

# Discerning Doubtful Things

by Al Whittinghill

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of making right choices and seeking spiritual maturity in order to discern doubtful things and follow God's will.*

**Duration:** 1:01:38

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:9, Psalm 119:11, Matthew 18:6-7, Romans 14:7, Hebrews 3:7-13

**Topics:** "Discernment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Christians being identified as followers of Jesus. He highlights the significance of spending time with Jesus and allowing it to reflect in one's speech and mindset. The speaker warns non-believers that there will come a day when they will regret not accepting Christ. He also cautions believers to be cautious of the little things that can slowly erode their faith and trust in God. The sermon references 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, which speaks about being faithful stewards of the mysteries of God.

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## Transcript

Hebrews chapter 3, we'll read verses 7 through 10. Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost keeps on saying, it says, Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me and proved Me, and they saw My works for forty years. These people in the wilderness for forty years, wore a miracle, followed a miracle, ate a miracle, saw a miracle, but they didn't do what the next verse says.

Wherefore, I was grieved with that generation and said, They always are erring in their heart. They have not known My ways. You see, they saw the acts of God and what He did, and they believed what He could do at a distance.

But they never let their hearts be moved over into the character and the ways of God, what grace teaches us that we must be doing, moving over into the Lord. And so it says that the Lord, verse 11, swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

In other words, leaving a relationship of intimacy and vital union with the Lord in grace and pure love by faith and moving into some safe list of how-tos or what to do, where we never have to really commune with God, who is a consuming fire. And so it says, verse 13, to exhort one another, to encourage one another

every day while it's still called today, lest any of us, of you, be hardened through the trickiness, the deceitfulness of sin, because sin will trick you. I mean, we can call it by all kinds of names and try to coexist like they tried to coexist in the land of promise, trying to compromise and move into a corner of our life like they moved into a city in the promised land.

Things that God says must be utterly removed from our lives. So, verse 19, it says, we see that they could not enter in to God's rest, meaning because of unbelief. Now, unbelief is not non-belief.

It's wrong belief. It's wrong belief. It's believing the wrong things.

And plenty of people would die for what they believe that's wrong. They go out and set themselves on fire to prove that what they believe to be true is true, but it's still wrong. They don't make it true.

Verse 1, chapter 4, Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left to us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Not really come short of it, because if you're in Christ, he's going to finish that good work. It may be when he comes, but he's going to do it.

But you can enter into it now. Don't seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.

But the word preached did not profit them, because it wasn't mixed with faith in those that heard it. They needed to keep on walking by faith. Now, if you are a believer, you have probably noticed by now that the big things in your life, such as, I mean, the real obvious temptations, if you've been an alcoholic before you're saved, for most people, those things begin to vanish pretty quickly.

Not the temptation to go back to drink, if you're really walking with God. But you see, it's not the big things that ultimately make the difference so much in a Christian's life over a ten year period, as it is the small things that we think we can afford to overlook. It's the little things.

But you see, the truth is that we say, well, it's just a bunch of little things. But God graciously fills our life full of little things that don't risk lives and that don't shipwreck us. He gives us little things that we must choose in in order to teach us the mechanism of right choice, so we can go on to the important things that mean life or death to many around us.

And God keeps leading us into these little things, little choices about money, choices about things that we may think are insignificant, but he's planting the seeds of right choice and trust in us so that he then can trust us when there's a lot at stake. And so if you never are faithful in the little things, in Luke 16, the Lord said, if you're not faithful in the little things, then God will not commit to you the true riches. So a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step and a walk of faith is doing the same thing over and over and over again by faith, which works by love.

And then we find the power of choice, which is love in action based on the word coming to bear in my life. So the power of choice is a moral freedom that God gives to us as he is there. He gives us freedom to make the right choice.

It's a strange great mystery to me, but God has chosen in his sovereignty for the believer to give them the privilege of choice because you see, love must choose. You must choose. I mean, if your wife lives with you just legalistically, you're probably not very fulfilled.

But if she loves you and you know that she wants to stay with you because it's you she loves, then she puts up with all the other. But she loves you. Then that makes you be so blessed because love must choose.

So a disciple of the Lord Jesus must learn to choose and our flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit wars or lusts against the flesh. And these two seem to contradict each other. We live in a world that's antagonistic toward God.

We're in it, but not of it. And so there's this constant tension. And it's a good thing if we understand it because we've got to choose.

God leaves it there so we can choose. But you can't choose and learn to choose without a power and a knowledge of God's word. You just can't do it.

You can hear sermons all you want. That won't do it. You won't get enough from the pulpit to give you what you need to have strength on the inside.

You've got to get in the word and eat that word for yourself and let what has been milked to you become meat to you as you learn to choose and act upon what seems to contradict everything you've always counted dear. Preserve your life and to have a positive self-image and all these things the world says you've got to do. Well, the word may come to you and say, put that behind you and live for something higher.

Live by the power of an everlasting life. Enter the rest of God. No more I but Christ.

And everything shouts you're done for. But as you in love hold on to that, then God documents and signs his name across a supernatural life. He says this is of God.

So love must choose. Faith sees the invisible. Faith chooses the imperishable.

