

You Have to Love Jesus to Follow Him

by Carter Conlon

To follow Jesus, we must love Him more than our old life, our relationships, and our possessions, and be willing to let go of things that hinder our love for Him.

Duration: 56:45

Scripture: Psalm 119:97, Matthew 6:26, John 20:27, John 21:16, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Hebrews 10:23

Topics: "Loving Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal experience of preaching in a small church and witnessing sparrows pecking at the driveway. Through this observation, the preacher reflects on God's provision for even the smallest creatures and encourages the congregation to trust in God's provision for their own lives. The sermon emphasizes the importance of serving others and being led by the Spirit of God, even in difficult or uncomfortable situations. The preacher also highlights the significance of believing in God's commission and holding fast to faith, assuring the listeners that God will bring their journey to a successful conclusion.

Transcript

Good morning, Times Square Church. Praise God. You have to love Jesus to follow Him.

Now I want to ask you a question before we even go into this message this morning. Do you love Jesus? I want to ask you again, do you love Jesus? I want to ask you again, do you love Jesus? So are you very emphatic on the fact that you love Jesus? Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit examine the depth of that statement? You are willing? And if God speaks to your heart, you will respond? Well, bless God, I'm a blessed pastor this morning to be speaking to this kind of an audience. John chapter 21, please, if you'll turn there in the New Testament.

You have to love Jesus to follow Him. Father, I thank You with all my heart for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Oh God, You have to pick me up and carry me this morning.

And I thank You, Lord, that You'll give me the ability to speak this. You'll give me the heart, the mind. You'll quicken my physical body.

And God, You'll give me everything that I need, Lord, that I can stand and be an oracle of God. I yield my body as a vessel into Your hands. I'm asking only that You be glorified and that Your church advance,

Your kingdom come, and Your will be done in us as it is in heaven.

Guide us into these days that we're living in. Give us the grace and strength that we're going to need to survive it. Father, we thank You for this in Jesus' name.

I have a bit of laryngitis. I do hope my voice will hold out throughout this message. John chapter 21, beginning at verse 7. You have to love Jesus to follow Him.

Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, for he was naked and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship, for they were not far from land, but as it were 200 cubits, dragging the net with fishes.

As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bred. And Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three.

And for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? Knowing it was the Lord.

Jesus then cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

He said unto him, Feed my lambs. He said unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He probably said, Yea, Lord, a little louder than the first time.

He said unto him, Feed my sheep. He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee.

Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, Follow me. Now, folks, this was the third time, according to verse 14, that Jesus had come to his disciples after the cross, meaning that after he had died on the cross and he was raised from the dead, this is the third time he has come to his disciples, to those who had been the most intimate with him, those who had walked the closest with him.

The first time, in John chapter 20 and verse 21, he came to them and he said, Peace be unto you, as my Father has sent me, even so send I you. So the first time he came to them, he sent them on a journey, just as he had been sent by his Father. Now, it's important to understand that when you and I came to Christ, it's wonderful that we were saved and we were brought into peace through the fact that God was reconciled to our sin by putting all of the sin that we had committed upon his son on Calvary.

When you trusted in Christ, you were reconciled to God, and when God came to you the first time, just as these disciples, he said to you, Peace, your sin is forgiven. You're in right standing in relationship with God. Now, there was a commission given to them, as my Father has sent me to bring men out of darkness and into reconciliation with God, now I send you.

You're to be witnesses of the cross. You're to be witnesses of this God who sent his son into the world. You're to be living witnesses of this God.

As a matter of fact, in the New Testament, the scripture bears witness that we are to be a compelling testimony of this. We are to be given for men in measure, as it is, that is a representation of how God in Christ was given to those who were alienated from him. The second time, in John chapter 20 and verse 27, he challenged them all through his interaction with Thomas to be not faithless, but believing.

Thomas was among those who had not seen his first appearing to them. And he said, unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and unless I put my finger into them and thrust my hand into his side, he said, I will not believe. He said, I have to see something.

I have to have a visible and tangible sign that he has indeed risen from the dead and is among us again. And Jesus came in and appeared to them again, and he challenged, because the others are in the room as well, and he challenged them, and he said, don't be faithless, but believe. Now, you see, I'm building something here this morning because Christ was building something.

They were sent on a commission to be representatives of God in the earth and the reconciliation of God through his son. Then the second time he appeared, they were instructed through this example not to be faithless, but believing. You've got to believe that God has commissioned you, and you've got to believe that that which he has begun, he will bring to an end.

He will bring it to the conclusion that he has desired for your life. You're not going to be a statistic along the way. You're not going to fall.

You're not going to fail. The supply is not going to run out, no matter what happens around you. Now, if you're faithless and unbelieving, you open your heart to every power of hell that will come against the testimony of Christ in you.

