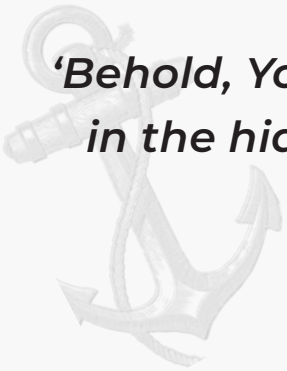


Spiritual Bypass

When we use true things to avoid honest things.

ANCHORED VERSE



*'Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And
in the hidden part [of my heart] You will make me
know wisdom. '*

— Psalm 51:6 (AMP) —

This week's Anchored Update reflects on spiritual bypass, the way we can sometimes use spiritual language, Scripture, prayer, or truth to avoid grief, responsibility, repentance, or healing. I'm sitting with the question of whether my faith is helping me become more honest before God, or whether I've sometimes used the right words to keep from facing what still needs His touch.

by Sean Brannan

Friday, 3 July, 2026

Hello friend,

Thanks for taking a few minutes to read this week's Anchored Update. It means a lot to me. Every week, my hope is that these reflections give us a little space to slow down, pay attention, and let God meet us honestly in the middle of real life.

This week, I've been thinking about something that connects pretty closely to last week's reflection on [congruence](#). Last week, we looked at the alignment between what we believe, what we say, and how we live. This week feels like the next layer down, because sometimes the gap isn't only between our words and actions. Sometimes there's also a gap between the spiritual language we use around others and the honest condition of our hearts before God.

Quick update: My book, *From Survival to Surrender*, is registered, has an ISBN assigned, and the proof has been submitted. I got the proof back, and it looks clean visually. The layout, the flowcharts, and the overall feel of the book came together better than I could have hoped. After reading it through again, though, I knew I needed to make some final edits before publishing. Not major theological or clinical changes, but enough that I couldn't, in good conscience, call it finished yet.

So that's part of what I'm working on this week. The companion journal is also completed and will be released alongside the book. If you'd like to pre-order a copy, you can place your order [here](#). I'm grateful for the encouragement, patience, and support as this project keeps moving toward completion.

Ok, let's talk about Spiritual Bypass.

Before going too far, I want to define what I mean by spiritual bypass. The phrase "*spiritual bypassing*" is commonly attributed to psychologist and Buddhist teacher John Welwood. He used it to describe how spiritual ideas and practices can become a way to sidestep unresolved emotional pain, [psychological wounds](#), and unfinished inner work. In simple terms, spiritual bypass is what happens when we use spiritual language, beliefs, practices, or principles to avoid facing what we need to face honestly before God.

I think it can show up in at least two ways. Sometimes it's inward, when we use spiritual words and practices to avoid grief, fear, pain, responsibility, repentance, or the deeper internal work God may be inviting us into. Other times it's outward, when we use spiritual language and practices to protect our image with others so we can appear more faithful, healed, mature, steady, or okay than we really are.

This usually isn't intentional. Many of us are attempting to honor God with our words and practices while carrying more than we know how to process.

Spiritual bypass may look like quoting Scripture while refusing to grieve, saying we've forgiven while never facing the wound, praying about something while avoiding a hard conversation, or calling something surrender when we're actually avoiding responsibility. The issue isn't Scripture, prayer, forgiveness, or surrender. Those are good and necessary gifts. The issue is whether I'm bringing my real inner world before God, or reaching for spiritual language and practices before I've been honest about what's actually happening "in the innermost being."

That's what I've been asking myself: Have I reached for true words too quickly because I didn't want to admit how unsettled I really was?

- » I can say "God is in control" and still need to grieve what happened.
- » I can say "I forgive them" and still need to be honest about how deeply something hurt.
- » I can say "I'm praying about it" while quietly avoiding a hard conversation,
- » I can say "The Lord will handle it" when part of me is trying to avoid responsibility.
- » I can say "I'm blessed" while still carrying anger, exhaustion, resentment, or numbness beneath the surface.

I believe all of those statements are true: God is in control, forgiveness is real, prayer is powerful, the Lord is faithful, and blessing is not dependent on perfect circumstances. The problem is the [heart posture](#) behind them. *Am I speaking them from honest trust, or am I using them to avoid something I don't want to face?*

The truth isn't meant to become a hiding place from the truth.

Real faith doesn't:

- » bypass reality; it brings reality into the presence of God.
- » deny grief; it learns how to lament.
- » avoid fear; it brings fear before perfect love.
- » pretend wounds are healed because we know the right language; it allows Jesus to touch what still hurts.
- » use forgiveness to skip pain; it lets forgiveness grow from truth instead of denial.

