

Joke: There were a couple of kids that were laughing and standing around a dog that was obviously scared.

A priest walks by and says "Now I know you all won't hurt that dog."

One of the kids says "Oh no, we love the dog. We're having a contest whoever says the biggest lie wins the dog.

One kid says "Well my daddy was Micheal Jordan and we played basketball everyday with Bill Clinton."

Another kid says "Oh really? Well my daddy was Neil Armstrong and we faked the moon landing in my backyard every Sunday."

The last kid says "Psh, you guys are lame. My mom is Colonel Sanders and we have a KFC vending machine in our living room."

The priest after listening in said "Excuse me gentlemen, do you not know lying is a sin? It says so in the bible. You know, when I was your age, I never told a lie!

One of the kids says "Give him the Dog."

I don't know about you but when I was a lot younger than I am now I was fascinated by vending machines.

I must admit I don't remember how much every item was back then maybe 25 cents. Now it's like 2 or 3 bucks for a bag of chips.

Anyway I can remember walking up to them and doing a quick scan of all the available snacks, maybe better term is junk food, but I was strategizing on what I might want. Then I'd drop the change in the coin slot press D2 and watch that little twisty thing spin until my Jolly Ranchers, Dorito's, or one of my favorites Honey Buns dropped into the bottom of that machine.

And most of the time everything went off without a hitch. I'd reach in grab my munchie and head off. But every now and then as you watch that twisty thing spin and watch that product being pushed forward with anticipation just as it was about to drop, and maybe this never happened to you, but it was right there and then. . .it got stuck.

Maybe it didn't twist quite enough to push it off and there it was stuck in the metal bar. That's the worse thing ever. Sometimes it was just between that bar and the glass. Oh, that's frustrating.

But It took your money, you were ripped off, cheated out of your item. Wasn't that just infuriating?

And so what would you do? Well, If your anything like me, you went back outside looked for a rock and threw it the glass in hopes to break it so you could get what was rightfully yours.

No, I never did that. Don't do that going to jail isn't worth the 2 or 3 bucks you loose today.

But what did you do? If it was lower you might try to bend down and reach your arm in there and see if you could reach it.

I don't recommend that either I almost got my arm stuck a couple times trying to do that as well. That could embarrassing. 911 what's your emergency?

If it was available I would fill out those little envelopes to get what I lost back.

But before I did that I would almost always shake the machine, rock it back and forth trying to get my stuck item to drop.

And I tell you that to say this, many of us treat God like a vending machine and we just put in, not our 25 cents, but we put in our good behavior, our church attendance, our Bible reading or our offerings, and then we press the prayer button and we expect God to give us exactly what we ordered.

Because after all, we're serving God, so our loved ones should be healed. And we go to church at least three weekends a month. And we have a streak of 11 days in a row reading the Scriptures.

So we should get that job, even though we may not be the most qualified because we really want it.

But what we have to understand is that God isn't a vending machine and our faith isn't a contract.

And we may not recognize it but may I suggest that many of us, without even realizing it, have a transactional type faith.

We think that, If I do my part, then God has to do His part.

And without even realizing it, that turns our faith in God into a transaction with God.

And if God doesn't do what we want Him to do or give us what we want Him to give us, or answer our prayer in the way that we want, when we want, well then we often feel frustrated.

We might even feel hurt or even betrayed by God. And so what I want to do today is I would like to expose one of the most dangerous lies that keeps so many of us from experiencing real faith.

Because the truth is, we fall victim to a faith that is a type of transactional faith.

And in case your curious that is not the type of faith what we should have.

What is transactional faith? It's one that tends to believe that God owes us. If I do my part, then God has to do His part.

And let me say this God doesn't owe us anything. He already gave us everything. He has given us every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. He already sent His Son to die on our behalf so that we could become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus and make our eternal home with Him.

But the truth is this one lie may cause as many or more people to walk away from God, walk away from the church as any other lie that we see today.

And so what I want to do is show you from God's Word what true faith is. What is true faith? Great question. True faith is not transactional it is relational.

True faith is about knowing and loving God for who He is, not just for what He does.

We are in a message series called Christian-ish. In case you missed last week. We've defined Christian-ish as someone who wears the label Christian, like obviously, I'm a Christian, without actually truly following Jesus.

And those of us that slip into a Christian-ish mindset, often embrace a false faith that I'm calling transactional faith.

What does it mean to have a transactional faith? I'll give you a definition.

