

Superficial Faith

by Charles Leiter

Superficial faith is a shallow, surface-level commitment to Christ, lacking genuine transformation and a deep commitment to following Him.

Duration: 55:02

Scripture: John 2:23 - 3:2, John 8:30, John 8:33-34, John 8:39-40, John 8:42, John 8:44

Topics: "False Faith", "Spiritual Priorities"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of superficial faith and its implications. He emphasizes that it is possible for someone to believe in Jesus Christ and still end up in hell. The speaker uses the analogy of people centering their lives around various interests, such as sports or technology, to highlight the importance of prioritizing faith in God. He also references the story of the woman at the well to illustrate the need to let go of worldly attachments in order to fully embrace the living water offered by Jesus.

Transcript

Let's pray once more before we look into the Word. Our Father, we are so thankful that you brought us to this place and that you've given us your Word and your Spirit. And we think of that Word there, that what does the Lord require of you but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

And we think of the Lord Jesus Christ, how he did justly as no man has ever done, how he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. And at the same time that he did justly, he loved mercy. There was never anyone like him for mercy and compassion.

And he walked humbly with his God. We pray that you'd help us to do that this evening. We pray that you would grant your Spirit here to give us ears to hear and we pray for a Spirit of faith and power and love and of a sound mind.

In Jesus' name, amen. Let's open our Bibles to John chapter 2. And we'll read a few verses here. John chapter 2, beginning at verse 23.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in his name, beholding his signs which he was doing. But Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to them, for he knew all men. And because he did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man, for he himself knew what was

in man.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews. This man came to him by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you've come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that you do. Nicodemus was one of these men that had seen the signs that we read about in verse 23.

No man can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. Jesus answered and said to him, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he? Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it's going.

So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. It's absolutely always certain everyone who is born of the Spirit is like he describes here in verse 8. I want to speak to you tonight on the subject of superficial faith. And I trust that this will be helpful if you're Christian.

It will help you in dealing with other souls. If you're just religious, it might help you to see that. And so we want to look at the subject of superficial faith from verses 23 to 25 of chapter 2. Amazing verses, wonderful verses.

And those are the verses that we'll be looking at. I want us to notice first of all from these verses, the possibility of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and still going to hell. Isn't that a shocking statement? The possibility of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and still going to hell.

Notice in verse 23 of chapter 2, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in his name. Many believed in his name, beholding his signs which he was doing. But, notice this, verse 24, they believed in his name, but Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to them, for he knew all men.

Now the word translated entrusting, he was not entrusting himself to them. In the King James I think it's committed, he did not commit himself to them. And it's the very same word that's used here about believing.

Many believed in his name, but Jesus on his part did not believe in them. Or you could say many trusted in his name, but he did not trust himself to them. He did not commit himself to them.

So the question is, and the question that we all ought to ask ourselves, is just this, not have I trusted in Jesus, but has Jesus entrusted himself to me? Has he trusted himself to me? Now that's an amazing thing. You know, if I went to the White House and I said, I know George Bush, I knock on the gate out there in front to the guard and say, I know George Bush, that won't get me in. But if George Bush comes up and says, I know Charles Leiter, that'll get me in.

Jesus did not entrust himself to these people. So the question is, has Jesus entrusted himself to you? And the question comes up, why wouldn't he entrust himself to them? And the answer is given in verse 24 and

25. He would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men, verse 25, because he did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man, for he himself knew what was in man.

In other words, he knew what was down in the heart, and deep down in the heart, he saw that there was no reality deep down in their hearts. Now, I'm not saying that they weren't sincere. These people were sincere, just like Nicodemus was sincere, very sincere.

But you can be sincere, as sincere as you know how to be outwardly on the surface level, and deep down in your heart still be full of all kinds of unreality and insincerity and dishonesty. And that's why Jesus did not commit himself to them. This is the great mistake of many people that are trying to lead people to the Lord.

They assume that because they're sincere, they know how to be, they assume that God will hear their prayer. Now, that's exactly what Jesus did not do here. These people were sincere, but he did not commit himself to them because that sincerity, they were sincere, but they were superficial.

And that's what I want to talk about tonight, superficial. Well, what's it mean? It means shallow, just on the surface. They had a superficial type of faith.

And this is the kind of thing that happens all the time. You get people stirred up in a big evangelistic meeting and play the right kind of music and everything and have all of this stuff happening, and lo and behold, they will come forward. That'll happen.

And they're not deliberately being dishonest. They're sincere in one sense. They're not deliberately being dishonest, but it's a shallow thing.

It's a superficial thing many times. I'm not saying always, but many times it is a superficial thing. You get somebody stirred in their emotions and they will come.

The problem is, many times it doesn't last for a week. A lot of times it doesn't last for a day. I just got back from a trip to Romania and they have the same kind of thing over there as we do here, and that is, one of the leaders said this, he said, if what American evangelists are saying is true, the entire population of Romania has been saved about four or five times.