That's one thing that stood out to me in Psalm 51:6. David isn't talking about polished language, public presentation, or saying the right spiritual thing. He says God desires truth in the innermost being. Then he points even deeper, into the hidden part of the heart, where God makes wisdom known.

I think that's both comforting and uncomfortable.

It's comforting because God isn't looking for a religious performance or asking me to dress up my inner world so I can sound or act more spiritual than I am. He already sees what is hidden, and He isn't afraid to meet me there.

It's uncomfortable because I can't surrender what I keep explaining away, and I can't allow Him to heal what I refuse to name. I can't bring something into the light while I'm still pretending it doesn't exist.

This is where I think a lot of us get tangled up. We may not be trying to avoid God at all. We may actually be trying to honor Him with our words and practices in the middle of what we're carrying. But somewhere along the way, we can begin to confuse honesty with weakness or start believing that admitting grief means we lack faith, admitting [fear](#) means we lack trust, admitting anger means we lack maturity, or admitting pain means we haven't truly forgiven.

I don't think that's what Jesus showed us. Jesus didn't avoid sorrow or pretend that pain wasn't real. He wept and entered into people's suffering with compassion, truth, and presence. He didn't rush people past the reality of their condition so they could sound more faithful or appear more whole. He met them honestly, called them forward, and restored what was broken.

I think spiritual bypass may be more prevalent in Christian circles than many of us want to admit, and I say that with myself in the mirror first. There is a version of faith that can say the right things, quote the right verses, attend the right gatherings, and use the right language while never developing the self-awareness needed to be honest about what is actually happening inside. Sometimes it's easier to blame others, protect our image, or use biblical truth to defend our avoidance than it is to admit, *"There's something in me that still needs attention."*

This isn't about perfection, and it's not about trying to look like we have everything figured out. That's part of the problem. Spiritual bypass keeps us working on the mask while God invites us to deal with the hidden parts of our hearts. It can make us more concerned with appearing faithful, healed, mature, or steady than becoming honest, surrendered, self-aware, and more fully integrated.

Life has beaten all of us up in different ways, leaving some places wounded and other places scarred. Somewhere along the way, many of us learned how to hide, harden, defend, and perform. If we're not careful, spiritual language and practices can become part of that protection.

But this is also where we have to be willing to face ourselves. God is the One who heals, but we still have a part to play. We have to stop hiding from what needs His touch. We have to be willing to develop self-awareness, pay attention to our patterns, own our reactions, repent where needed, and stop working harder on the appearance of faith than the condition of our hearts.

The invitation is to come to Jesus with the humility and openness of a child, not polished, pretending, or trying to appear more healed, mature, or faithful than we are, but honest before Him and willing to be seen, corrected, comforted, and restored.

That may be part of what it means to guard our hearts with all diligence. Not by denying the wound, but by bringing it under the care and truth of God. It means seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, repenting where we need to repent, and allowing Him to heal the places where life has hurt us.

That is why Psalm 51:6 has stayed with me this week. God desires truth in the innermost being, and even in the hidden part of the heart, He still teaches wisdom.

This Week's Articles:

No new articles were published this week.

If you haven't already, you can check out the Guided Series or Anchored Reflections on the site. More is coming soon.

Anchored Prayer

Abba,

Thank You for meeting me in truth, not performance. Thank You that I don't have to hide behind the right words, polished answers, or spiritual language that sounds stronger than I feel.

Lead me into honesty without shame. Show me where I've used true things to avoid honest things. Help me bring my grief, fear, pain, responsibility, repentance, and healing into Your presence instead of trying to move past them too quickly.

Teach me wisdom in the hidden places of my heart. Help my faith become more honest, more surrendered, and more whole.

Hallelujah. Amen.

Anchored Reflection

Where might I be using spiritual language or practices to protect an image instead of bringing my real heart before God?

Is there grief, fear, pain, responsibility, repentance, or healing that I've been trying to move past too quickly?

What would it look like to tell the truth before God without dressing it up?



***The truth isn't meant to become
a hiding place from the truth.***

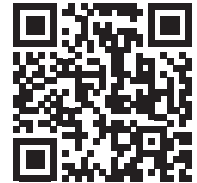


You Matter...

Every newsletter, article, and Anchored Reflection begins with a real question or burden.

If something is pressing on your heart, send it my way. Each week I choose a focus for the newsletter, an article, or a reflection. What you share could be the catalyst for someone else's breakthrough. I would also love your feedback on recent articles.

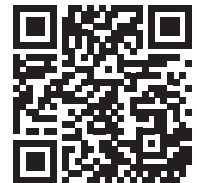
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