

What's Beneath the Surface of Your Life?

Focus on Your Heart

Steven Furtick

In Matthew 15:10, Jesus is going to show us how to flip it. You ready? Are you ready? Jesus called the crowd to him and said, Listen and understand what goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth that is what defiles them. Then the disciples came to him and asked, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?' Did you look at the comments section of that post, Jesus. where you said, what goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of the mouth that's what defiles them.

And Jesus replied, verse 13, Every plant that my Heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up or plucked by the roots. Leave them. Then all you need to do this year with some of the stuff that you argued with last year, and fought against last year, touch somebody and say, Leave it alone. Because, "they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit..." Unless they have a bird box. And, "Peter said..." Explain... Settle down. Explain the parable to us. 'Are you still so dull?' Jesus asked him, 'don't you see,'" key phrase, don't you see? And the issue is that they don't. They see only the surface. And Jesus now reveals what cannot be understood with natural eyes. "That whatever enters the mouth, goes into the stomach and then out of the body"?

What a vivid illustration. "But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts - murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander". I think he got all of us by the time he finished that list. "These are what defile a person. Eating with unwashed hands," it's gross, it's disgusting, it's unsanitary, it's against the law if you work in a restaurant, but "eating with unwashed hands does not defile them". Touch the person next to you, tell them, Flip it. Don't fix things this year at the surface level. Don't fix things this year, at the level that you see the problem. Seek the Lord and ask Him to show you where the sewage starts. Instead of just cleaning up crap all year, ask God to show you where it starts and where something comes out, is not usually where it comes from.

That's what Jesus was getting at with the Pharisees because they were offended. And so he took their offense as an opportunity to talk about the origin. And then he shared a little bit about the outcome. And those are my three points for today. Just in case you have to leave early to watch a playoff game. I'll give you all three up top: Offense, origin, outcome, and may this year be the year that you take notes in church with the Elevation Pen that our tithers generously provided for you. Three points, the offense, the origin, and the outcome. The offense is this, the Pharisees have caught Jesus disciples eating without any hand sanitizer, eating without any Purell, eating without obeying their oral tradition, that before you eat the meal, you've got to wash your hands.

And I want you to watch how Jesus flips it. Because what we tend to do, like the Pharisees, who were religious separatists, who felt the need to identify their righteousness by appearance,

because it's much easier to do that, than to cultivate righteousness through love and compassion and selflessness. I'm saying something today, y'all. And in fixing it at the level that it can be seen, they fix it in a way that does not produce or sustain real change. But Jesus is about to flip it. And he does this every time the Pharisees challenge him.

Now, these Pharisees came to him and they came all the way from Jerusalem. Look, look back at verse one. It says that some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem. These are the major leaguers These are not the AA Pharisees, and this is not the farm team. This is the big boys. And they come to Jesus and they ask, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat. What's the question? Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? If you came to church last year, you learned that Jesus is not only a savior, but he also has the [ability to be a savage](#). So watch what he does. He takes their question, Why do your disciples break tradition? And in verse three, Jesus replied, Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?

And God wants to know which one is more important, the traditions of men, or the truth of God. And it's about time for some of us to decide, are we going to spend this whole year living out of tradition, or living according to truth? I challenge you this year to flip it. It is so easy to live with an invisible belief system, that regulates your responses in situations, and even your ideas of what is possible in your life. An unquestioned belief system is a dangerous thing. The phrases are significant, because the Pharisees are talking about the traditions of the elders. And Jesus is talking about the command of God. One is tradition. One is truth. And a lot of times we don't know the difference, because for some of us, we give more attention to our traditions than we do to God's truth.

Can I give you an example? May I? Sometimes people, would rather, I've noticed this, they would rather argue about things that they don't agree about, then work together on things that they do agree about. Can I get you another example? Sometimes in my life, ways of thinking have been handed down to me, not necessarily by my parents, I love you mom. But just by the culture that I live in, and I never stopped to question, Where did this come from? I want you to write that phrase down if you're the writing type. Where did this come from? Is this really from God? What an excellent question to start our year with. Where did this come from? Because where it comes out is not usually where it comes from.