And faith does the impossible. You've got to look at the invisible. Paul said in 2 Corinthians, he says, we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen, because the things that are seen are temporary.

The things that are unseen are eternal. So then, though our outer man seems to perish, we don't faint because the inward man, the real me, the one that Jesus is making, the new man is being renewed day by day, even by the spirit of the Lord, as I abide in him and look to him and walk in faith and in trust with him. Now, as we choose correctly, we're exercised like lifting weights.

You know, suppose a man came to someone with my bill, rather extremely thin. And he said, listen, you really need some muscle on you. I'm leaving town and here's a good book.

And I want you to. It's a book on weightlifting. It's the best one I've ever seen.

And I want you to do. I want you to take this book and really give yourself to it. I say I'll do it.

Anything's worth it, you know, to look like you, dear brother, Mr. Hercules. And so. So all of a sudden, you know, he leaves town.

He said, I'll be back in three months and you give yourself to this and we'll see what happens when I get back. And so while he's gone, I take that book and I study it profusely. And you know what? I even memorize pages in that book and I go to a class where everybody discusses that book and I give hours a day to that book, the passages and the techniques and all that.

And when he comes back, I toss the book in his lap three months later and say, it didn't do anything for me. What a stupid book. He says, well, did you do the exercises? I said, do the exercises.

You just said, read the book. It'll change your life. You see, you've got to be exercised and the Bible was not given for information.

It was given for transformation and it was given to transform you as you are exercised. You're onto godliness. That's what it says in Timothy.

Exercise unto godliness. This tension between the visible and the invisible can be simply called taking up the cross. Taking up the cross and learning to deny everything in your life that is contrary to the word of God because of a greater love that he's put there, which is a choice.

Now I want you to turn to Hebrews 5. Hebrews is being written to people that were kind of caught between two worlds. They were pilgrims. They were called by God, but they were being tossed between the visible and the invisible.

They were being pulled and Hebrews is written written to warn them to press on in to the fullness of God. It's written to us to upon whom the ends of the world have come. And in Hebrews chapter five, we come as we come to the end of that chapter.

The writer talks about the Lord Jesus who learned obedience. Perfect son of God who learned practically and experientially obedience by the things he suffered. He was exercised.

And then he says to these people, I have a lot to tell you about this matter, but you can't understand it. You can't hear it yet because you're dull. You've never had the inside mechanism made sensitive to the voice of God so that you can make the right choices.

So I've got to go back and give you milk. Baby food and start all over again. That's what we're doing in our churches all the time.

Pastors are having to give Christians baby food, baby food, because they think they can have their life consisting of coming to church and hearing a good message and going out like reading a book on weightlifting and saying a great message, but never let it be exercised in the hard place of work Monday through Friday or when their wife and children don't see eye to eye with them and they have to choose against themselves. They don't do that. Hebrews chapter five verse eleven.

The writer is wanting to talk about Melchizedek, that mysterious figure, the picture of Christ in the Old Testament. He says of whom meaning Christ or Melchizedek here, whichever one he means, I'm not sure, but it's a mysterious figure. We have many things to say about, but it's hard to be uttered to you seeing that you have become slothful is the word or dull of hearing.

For when the chronos, the chronological time came that you should be teaching others, you have need that someone teaches you again. The first principles of the oracles of God. You should be mature or more

mature by now, he says, but you have need that somebody comes and reteach you the baby stuff and it says you've become such as have need of milk, not of strong meat for everyone.

One that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a baby, but strong meat belongs to those that are of full age. The word there is the word that's translated mature or perfect or come to the goal of God. Strong meat belongs to those that God is maturing and having brought to the goal.

Even here they are to those who by reason of habitual use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. It says that that people turn from milk to meat. They get teeth spiritually.

They're able to take the substance that gives them muscle meat. It comes in when they began to be exercised and learn to make choices, exercised in choices. The word exercise is the word gymnasium.

It's the perfect word for weight lifting. We come under the bench and we push and it's hard and we feel pressed beyond measure. But as we diligently look to him for strength to lift that burden and to walk with him, we've made the right choice.

We hold that line and then the Lord strengthens us in the inner man and we become men of God that he can trust who are strong in the Lord and walking in grace. That's what happens to us as we make choices. But if we do not choose, we'll never grow.

Brother, God will not choose for you when he gives you a choice. He will wait on you. He will wait 40 years like they waited in the wilderness.

I know men who at the same place 10 years later that there were 10 years ago, all because of a woman. They would make a right choice. I know other men who at the same place today, they were five or six years ago, all because of something they're watching, but they won't give up.

And you see, God will let them stay there. He'll let them just stay there. Now he and mercy will put pressure to take us to the woodshed because his grace, like he did in the Old Testament, came and leaned on them and said, remember the covenant.

But if we are hardening our hearts and going on in our unbelief and not walking by faith, God will let us stay in what we think we want. He'll give you what you think you want in your heart, but allow a leanness to come to your soul. This is serious business.

And because you see, on the other hand, God putting that love pressure on us, the devil is very, very serious about trying to put us in a place of standstill. He's very, very busy in our day. He wants to defile me.

He wants to make a crack in my grace foundation and get me to trust in myself. And we say, oh, it's just a little thing. It's just a little thing.