But if you hold fast your confidence in the Lord, God will prove himself faithful to you, and you'll not fall or fail in this journey. Now, the third time he appears to them is what we're talking about this morning. You would think that the first and second time would be sufficient, but now the third time, and where does he find them? Are they on the road? Are they telling people about the risen Christ? Is faith alive in their hearts? Where are they? They're fishing.

And what they had really done is they'd gravitated or gathered around familiar comforts. And it could be argued, I believe, that they're neither going forward nor backwards. They're essentially in a stagnant place, and they're catching nothing by their own testimony.

He's standing on the shore. Now, they've been commissioned to be fishers of men. And Christ himself, the third time, was standing on the shore and said, How have you done? You've been fishing all night.

Have you caught anything? Now, the first time I think they're really honest, it's true, is when they said, you know, there's not many honest fishermen around, at least not through my history. And when they said, No,

we've got nothing. Then he tells them, cast the net on the right side.

Do it my way. Hear my voice. Do it the way I've called you to do it.

You know, folks, there's so many places now where God's people are fishing, but they're not catching anything. Week after week, going out, even through the midnight hour, and week after week, and year after weary year, there's hardly any fruit, hardly anything to show for their labor. Toiling all night and catching nothing.

Do you think perhaps something might be wrong? Something might be out of order? Something might be missing in their love for God. Now, Jesus brings them to shore by his voice, prepares for them a banquet of fish and bread, feeds them, and sits down with them, and speaks to Peter these words. Now, it was significant that he spoke it to Peter, because Peter was more or less the ex facto leader, as it is of the church, of that primitive church at that time.

So he speaks to those today who are called to lead. Now, you're called to lead your family. You're called to lead others to Christ.

We're all called into some form of leadership role in the body of Jesus Christ. But now Christ is about to identify why these men have gravitated to the familiar. Why they're going nowhere.

Why they're fishing and catching nothing. Why it is that the first and second commission have not been sufficient. You remember in John 21, it says, he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit.

So they had a measure of the Holy Spirit at that time. He gave them the commission to go as I've been sent to the Father. And he told them not to be faithless, but believing.

You and I would think that would be sufficient to send them out the door and into the work of God. And now he begins to identify it. He says in verse 15, when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Joseph, lovest thou me more than these.

Now I'm anxious to get to heaven for a lot of reasons. But one of them is when I get there, I want to know what these were that he was pointing to. There was a these involved in this question.

He's obviously pointing to something that's in the immediate vicinity. And you and I can only speculate on that. I wonder sometimes, was it the 153 fish? I mean, there's 153 fish and they're not minnows.

These are big fish. They're in a net. It's a bigger catch probably than they've ever caught before.

And it's been gotten by the word of God. They've actually obeyed God in that primitive obedience as it is. They brought in this incredible harvest of personal wealth.

There's no other way to describe it. These are not men they brought in. These are fish that they brought out of the sea.

And to me, it represents the wealth and the resources that are now within the reach of Peter and the disciples that would become available also as he chose to obey the voice of God. Do you love me more than these? Folks, as you walk with God, there'll be an incredible unveiling of his resource. Not just the spiritual but the physical as well.

But you and I have to choose in our hearts that we're going to love him more than the money that becomes available to us. That's really the bottom line. When you come to Christ, you may have been out in the street laying in your own vomit, just an incorrigible drunk.

But then Christ comes into your life. These old things pass away and suddenly you've got a good job. Suddenly you're moving in another sphere that was completely outside of your reach until Christ came into your life.

But you have to be able to answer the question, do you love me more than these? Do you love me more than the prosperity that will come into your life because I've come to you? You see, God gives a new mind. He gives a new heart. He gives a new spirit.

He gives a new direction. He takes you out of all forms of poverty and brings you into this incredible treasure that his presence will always bring to those who are living for him and serving him. But if you don't love him more than mammon, you're going to get waylaid.

You're going to get sent to the sidelines. Matthew 6.24, Jesus said, you cannot serve God and money. You cannot serve both.

Yes, money is necessary to live, to pay the bills, to put clothes on our back and food in our cupboard and everything else that goes along with that. But you cannot love it more than Jesus Christ because there might be a day when he calls you to part with it. And that's where your heart will be tested.

When the Lord comes to you and says, I want you to take this that you've stored up in your barn and I want you to go and do something with it that will bring my kingdom into a further purpose in the earth. That's where you and I find out if we love money more than we love God. I think he might have been pointing to the boats and nets.

The things that you formerly loved and thought would provide security, purpose and joy in your life. Pointing to those things. Pointing to your occupation.