Transactional faith is a distorted belief that turns our relationship with God into a contract, believing that if we do our part, God is obligated to do His part.

If any of you find yourself thinking God didn't do what He was supposed to do. I mean, I did my part, I prayed and I read the Bible, I fasted, I stood on the scripture, and I did everything just right, and God didn't hold up to His part of the bargain.

If you ever felt like that, I want you to know you're not alone.

There were actually several people in the Bible that fell victim to that same sort of thinking.

I'll show you five different examples from God's Word.

The first one we're going to see is in Exodus 16:3, when the Israelites followed God, believing that He was going to bless them in a massive way, and they said. . .

Exodus 16:3 (NLT): 3 “If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt,” they moaned. “There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.”

In other words, Well, God, we trusted you. Why are we struggling so much? God, you didn't do what we thought you were going to do.

Now what you need to understand is that they were on their way to a place that God told them was theirs. The promised land, but they didn't get there when they thought, how they thought, or as soon as they thought they would so they said. . .

Exodus 16:3 (NLT): 3 “If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt,” they moaned. “There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.”

The same thing with Jonah in Jonah 4.

Jonah 4:1–2 (ESV): But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

Let me just give you the context here, Jonah was angry at the fact that God spared the people in Nineveh.

So, Jonah was like, "God, I obeyed you, well I mostly obeyed you. And so God, why are you blessing them? You should be blessing me, not those evil people.

I ran the other direction because well I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. I just knew you were going to save those people.”

We see the same thing with Martha.

Whenever her brother Lazarus died, she said, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died. We've served you, my brother served you, you had dinner at our place. Why did you let this happen? We called for you days ago but you didn't come and now our brother is dead.

We expected you to come earlier, why didn't you show up when we called you?

Same thing with the older brother in the story of the prodigal son. You can read the whole story in Luke 15 I'll just give you a couple verses.

How many of you remember what the younger brother said. . .He said, Hey dad, give me my share of the estate.

And what did the younger son do with his share. . .

Luke 15:13 (NIV): 13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

And after he squandered every thing away and had nothing left he came home, and the father's like, I'm so glad you're home.

Now, let's throw a big party for you.

The older brother didn't take to kindly to that whole party thing as a matter of fact. . .

Luke 15:28–29 (NIV): The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

Did you know there's a new Bible Translation, it's called the Gen Z Bible translation here's Luke 15:28 and 29 from Gen Z.

28. But he was so mad, he just couldn't go inside. So his dad came out and begged him to come in. 29. And he was like, yo, dad, I've been serving you for mad years and I never once broke your commandments. But you never gave me a lit party with my homies, not even a little goat, man!

He was like. Wait a minute. That's not fair. I did everything. Where's my party? I've been living and serving faithfully in this house. Why are you blessing him and not blessing me?

Then there was the rich, young ruler, who said to Jesus, " I kept all the rules. I've done everything just right. Jesus, why isn't that enough? Now I need to sell everything to follow you?

And let me just pause here to say this, Jesus had never told anybody else what He told that rich young ruler.

Jesus uses this moment to show this young ruler and us that true fulfillment and eternal life comes from a relationship with Jesus, not from material possessions or self-righteousness.

It's by grace and grace alone. Not what you have done, but what Jesus did.

And what I have seen from many people of faith is that we think the more that we seek God and the more that we serve God and the more that we're faithful to God and the more that we obey Him, many of us, without really knowing it, we tend to expect a little special treatment.

Like, "There's all those other people, they're not serving you the way I am. I've been faithful. So, if I'm praying, God, you should answer my prayer before the person who skipped church the past three weeks.

And it's really subtle. And the problem is it actually feels like faith, but it's really a dangerous lie because we start to believe that if we serve God faithfully, then He owes us.

And it becomes a performance based faith. And not relational.

And the way it comes out a lot of times is it comes out like this. We think, "Okay, God, I've been doing a lot for you lately. I've been in the word for a long time and I'm studying, I fasted early on in the year. I've given offering's and I've been really faithfully praying and I've been sharing my faith and I've been keeping my eyes pure. And I know I'm not perfect, God, but I know that I'm doing better than _____. I'm really trying to honor you with all that I have and all that I am. And so, God, why didn't you answer my prayer?"

And we start making kind of arguments with God.

God, I raised my kids in church, so why are they walking away from you? You said we should train a child in the ways of the Lord and he will never depart from it. God, I've been faithfully giving for years, and I'm still living paycheck to paycheck. God, I've been serving you. I've been living with sexual integrity, And yet why am I not married when all my friends that haven't been that are?

