

Being Honest Before God and Man - Ron Stullenbarger -

The world is right now in an identity crisis. With the global rise of social media and the Internet, we can now project ourselves to the world as anything we want. We've been given the option of only being partly known by countless people rather than really known by a few. We can attempt to fill a gap in our souls for love and relationship with the online world rather than being fully known in our strengths and weaknesses, our greatest faults and soaring successes. We are in need of an awakening of honesty.

Having an honest heart before man is the only path to experiencing true liberation from the binding opinions of others. When we work tirelessly to build up a false self so that we can receive affirmation from others, we never truly experience love. For our false self to be loved is not truly love at all because we constantly have the thought, *"If they really knew me, they wouldn't love me."* We have an enemy aimed at the destruction of our greatest need: truly being loved. And exaggeration, false projections, and outright lies guide us exactly where our enemy wants us, into a lifestyle of never truly being known and therefore never truly being loved for who we are.

Throughout Scripture we see that wherever the Spirit is at work, the acts of confession, repentance, and truly being known to others are the result. Acts 19:18 tells us, *"Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices."* And God commands us in Colossians 3:9, *"Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices."* To project a lie or exaggeration of ourselves to others is to declare that we value the opinion of man over the opinion of God. Every time we work to create a better image of ourselves, we step outside of God's grace and work for the love of man.

The path to truly being loved starts with being honest before God and man. It starts with positioning ourselves to truly be loved by God. In his book *The Furious Longing of God*, Brennan Manning describes what happens when we encounter God's longing for us. He says, *"The praise of others will not send your spirit soaring, nor will their criticism plunge you into the pit. Their rejection may make you sick, but it will not be a sickness unto death."* God longs to set us free from the emotional roller-coaster of living for the affirmation of man. God loves you where you are, as you are. You don't need to strive for the fleeting, burdensome affection of people any longer. The Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe is waiting right now to pour out a love so rich and true that it will set you free from ever needing what the world has to offer.

Take time in prayer to meditate on the importance of being honest with others around you. Receive the love of God and be filled with courage to be fully known. Posture your heart at a place to be truly loved by God and others for who you are. May you experience the power of true, honest love today.