It's kind of like the story of Gulliver. Remember that story in Gulliver's Travels when he went to sleep and the Lilliputians, those little tiny guys, came and while he was sleeping, they put a string across his foot. At any point, should Gulliver have woken up, he could have popped himself loose and gotten up.

But as he slept on, little by little, these Lilliputians put strings and stakes over the legs and more and more of them until finally when he woke up, he was locked down and he couldn't get up. A giant was actually captive to a bunch of little midgets who had put those threads to hold him down. It's kind of like that giant

royal gorge.

I heard this is true. I don't know if it is, but it sure is a good illustration how that big gorge that was a thousand feet down or more than that, and they couldn't, they wanted to make a bridge across it, but they couldn't figure out how to get the initial span across because it was so far down and such a wide gorge. And all these engineers came in and they said, let's do it this way.

They said, no, it'll never work. Finally, a little boy came out with his kite and said, I'll get the first one across. And he let that kite go up and it went up and it went up and up and he let the kite go and the string went across the gorge and they got that string and put a little bigger string across from it and then a little bigger string and then a rope and then a cable and then from that cable, they pulled other cables and then that started everything, that cable that laid that first beam across and a bridge was built over what was impossible.

And that's how the devil does in your life and in mine. He first gets a little gossamer silk thread of something and shoots it across and makes a foothold in your life. And then as we let it go on, then there's a little larger foothold and then a little larger foothold and pretty soon he's got a bridge and he's trafficking in and out.

If we do not crucify self, self will re-crucify Christ in our daily life. We've got to learn to choose. Now, some choices are very, very clear in God's Word.

They're very clear, such as thou shalt not commit adultery. Those should never give us any problem at all, but they do. Men in our day, they do, because we're bombarded.

But I'm not going to speak so much about the obvious gross disobediences that are in many men's lives. I want to share this morning on what the Lord wants us to see about those things that aren't quite so clear, because this is those little things that paralyze so many of us, that we play dumb on. You know, I mean, I've met guys that, well, the question is, do I really want to know? I've met a lot of guys who say, well, I just don't understand what the Bible really teaches here.

And if you came in with a clear word, they would act like they wouldn't want to hear you because they want to play dumb. The question I want to ask is, do you really want to be holy? Now, a lot of people want to be spiritual. A lot of people want to do miracles.

A lot of people want to know the Bible. But do you want to be holy? Do you want God to be able to entrust to you the true riches? Do you use the Scriptures deceitfully? I've met other people that justify what God hates in their life by taking Scriptures instead of weighing. They wrench them out of context and take an isolated passage and they document what they're doing in their life and justify their sin in the name of God.

Paul said, we don't do that anymore. 2 Corinthians 4.1 We don't use the Scriptures deceitfully. It's called craftiness.

Using God's Word, like many in church history have done, to justify the most hideous error and blame it on God when it's all over and still feel nice and religious while we're doing it. I'll tell you, the world is full of this. The church is full of this.

You know, we say about things, well, what's wrong with it, brother? That's not the question for a born again man to ask. That's the question the world asks. What's wrong with it? What's wrong with it, brother?

They always say that the world.

Let me tell you, the question for a Christian is not what's wrong with it, but what's right with it. Is it pure? Is it holy? Is it worthy? Is it a mark of ownership of the Lord Jesus in my life? You see, it says in 1 Corinthians chapter three. Let me read that to you.

Verse one and two. It talks about stewardship of the mysteries of God. 1 Corinthians chapter three.

It says chapter four. I mean, 1 Corinthians chapter four, verse one, let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mystery of God, mysteries of God. Moreover, it's required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

So God wants me to learn to choose. Now, what I want to do in this next moment is to just point out how to know about things in your life that God wants to make an issue of that you may not really have as an issue yet. Now, you know that sign we got this morning, Bill, that some guys were sleeping like that? It's happening.

I see it out there. Some of you guys, you're really trying, but you're sitting on your heads going back like this. Hey, don't be under pressure.

There's no pressure. You don't have to listen. But I mean, if you really want to sleep, I mean, if you have to sleep, go back there and get you a chair in the back and go to sleep.

I mean, we're not under the law around here. But if you could say to the guy beside you, if you see me nod, smack me, and that'll help you. But whatever it takes, you know, but hey, you don't have to stay awake.

It's hard after a hard day of yesterday and long nights of sharing and come in here and you have this wonderful environment with all these precious, godly, powerful, trustworthy men all around who have absolutely nothing wrong in their life. It's easy just to nod off, isn't it? What about those doubtful things, brother, in your life that you say, what's wrong with it? Or you're not sure of are things that aren't clearly spoken of in the Scripture. For example, cigarettes.

You know, the only time cigarettes are mentioned in the Bible or in the Old Testament, when it says Rebecca lighted off her camel. It's the only time. But other than that, I can't find it.

How do you and people can hide behind ignorance and say, well, the Bible doesn't say anything about smoking. And there's a thousand things that you can do on that. Someone says to me, they'll come.

They say, oh, what's wrong with and they'll name something. And you know how I always answer them or like to. I say, why do you ask? Because, you see, the reason they've asked what's wrong with it is because you see the still small voice of God.

