

Coach House Church

BEACONS

COME INTO THE LIGHT

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Many of us are familiar with the fear of exposure. Perhaps we're new to a job and we don't quite have the skills that we put on our CV. So, we work hard so that people won't see our mistakes and we try to blag our way through it. Other times, we just have the feeling that other people around us are simply better at life than we are, and one day we'll be exposed as frauds and everyone will see our shortcomings.

Where does this fear of exposure come from? Positively, I think it's because we want to be people who do good actions and because we want to have an honourable reputation. Negatively, it's because we feel guilty about our poor actions and fear being shamed in front of others.

Additionally, I think we fear exposure because of how it is experienced. Colleagues may mock us for a mistake. Friends might be angry with us when we fail to keep a promise. If our bad actions are exposed in front of others and we only encounter negativity or hostility, we are likely to try and cover up our wrongdoings in the future to avoid exposure. And this just worsens the cycle.

However, when people help us to confront wrong things in our lives and we know that they care, it helps us to be honest with them. It helps us to change as people. I am struck by this passage in John 3:19-21 because it illustrates how we hide from God when the appropriate response is to come to him.

"19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."(ESV)

First of all, Jesus is the light described in this passage. The previous verses underline the fact that he has come to save mankind and not to condemn them. Darkness is life lived apart from him and without reference to him.

The reason why people love the darkness is not because it's enjoyable in itself, but because it serves a function, and hides their evil works. You can imagine some people who may actively delight in the darkness so that they can keep on practising evil sadistically. However, it's possible to imagine someone who is just a bit desperate, and loves it out of a sense of relief. Perhaps they see a whole long list of all the bad things they've done and they don't see a way out. Perhaps they are overburdened with guilt and think there is no release. If they came to Jesus, their works would be exposed, and perhaps fearing this, they are terrified and stay well away.

If verse 20 describes the bad response, verse 21 describes the good response. In summary, the right response is to come to the light. The person who does what is true/lives by the truth comes to the light because they know they can share their lives with God. They do not try to hide things or cover them up or pretend. Coming to Jesus honestly and humbly is a mark of faith in God, not doing perfect works and showing them off. I don't think John is referring to shiny happy people bringing their pristine works to God in verse 21. Rather a person that knows God can present their lives honestly to him. The focus is not on good works, but on expressing faith through coming into the light and coming to Jesus.

If we believe God will be angry and not forgive us, we will not come to him. It takes us back to the example of the friend who only gets angry when you do something wrong, and the friend who cares enough to listen and help you out. You'll hide away from the first one, you'll be likely to admit your wrongdoing to the second one.

God is like the second friend, and John 3:16-17 shows us why. It says this: " For God so loved the world,^[i] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Both verses show us a contrast. God's guiding motivation in sending Jesus to earth is his love for humankind. On that basis, in verse 16, we have eternal life if we believe in Jesus, and do not perish. In verse 17, it shows that Jesus comes not to condemn the world, but to save it. Through Jesus, we gain eternal life and do not perish. Through Jesus, the world has the opportunity to be saved, and not condemned.

The main point is this: if we know Jesus has come to save us, we can expose our wrongdoings to him in faith that he will change us and not condemn us. If we believe that God is solely out to judge us for our faults, we will be likely never to come to him and hide away in the darkness.

So what should we do? Two simple points come to mind

1. Come to Jesus – Jesus can restore our relationship with God no matter what we have done. The best response is always to come to him, confess what we have done wrong, and allow him to help us change.
2. Live in the truth – We access the truth about God and ourselves as we read the Bible, confess our sins to each other and God, spend time with other believers, and worship God. Our natural stance is to hide in the darkness, but doing these things helps expose us to the truth about God, and have our default opinions challenged. This helps us to come to Jesus.

To finish, I am going to pray with reference to 1 John 1:8

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Lord God, I thank you that your word encourages us to come to you because you love us and desire to have a restored relationship with us. Help us to confess our sins and come to you rather than hiding away in the dark. I thank you that you are faithful and cleanse us from all sin. Please help us to run to you when we struggle and fail this week, and let us trust in you to change us, in Jesus name, amen.



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