And sometimes we are living out scripts that we have not even identified, the author of. To wonder, Why do I think it has to be done this way? Why do I assume that this is all I can be? Why have I told myself the story that everyone in my family was this way, and I'm going to be this way too, and it's just a generational curse or a genetic defect? Why have I believed, that up until this point, it can't change so it never will? This is when I live according to tradition rather than truth. But this is the year to flip it. Somebody shout, "This is the year to flip it". And this year, I'm not letting my truth flow from my tradition. I want my tradition to flow from truth. That is, I want my life to reflect my values, not necessarily my habits up until this point in time.

Jesus is so brilliant in the way that he flips their tradition, and says that, You are actually

using God as a cover up for your dysfunctional behavior. But he has the ability to flip it, because he is truth. See, they're talking about truth. He embodies truth. They think they know the truth. He is the truth. The way, the truth, and the life. They studied the Word of God, He is the word of God. They live in creation, He is the Creator. See where he's coming from, is different than where they're coming from. So what he knows is different than what they think. And his insight is greater than their opinion. And that's why I want to know God's heart this year, God's thoughts, His ways are higher than my ways, his thoughts are higher than my thoughts.

So this is my year to ask the question about what I believe and the behaviors I've embraced. Where is this coming from? That's the origin. The offense is this, they're not washing their hands? Well, God never told the people, you have to wash your hands every time you eat. That's, that's great for OSHA, but it's not from God. It's great for your health, your well being, but it's not in the Bible, it's in the tradition. Because the elders would take the law of Moses and then they would put layers on the law, and layers on the law. And so they passed it around by word of mouth. And so they kind of started thinking what they thought God meant by stuff. And they started interpreting it according to their religious vantage point.

And by the time that Jesus showed up on the scene, there were so many layers on top of the truth, nobody could get to it. That's why he had to come to show us that the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Am I talking all right this year? Flip the flow. And start with what God says, not what you see. Because if I spend this whole year, fixing stuff, at the level where I can see it, Jesus said, it doesn't even work that way in the human body. It doesn't. You put it in your mouth, and I don't mean to be offensive here. I mean, Jesus was offensive, but I don't want to be. But Jesus said, You put it in your mouth but it doesn't come out of your mouth. Do you get the picture or shall I continue?

I mean, occasionally, it comes back out of your mouth, but typically, unless something is really wrong, it doesn't come out where it went in. It doesn't come out in the same place that it came from. I've noticed this is true in so many of the areas of my life, where I'm trying to see change and improvement. Even in the area of my anger, I wonder sometimes when I'm driving down the road, and something comes over me, a demon called Legion comes over me. And I will think to myself, there is no way, that that woman, that 73 year old woman's turn signal, could have made me as mad as I just got. I mean, if she if she were in my church, I would hug that woman. And here I am, thinking thoughts about this woman, maybe saying some words about this woman, in the safety of the sanctuary of my vehicle. And I've been wondering, where does this come from?

You know, that's a great question to ask about the stuff in your life, if we can put it that way. Jesus said, it goes in your mouth one way, but it comes out in a different form. And a good question to ask about that stuff in your life is, where did it come from? How did I take that out on somebody who didn't even do anything to me? See, 'cause usually, where it comes out is not where it comes from. We don't usually get angry and lose our temper with people who we're actually mad at. We lose our temper with people who we know will forgive us. And now you're taking out something on the people that you love the most. But where is coming out is different than where it's coming from. And if we don't get honest about what we need from God, this year, we will spend yet another year mopping up the

floor without finding the pipe that was busted, that was causing the leak to begin with.

Come on, you know, this is the truth. A lot of times, when I'm angry, it's not really even that I'm angry. It's that I'm afraid. And rather than be vulnerable, in my fear, I'd rather express my fear through anger as a protective mechanism. And so I'm trying to work on my temper, but really what I need to work on is my trust. Because if I trusted God more, I wouldn't be afraid and if I wasn't afraid, I wouldn't find an expression of anger. Where's this coming from?

It's great to make a list at the beginning of the year of the things that you'd like to do differently. But it's better to find out where it's coming from so you don't just recreate a different issue that was caused by the same disease, because you only learned to take ibuprofen for the symptoms, but you never underwent the surgery to understand some of the beliefs beneath the behavior. Even in relating to people, I have to remember that even the way they're treating me might not be a reflection of how they feel about me. It might be a reflection of how they feel about themselves. It might be a reflection of what they're dealing with in their own time alone.