Now, I'm not saying that a neighbor can't come and make you miserable and be in the flesh. But I'm saying most of the time when someone says, what's wrong with it? It's because they're defending something in their life that the Holy Spirit is making them nervous about. And they're looking for me to try to prove it to them.

But you see, unless a man learns to listen to that still small voice, he'll always be on baby food. He'll always have to have his spiritual diapers changed. And if you mess him up, he'll burp all over you.

He only cares about himself and his own little things. And he's stuck in the side pool of selfishness and an eddy of unbelief. And he'll never be swept along in these last days and used by God like God wants to use him.

He'll go on and get to the end of his life and look back and say, oh, God, if I'd only listened to you on the stupid little trinkets that I traded for the true riches of God, what looked like something so important, it's just dust and you'll leave it behind. So what I want to do is take you through what I'll call a checklist for right choices. Now, I told you earlier we don't have to have lists.

I'm not telling you what to do. I'm telling you how here to discern. If you really want to know, brother, I promise you by the faithfulness of the word and by God's character that if you really want to know if something in your life is pleasing to God and if it's something that you can continue in or if you want it to be changed in order to please him, if you really want to know and you use these questions, God will show you you won't be able to plead ignorance anymore.

Not ever again. Well, let's put them on the overhead and we'll go through them one by one. First of all, brother, these are questions and I would write these down.

I would take them home and I would pray over your life and the things that the Holy Spirit might be making you a little uneasy about. Bring to this this grid of choice and and we'll see. The first question is this one and we'll have scripture with each question.

The first question is, will it bring glory to God? Will it bring glory to God? And that's an obvious thing that we would ask. But in the first Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 31, it says, whether therefore you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. So I would take this thing that I'm questioning about and say, is this going to glorify God? Is it pure? Is it righteous? Is it holy? Is it loving? Is it eternal? Now, that may not answer your question.

You may not have all the lights you need after you submit this item in your Christian experience to the Lord. And so you may need to ask some other questions. Will this bring glory to God? Well, second question, is it profitable? Is it profitable? And that doesn't mean necessarily financially, brother.

First Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 23. Same chapter. It says all things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient.

All things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify. In other words, is this thing that I'm involved in, whether it be sports, whether it be recreation, whether it be a habit, whether it be a relationship, is it a good investment of God's time? Is it a good investment of money? Is it a good investment of energy? How will it appear at the judgment seat of God when I stand there and see it in that light? Is it profitable? Does it advance the kingdom of God? That's what under is it profitable? Does it does it answer the law of love in the kingdom of God? This this thing I'm questioning, is it profitable? Well, a third question, you know, it's almost hard to give this list because I can see in some of your faces things that you're even putting up on this test right now that you've got going on. And and it's almost like this sudden twinge of pain because you can see you can just see it.

I mean, it's almost like somebody sitting on a tack and you say and you see this unconscious twitch of your lip or something. It's painful, but this is being exercised to make right choices that God wants you to make. Third question is, does it edify? Does it edify now the scripture for that would be Romans 14, 19.

Listen to this scripture in Romans 14, verse 19. It says, let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things with which we may edify one another. The word edify actually means to improve in moral growth.

So is this thing improving my brother in his moral growth as he sees it in my life? Is it answering that law of love? Does it build up? Does it enlighten? That's what edify means. Does it edify others? Does it edify the church and its reputation in the world? Does it edify my character and encourage me in the Lord, this thing that I'm doing? And brother, if it doesn't, you don't have time for it. You don't have time for it.

So first, will it bring glory to God? Second, is it profitable for the kingdom of God? Third, does it edify? And fourth, fourth, does it potentially enslave? Does it potentially enslave? First Corinthians chapter six, verse 12. Does it potentially enslave? And that particular verse says, all things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

There are some things that you began to do in your life that as you do them, they began to control you. I remember several years ago that and I'm really not trying to put in all of you on a guilt trip. OK, but this is just what happened to me about nine years ago.

The Lord spoke to me and told me that I was under the control of a a desire for caffeine. That it actually controlled me and I would plan too much around getting that that morning cup of coffee. I'm just trying to apply it where we are, brothers.

And and I remember I remember, you know, I could have gone right on. But God had made this an issue for me. One for you, but it was for me because that's where I was at that point.

And the Lord said, I want to see if you love me. And that's what he was saying. I want to exercise you.

And you know what happened? I had to get down before God and say, by the grace of God, I'm going to lay this at the altar. And like an Isaac, not nothing that big, but just a stupid little thing. But it is important to me.

I'm going to just I'm going to let go of it just so it'll pull its tentacles out of my heart. And for one solid year, I never had a cup of coffee. And I thought I was through for the rest of my life.

I was in Canada at a conference and someone was speaking right, right before me. And they came and they said, my husband is here. There's a lady, a different demand.

She said, my husband is finally here. He's the man with the cast over there. He works in construction.

And I'm praying that God will give you the opportunity to talk to him and lead him to Christ or pray for him, brother. And I said, I will pray. And I did pray.

I went up there to preach right after that. When I got through, I came down and stood on the back row, listening to the next person. And all of a sudden, this fellow on crutches hobbles over next to me and he says to me, hey, my wife tells me about you.