God, aren't you gonna live up to Your end of the deal?

And we have to understand that true faith is relational, not transactional.

It's about knowing and loving God for who He is and not just for what He does.

And let me just pause here again to say this, there are unconditional promises that God has. God loves you no matter what, He sent His Son to die for us. Jesus is coming back. Those are unconditional promises. It doesn't matter if you believe them or not they are still true.

It is also true that there are conditional blessings but even those being conditional are still not transactional but relational, let me explain.

I've talked about this before but what is a covenant? A covenant is an agreement between God and us.

But it's important to understand that there is a difference between a covenant which is relational and a contract which is transactional.

And here's the deal with a covenant God initiates it. It's not our agreement it's His.

It's not if I do this, God, then you have to help me pass this test.

I mentioned a couple weeks ago God will honor His promises. All His promises are yes and amen. But there are some things God wants us to partner with Him on. And if we choose to do so there is probably a blessing on the other-side of that, but He is not obligated to fulfill our potential that takes us partnering with the Holy Spirit to bring about that which God desires for us.

It's relational. A Covenant God initiates.

And the difference between a covenant and a contract is really important a contract is transactional, temporary, and enforceable by law.

On the other hand, a covenant, is not transactional, temporary, or enforceable.

A covenant is relational, eternal, and sustained by love.

And when you think about it, a contract is based on how we can protect ourselves. It's almost based on a mutual distrust.

Like, "I don't know you, you don't know me, so let's make a contract, and with that you have to do your part and I have to do my part."

If your in the rental business most of the time you have a contract and both sides have a part to do. The person renting has to provide the house, building, whatever else and the tenant needs to pay a monthly fee to stay there.

So you draw up a contract which is temporary, transactional, and enforceable by law if either party fails to do their part. And you do that to protect both sides.

Now I said most of the time because there may be times that you want to bless someone and so you let them have that rental unit, car, or whatever but that usually happens when you know that person, you already have a relationship with them so you tell

them stay as long as you need, here's the car for as long as you need it's yours no timeframe.

There's no contract, it was based on a relationship.

When we had an extra vehicle we gave that for people to use, we paid the insurance, and plates, all that and would let them use it for as long as they needed. Truthfully it was gone more than it was with us. And it was always done relationally.

And here's the thing, God knew that we would have a hard time keeping up on our end of the deal so He didn't want just a contract He made a covenant and here's the good news. . .

Hebrews 6:13–20 (NLT): For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying: 14 "I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number." 15 Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised. 16 Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding. 17 God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. 18 So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. 19 This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. 20 Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

He made that covenant with Himself. And he is always faithful.

God loves us with a relational, covenantal love that is not temporary and unconditional.

It's Him sending His Son to pay the price for our sinfulness. While we still enemies of God, not serving God, had no interest in God.

God bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind.

And what's crazy about God is, even if we don't live up to our end, God will live up to His end.

Scripture tells us this. . .

2 Timothy 2:13 (NLT): 13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

That's how good our God is.

So we should love God, not just for what He does but for who He is. It's never transactional. It's a love that is covenantal and relational.

And I want to show you a intimate glimpse into a relationship that David had with God.

If you remember, David was described as a man after God's own heart and I want to show you the relational language David used in Psalm 63 let me just highlight a few of the verses.

Psalm 63:1 (NIV): You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

He says, God, You are my God, then he says, earnestly I seek Your blessings. . .earnestly I seek Your miracles. . .earnestly I seek Your provision. Is that what He says? No, he says earnestly I seek You.

He's not looking and seeking for what God does or can do, he's seeking God for who He is.

He then says, my whole being longs for you

Then skipping to verse 3 we read. . .

Psalm 63:3 (NIV): Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

Picking up with verse 6 we read. . .

Psalm 63:6–8 (NIV): 6 On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. 7 Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. 8 I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.

That's intimate. That's way beyond friendship. I've got friends. And I promise you, I have never talked to any of them like that. I have never gone to them and said, Dude, like earnestly, I seek you, my soul thirst for you.

Last night, bro, I was thinking about you. I was thinking about your wings. I just wouldn't do that.

Truth is I haven't even done that with my wife.

But his relationship with God it is relational and deeply intimate.

So how do we know if we actually have a transactional faith in God?

How do we know if we're just putting our expectations on Him and maybe getting disappointed because He doesn't do what we want Him to do?

And I'm going to give you three questions to ask yourself.