And the way that they push me away. And that's why you really got to be careful not to let rejection take root in your heart. Because sometimes people are pushing you away, not because of anything that is undesirable about you, but it's actually that the person finds themselves so undesirable, that they don't know how to let anyone get close, because to let anybody close carries a risk with it, that they will be seen and found out to be less than which they already believe that they are, and you are spending all of your time trying to love someone who is unable to receive your love. And the rejection is not proof of your defection, it is proof of something in their own life, but where it shows up is not necessarily where it starts.

And Jesus knew that, he knew that, which is why he didn't go back and forth with these Pharisees. He knew better. He knew where he came from. And he knew that every plant that my father does not plant will be plucked up. So he knew that where it comes from, determines how it comes out. Can I preach a little bit today? I know you got a lot on your minds, and you've got to pack lunches for the kids, and get back to school. And I know all of that. But I want to stop and ask the question today, where did it come from? And in my life, so often, I have been dealing with things at the level of visibility. And because I'm dealing with things at the level of...

Jesus takes us inside, he says, When food goes into the stomach and comes out the body, it's like a thought that goes in the heart and comes out the mouth. He's making an analogy. And there's not a lot of scientific, you know, explanation. It's not a biology lesson necessarily. He's not going into the small intestine, in the secretion of the fluids of the kidney and the pancreas. Did that make any sense? But he's giving us something to understand about how we metabolize our thoughts and our lives, and even our disappointments and our failures.

And I think it's so valuable, because a lot of us started this year counting calories. Counting carbs. Some of y'all are on Paleo, and Keto, and counting macros, I still don't know what macros are. But I heard a lot of people have been counting them. And I wish you the best with that. Because we all gotta count something. We've all gotta count something or we're going to keep counting our waistline as it expands like the prayer of Jabez, and God enlarges your territory, I

gotta count something at some point. Like when I first married Holly, she started, the demon of fried rice came into our house.

You like how everything's a demon today? The demon of Doritos got in our house. And when I got to size 38 and it was bulging. I mean, I had a braided belt stretched across those size 38's, and I started size 30, 18 months later, I said, I gotta start counting carbs, I got to start eating bacon, I gotta get a healthy alternative. I gotta get the Atkins diet, I gotta have a low carb lifestyle. And you know what the Lord told me last year, because I was letting all [this toxic talk and toxic thoughts](#) just get all in my spirit, and it had got me to a real dark place. And God said, if you would count your complaints, like you count your carbs, and it's funny because the majority of things we think we need to do better this year have to do with putting stuff in our mouth, what we put in our mouth.

And maybe you do need to stop putting some stuff in your mouth. But maybe the priority, flip the flow, is what you put in your heart. Because where it comes from determines where it comes out. Now I'm not telling you what movies to watch or what music to listen to this year. I'm not that kind of preacher. In fact, I think sometimes some of the stuff that we put in our heart that hurts us the most, has nothing to do with bad words. Man I've heard pagans speak a word of God with bad language in it and Christians curse without saying a single four letter word. I've heard Christians say some of the most hateful, judgmental, fear inducing, condemnation you've ever heard in your life.

And listen, this year, I'm guarding my heart. And I don't mean that I'm not watching Netflix, and I don't mean... that's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about reading the Old Testament before next Sunday. I'm talking about really paying attention to the types of a pattern of thought that you allow your heart to digest. Because your spirit has a digestive system. Jesus said it's out of your heart that's causing you the real problem. You know, Pharisees are like offended, Jesus, 'cause you said that they don't have to wash their hands before they eat. Well, they don't only Aaron and the priests had to wash their hands. But they put traditions on top of truth and made it something that was never supposed to be.

You can wash your hands all you want, you can break out your hands sanitizer every time Pastor says, Touch your neighbor and squirt it on. You know, I was so offended the other day, somebody came up to meet me and they introduced themselves. And they shook my hand. I watched them walk away squirting stuff all over their hands. I'm like, Well, hey, I didn't even want to talk to you. Don't you wish they made heart sanitizer? For some of these people that we have to deal with, for some of these thoughts, some of these memories, some of these habits? Wouldn't that be marketable?