Would you go across the street and have a cup of coffee with me? And the Lord said, you're finished, go do it. You see, all he had done was just pulled it out of my heart to where I was master and it wasn't master of me. And I went over there and had a cup of coffee with that man, led him to the Lord Jesus.

And that's great. You see, the Lord said, hey, brother, you're free, you're free, son. But I just want to take out of your life the things that potentially enslave you.

In other words, does it have power over you? Are you addicted to movies? Are you addicted to entertainment? Is it harmful to your body? First Corinthians 6:19 says First Corinthians 6:19 says that's not on there. It says, what know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God and you're not your own. You are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

So you don't really have a right to do anything you want to to your body because your body belongs to him. And so is this enslaving your body? Is it an encumbrance or is it a weight that's up there? In other words, if you're running in the Peachtree Road race, you don't run it in a tuxedo. And if you're going to run the race of faith, you don't run it all cumbered down with all kinds of things, the cares and uncertain things of this world.

You are stripped down to a running weight, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin, which so does easily beset us. It besets us.

So it does this potentially enslave. Well, number five, number five question. It's getting smaller, this corner that we're moving into number five.

Will it this thing that I'm debating about and trying to play dumb on? Will it strengthen me against temptation? Or, in other words, will it make me a more true disciple of Jesus Christ? And the scripture I'll use is Romans 13, 14, that says, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision or forethought is the word for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Most of us, we all do plan for that situation that's most conducive to our flesh. We go on a trip, whatever we do, we usually tend to pamper our flesh.

And so the question that I've got to ask is, will this make provision for my flesh? It says in Proverbs 22, verse three, it says that a wise man, Proverbs 22, verse three, a wise man foresees the evil. And he keeps away from it. And that means then if you've had a problem with drinking in your life, then you don't go sit in the bar, even though you're not going to drink with all your buddies and watch the ball game, because sooner or later, your flesh is going to rise up and the devil is going to hook something in there and say, I'll have a drink with the old boys.

It's all right. If the Lord's told you not to do that, then don't go to that place. Make no provision for the flesh.

This is very practical. If you're tempted to stop where you always stopped, like this man that was became a Christian and he was before he was a Christian, he'd always stop and get a couple six packs of beer and have one of them gone before he got home and he got saved and he knew that the Lord delivered him from that. And he was delivered.

But as he drove home, he almost felt like his car wanted to turn in there by pure habit, a habit of unrighteousness. And it was a battle for him and he'd have to pray and struggle like a muzzled dog as he went by this place. And he came to me.

He says, what I do, brother, I said, drive home a different way. Take a different road home. He started going maybe a mile out of his way and didn't drive by that place.

And you know what happened? It gave God that season in his life to strengthen him to where it didn't bother him anymore. It was this one fellow that used to have these terrible nightmares. He would always dream that these terrible monsters were coming out from under his bed in that space and coming out and then torment him while he was sleeping with fear.

And he'd wake up in a cold sweat and he started being really bothered by this. So he went to his psychologist and his psychiatrist and they charged him an arm and a leg, but they couldn't help him. And he kept having all these terrible dreams.

And finally, in despair, he was just he lost weight and he was at the end of his rope. And he told his brother his brother was just a practical man, a carpenter. And he said, I'm in misery.

I'm having these nightmares and these monsters come out from under my bed and torment me. And I don't know what to do. And the brother says, I can fix that.

He says, you can fix that. No way. I mean, come on.

I mean, I've been to the best psychiatrist in the whole state. And you say you can do what he couldn't do. Sure.

And this man came over to his house and he got out his saw and he cut the legs off his bed. And so when he got in his bed, it was sitting down on the ground and that man never had another dream. That's pretty dumb.

I know it's dumb, but I tell you what, that's about as practical as you can get. And if you want to be free, sometimes that's what you have to do. You have to cut the legs off of what you're imagining and you have to get down to where it's really on ground level and really take it.

In other words, under this, will it strengthen me against temptation? There's a scripture, First Corinthians, chapter fifteen, verse thirty three. It says, do not be deceived. Evil communications, corrupt good manners.

I mean, if you hang around with guys that that are always fudging on God. And brother, you go fudge on God because the pressure will get to you. And if you think you won't, if you think you can run with that pack, I would ask you, why are you even like being around them? I mean, you should be the friend of sinners.

You should be loving toward people. But that doesn't mean you should want to solicit their company when you have a choice. You should be with the with the men that are going to spur you on to follow God and be accountable to godly men.

Galatians, chapter five, verse 13, for brothers, we have been called into liberty. That's great. Only do not use your liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

I'm free, I'm free, says the man as he goes and he stuffs himself with everything that is offensive to God, I'm free, I'm under grace. And I'll tell you what, you've never even understood grace. You've never understood it.

If you can do that, you've never seen the God who's consuming fire. So will it strengthen me against temptation? The question that I've got to ask under that the last one under will it strengthen me against

temptation is will it help others or is it sowing to the flesh or is it sowing to the spirit? Is this thing that looks so harmless? Is it sowing to the flesh or is it sowing to the spirit? I'll read the verse for you that Bill Clinton picked as his inaugural verse. Parade magazine pointed that out, that he used his grandmother's Bible and laid his hand on it.