I remember, and I've used this illustration many times in this church. The young lady that came to this church for a season, right after I first began to be one of the pastors here. And she was so excited, so happy to be saved.

She would leap and dance somewhere around the second or third row. And I remember she started coming behind the platform after the service and she said to me, Pastor, it can't possibly be that God has asked me to give up this career that's so dear to my heart that I've fought for all of my life. Now, I hadn't asked her to do that.

Nobody had mentioned it. It was the Holy Spirit was speaking to her about giving this up. And I said, well, the only thing I can tell you is that whatever God is telling you to do, do that.

Obey Him. There's no folly to those who let go of those things that they can't keep for eternity to lay hold of those things that are eternal. And I remember her coming back two or three times and every time her countenance was changing.

She was becoming harder. I remember about the third or so time, there was no longer a question. It was now an argument against God.

No, God wouldn't do this to me, she said. God wouldn't ask me to do this. This has been the dream and desire of my heart.

And now she had come to Christ. She had come to New York City as well to be famous, as she saw it. And now she had come to Christ and she felt that the Lord was asking her to give this career up.

Now, this is a battle between her and God. It's not a battle between this church and her or any of the preachers in this church. Then I remember the tragedy of one day going across the street to Starbucks and there she was.

And when she saw me come in, she turned her back and pretend that she didn't know I was there, but I knew she saw me come in. And I never saw her again in this church. She made her choice.

Do you love me more than these? And this is the question God asks to you today and to me. Do you love me more than these? Do you love me? You see, it's easy to say, Oh God, I love you. In church, it's easy to say, Look around.

Oh, your presence is here. And it's so easy to say that. Just like people go to an altar and the bride looks into the eyes of her groom and the groom looks into the eyes of his bride and it's so sweet.

I love you. Oh, I love you so much. But wait till children come.

Wait till the bills can't be paid. Why do we have a 51% divorce rate and higher in the church of Jesus Christ? Might I suggest to you the words are not as deep as we think they are. And yet we come into the house of the Lord and we say, Oh Jesus, I love you.

But the Lord says, Do you love me? Do you really love me? Do you love me more? Can I ask you to give up what you're holding to? Can I ask you? That's simply the question. Do you love me, Peter, more than these? Because this is a pivotal question. If Peter couldn't say yes to that from an honest heart, he's not going anywhere.

He's going back fishing again. He's going to sing songs. He's going to pick up his guitar.

He's going to go out all night, catch nothing, and worship God. And that's where many people go because they're not willing to... I'm not suggesting today that everybody here give up your career and suddenly stand out in the street and say, God, what would you have me to do? No, I'm suggesting your heart be open to whatever God is asking you to do. And if you're an honest seeker of God, there's a day when His word will come to your heart.

And He might say, Be a testimony where you are. Be a great worker in the business that you're put in. Live your life there.

Give your all for the cause that I placed in your hands. Live a godly life before your family. But He also might say, Here's where I want you to go.

This is what I want you to do. The issue really is, Am I really bought with the blood of Jesus Christ? Do I really belong to God? Is everything that I am and have really His? Or am I just uttering empty words in His presence and saying, Lord, I love you. Do you love me more than these? I wonder if he was pointing to his friends.

All around, there's other disciples that he's brought into this fishing venture. And the question is, If they won't follow, do you love me enough to let them go? You know, a lot of young Christians don't make right choices in the beginning. They come to Christ.

They come to church. But they have associations. They have relationships and friendships and practices.

Not willing to be able to make the break and say, I'm going with God. I found somebody that my soul loves and who loves my soul. And if you won't go with me, then I'm sorry.

But I'm going on alone if I have to go alone. But so many people try to have the best of both and try to keep a foot in the church and a foot in a relationship or relationships that God clearly says will take your life away from you. Will be like a plug pulled on your spiritual bathtub as it doesn't take away all of the heart that you have for the work of God.

It represents an old lifestyle. And that's why when Peter finally said, Lord, you know I love you, then Jesus said to him, feed my lambs. In other words, feed the new believers with this understanding that to come to Christ means to let go of the things of this world that you cannot love anything more than him.

And that if you have friends that won't follow, then you have to let them go. Now folks, I've been there just like you were there. I had to make the break and to this day I thank God with all of my heart that I made the break.

I was in the police department. There's a high, high, high pressure of conformity there. I remember the day that one of my former best friends came to me and he said, you're not one of us anymore.

You're not like us anymore. You don't hang around with us anymore. You don't do what we used to do anymore.

And I remember, and the inference was a veiled threat that if you don't stop this direction, we're going to cut you off. You're not going to be... He told me, he says, you're not one of the boys anymore. That's what he said clearly.

In other words, you're on the outs. We've been talking about you. And I had to make a choice.