I know how to wash my hands. I know how to make people think I'm doing okay. I know how to smile and say I'm fine. I know how to crop the picture 12 times and post hashtag 'wokeuplikethis'. I know how to wash my hands. But how do I wash my heart? And this is where Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses went up the mountain and came down with the law, Jesus went up on a mountain and taught a sermon and said, I didn't come to abolish the law, but I came to fulfill it. I didn't come to do away with it. I didn't come so that the law would not exist. I came

so that I could flip it, and watch this, that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, not by us.

For you to start this year thinking that there's a future version of you that God will like more, or a future version of you that can be happier, is to negate the very nature of the grace you came to celebrate. Because Jesus came not to require righteousness, but to enable righteousness. That's what the cross was. You understand that? When Jesus died on the cross, the angels did not get nervous in heaven. The angels didn't wring their hands in heaven. The angels didn't start devising a backup plan in heaven, because the angels in heaven knew where Jesus came from. And when you knew where it comes from, you know how it comes out.

And even when they beat Him and even when they mocked Him, my voice is tired, I preached three times, I could use some help. Even when they buried Him in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea, heaven didn't get nervous because we know where He came from so we know how this comes out. Even before I go through the trial this year, I know how this comes out because He who began a good work in me will be faithful to complete it. Shout for 19 seconds if you've got faith. That's why Joshua said, "Shout before the first brick hits the ground". I know where the command came from so I know how the battle turns out. It's the spirit of faith to let you know that if it comes from God, if He called you, if formed you, if your help comes from Him, you can predict in advance how this comes out. Already know the outcome.

Even when I was reading the Scripture, God said, "Flip it", because it said evil thoughts come from your heart and it's a hard thing to sort through your heart to know what thoughts came from God, and what thoughts came from ego, and what thoughts came from grandpa, and what thoughts came from Fox News, and what thoughts came from Bloomberg and what thoughts came from Twitter, and what thoughts came from... what's the other one? CNN and Facebook and Uncle Ray and Uncle Tim and Aunt Cindy, and Aunt Martha, it's hard to know, it's hard to know. It's hard to know what's in your heart and that's why we need the Holy Spirit this year, that's why we need Jesus.

I know it sounds simple, and maybe this teaching is too elementary and some people are little bored with it, but I need help with my heart this year. I did help because some stuff in there is from God and some stuff is not. And I need help sorting it out because I sent [Pastor Craig](#) some Christmas gifts this year, always send him clothes for Christmas in case He wants to wear them to preach in the new year. And he's like, one of my best friends so it's not weird when I send him clothes, he gets it, he doesn't take it as an insult, like I think he doesn't know how to dress, but he likes what I send him. I keep it a little on the youthful side for him, he's 51, but I feel like I don't wanna push him too far. I'm not gon' have him up there, dripping in off-white, looking ridiculous from head to toe.

And so I know just where to push him so He trusts me, He trusts me, that's the point I want to make, He trusts me. And this year I sent him a nice little box of clothes. Two shirts in the box, one of them was like a zip sweater thing it came right there and then he shirt, a Burberry shirt to put under the sweater, and I told him and the note, "Merry Christmas; here's your clothes. You can wear it three different ways. The sweater without the shirt, the shirt without the sweater, the

shirt under the sweater, you're welcome, Merry Christmas".

I'm an efficient stylist. I'm thinking 'bout having a side hustle dressing preachers, but that's not the point. The point is he sent me a picture of him wearing the clothes and he put on the clothes. He put, first of all, the sweater on, it looked good, then he put the shirt on looked good. Then there was a third picture and he was wearing something I never saw before in my life. It was baggy, bright red. Am I telling the truth? Because I sent it to Jess who works in my office now for almost 10 years. I said, "We didn't send him this, did we"? She said, "No, sir, I never saw that before in my life".