And this is the particular verse that he when he swore himself in when he was sworn in to be president was his theme verse. I'll read it to you. And when you ask yourself, is it sowing to the flesh or spirit? Galatians, chapter six, verse six and seven.

And it says, verse seven and eight, excuse me, be not deceived. God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap for he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. And he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

Took guts, didn't it? To lay your hand and swear on that. You see, is this sowing into my life that which will reap corruption or is it sowing into my life that which will reap life everlasting? Will it strengthen me against temptation? Well, the next question is, how does it appear or affect others? How does it appear to or how does it affect others? It's really true. I am my brother's keeper.

Woe to the man by whom offenses come. If I cause my brother to stumble and he, by reason of my liberty or something that I am walking in, stumbles and shipwrecks. Woe be to the one by whom that happens.

We must be very jealous. First Thessalonians 5:22 abstain from all appearance of evil. That then means that we don't only shun the things that are offensive to God, but we shun the things that others can construe to be offensive to God.

For example, if a godly sister comes and says, would you give me some some of your insights on this topic of Scripture? And she comes or I'm having marriage problems and she could be the most unattractive woman in the whole universe. And I could be completely just repelled by her physical. There's no danger at all of anything before God of ever anything happening or even flirtation.

But when she comes and sits in my office, I would always make it a point to either have a woman in there with me or have my door open with the secretary sitting right outside. You know, I could abstain from all appearance of evil so that the devil can't come along and say later, this is what happened is my word against hers. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Matthew chapter 18, Matthew chapter 18, verse six and seven. It is also very appropriate to what we're talking about. Matthew chapter 18, verse six and seven.

It says, whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it would be better for him that a millstone were hung around his neck and he was drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses. It's necessary that offenses come, it will happen, but woe to the man by whom they come.

Romans chapter seven, Romans chapter seven. I hope you're writing these down just to take back Romans chapter 14. I mean, sorry, Romans chapter 14, verse seven.

It says, none of us lives to himself and no man dies to himself. Romans 14:21. It is neither good to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother will stumble or is offended or is made weak.

So I am responsible for how how I conduct myself affects you. This is an amazing thing, brother. But so I've got to ask, would I do this thing that I'm questioning, regardless of who is there? Would you do it if your pastor were there? Well, if you wouldn't, you certainly shouldn't do it if the Lord Jesus was there and he is in you.

And so that's your standard. And that's where you've got to live. Will it help others to follow Christ? Will it help them and encourage them in their walk with God? How does it appear or affect? How does it appear to or how does it affect others? Listen to first Corinthians chapter eight, verse nine and following.

Listen to this. Take heed, lest by any means your Liberty become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if any man sees you who have knowledge, sit at meat at an idol's table or an idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him that's weak be emboldened to do those things, to eat those things offered to idols? And through your knowledge, your spiritual understanding, which may be right for you, the weaker brother perish for whom Christ died.

When you sin against the brothers, you wound their weak conscience. You sin against Christ. You can't get any clearer than that.

You know, when I was in Europe, people around me had had the ability to sit down and and sit at the table and drink beer after a Christian meeting. And and I am not making a statement by this because plenty of people that are truly godly will have a beer in that context. But I was imprisoned in a beer bottle in my past and the Lord freed me forever from that and said, don't ever let one drop of that slimy gunk go down your throat again.

And so as I sat there and watched these brothers, their liberty, they start having a few more and a few more. And I saw that their liberty was an occasion for the flesh. And I'll tell you what, I was hurt.

And I believe that was a sin against the Lord Jesus by them because they knew that I had been an alcoholic. At least I wasn't trying to get free. I just love being an alcoholic.

I just the Lord saved me. I mean, I wasn't sloppy. I want to get.

I just love being drunk all the time. And the Lord freed me and I never wanted to go back. But I sat there with brothers that I love and I was in pure turmoil.

And of course, I've forgiven them, but I'm telling you, we ought not put our brothers in that situation where we know that God is saying to us these things. First Corinthians, Chapter 10, verse 32, In nothing give offense, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved.

When you are with people, try to become as they are in as much as it doesn't contradict what God's conscience has laid in your life. So how does it affect others or how does it appear to them? Seventh question is this activity characteristic of the world or is it characteristic of the father? I would go online down the middle of a page and say concerning this activity, which kingdom does this belong in? Where does it originate? The world or the father? First John, Chapter two, verse 15, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. It's not just loving the world system.

It's loving the things that the world system seduces you by. And that's easy to do. I mean, I'm not up here saying that we're to be hermits moving into a hole won't make you holy.

I'm saying this, that you are not to be motivated by the things that the world is motivated by. You're motivated by faith and do not love the world, the systems nor the things that are in the world. A lot of Christians who are very against the world love and give much of their time and energies for the things the world can give.

I would never act like that, but these things are wonderful. If any man loved the world, the love of the father is not in him. There's no room for all that's in the world.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life is of the is not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passes away and all the lusts thereof. But he that is doing the will of God abides forever.