Who do I go with? Do I bend to the pressure and start going to the parties and start doing the things that I used to do and start laughing at the dirty jokes and start partaking of the gossip in the lunchroom? Or do I make a break and go with God? And I had to walk it alone, folks, for a few years. And it was hard. I had almost no friends.

And the ones that were there were very fair-weather. And a lot of my superiors were threatening me just because I decided to be honest and love God and walk with Him for no other reason. But thank God to this day.

Thank God to this day. Feed my lambs. Pastors that are here today, feed the lambs of God with an understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

This is not a feel-good club. This is not a place where you come in and just sing songs to feel good and go back to living your old lifestyle the rest of the week. This is a break with sin.

It's a break with the world. It's a break with the way things used to be done. Feed my lambs.

See, if Peter didn't make the break, he couldn't feed the lambs. There was no way he could feed them. Then in John 21, 16.

Again, he says to him the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Do you love me? Do you love the sound of my voice when I speak to you? Will that become the deepest treasure of your life? Psalm 119, verse 97. The psalmist says these words. He says, Oh, how I love thy law.

It is my meditation all the day. I remember when I first got saved, I loved the word of God. I would park my car in behind a building.

I used to work radar. I don't know if they call it that anymore, but it used to be called radar. I remember I used to pray for rain because the old sets we had didn't work in the rain in those days.

I'd pray for rain so I could park somewhere where no one could see me. I'd open my Bible in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. I'd sit there with hot tears coming down my face.

I'd found the truth. I loved the word of God. I loved His voice speaking into my heart.

It was then that God began to speak to me about a journey that He was going to take me on, places that I was going to go, things that He wanted to do through my life. It was then. It was in these moments.

Now I had a choice to make. Do I love His voice so much that I will let Him lead me? Do I love His voice so much that He can speak into me? Do I love His voice so much that He can call me from where I am into another place? Do I love His voice so much that I will leave where I am and go where He's calling me even when I love what I'm doing? Do you love me? Peter, do you love me? Now in 2 Kings, for time's sake, you don't have to turn there. I'll go there myself and I'll read it to you.

2 Kings chapter 2 is a story about Elijah and Elisha. And it's a type of followers of Christ. Elijah represents the Word and the power of God and the earth at that time.

Now Elisha represents a disciple of that man upon whom the Spirit of God was. And Elisha's following Elijah. Elijah one day turns to Elisha and it says, Terry, I pray for the Lord has sent me to Bethel.

And Elisha said unto him, as the Lord lives and as my soul lives, I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel. You see, Elisha loved Elijah.

You see, if you don't love the Lord in truth and in righteousness, you won't be able to follow where He's going to go. Now I know that these three places, Bethel, Jericho and Jordan represented the school of the prophets that had been established by Elijah by Elijah himself. But they also are a type of something else.

It's a type of the certain camps of Christianity. Places that people have chosen to dwell. As Elijah is going by, I want you to get a picture in your mind.

Elijah is going by. He's on a journey. He's going to go across Jordan.

He's going to be taken up by a whirlwind into heaven. It's surely a Christ type. Surely an Old Testament type of Christ.

And Elisha is a type of the church that is following him. The church that is at his footsteps. The church that is saying, now Elijah says to Elisha, you don't have to go this distance with me.

But Elisha loved Elijah. And he said, no, nothing is going to part us. Wherever you go, I'm going.

I'm going with you. And the first place they go is Bethel. Now Bethel means house of God.

Bethel is first heard of in Genesis chapter 28. It's where Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, is fleeing his brother, but he's also going into the place of God's promise for him. And in Bethel, he laid down, perhaps one of the first few nights in that journey, put his head upon a stone, and he had a dream.

And in that dream, he saw a ladder that ascended from the earth to heaven. And the angels of God were ascending and descending upon that ladder. And God came to him and said, Jacob, I'm going to increase you to the north, the south, the east, and the west.

I'm going to make you great and increase your descendants. And through you, he said, the whole world is going to be blessed. There's going to be a blessing come upon all people, all nations, all places, through you, Jacob.

And Jacob, when he woke up from that vision, he was terrified. The terror of the Lord was on him. He said, oh, surely this is a dreadful place.

He said, this is none other than the house of God. That's what Bethel represented. And Elijah said to Elijah, we're first going to Bethel.

Now Bethel is a place of seeking revelation, but never embarking on the journey it leads to. Bethel is the house of God. Bethel represents those who come to the house of God and have this, you have an honest thirst for revelation.

You really did come here this morning and say, I want more of Jesus. I hope Pastor Carter or Pastor Dave, whoever is speaking, I hope they can open the scriptures and just give me just another deeper, more meaningful understanding of God. I want this.

