not quite enough either. Intellectual assent that Christianity is true isn't enough to bring you to a right relationship with God. I was very much aware that I was a sinner who needed to repent and put my trust in Christ. What amazed me so much at that period in my life was how the Bible answers so much of our basic questions in life: where we came from, why we have so many problems with each other and troubles inside our own hearts, why we see so many problems in the world around us ... and the Bible also tells us what the solution to our problem is. It was on Palm Sunday of my second year in college that I accepted Christ as my Savior and put my trust in Him.

It is by the door of faith that we are saved. Not by our works. Not by going to church. Not by intellectual assent that this message is true. In order to restore our relationship with God, it was God Himself who provided the solution. God sent His Son to this earth to be the sacrifice for our sin. This is how Francis Schaeffer describes it:

All men are separated from God by their true moral guilt. God exists, God has a character, God is a holy God, and when men sin they have true moral guilt before the God who exists... Only the finished, substitutionary work of Christ on the cross as the Lamb of God – in history, space, and time – is enough to remove this. ... It is the infinite value of the finished work of Christ, the second person of the Trinity, upon the cross, plus nothing on our part, that is the basis for the removal of our guilt. When we thus come, believing God, the Bible says we are declared justified by God; the guilt is gone, and we are returned to fellowship with God – the very thing for which we were created in the first place.

Just as the only basis for the removal of our guilt is the finished work of Christ upon the cross in history, plus nothing, so the only instrument for accepting that finished work of Christ upon the cross is faith.

There are some important words here to remember. The basis for the removal of our guilt is the finished work of Christ on the cross. Remember Jesus' last words on the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30). There is nothing we add to that work of Christ. We simply accept it through faith. It is the finished work of Christ on the cross which so impressed Francis Schaeffer during his spiritual crisis in the 1950's. We rest in that finished work, we take it as the foundation of our life from now on, and we live our lives on that basis.

There is one more word in that quotation from Francis Schaeffer which I want to highlight. He said that "When we thus come [to Christ], believing God, the Bible says we are declared justified by God; the guilt is gone..." Declared justified. This is the doctrine we call Justification. It happens at one moment in time, when we place our trust in Christ. God declares our guilt gone, because Christ paid the penalty for our sins on the cross.

There is another important word we must highlight: Sanctification. This is a process, not a one-time event. Whereas justification happens at a moment in time, sanctification is the moment-by-moment living of the Christian life. Let me quote from Schaeffer again:

We must not think that because we have accepted Christ as Savior and therefore are Christians, this is all there is in the Christian life. ... After we are born [physically], the important thing is the living of our lives in all their relationships, possibilities, and capabilities. It is exactly the same with the [spiritual] new birth. In one way, the new birth is the most important thing in our spiritual lives, because we are not Christians until we have come this way. In another way, however, after one has become a Christian, it must be minimized, in that we should not always have our minds only on our new birth. The important thing after being born spiritually is to live. There is a new birth, and then there is the Christian life to be lived. This is the area of sanctification, from the time of the new birth, through this present life, until Jesus comes or until we die.

The word "sanctification" comes from the word "sanctify," which basically means "to make holy." Being holy means being separated from the world and dedicated to God. In sanctification, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to overcome sin in our lives and become more like Christ. The *Lexham Survey of Theology* has this to say:

Sanctification ... is not simply ethical conformity but the conformity of one's entire life into the image of God. ... Christians are enabled to do good works that please and honor God, love and serve others, and represent God's character and ways before the world.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV) – "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Timothy 2:21 (ESV) – "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy [sanctified], useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work."

Colossians 1:10 (NASB) – "So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

As I said before, sanctification is a moment-by-moment living of the Christian life. The process won't actually be complete until we reach heaven. We won't do this perfectly, so don't try to be perfect, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can make progress. The main thing is that we need to live lives faithful to the gospel, and we need to continue day by day.

Next, I would like to move to Part 2 of today's message. Francis Schaeffer goes on to discuss some unbalanced ways people have approached the matter of living their life after accepting Christ.

Part 2 – A caution against legalism, and a caution against anti-legalism.