I texted him back the good news, first. "All the stuff I sent you is dope, the good news. The bad news is, that third thing you put on, I don't know where that came from". But he trusted me so much that he said, "If it came from Furtick...", this is real faith, y'all. He said, "Even though I think it looks ridiculous, if it came from Furtick...", and I said, "But it didn't come from Furtick, not this one, I am not taking credit for this fashion decision, this did not come from Furtick. You need to find out what happened". And he found out what happened because one of his staff members who knew how much he trusted me saw the box that came from me and decided to go in the box, open the box, can y'all believe this? Find the ugliest sweater they can find, stick it in the box under the stuff that I picked, and they knew he trusted me so much that he would wear whatever he thought came from me, but the devil is a liar.

I texted him and I said, "You need to take that out the box, that was not from me". I hear the spirit of God saying, "You been wearing some stuff in 2018 that I did not put in your box. It's time for you to go through the box and everything that does not look like joy in the garment of praise, take it off. Everything that does not look like the armor of God, take it off. Everything that doesn't look like victory, take it off". I'm coming into a new year drippin', I'm not coming into a new year wearing rags. His righteousness is my garment and His victory is my guarantee, shout about it, church. I feel the Holy Ghost.

So, when they buried Him, they didn't have to be afraid. When you know where it comes from, you know how it comes out. That's how you can already put a smile on even though you're still going through the most difficult days of your life. And because my righteousness does not come from me, or from washing my hands, or from sticking to my diet, or from losing 23 pounds, 'cause wouldn't it be a shame to lose 23 pounds and still hate yourself because you fixed it on the surface, but you didn't receive it at the source.

This year I'm gonna flip it, and I'm gonna stand in the reality that I am the righteousness of God not because of what I've done. In fact, you can stand and I'll pray that for you right now. No one leaving, no one moving. This is your year to flip it, this is your year to evaluate your traditions, the empty traditions that have told you layers of lies that there is something that you must do. You gotta wash your hands. Jesus said, "That's your tradition, that's not the truth". Watch and flip it. He said, "Normally the unclean, if it touches the clean, it makes the clean unclean, but I'm not a high priest, like Aaron; I'm a great, high priest. So, if I touch you, I don't become unclean, you become clean".

Somebody shout, "Flip it". I wanna change by grace, this year, through faith, not of works,

because if I fix it at the surface, I have to sustain it in my own strength, and so I'm not going on a diet so that I will be likable, I'm going on a diet so my knees don't hurt. See the difference? Flip it. Flip it. I'm not going back to school to get my degree so I can finally stop feeling an idiot, I'm going back to school to get my degree so that I can move forward into the opportunities that God has for me, not to earn approval, not to live up to a standard, but to live out what Christ has already given me and to me this is the beauty of the gospel that everything that needs to be done for me to be right with God is already done.

Bow your head. I've said what the Lord told me to say, and I pray that you received it. This is your year to flip it. Over the course of the next several weeks, we will be talking about some very practical things some very personal things. Maybe last year you attended church occasionally when the kids didn't have a game and you weren't too tired. Maybe this is your year to flip it and to make a real commitment this year, that I'm gonna sanitize my heart by being in the presence of God with other people and really letting God's work cleanse me and uproot the things that have been destroying me.

Lord, we thank you today for Jesus Christ Who came to earth to flip it. We thank you today that He who knew no sin became sin that we might become the righteousness of God. Somebody shout, "That's what I am". And so now, Lord, may all that we do and don't do this year, flow from a heart that is already loved. Your word says that, "As the rain falls from the heavens and waters the earth, and makes it bud and flourish and bring forth springtime, so shall Your word be that proceeds forth from Your mouth it will not return to You void, but will accomplish what You sent it to do". We thank You for sending Your word to us for a new year. We thank You for the flow of Your word in this place today. I pray now that it would accomplish in our lives a great harvest of righteousness for those who have been trained by it

Introduction:

And God wants to know which one is more important, the traditions of men, or the truth of God. And it's about time for some of us to decide, are we going to spend this whole year living out of tradition, or living according to truth? I challenge you this year to flip it. It is so easy to live with an invisible belief system, that regulates your responses in situations, and even your ideas of what is possible in your life. An unquestioned belief system is a dangerous thing. The phrases are significant, because the Pharisees are talking about the traditions of the elders. And Jesus is talking about the command of God. One is tradition. One is truth. And a lot of times we don't know the difference, because for some