So it's a characteristic of the world of the father. In Acts chapter four, these men had been so much with the Lord in communion in verse 13. It says in Acts four that they noted when they saw these brothers that these men had been with Jesus.

And that's what I want people to see. And that's what we need to have people say. And you should want it that when they see this man has spent time with Jesus, I can tell your speech betrays you.

You have a countenance. You have a you have a mindset that shows you've been with the Lord Jesus. And they may say, oh, you're a Christian.

Oh, I understand why you'd say that. You say, you're right. I'm a Christian.

And I understand why you say what you say, because you're not a Christian. But I'll tell you something. The day is coming when you wish you had been a Christian, when you stand before God.

And he says, remember all the times I spoke to you about the gospel and you kept living for trinkets? That's what you've got to learn to do. And you've got to be free enough on the inside to where you can share with people. I've got to be able to share with people like that.

Well, an eighth question, and these are getting more obvious, is number eight. Is it scriptural? The scripture that our brother down here read to us with broken heart that ministered so strongly when it says in Psalm 119, verse nine, it says, Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed thereto unto thy word. Thy word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

And it says, order my steps in thy word. That that song tells us so much about the foundation of the word of God put in our hearts. Search the scriptures.

That list I gave you. Let that list search you. Let the scriptures search you.

Don't just you search it. And so ask yourself about this thing you're questioning. Is it spoken to specifically in the word of God, for example, cigarettes? What if it's not? Say, is it spoken to in principle? Hey, if you want to know, you can find out.

I heard Vance Havner once say he said, listen, I was coming to the church. Then I saw you deacons out there offering up your burnt offering on the front porch to the Lord. He said, but listen, tomorrow when you come back in this church, don't bring your cigarettes, leave them out there on the front porch and don't worry why you're in here.

No hog or dog will bother them. They'll be there when you leave. Anyway, I thought that was pretty interesting.

We purify our souls, it says, in obeying the truth through the spirit. As you obey the truth of the word by the spirit of God, by pure grace alone, your soul is purified and you're set free from things that have kept you back and put you at a standstill and kept you in an eddy for maybe years. Some of you and God wants you to move on, press out and get rid of that stuff.

It's so in your life, some of these things that you may think you have to live that way. You're so in bondage that you think that there's no escape. But I'll tell you, there is an escape.

It's all about pure grace and God will let you free. Do you really want God's answer? Do you then search the scriptures and he'll show you. He'll give you the power on the inside.

Well, number nine, number nine, number nine question. I'm going to be hurrying on here. What do my authorities say? What do my authorities say? Now you might say, well, I don't have any authorities.

Well, that's your first problem. That's your first problem. Are who are my authorities anyway? Well, if you're a young person and you're here, there are a lot of authorities in your life.

But your parents, you know, I told my son the other day, I mean, he had something he really wanted to do with his friend and his friends. Daddy said, I just don't want you to do that. I give him my son permission to do it is go to a certain high school football game.

It's a rainy night and all that. And I just said, you can do it. I trust you.

I want you to. He's only 15 and there's a lot of things going on. But but my friends, my son's friends, dad said, you can't do it.

And boy, it really bent my son out of shape. And I said, you need to submit when it's unreasonable to you or you cannot submit. But you got to realize that that man is the authority in that boy's life.

And you need to trust God to be big enough to speak through that man of God who is that daddy of your friend. What do your authorities say? If you're a young person, it's your parents. And of course, you have your pastor.

He watches over your soul and he's got to give an account to God for you. So so submit to him and and and ask him what he thinks about it. And God will speak to you through these people.

Ask him. I say, I told a young person whose parents weren't even a Christian. I said, listen, nobody loves you more than your parents.

Your friends will forsake you. You go to prison and see how many of them will come see you in prison. Not many.

But your mom and dad will always be there most of the time. I mean, they'll always you can go to prison and they'll be there because they love you. They can't help it.

Ask your peers in Christ. Ask, you know, Jim McCormick is a very good friend of mine. And if I had if I had a problem in my life that I just could not discern, I would have the freedom to pick up my telephone and

say, brother, what do you think about this? Ephesians 5:21.

Submit yourselves one to another in fear of God and being in these groups of accountability. Ask brothers, you know, and trust in the Lord. And you can ask your wife if you have the humility to ask her, honey, what do you think about this? And you know what? She may give you the answer that God's kept you dumb to see just so he'll see if you have the humility to listen to your wife.

Don't you just hate that when it's so obvious and she says something that's so obvious and you just want to crawl under your sofa and God let her be the one to speak into your heart. What do my authorities say? Well, the last thing, and this is the killer. Is can I imagine the Lord Jesus Christ doing this? Can I imagine the Lord Jesus Christ doing this? Or let's paraphrase it.

Can I do it in faith? Because faith is an action based upon the word of God that's carried out by the spirit of God in your life. And so the question comes to me in Romans 14:23. Is it a faith and whatsoever is not a faith is sin.

If I can't see and know from Scripture that the Lord Jesus himself would be able to participate fully in this action along with me, then I must not do it. I hear people say all the time, oh, Lord Jesus, if I have sinned, please forgive me. And I want to say that you don't have to say if all of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Forgive me if I've failed you. You failed him. Believe me, but his grace covers it.