In many Christian groups, Christians desirous of living holy lives and who wish to separate from the world's ungodly ways have drawn up a list of do's and don't's that they believe need to be adhered to if we are to lead sanctified, God-honoring lives. They make rules ... for example: no smoking, no drinking alcohol, no dancing, no movies, etc., etc. About this kind of legalism, Schaeffer has this to say:

Often, after a person is born again, ... he is given a list of things, usually of a limited nature, and primarily negative. Often, he is given the idea that if he does not do this series of things he will be spiritual. This is not so. The true Christian life, true spirituality, is not merely a negative not-doing of any small list of things. Even if the list began as a very excellent list of things to beware of in that particular historic setting, we must still emphasize that the Christian life, or true spirituality, is more than refraining from a certain external list of taboos in a mechanical way.

Because this is true, there almost always comes into being another group of Christians which rises up and begins to work against such a list of taboos. ... Both of these groups can be right and both can be wrong, depending on how they approach the matter.

I used to be one of those people who detested those lists of taboos. But such an attitude can be too severely negative. That's why I have titled Part 2 of today's sermon "A caution against legalism, and a caution against anti-legalism."

Schaeffer had originally belonged to a strict denomination that emphasized these kinds of lists as a way of living lives that were separate from the world and its corrupting influences. But when he had his spiritual crisis in the 1950's, he realized the weaknesses of this kind of legalistic system and he began to shun many of these taboos. But when we do such a thing, we must be mindful of what true Biblical living is all about. We need not follow legalistic rules, but in our rejection of such legalism, we must be careful. Schaeffer continues:

But we must see that in giving up such lists, in feeling the limitation of the 'list' mentality, we must not do this merely in order to live a looser life: *it must be for something deeper*. So I think that both sides can be right and both sides can be wrong. We do not come to true spirituality or the true Christian life merely by keeping a list, but neither do we come to it by rejecting the list.

When I came of age in the 1970's, I heard numerous preachers such as John MacArthur make criticisms of these kinds of lists (no smoking, no drinking, no dancing). I initially had a bad attitude toward legalistic Christians. But then MacArthur, and also Schaeffer, pointed me to Romans chapter 14. I don't have time today to go through this chapter in detail, but here you will find the Apostle Paul criticizing certain Christians who follow certain legalistic rules, since those rules are essentially unnecessary. Nevertheless, Paul notes that the motivation behind their practice is a good one: they do desire to honor God. Paul then criticizes those Christians who would deliberately break some of those rules in front of their brothers' eyes and thus offend their brothers. To do such a thing is not walking by the law of love. For example, some Christians might not want to follow taboos about refraining from certain foods, so they go ahead and they eat some food with no consideration about how their action could disturb the sensibilities of their Christian brothers. This could really be disruptive to your brother's walk with the Lord.

Paul says in Romans 14:15 (NASB) – "For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking in accordance with love. Do not destroy with your choice of food that person for whom Christ died."

Do not destroy with your choice of food that person for whom Christ died.

If you were to decide not to follow those legalistic lists of do's and don't's, you should do so in a way that would not offend or disrupt the faith of your brother or sister.

And if we were to discard such kinds of lists, what kind of rules should we follow instead?
That brings us to the next part of my message.

Part 3 – The heart of God’s law.

We need not follow those man-made legalistic rules.
But when we discard them, what are we left with?

Answer:

The Ten Commandments.

And...

The “Law of Love,” as expressed in verses such as Romans 14:15 which I quoted a few minutes ago. And in such verses as Romans 13:8 (NKJV) – “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

The Ten Commandments ... and the Law of Love.

I’m sure you’re familiar with the Ten Commandments.

Let’s look at Exodus chapter 20 (NASB). Beginning with verses 2 and 3.

Verse 2 – “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

Commandment #1, verse 3 – “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Commandment #2, verses 4-6 – make no idols.

Etc., etc.

And Commandment #10, verse 17 – “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male slave, or his female slave, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Again, Commandment #10 – “You shall not covet ...”

You shall not covet ...

What does “covet” mean? It means to desire something excessively. To desire. To crave something. That is *an internal* impulse. In your heart. That final commandment tells us we must not crave to possess our neighbor’s house, or his wife, or his servants, or anything belonging to him. This very craving for something that is not our own is also a sin that God expressly forbids in the Ten Commandments. God is not only giving us a list of commands forbidding certain actions, but He is also forbidding these inward cravings.