The first question is this. Do I follow God because of what He does for me or because of who He is?

Do I follow Him because of what He does, because I've seen a lot of people, when He doesn't do what they want Him to do, they say, I thought you would, and some have chosen to walk away from God and the church because He didn't.

Do I follow Him for who He is or for what He does?

Second question, Do I still trust God when He doesn't answer my prayer the way I want or do I feel betrayed because He didn't?

Do I still worship Him and believe in His goodness when I've prayed and fasted and begged Him and thought He would and He didn't?

Or do I feel hurt and betrayed?

Third question is this, do I serve God simply because I love Him or because I'm hoping for something in return?

Do I follow God because of what He does for me or because of who He is? Do I still trust God when He doesn't answer my prayer the way I want? Do I serve God simply because I love Him or because I'm hoping for something in return?

And maybe your asking another question, maybe your asking why pastor are you preaching this series Christian-ish in the first place?

And the reason is because I need it. Because the truth is sometimes I am Christian-ish.

Hear me church on a good day, I love God sincerely, genuinely. I want His glory, I want His will to be done, and I've got no strings attached.

In a good moment, I'm that way.

But if I'm being honest, I have a lot of moments that aren't good. When I just want God to do what I want Him to do. I want God to bless my kids. Heal my friend. Grow the church

And here's what goes on in my mind in those moments, can I just be honest? I hope you can handle my very real human, unfiltered version.

Here's what I think. God, I do my best to serve you. I work hard. I am faithful. I live a life to honor You. I do your will. I preach my best. Study your word.

And sometimes I feel like you let me down. Why are we only 12 when the church down the road is 1200.

Why when I prayed for that person, are they still sick. I know you still heal.

I know you can, and you haven't. I don't understand. God, don't you think you could do this for them? I mean I will give you all the glory, you know my heart.

And if you find yourself in a similar place, let's just be honest about it.

God, why haven't you answered my prayer? God, why don't I have a better job? God, why haven't you fixed my marriage? Why is my life still so hard?

And I want to say this as clearly and lovingly as I can. If you're doing God's will just to get God's stuff, you're missing God's heart.

God is not a tool we use. He's a King that we worship.

Look what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33.

Matthew 6:33 (NIV): But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

What does seeking God's kingdom involve as New Covenant believers? It involves us recognizing that we are a part of His kingdom through faith because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. And we are called to live out this new identity we have been given by expressing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

This is not about striving to achieve something we lack, but rather living in the reality of what we already have in Christ.

You don't seek for what He can do for you. You seek Him.

You pray seeking His heart.

You seek God. Earnestly, I long for you. My soul longs for you. I cry out to you, God. You are the object of my affection. My lips will glorify you. God, I'm seeking you. Why?

Because it's about loving God for who He is, not just for what He does.

True faith is relational, not transactional.

Pray

God, I'm so sorry for all the times when I've got strings attached to my relationship with you.

God, when I think that you owe me something, when you have already given me everything through Jesus.

Help me in every way, I'd put you first by honoring you always.

And for those of you that are followers of Jesus, but may be a little Christian-ish, you have been born into the kingdom of God.

Your sins have been forgiven. You know that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

You're a Christian, but you've slipped into maybe some transactional faith with God, and you genuinely want to be closer.

I want to encourage you this week, to pray that prayer every day. God, help me to know you, and love you for who you are, not just what you do.

And I believe that God will show His heart and love for you. And transform your faith from transactional to relational.

Holy Spirit, draw us. Draw us close to you.

Guide our steps, direct our words, may every part of our life reflect your love, and your goodness.

Help us to know you relationally, intimately, so we can serve you faithfully.

And for those of you here today or watching online that may have not yet tasted and seen that the Lord is good. Let me tell you about how good God is.

He is not transactional. He wants you to have a relationship with Him that's why. . .

He created a covenant with us. He sent His only Son, Jesus. The Lamb of God, perfect in every way and died for the forgiveness of our sins.

That's how much He loves you. For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus.

Jesus loves you that much. He died in your place on a cross, and God raised him from the dead so that anyone who calls on His name would be saved and forgiven.

This is what Jesus said. This is eternal life. That you may know God, that you may know Him. It's a relationship not a religion.

And if you are one of those saying, "I don't have that." God wants you to have it. You're here or watching online for a reason. His Holy Spirit is drawing you to Himself.

And I want to encourage you today. To call upon His name. Ask Him to forgive you and help you to live out what He has purposed for you to do. And when you call on Him, He will forgive and make you new.