I want it to be part of my heart. I want the knowledge of God. But you have to see the irony of this.

As they pass by Bethel, the house of God, as Elijah and Elisha are passing by, 50 prophets, 50 sons of the prophets come out and they say to Elijah, Elisha rather, do you not know you're going to lose your master today? Your master is going to be taken away from you. And so here they are. They've got this revelation, but it never takes them on the journey.

All they can do is come out of Bethel and say, I see sorrow. I see loss. I see heartache on this path.

I see difficulty ahead for you. Folks, when I decided to become a preacher, when I decided to follow God as leading into the ministry, I had Christian friends at that time. I don't remember anybody encouraging me.

I remember the 50 prophets of Bethel coming out and saying, loss, what about your retirement plan? What about your dental plan? What about your children's education? I remember thinking, for goodness sakes, I'm talking about following God here. I believe God's called me to pastor and to preach. And all I have coming out of the house of God are people trying to turn me from the path.

Settling in at Bethel. They knew more than I did, but ironically they knew less. Because all the learning, everything they'd studied all the years of being in the house of God, they couldn't even recognize when

God is calling somebody to follow Him.

That's all anybody said to me. Loss, heartache, sorrow, not only for you, but for your family. Ironically, it was only the unsaved guys in the police department that hugged me and cried and said, we don't agree with you, but man, you've got guts.

Then they came to Jericho. Jericho is a place of standing on the history, on association, and past victory. Jericho is where somebody feels that it's sufficient to say, hey, I'm a Pentecostal, I go to Times Square Church, I'm a Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, my grandfather was a preacher.

And somehow the human heart gravitates to that as if it's enough. And here goes Elijah, here goes Elisha, past Jericho, and one more time, 50 prophets, 50 sons of the prophets come out and say to Elisha, loss, heartache, sorrow. You know what Elisha said to them? Hold your breath, that's actually the original translation.

Hold your breath, don't waste your time talking to me. You have all the history, you have all the tradition, you have the association, you know all about the past victories, but you're not willing to undertake the journey. That journey that brings you to a place where your life makes a difference in your generation.

That journey that takes you to a place where you will suffer the ridicule of Christ because of your relationship to God. And then finally, Elijah says we're going to Jordan. And Jordan is that place of self-denial and surrender to the will of God.

Jordan is where Jesus Christ was baptized, in the river Jordan. Jordan is where we finally surrender and say, not my will but thine be done. When Jesus went down in the waters of baptism under the ministry of John the Baptist, he knew that it was taking him to a cross.

He was yielded to the will of his father in Jordan. And the scripture says that the sons of the prophets came out and they viewed it. 50 men of the sons of the prophets went and stood to view afar off.

In other words, they were somewhat enamored with this journey and they wanted to see it. They loved maybe to go to the bookstores of their day and get books on missionaries who had paid the price to bring the gospel in all the world. They loved the stories.

But they themselves were not willing to take the journey. Do you love me? Jesus said to Peter, do you love me? Will you follow to where my voice leads you? You know, this might seem like a hard message, but it isn't really. It's the passion of God wanting to give you of his presence, wanting to take you and I on a journey.

That when we get to the end, we'll be like Psalm 126 and say, when we came into the fullness of God, our mouths were filled with laughter. The joy of the Lord had become our strength and the heathen round about us said, look at what God has done for them. Nothing else could explain this.

Look what God has done. But folks, that doesn't come to those who just sit in the church. Now, it's nice that you're here.

I'm not suggesting you don't come back again. Don't misunderstand me. Might I suggest that the journey has to go deeper.

The journey has to go farther. Do you love me? Now, here's where it gets really interesting. In verse 17, the third time, Jesus says, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? And Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, lovest thou me? And this is about the image of God.

This is about what God looks like in the earth. You see, in Ezekiel chapter 8 and verse 5, God took the prophet Ezekiel into Jerusalem and he said, I want to show you why I'm taking my presence away from my own house. And when he took the prophet Ezekiel into Jerusalem, the very first thing he saw is northward at the gate of the altar was an image of jealousy in the house of God.

The people of that generation had created an image of God that had provoked God himself to jealousy. And he was saying, I can't allow this image of me to exist anymore. You've created an image of me that is not in conformity to who I am.

And unless, if I don't scatter it, if I don't take my presence away from it, the world will begin to believe this is what I look like. So I've got to take my presence away from it. I can't walk with it because we're not walking together in truth.

And I want you to look at something. In verse 12 of John 21, Jesus said to them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples dared ask him, Who art thou, knowing it was the Lord? Now, I want to suggest to you, he's just an ordinary looking man.

Now, most of them, many of them, may have had an image of what the risen... This is the risen Christ. This is post-calvary. This is the risen Christ.

