

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Decent Exposure

John Lee

Exposure is the experience of or contact with something. It could be a physical element or a social association. It is usually not a friendly term. Exposure is often used to articulate something bad or excessive such as radiation exposure, over or under-exposure, or even indecent exposure (something lewd, immodest, or criminal).

But we want to consider a positive side of exposure: DECENT EXPOSURE. Exposure is not always bad. We may, for instance, expose ourselves or someone to something as part of a good learning experience. Decent, or proper, exposure of ourselves is one key to the Christian walk.

In David's classic **Psalm 19**, he pleads for the Lord to "*Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.*" David needed help from God to bring to light (expose) areas he needed to correct. Of all our human gifts, "correct-ability" is one of very great value. Sometimes, it requires swallowing our pride, but it opens the way to better things we aspire to.

Again in **Psalms 139:23-24**, David asks for the Lord's help in exposing hidden faults: "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*" All of us, like David, need help seeing our own shortcomings. How willing we are to be helped in this is one indicator of our Christian maturity and desire to be more God-like.

Jeremiah 17:9 warns us not to trust our own hearts: "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*" The hardest person for us to see accurately is often ourselves.

Exposing our hearts to ourselves or others takes both honesty and courage. Often we fill our lives with distractions and busyness to avoid honest self-evaluations. Yet Paul urges us to examine ourselves (see **2 Corinthians 13:5**). Without honesty to truly evaluate where our faults and weaknesses are, we will not have or accept the information we need to change. Absolute honesty is essential for salvation. And without

courage, we will not have the strength and resolve to change. Slowing down to take time to truly evaluate ourselves and accept evaluation from others is essential.

There are several ways that decent or godly exposure can take place in the Christian life. God can provide it as David requested. Each of us, with God's Holy Word, can have our lives and faults exposed as well as identifying our strengths.

We can also be exposed by our conscience. If we allow our conscience to be properly trained by God's guidance, it can expose our sinful actions as it troubles us. Our conscience will not tell us right from wrong; only God can do that. But if we align our conscience with God's will, it will tell us if our actions are in accordance with His will. And our conscience will give us decent exposure to things we need to correct.

Also, we can be decently exposed by and with our fellow Christians. **James 5:16** tells us, "*Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*" Our willingness to develop ties with our brethren and open up, share, and expose ourselves to one another can be a great resource in our Christian walk. Picking one another up – or being picked up – is a valued work of fellowship (see **Galatians 6:1**). Unfortunately, we are so intent sometimes on covering our weaknesses that sharing and exposing ourselves is avoided.

Photographers know the importance of proper exposure in their craft, letting in the proper light to see the subject accurately. Likewise, Christians need the proper exposure and the light God provides in their self-examinations.

Even a small splinter can be painful to remove. Yet the sooner it is removed, the quicker the healing. The sore must be lanced for healing to begin. The cut must be made for the heart to be repaired. So it is with our faults. The sooner they are confessed and corrected, the quicker the healing and growth.

The Christian walk is constantly about restoration. We all tend to degrade from our bright conversion state. It takes constant attention to stay on the path to Heaven. The fallacy of "once saved, always saved" is that we are tempted to put ourselves on autopilot for the rest of our lives. And that is simply not God's will or teaching. But **Psalm 23:3** says He will

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restore our soul.

David wisely wrote,

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit (Psalm 51:10-12).

The Christian walk is one of repeated restoration. It takes many returns to the Lord to stay on the path that leads to heaven. Since there is no avoiding the process of degradation, we must take measures to correct it when we see that it has occurred. And that seeing requires that we expose ourselves to reality and the truth. Fortunately, God, His Word, a properly trained conscience, and our brothers and sisters in the Lord, have been given to us to help us see ourselves as we are so that we can become what we need to be.

There is an old adage that most of us would rather be ruined by praise than helped by criticism. But it is help that we most often need. Help in seeing ourselves as we truly are and, therefore, seeing what we need to do to become more like Him. And that requires exposure — “decent exposure.”

There are many harmful things we can be exposed to, but there are also decent and needful exposures. We all need exposure of our true beings so that correction and restoration can occur.

The wise know that they will make mistakes. But they also know that a great blessing lies in their ability and willingness to correct those mistakes and to therefore become better servants of God.

May God give us the honesty and courage to “decently expose” ourselves to His and our fellow Christian’s watchful guidance and become more like Him each day.