But such forgiveness and such grace should put us in a godly fear before him and say, Lord, I have caused you such pain by my sin and my rebellion and my weakness that I don't want to lift my finger if I can't imagine you being involved in it. Can I imagine the Lord Jesus Christ doing this? And I want to nail this right now. In First Corinthians, chapter six, I'll tell you, there's some people that I know and love in another town that are using the scriptures to justify an activity in their life.

And I've tried to talk to them and I'm a burden for them in First Corinthians, chapter six, verse 15. It says, no, not that your bodies are the members of Christ. This is not just a metaphor.

This is not just a theory that if I'm in the Lord Jesus, I am bone of his bone. I am flesh of his flesh. I am joined.

First Corinthians, six, 17, and my spirit to the Lord. And I am not my own. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

I have the mind of Christ. I'm not to live my own will. I'm to love the things he loves and hates the things he hates.

And so I've got to read this and say, don't you know that your hands, your feet, your eyes are the body of Christ? His spirit has to live in your body if he sealed you. And shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What don't you know that he that is joined to a harlot has become one with her or two shall become one? It says in Genesis 2:24, but he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. Do you know what those verses say? In reality, it is saying this, what I do with my

hands.

I make the Lord Jesus Christ participate in. If you're fondling some woman. It's not your wife.

You're making Jesus do that. If you're a Christian, if you're involved in masturbation, can you imagine Jesus masturbating? Can you don't say anything about masturbation directly in the Bible? It talks about uncleanness and that type of thing. People justify that saying I'm only human.

God knows I'm lonely. But if you want the answers, you just say, can I imagine Jesus Christ doing it? Can you can you imagine Jesus with a cigarette in his mouth? Jesus did drink wine. So I'm saying this is a healthy thing.

I'm not sanctioned drinking wine, but I'm saying you better find out what kind of wine he drank. If you want to know, you can know if you want to play ignorant, you can play ignorant. But I would say this before you do something, before you're out on that date with that young woman, that's a woman of God and you're a man of God and you're out with her and you're you're using her to satisfy yourself and you're touching her.

Before you do that next time, bow your heads and pray. I guarantee people that do that don't pray much together. But you bow your head and pray, Lord, would you bless this act of fondling that we're about to do? Would you please just put your seal on and your presence on this action that we're about in this hidden moment? Thank you very much in Jesus name.

If you can do that, go ahead, brother, and then come to me because you need to be saved. You need to come to Jesus. Is it worthy of my calling that I have as a Christian? Does it express loving dependence upon God? It's not what's wrong with it.

What's wrong with that movie? What's wrong with this activity? What's wrong with that? Listen, I am not the center of the universe. God is the center of the universe and he always will be. And it is impossible to love anybody else without giving yourself.

You've got to give yourself to God. You've got to give yourself away. So we've got to intelligently lay aside all that we are and we allow the yes, Lord of the Holy Spirit to lead us into paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

I'm really excited about promise keepers and about accountability groups that are sweeping our country because men are finally seeing that it is good to surrender all and dare to stretch out of this comfort zone Christianity. This this miserable success that we live in that is just fleshly and move out and take the high places of the field by going beyond who we've ever been before. I would say to you, brother, submit to God, submit to God and resist the devil.

You can't say no to the devil until you said yes to God. Can't do it. Submit to God and then say no to the devil and search the scriptures and memorize them and meditate in them and go over this list of checklists for your things in your life and let God purge your life.

If you don't, I want to remind you, it's your choice. Doesn't mean you're kicked out of the kingdom of God. You're a believer, but it does mean that God will not use you.

And when you get to the end of your life, you'll say, I wish I had and you won't get another rerun. It's all over. I'll tell you what.

Time passes quick. The older you get, it seems to get quicker. It gets quicker and quicker.

And as you come to the end, you'll say, why didn't I do it sooner? I'd exhort you in Jesus name to go through that list I gave you and let the Holy Spirit be the guide to your conscience. Go down that list and let the Lord speak to your heart and see the real battle in your life. Not the fleshly one, but the battle for control and lordship and whose you are and stop making provision for your flesh and excusing yourself and condemning God as a Christian.

Pray and become accountable to other men and and and find out what God is doing. And then because you're free as he set you free, join him. Don't say, Lord, I want you to bless this, say, Lord, what are you doing? And only those who are really free, like I'm talking about, can hear him.

If you hadn't heard God talking to you about the things that are that take a little searching to find out whether they're right or wrong. Like I've just discussed, if if God says child and tries to get your attention, you harden your heart. Then don't think for a moment that you can hear his voice over here about guidance.

Where you want to hear him, you've got to hear God where he wants you to hear him before you can hear him where you want to hear him. And so you've got to come to him and say, Lord, this list, I want to go through this and say, Lord, these questions I must answer. Sin dies hard.

I'll tell you, I know of men who are wrestling with something in their life and they wrestle with it so long that they're willing to just settle for second class believing. Because they just can't give up their idolatry. Well, it's a tragedy.

I'm sure one day there'll be tears over that. This is the tears in heaven. I don't know what they're about, but that should be one of them.

I think God will wipe them away. But you've missed it. I would exhort you to be full of integrity with God and let him lead you in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

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