This is the Christ raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is Christ alive from the dead. The first fruits, as the scripture says.

But he's standing on the seashore. I think a lot of men would have expected, there's got to be at least 50 angels with him, there's got to be a golden throne, there's got to be some kind of a glow, at least around him. But here he is, he's just an ordinary looking man.

That's why the scripture says nobody dared to ask him because the thoughts were in their heart. Who is this? He's just an ordinary looking man who's called us to shore. And verse 13 tells us he's serving others.

Then Jesus came and took bread and gave them and fished likewise. So he's an ordinary looking man. He's serving other people.

Verse 6 tells us that he's giving spiritual direction to those whose efforts are bearing no fruit. He said to them, cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find. And they cast their four or were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fishes.

Verse 12 tells us he's inviting others to partake of supernatural provision. Come and dine. Folks, there's coals there, there's fish there, there's bread there.

It's all come from the hand of God. You've got to follow me in this. This is the risen Christ.

He's an ordinary looking man. He's serving others. He's giving spiritual direction to those whose efforts are fruitless.

He's inviting people to be partakers of supernatural provision. And in verse 18, he talks to Peter about being led into places that you would rather in your flesh not go. And about being carried into a life of personal sacrifice and giving of yourself that ordinary men are incapable of.

And then he says to Peter, follow me. Do you love me? Do you love the image of God? Folks, what kind of an image of God have we created in this generation? How are we representing God among men? When you turn on your television, if you have one, and you go to Christian television, what kind of an image of God is there? What's being presented to this generation? When we say this is what God looks like, this is what His people looks like, this is what the people empowered by the Holy Spirit look like. Is it true? Is it real? Are we willing to follow in the footsteps of Christ? Ordinary people.

I thank God more than anything in my life for ordinariness. Just ordinary people like you. I'm looking at the sanctuary, I don't see any mighty, I don't see any noble, I don't see any of great power and status and wealth and influence.

I see ordinary people. For God gripped in the heart by the Spirit of the living God, and that love that they have for Jesus sends them out to serve other people. Serving the lost world.

Serving those whose efforts are bearing no fruit. Serving, serving, serving, serving. And as we serve others, we are empowered by God with supernatural provision, and we invite other people to say, listen, what God has done for me, He can do for you.

Come and dine, come and dine, the Master calls. Come and dine. Being led into places that in the flesh we would rather not go.

In the flesh I never would have gone to Nigeria to stand on a platform in a war-torn area, risking life and limb to bring some form of peace with God to a people who are at war with one another. In the natural, I never would have gone into inner city Jamaica. In the natural, I wouldn't live a life that's so narrow.

I'm talking about in the natural. But in the supernatural, God gives the power to abide where we are, to do what He calls us to do, promising that if you do it right, if you cast your net on the right side, you'll bring in a multitude, a harvest into the kingdom of God, carried into a life of personal sacrifice and giving that ordinary men aren't capable of. Carried by the Spirit of God.

Jesus said to Peter, when you were young, you dressed yourself and you went wherever you wanted to go. I'm paraphrasing, but this is exactly what it says. But when you get older, you'll stretch out your hands, another will dress you and carry you into places that you can't go in your own strength.

Hallelujah. What an awesome life it is to be a Christian. What an awesome life it is to follow God as best as we know how, with all our heart, and our soul, and our mind, and our strength.

Are we flawless? Absolutely not. Do we make mistakes? Absolutely. But the mistakes don't last long.

God picks us up again, puts us back on that path where honor will be brought to His name. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? To follow Christ, first means that something else must be left behind. Now many are here, you're professing your love for Jesus.

When I said, do you love Jesus? You said, yes. But you're living in a lifestyle that's not in obedience to the Word of God and you know it. So the question to you today is, what are you going to do about it? You're

doing things you shouldn't be doing.

They're clear violations of the Word of God. You're acting in a way you shouldn't be acting. But how quickly you said, I love Jesus.

But the question is, do you? Really. If you do, you will get up and you will get out. It's quite simple.

There's nothing gray about this. You will get up and you will get out. You'll get up and get out of practices.

You'll get up and get out of relationships. You'll get up and get out of places that you're not supposed to be as a child of God. If you love Jesus.

If you really do love Him. If you really do love Him, you'll get up and get out of fear. The fear that somehow God's Word isn't true.

You won't arrive at your destination or be provided for along the way. I struggled with this in the beginning. I started listening to these words.

So many people were against what God was calling me to do. Well-meaning people. Studied people.

People with a history much longer than mine of walking with God were saying, No, don't do this. This is folly. And I remember the raging battle that was going on in my heart because I actually enjoyed what I was doing in my career.

It paid well. It had a lot of benefits. In the natural.

