

Talks - Spiritual Bling – myfishbites.com

Intro – Spiritual Bling

What is bling? It's jewellery and accessories associated with hip-hop culture or with people looking glamorous. People wear gold and diamond rings, bracelets, necklaces and chains. Bling is about looking good and boasting in your wealth. It is the shameless self promotion of wealth, where "cash is for flashing and wealth is for brandishing" as the BBC put it.

In a rap, God gave the line, "Now clothed from on high, I'm rocking spiritual bling..." Rocking spiritual bling means wearing God's spiritual clothes. These are the garments of Godliness, precious and refined. Today the challenge is: are you wearing Christ Jesus, are you putting on Christ?

PowerPoint Download / Adobe PDF talking points

[There is a PowerPoint file for this talk, downloadable as a zip file..](#)

[For the Adobe PDF file \(to be used in groups\), click here..](#)

Question – What are you wearing today?

My local paper has an article looking at what people are wearing – they look over a person's outfit, what it cost and where it was from, where it was inspired from.

But what would Jesus see if he looked at us today? Would he see our labels, our make-up, our apparent wealth or lack of it..? What labels, what masks, what are you wearing today? Jesus sees through, penetrating to the deepest parts of our being, seeing our hearts. So what would Jesus see today if he looked at you and I?

I was talking with someone recently about which movies they have. They said while they had loads of movies available to watch or download, they would rather read the Bible. Could you say that?!

We all have a human body (well, most of us anyway) – if we opened you up what would we find inside? We'd find muscles, bones, and body parts.. But if we did a spiritual dissection, what would we find? If God opened you up, what would he find inside – or should I say 'sinside'? Would we find words like the DVD, like faith, being right with God, love, Godliness..?

Godliness has value for all things

Godliness = The loving fear of God and being Christlike (Amplified Bible).

1 Timothy 4.7-8: "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

Let's be clear. Godliness has both spiritual and practical value. What Paul writes to Timothy, he writes to us today and, like the entire Bible, is shocking, relevant and sets new standards. Have nothing to do with godless stuff but rather, train yourself to be Godly because Godliness has value for all things, in this life and the life to come. That is clear and it is radical.

I went out with some Christian friends to a restaurant and the topic of conversation went downhill. So much so that I actually felt like leaving, and nearly did. I thought, "this can't be right.. We're supposed to be Christians - different - setting the standard because we want to be like Jesus."

God wants us to have high Godly standards. It doesn't mean we don't talk about stuff around us, but it means we come at everything with a Godly perspective. What does God want me to do? How should I think? How does God see this? Where is the encouragement to grow, be transformed?

I heard a story recently about 2 young people. One wanted to be a Red Coat at Butlins, the other wanted to be an actor. The first refused instruction and didn't get involved at school. The second listened intently to suggestions, made changes and grew massively. The first works in a convenience store, the second is in the National Youth Theatre who only take around 40 people a year. The difference was commitment, determination, training. The Bible talks about training yourself to be Godly. If I want to be an actor, I study movies, learn from better actors, train. If I want to be a footballer, I turn up to practice, train, get fit, practice skills, learn. If I want to be Godly, I go to God. I go to his Word, prayer, music, GOD TV, books and other Christians. The Christian life is often one where you can choose to grow. Like a good Xbox or Playstation game, with God, there is always another level. As the old Microsoft strapline said, 'Where do you want to go today?' In my case, the answer was 'to my Apple Mac'.. In Christian life, it's to God.

Godliness is through Christ

The respected Bible speaker called Derek Prince reminds us in one of his talks that at Golgotha (where Jesus died), there were 3 crosses built. Two were for the 2 criminals. But who was the middle cross for? It was for Barabbas.

Who was Barabbas? He was a criminal, a murderer, a sinner. When Jesus took his place on the Cross, it was prophetic for you and I. We are like Barabbas, in that we are sinners and deserve to die. But there is hope – Romans 6 says we are dead to sin but are now alive in Christ.

Romans 6.19-23: "I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness,

and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Something has to happen to us in order for God’s holiness, his Godliness to be made known in our lives. We are in a war, between the old and the new...

The American Civil war was about many things. But in part, it was a battle of ideology, between the North and the South, including slavery with Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. In the end, the North won the Civil War. But many things didn’t really change. Treatment of black people was one thing that didn’t change. Although everyone was created equal under God, this did not include black people. For years, they struggled and were on the end of this most horrific treatment, abuse, segregation and discrimination – as the old ways of thinking were shaken, challenged and ultimately overcome to a great extent. The old way of thinking had to die, and the freedom, fair treatment and emancipation had to win through. Eventually it did, although many would argue that many things have not changed for the better.

So too, we are in a war between good and evil. But God has an answer. The answer is death and execution. 2000 years ago, the execution took place when Jesus died on the Cross. The ‘execution’ that can now take place in us is a spiritual one not a physical one.

Romans 6.3-7 – “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

So we know that if we accept Jesus, we are changed.. But we still have work to do. Unlike the labels in the shop where we can buy a new top, a new pair of trainers – we cannot simply buy spiritual clothes that make us holy, right with God, loving, faithful, gentle, peaceful. For this, there is another stage. This stage can be called dying to self. We’ll come back to that later.

On the Cross, Jesus became sin. He then died, was buried and then resurrected. The death that he died means that he died to sin once for all. You can I have to go through that same process. The old man has to die, be crucified, executed. We have to be buried (baptized) and then to rise to new life in Christ.