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The Division of Soul and Spirit

John Morris

Man was made in the image and likeness of God (**Genesis 1:26, 1 Corinthians 11:7, and James 3:9**). To what degree this

is true, we cannot say, but the words in these passages seem to indicate that we resemble Him both in appearance and capacity. God has a form (**Philippians 2:6**), and apparently, ours bears some limited likeness to it. And God possesses qualities that He has passed on to us: we are relational, experience emotions, and have a will. And like Him, we are three in one: He is Father, Word, and Spirit; we are spirit, soul, and body (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**).

Distinguishing between man’s material (body) and immaterial (soul and spirit) parts is straightforward. One can be experienced through the senses; the others cannot. But what of the difference between the soul and spirit? This is more difficult. Our eyes and ears are of no help to us. But the word of God makes it possible: “*For the word of God is living and powerful...piercing even to the division of soul and spirit*” (**Hebrews 4:12**). In the paragraphs below, we will attempt to let the Word do its dividing.

Before focusing on that division, however, it is worth noting that the soul and the spirit do not operate exclusively of each other in every way. They overlap emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Emotionally, both can be calm (**Psalm 131:2, Proverbs 17:27**), at rest (**Jeremiah 6:16, 2 Corinthians 2:13**) rejoice (**Psalm 35:9, Luke 1:47**), be troubled (**Psalm 6:3, Daniel 2:1**), sorrowful (**Matthew 26:38, 1 Samuel 1:15**), in anguish (**Genesis 42:21, Exodus 6:9**), feel faint (**Jonah 2:7, Psalm 77:3**), and grieve (**Job 30:25, Daniel 7:15**)

Intellectually, both can possess knowledge (**Joshua 23:14, 1 Corinthians 2:11**). And spiritually, both can seek God (**Deuteronomy 4:29, Isaiah 26:9**), serve God (**Deuteronomy 10:12, Romans 1:9**), and sin (**Habbakuk 2:4, Isaiah 29:24**).

But there *are* things unique to each. And in these, the division of soul and spirit begins to emerge.

Only the soul is connected to the appetite. God commanded the nation of Israel to “*afflict [their] souls*” on the Day of Atonement (**Leviticus 23:27**). An Israelite could voluntarily vow to “*afflict her soul*” at other times, as well. But what did that mean? The following exchange between Israel and God provides the answer. Israel complained: “*Why have we fasted...and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?*” God answered: “*Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul?*” And later, “*If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday*” (**Isaiah 58:3, 5, 10**). To experience hunger, then (either through intentional fasting or otherwise), is to have an afflicted soul (see also **Isaiah 29:8**, which includes thirst). No such connection is ever made with the spirit.

The soul is connected to sexual desire. This is borne out in Genesis: “*And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw [Dinah], he took her and lay with her, and violated her. His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob*” (34:2-3). Later, Hamor spoke to Dinah’s brothers, saying, “*The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter*” (34:8). Sexual desire, connected with the soul, is not wrong in and of itself, but Shechem’s response to it certainly had been. As we shall see later, Shechem’s spirit could have kept his soul’s desire within its proper parameters.

Interestingly, desire of all kinds is associated with the soul in Scripture (godly, ungodly, and otherwise). Saul’s soul desired to apprehend David (1 Samuel 23:20). The soul of the wicked desires evil (Proverbs 21:10). The soul of the lazy man desires any number of things (Proverbs 13:4). And the souls of the righteous desire God. Desire can take many forms, but throughout Scripture, it is associated with the soul, not the spirit.

And the same is true for weariness. Three times in Scripture, we read of weary souls (Proverbs 25:25; Jeremiah 4:31; 31:25), but never of weary spirits. This may be due to the soul’s connection with the physical body (evidenced in its association with appetite and sexual desire). The body gets weary, physically and emotionally, and the soul is touched by that.

Turning to the spirit, we see how it differs from the soul.

The spirit wills. Those who donated materials for the construction of the Tabernacle and its accouterments were those “*whose spirit was willing*” (Exodus 35:21). Jesus observed of His slumbering disciples, “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41). The soul can desire, but it will never be satisfied until the spirit wills/resolves to do something about it. This helps illuminate the many references in Scripture to God stirring up, raising up, moving, and even hardening the spirits of groups and individuals (e.g., Deuteronomy 2:30, 2 Chronicles 26:22, Ezra 1:5, Jeremiah 51:11, Haggai 1:14). Through circumstances and His word, God indirectly acted upon the spirits of kings, leaders, and people. And according to their nature, they responded for good or ill. Some spirits proved willing, and some willful.

Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that the spirit serves as the seat of understanding, thought, and reason. Elihu justified his decision to offer his opinion on Job’s situation by asserting, “*But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding*” (Job 32:8). Elihu had been slow to speak due to comparative youth (Job 32:6-7), but he had a spirit just like those other men, and so he too possessed

understanding – the ability to draw distinctions and make assessments/judgments. This capacity of the spirit for thought and reason accords with other qualities attributed to it. Only the spirit (never the soul) is said to be proud or humble: “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit...*” (Proverbs 16:18-19; cf. Ecclesiastes 7:8; Proverbs 29:23). What are pride and humility? They have to do with what we think – about ourselves, particularly: “*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly...*” (Romans 12:3). Those who are humble in spirit are being reasonable.

Finally, the spirit seems to possess a more elevated spiritual dimension/capacity than does the soul (at least, while we remain in the flesh). When God gave the Corinthians the gift of tongues, it enabled them to prophesy, sing, and pray with their spirits (1 Corinthians 14:2, 14-16). Nothing is said of the gift engaging their souls. And in closing his letters, Paul three times expressed his desire that the grace of the Lord Jesus, or the Lord Jesus Himself, would be with the brethren’s spirits (Galatians 6:18; Philemon 25; 2 Timothy 4:22). But he never expressed such thoughts relating to their souls. The *spirit*, it may be, is more *spiritual*.

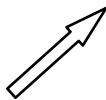
So that’s the best I’ve been able to do at discovering the difference between the soul and spirit. If you have something to add or see something that doesn’t add up, please let me know!

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Blessed Are the Dead

Bradlie Jack Russell, 43, of rural Nelson, MO, died Thursday, July 27. Born December 10, 1979, in Brookfield, he was the youngest and beloved son of Jack and Debbie (Singleton) Russell, who survive of rural Marshall. On December 12, 2012, in rural Nelson, he married his love, Rachel Homan, who Bradlie would often say made him a better person. She survives of the home. Also surviving are five children, Jasmine Leigh Russell, Alizah Elizabeth Russell, Reagan Delanie Russell, Mitchell Duaine Johnson, and Emilie Alaina Marie Escobar; a brother, Dann (Amie) Russell; two sisters, Melanie (Butch) Blumhorst, and Tiffanie (Tim) Weekley; and his maternal grandmother, Dixie Singleton; numerous nieces and nephews and great nieces and great nephews.

Bradlie was a longtime member and newly appointed



Please check your expiration date!

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Deacon of the **Old Lamine Church of Christ**. His first priority was his service to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Bradlie was dedicated to furthering the Kingdom and was known to have Bible studies with numerous individuals as well as leading a monthly study and fellowship with his church brothers and neighbors, where Brad was known to provide God's Word, love, good food, and words of encouragement.

Brad will be most remembered for his serving spirit. There have been countless stories shared of his genuine and intentional acts of love for others. He strove to serve in quiet humility, and for this he will be greatly missed.

Special Meetings

Please make plans to join the **Braymer Church of Christ** in Braymer, MO for a special meeting on September 24. **Louis Garbi, John Morris, Flint Fenton, and Wade Stanley** will preach on a variety of topics from God's word. The congregation plans morning and afternoon services with a lunch in between.

Northern Missouri Fall Campout

The churches in **Martinstown and Unionville, MO** plan their second annual **Fall Campout** for **October 6-8**. For a meeting flyer, please scan the QR code to the right with the camera on your phone or tablet. Congregations, please feel free to print and post the flyer. Teachers, topics, schedules, and information about accomodations are included in the flyer.



Weekend Meeting, Ozark, MO

The **Riverside Road Church of Christ** plans a special weekend meeting for October 14-15. Their theme is "This is the Way -- Walk It!" The flyer for the meeting can be found using the QR code to the right.



Youth Workshop, Ottawa, KS

The **Rock Creek Church of Christ** plans a special "Youth Workshop" for the weekend of October 28-29.

2023 Meetings

- September 2-3.....Labor Day Meeting, Pleasant Hill, IA
- September 24.....Braymer, MO
- October 6-8.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO
- October 14-15.....Riverside Road, Ozark, MO
- October 28-29.....Youth Workshop, Rock Creek, Ottawa, KS

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