And I remember one day I was preaching my heart out in a small church that was beginning to form in the town close to where I was living. And I remember looking out the window. And I'm preaching this message.

Give your all to God. Don't be afraid to walk with God. Don't be afraid to go with Christ.

I'm looking out the window and in the driveway of this particular building, there's about four or five, I guess, little brown sparrows. It's in the wintertime and they're pecking away at the driveway and there doesn't seem to be anything there. And the Lord says to my heart, Are you not worth more than they? I promised in my word that I would provide for the sparrows.

And I do, even though you can't see the provision. And I couldn't. I couldn't see a single seed in that driveway.

But yet they're pecking away. Almost my whole message. And he said, I'm providing for them.

Even though you can't see the provision, I'm providing. Do you not believe that I will provide for you? Do you not believe that I'll provide for your family? I'll look after your children. Do you not believe that I'll carry you if you ever get old or infirm or sick or if you ever... I don't think there's anything like retirement.

I've learned from Brother Dave that there is no such a thing as retirement. If we live another 20 years or 30 years, it's going to be funny watching the two of us on this platform. Fear.

How many today are just filled with fear? You say you love God, but doesn't the Bible say that perfect love casts out fear? Doesn't the scripture say in 1 John that he who fears is not made perfect in love? Isn't that

what the word of God says? So if I'm afraid that God is not going to provide for me, can I not reach the conclusion that I really don't love him as much as I thought I did? He said in Malachi, bring what you have into the storehouse and prove me. Prove me now. I'm not talking about tithing.

It's about everything. It's about all that you are. Bring it into the storehouse.

And he says, and prove me. I'll open to you the windows of heaven. He said, I'll rebuke the devourer.

God says, I'll do all of these things, but first you have to bring what you are. You have to bring what you are into my work, into my kingdom, into my presence. You've got to be something moldable in my hand.

You've got to be a vessel that is willing to say, God, take me and use my life for your glory. And he says, then I'll open to you the windows of heaven. I have lived this.

I know this is true. I know every pastor on this platform has lived this. People in this audience have lived this.

We've seen this. We've walked with God. We've known his faithfulness.

And lastly, and most importantly, your own image of yourself has to die. Of what you think your life should be. Of how you feel that God should use you.

Of how you feel that where that should lead you. You've got to get rid of the desire to have your name and light somewhere. You've got to get rid of all the desire to be great, because that came from the garden of Eden.

That came from the fall of Adam. To be as God. You've got to get that out of your heart.

And say, Lord, send me as you were on the shores of John chapter 21. Read it again when you get home. An ordinary person.

Calling people into the provision of God. Serving others. Giving instruction.

God, call me. Let your image be formed in me. Let me become the true church of Jesus Christ in this generation.

Help me, God, to die to what I think I should be. Where I feel that this relationship with you should take me. Help me, God.

Help me, God. Help me, God. Help me, God.

Peter said in exasperation, he said, Lord, you know I love you. You know I do. I love you as much as I'm able.

As much as I can. And Jesus took that statement. That third statement from Peter and then spoke into his life and said, because of that love, Peter, you're going to be taken into places where you're no longer leading anymore.

And thank God he did. Thank God Peter did stretch out his hands. Thank God he didn't turn back on the journey.

How poor we would be. Poorer in the church age that we live in today to have not had the history of this man. The testimony of his life and the two epistles he wrote in the New Testament.

How much poorer we would be had this man turned back. And think of the numbers of people now in our generation who will stay in poverty if you and I don't choose to truly represent Christ in our generation. If we don't walk as servants to a fallen society.

Think of how poor so many people will be. How much treasure will be withheld as we march through the streets proud as peacocks but having lost the image of God. I've found where the power of God is.

I have found where the power of God is and I pray for the grace to stay there and never leave that place. Do you love Jesus? It's not as boisterous as it was in the beginning. The only thing that you can say and you can say it today by getting out of your seat.

I love you enough to obey you in my lifestyle and turn from sin. I love you enough God to turn away from relationships with people who are not going your way. I love you enough oh Jesus Christ the son of God to believe that if I follow you you will provide for me.

I love you enough to let you form your own image in my life. And even if it's never seen by men as long as I know that it's seen by God that suffices my heart. David the psalmist said I will be satisfied oh God when I awake with your likeness.

I'll be satisfied with your image upon me. I'll be satisfied to know that I walk with God and God walks with me. Now Father I thank you Lord.

I feel that this is one of the deepest challenges that we have had as a people in quite a long time. I pray for the grace to live this myself. I am the first to acknowledge I can't go there unless you lead me.

I can want it but unless you lead me into it Lord I'll not be able to do it. So I yield my heart before you in my life. I ask you Jesus Christ the son of God be glorified in me.