Dying to Self

Romans 6.8-14 – “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to

sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

Sometimes, life as a Christian is hard. But God has purposed it that way – he has told us that the way to find life is down a narrow road. Have you ever heard people complain to God saying things like, "you're killing me" when life is hard? Funnily enough, that's exactly what God is doing! He wants to "kill" the flesh and selfish side of us, and bring us to a place where we're fully submitted to him.

What does 'dying to self' mean?

A while back, I felt God call me to leave my previous church and come to my current church. I had been on my way out for some time and knew it was the right thing. But it was quite hard. I had to lay down doing things in youth work and with a band, that I had done for a few years. I had to come to a new church, meet some new people, let God open up new areas. On a Sunday morning and in the week, I no longer talked of my previous church, but of current church. In a sense, I had to lay down the past and walk into God's future for me. In recent times, I have walked a similar path as God has opened up even more new and exciting things. I cannot look back at the past with anything other than God's training for the present. I came to a new church, with new people and new things. The old had gone.

As a Christian, we have to die to the old person completely. We have to lay down areas of our life where God is not yet fully in control. This can be hard, it can be tough – but it is ultimately worth it. The question with God is whether you are prepared to do what it takes, no matter what the cost. The reward is great, far greater – but there may be a temporary pain.

Dying to self is saying to God, 'here I am, send me'. It is saying every day, 'not my will but yours be done.' It is a place of worship and submission. In the past, the monarch would lay a sword on the shoulders of a new knight who would pledge allegiance to the King or Queen. To live for Christ is to bow the knee before Jesus every day, in every way that we can with God's help. And God will help us by his Spirit.

Working in school with young people, you see so many sad stories – of young people misusing their bodies in so many ways.

Perhaps in the past, we were like this – feeding ourselves with bad things and wrong decisions. But the Bible says the new way is where your whole body is offered to God as a sacrifice, grateful to God for what he's done and giving every part of your body – mind, heart, tongue – to God as an instrument, a way of seeing his Kingdom come. But where we get in the way, God cannot work so well. So by letting go and letting God, we invite a new level of power. Imagine if we allowed God to use us to the full power he was able to. We can have a say – God use me..

Galatians 6:7-8 – “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

The characteristics of Godliness?

Let's read 2 Bible passages and then look at what they mean:

1 Timothy 6.11-12 – “But you, man of God, flee from all this (love of money), and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Colossians 3.12-14 – “So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offence. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.”

We are first and foremost, men and women of God. If we make the decision to be people of God, everything else will come in time. We have a choice to make. The Bible tells us that we should fight the good fight of the faith. So we know that it is a fight.

When I first went into a local school as a youth worker, it was hard and was surrounded by Year 11s angrily asking who I was. I pushed through them, not phased. But the early weeks were tough and I had to stand, but it was ultimately worth it.

Is the Christian life worth fighting for? Is Christ worth it? My experience has said that it is and he is. We are also urged to take hold of things. If there is something before me worth having, I have to reach out my hand to take it. We have a part to play in the Christian life – taking hold, laying hold, moving forward.

The Christian life is lived by throwing off the old, and putting on the new. So..

- We have to make a decision
- We have to follow the example of Jesus. What does Jesus want you to say, do, watch, listen to? How does he want you to react? What would Jesus do?
- Be committed. You are in this for the long term. You can have a relationship with someone and not be committed, but it will only go so far. If you are committed to one another, then the relationship will go a long way. How much more so must this be to Jesus..
- Practice. Practice makes perfect.
- Be open to God and walk in obedience. Put on Christ Jesus.

So, what are you wearing today? What clothes do you need to change, which ones do you need to throw away and which clothes do you need to get?

You don't still wear your baby clothes, because you grow. Are you growing? Are you wearing the wardrobe of Christ Jesus? Are you going to spiritually bling?!!

So how do we respond? Challenges relating to bling..

Flashy car – wealth, things of this world before God. Make sure they don't!

Gold teeth – what comes out of your mouth. Make sure it's good and Godly!

Diamonds, necklaces – outer side looks flashy. Make sure you get your 'inside' right!

Chains – anything that needs to be broken off. Allow God to work in your life to change you!

Cars – which direction are you traveling in? Make sure you walk where God is!

Rings – symbolism of marriage and commitment. Make sure you commit all you are to God!

(Extra Bonus Section) – What Godliness Is Not

1 Timothy 6.3-10: "If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to Godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

Sometimes I watch GOD TV. On there are some men who are not ashamed to show how much God has prospered them. They have cars, bodyguards, huge churches, helicopters, private jets. Their unabashed self-promotion and wealth promotion is quite obnoxious and ungodly. I often wonder how people like Heidi Baker who works across Africa (pouring herself out for people without desire of fame) or the countless millions of faithful Godly men and women in the 2/3 world and through time would feel about this..

Am I envious of these preachers? Not in the slightest bit. *As the Bible says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain."* God warns us against using Godliness for financial game (verse 5 of 1 Timothy 6) and tells says in *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."*

In Proverbs 6.16-17; God says above everything he hates is pride... "There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood."

There is no doubt that God prospers his people, but there is also no doubt that this is not God's main aim. God's aim is for his glory and for his Kingdom. He detests pride and sees the heart and not the outer man. One day, we will all be rewarded on who we were and how we served God, not on how much money we made..!