

"When Image Becomes More Important Than Integrity"

Big Idea:

The opposite of hypocrisy isn't perfection—it's a heart that seeks repentance.

I think we need to define hypocrisy correctly.

Hypocrisy is **not struggling with sin**.

Every Christian struggles.

Every Christian fails.

Every Christian has moments they regret.

Hypocrisy is pretending you don't.

It's protecting an image instead of pursuing transformation.

So this series isn't about pretending Christians never fail.

It's about refusing to pretend when we do."

Text: 2 Samuel 13–18

If we don't kill sin, it will kill us.

We have to get serious in dealing with sin.

"Sin never stays contained. It always spreads."

²³ Two years later, when Absalom's sheep were being sheared at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, Absalom invited all the king's sons to come to a feast.

2 Samuel 13:23

²⁹ So at Absalom's signal they murdered Amnon. Then the other sons of the king jumped on their mules and fled.

2 Samuel 13:29

²⁴ But the king gave this order: "Absalom may go to his own house, but he must never come into my presence." So Absalom did not see the king.

2 Samuel 14:24

1. Beautiful faces can hide broken hearts.

²⁵ Now Absalom was praised as the most handsome man in all Israel. He was flawless from head to foot. ²⁶ He cut his hair only once a year, and then only because it was so heavy. When he weighed it out, it came to five pounds!

2 Samuel 14:25-26

³⁰ So Absalom said to his servants, "Go and set fire to Joab's barley field, the field next to mine." So they set his field on fire, as Absalom had commanded.

³¹ Then Joab came to Absalom at his house and demanded, "Why did your servants set my field on fire?"

2 Samuel 14:30-21

2. Hidden Bitterness Produces Visible Destruction

²² And though Absalom never spoke to Amnon about this, he hated Amnon deeply because of what he had done to his sister.

2 Samuel 13:22

Not everything hidden is healed.

But buried pain often becomes deeper pain.

How are we to deal with pain?

Confront it

¹⁵ "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. ¹⁶ But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that two or three witnesses may confirm everything you say. ¹⁷ If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if they won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

Romans 12:17

Forgive them.

²¹ Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?"

²² "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

Matthew 18:21-22

¹⁴ "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:14-15

Release to God

⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

1 Peter 5:7

¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Hebrews 4:15-16

3. Fake spirituality focuses on image instead of transformation.

4. Manipulation often looks like compassion.

After this, Absalom bought a chariot and horses, and he hired fifty bodyguards to run ahead of him. ² He got up early every morning and went out to the gate of the city. When people brought a case to the king for judgment, Absalom would ask where in Israel they were from, and they would tell him their tribe. ³ Then Absalom would say, "You've really got a strong case here! It's too bad the king doesn't have anyone to hear it. ⁴ I wish I were the judge. Then everyone could bring their cases to me for judgment, and I would give them justice!"

2 Samuel 15:1-4

⁶ Absalom did this with everyone who came to the king for judgment, and so he stole the hearts of all the people of Israel.

2 Samuel 15:6

Hypocrisy begins whenever image becomes more important than integrity.

5. Pride always wants the throne.

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?^[a] Is anything worth more than your soul?

Matthew 16:24-26

This is radical, but radical surrender to Jesus is what transforms lives.

6. The thing we are most proud of can many times be our downfall.

⁹During the battle, Absalom happened to come upon some of David's men. He tried to escape on his mule, but as he rode beneath the thick branches of a great tree, his hair got caught in the tree. His mule kept going and left him dangling in the air.

2 Samuel 18:9

7. Jesus offers what Absalom never pursued.

And there is this idea that Christianity is accepting Jesus, and maybe being involved in a church community, and saying some prayers, and reading some Bible verses, and serving at VBS...

But can I just say God wants to go into the innermost layers of your heart. The ones we have hidden, the ones we don't talk about, the ones we try to avoid.

When I was a junk remover, we came across this family that was selling their farm, and we had to clean out all of the house, the sheds, the barns; it was quite the undertaking. What made it more challenging was that the selling family was very sentimental, and we would come across items in the home that they needed to let go of, but they kept holding onto them. Finally, it was some of their kids and the realtor who convinced them that they needed to let go. **"They couldn't move into what was next until they released what they insisted on carrying."**Isn't that exactly what some of us are doing spiritually?

⁹ Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰ That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

¹¹ You have made me act like a fool. You ought to be writing commendations for me, for I am not at all inferior to these “super apostles,” even though I am nothing at all.

2 Corinthians 12:9-11