I ask oh Lord that you be glorified in this church. That we not be an arrogant people. That we not be a people who have a wrong display of the image of God.

We truly be servants in our homes to our families to our friends in our workplace in our church and to our nation. God almighty would you help us to do this. Would you give us the strength Lord to get up and walk with you.

Father we thank you for this in Jesus name. We're going to worship for a little while. If the Holy Spirit has spoken to you.

You want to respond as we stand and just come to this altar in the annex. If you could stand between the screens please. If you need to get out of something and you're going to trust God for the strength.

Maybe there's some here for the first time. You're just going to be able to say honestly in your heart I love you Jesus. I stretch out my hands to you.

Guide me. Take me to where it is you want me to go. Let's stand together please if you will.

Balcony you can go to either exit and make your way down. Main sanctuary slip out of where you are. Let's worship together.

You know over the years one of the dilemmas that I would call it of the Pentecostal church is that we're led to feel that there has to be some kind of a great big emotional experience at the altar for it to be God. We have to shake and shout and jump. That's all wonderful but the times of growth in my life have happened when there's been a deep inner agreement with the word of God.

When I've gone to an altar and sometimes it was a private one and I said Lord this is right. What you're speaking here is right. Where I'm living is short of that place and I've agreed God you will bring my life in line with the truth in this area.

These have been quiet times. These are the times where the deepest work of God I have danced and shouted as much as anybody in this church but the deepest work of God was not done there. The deepest work of God was done in moments like this where I've said Lord you're right.

Your ways are right. I believe this message is no more condemning today than when Jesus had spoken to Peter and the disciples. He was not condemning them.

He was drawing them into something. Now from that agreement that came in John chapter 21 then came Acts chapter 2. The Lord says now you agree. Our purposes are lined up.

Now I'm going to lead you into power. The power of the Holy Spirit will come not to make you feel good but for a purpose. You will feel good but there will be a purpose to your life.

I remember driving my police cruiser down a specific street in Ottawa one day. I had been two years a Christian. I was just so sick of the compromise in my life.

I was so mad I punched the steering wheel. I said God I'm going to serve you if it kills me. And a week later I was filled with the Holy Ghost.

God came to me and my life has never been the same since but there was a determination in my heart. I'm going your way God. I'm not going to just hug my brothers and sisters in church and then die of embarrassment when I meet them in the marketplace.

I'm sick of this. I'm going to make an identification with Christ and with his church. I'm going to walk in a righteous way with God.

And that's when I met the power of God. Today is an agreement. Today I know many of you are agreeing with God and part of that agreement is leaving a lifestyle that you don't belong in as a child of God.

We had a testimony last Sunday night of a young lady who was involved in fornication as a Christian. She was attending this church and she didn't know how to get out of this relationship. And so she prayed and the Lord told her lock your apartment door and don't answer your phone.

It was that simple. He dealt with Mr. Wonderful. She got free and now she's serving in this body.

She's serving God in this church and she has a testimony of the Lord in her life. Now Lord, could you raise your hands please? I want you to know that the Lord loves you. I want you to know that he loves you passionately.

You are the delight of his heart. You are the apple of his eye. You are the reason he came to the earth.

You are. You are. Each of you individually.

God loves you. He saw your frailties. He saw your struggles.

He saw everything that you have to go through. And he said, you walk with me and I'll walk with you. I'll bring you through it.

And I'll bring you through it with a testimony of life when you get to the other side of it. Hallelujah. I was 26, 24 when I was saved, 26 when I was filled with the Holy Ghost.

And I was sitting in my kitchen one day with my guitar and I began to sing a song. I never knew that this song would be sung. It's been sung in a lot of places now.

I went to do a pastor's conference in another country and I said to the pastors, I'd love to teach you a song today. It's one that's dear to my heart. And as I began to sing it, the whole room started singing it.

I didn't realize they were singing it in all their churches. I was sitting in my kitchen all alone with my guitar. Did I ever believe that God could take a simple song of praise to him and send it all over the country? And I was sitting there with my guitar.

I want you to sing it with me today because it's been the essence of where God has taken me from. It's been the reason why I stand today. I love you, love you.

Love you, Jesus. And I praise your holy name. You are the Alpha and Omega.

You're the first and last and same. I love you, love you. Love you, Jesus.

And I praise your holy name. You are the first and last and same. You let them hang you on the tree.

You died for sinners just like me. I raise my voice unto the cross. God, raise your crown upon me.

I love you, love you. Love you, Jesus. And I praise your holy name.

You're the Alpha and Omega. You're the first and last and same. You died for sinners just like me.

You're the Alpha and Omega. You're the first and last and same. You're the Alpha and Omega.

You're the first and last and same. you

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