Let’s return to Francis Schaeffer for a moment. At the end of his discussion on those lists of taboos, he says this:

However, eventually the Christian life and true spirituality are not seen as outward at all, but inward. The climax of the Ten Commandments is the Tenth Commandment ... The commandment not to covet is an entirely inward thing. ... It is an intriguing factor that this is the last command that God gives us in the Ten Commandments and thus the hub of the whole matter...”

This is the hub of the whole matter. It’s all about the heart. This brings to mind what Jesus was saying in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew 5:21-22 (ESV) – “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”

Verses 27-28 (ESV) – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart’.”

To be angry with your brother is equivalent to murder. And to look lustfully at a woman is equivalent to adultery. How many of us are guilty of these things? It is not only the outward action that is forbidden but also the inward craving is an offense before God and is something that makes us guilty. God cares not only about our actions but also the inward motivations and cravings of our heart.

Jesus goes on to say more in Mark 7:20-23 (ESV) – “And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him.²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

God really cares about our hearts. We must be careful to guard them. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) – “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

Let me quote for you what Jesus told us was the greatest commandment. Matthew 22:37b-39 (ESV) – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

It was these kinds of insights that led Francis Schaeffer during his crisis period to understand the reasons why he had felt such a lack of reality in his own life and the lives of his contemporaries. They were following an external list of do’s and don’t’s, without the right heart and without the power of the Holy Spirit. They often lacked genuine Christian love. And they were not answering their generation’s tough questions related to the existence of God and to the Christian gospel. With his realization of the principles I’ve outlined for you today, he reordered his life and his ministry priorities. And he has helped countless people of his generation and my generation put their Christian life on a firm foundation.

Let us move on to the last part of today’s message.

Part 4 – Rejected, slain, raised.

As you hear these words, of course you get the image of Jesus and the last weeks of His ministry on earth. Let’s take a look at what Jesus told His disciples, in Luke 9:22 (KJV) – “Saying, ‘The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day’.”

Rejected by the religious leaders, and even by many of the people.

Slain by the Romans, at the request of the religious leaders.

Raised on the third day.

This is an outline of the last weeks of Jesus’ time on earth. But there is to be a parallel to this outline in our own lives as His followers. Let’s continue reading.

Luke 9:23-24 (NKJV) – “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it’.”

If we desire to follow Jesus, we will face rejection by other people. However, this is not the type of rejection we are reading about in these verses in Luke chapter 9. In verse 23 we read that anyone

who desires to follow Christ must “deny himself.” We reject our own ambition, and of course we need to reject sin in our life. Reject self. Reject sin.

Titus 2:12 (ESV) – “Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”

Romans 6:19 (NASB) – “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented the parts of your body as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your body’s parts as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”

Rejection of self and rejection of our old life. And then also: death. Luke 9:23-24 says we are to “take up our cross daily” and if we “lose our life for Christ’s sake, we will save it.”

Galatians 6:14 (NIV) – “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

We have died to the ways of the world.

But that is not the end of the story, just as Jesus’ death was not the end of His story.

Galatians 2:20 (NASB) – “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

We have been “crucified with Christ.” And today though we still are living in these bodies, it is Christ living His life through us, and we live our lives on this earth by faith in the Son of God.

Romans 6:3-4 (ESV) – “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

We were “buried” with Him, which is pictured by our baptism. We are also “raised” with Christ. And we are to live new lives, conformed more and more to the image of Christ. This is the essence of the lives we are to lead as Christians: dead to sin and self, raised to a new life that honors Him.

I will conclude my sermon today with some more words from Francis Schaeffer:

The order is in three steps: rejected, slain, raised. This speaks of his coming unique and substitutionary death ... Here Jesus takes this order that was so necessary for our redemption ... and applies it to the Christian’s life. The order – rejected, slain, raised – is also the order of the Christian life of true spirituality. ... As Christ’s rejection and death are the first steps in the order of redemption, so our rejection and death to things and self are the first steps in the order of a true and growing spirituality.

Fundamentally, what Schaeffer is saying in his book is that the Christian life is to be lived moment-by-moment in awareness of the presence of God, where we set aside our old lives of sin and self and live dedicated to God and following His law from the heart and not in a mechanical sort of way. May each of us remember to live close to the Lord every day, drawing on the power of the Holy Spirit, forsaking sin and self.