They come back, you know, a thousand were saved here and two thousand were saved here and five thousand there. And yet if you go out to those names that are written on those cards and try to get those people to meet in a Bible study, they're not interested. And so something's wrong, you see.

Something's really wrong. Charles Spurgeon, you know, was a great preacher in the last, well, I guess it's two centuries ago now, in the 1800s. And thousands of people were converted under his ministry, but he didn't have any kind of altar call.

And in fact, he had his counseling time on Tuesday afternoon, two or three days later. And one of the men that followed him began to have his counseling time right after the meeting, and one of the old deacons came to Spurgeon and he said, why are you doing that? Well, he said, I believe in striking while the iron's hot. In other words, the emotion's high, you get people, you say, come forward, pray this prayer.

And the old deacon replied, Mr. Spurgeon believed that if God heated the iron, it would stay hot until Tuesday afternoon. And that's the truth. If the Holy Spirit is dealing with somebody, you don't have to

manipulate them.

When I was in high school about a thousand years ago, I took classes on how to be a counselor. And you know what they taught us? They said, now look, whenever they give the appeal, all the counselors get up and start to go forward. So that creates a lot of psychological pressure.

You know, they said thousands are coming. You know, well, those thousands are the counselors. And that gets everybody in the mood to get up and come.

You see what that is? That's manipulation. That's all it is. It's psychology.

And it's very effective in getting people to come forward. The problem is, like I said many times, it's just superficial. It's just emotion.

Martin Lloyd-Jones was a great preacher in England in the 1900s. And on Sunday evenings, he always had an evangelistic service. And one Sunday evening, he's preaching, and he sees this fellow who was a drunkard, and he knew about the man.

But he was sitting in back, and he was weeping through the whole service, weeping profusely. And Lloyd-Jones always went back to the door to greet people on their way out. And he stood back there, and he thought, well, should I say something to him or not? Now, he didn't have any altar call.

And he said, should I say something to this fellow or not? And he decided not to. And the fellow passed by and went on out. The next day, he was out walking, and he met this man on a bridge.

And he said, Dr. Lloyd-Jones, if you had talked to me last night, I would have become a Christian. Well, he said, I'll talk to you right now. Just come to my study.

We can talk right now. He said, no, no, no, no. He said, if you had done it last night, I would have, but not today.

And you see what that is? That's sheer emotion. That's all it is. When the Holy Spirit is dealing with you, you can't get away that easy.

It doesn't take some little, you know, somebody playing the right song at just the right time. It's something you cannot escape God, because it's really God dealing with you. My wife was on her way to be a missionary in Papua New Guinea and had made one of these superficial type of decisions.

And she was planning to be a missionary. And God laid hold of her and saved her. She saw that that missionary stuff was just a religious thing that she had cooked up in her own head.

Well, notice here, the possibility of believing on Jesus and yet going to hell. But notice this. It's not only possible, but it's common.

It says many, many when they saw these things. It wasn't two or three guys. It was many people believed in his name.

It is not just a few people that believe in the name of Jesus and go to hell. It's a lot of people. That's the way it's always been.

That's what Jesus said it would be. Do you remember in Matthew chapter 7? He talks about a narrow way and a broad way. And he says, don't go down the broad way.

There's a big wide door and a broad path and many go down that. There's a few over here and there's many over here. And people have in their heads, they think, well, this broad way, that's people like Hitler, you know, and false religions and what have you.

That's not what he's talking about. You read the context. Who are the many? Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, do we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name do many miracles? That's the many.

And I will say to them, depart from me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you. The broad way and the narrow way are within professing Christianity.

And the many and the few are within professing Christianity. You go right down through the passage. There's two kinds of trees.

He says, these false prophets, you'll know them by their fruits. Talking about professing Christians. And then he goes on down and he talks about two men that hear the gospel message.

Here are these words of mine. One does them and one doesn't do them. Every one of those situations Jesus is talking about is within professing Christianity.

I'm saying to you, there are many within professing Christianity, the majority, the vast majority. When you look at Christendom as a whole, the vast majority are among these who believe in his name and yet they have superficial faith. Jesus doesn't commit himself to them and they perish.

Now let me say a couple more things here about this. Notice this too, not only the many, but according to the terminology used here, it sounds like they were real. Many believed in his name.

It's exactly the same phrase in the Greek as you have back here in chapter one, verse 12, as many as received him. To them he gave the right to become children of God even to those who believe in his name. That's what it is to become a Christian.

The terminology that's used sounds completely Christian. You wouldn't know just from the terminology whether or not these people are true Christians or not. And this is something that we see all through the word of God.

Let me give you some examples. And if you have your Bibles, we can just look at some of these. John chapter 8 and verse 30.

Jesus is preaching and teaching and it says in verse 30, as he spoke these things, many came to believe in him. They came to believe in him. Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed in him, now he's talking to these believers, if you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

Let me just follow down through here with you. Verse 33, they answered him. Verse 34, Jesus answered them.

Verse 39, they answered and said to him. And also in verse 39, Jesus said to them. Verse 40, in the middle of the verse, they said to him.

Verse 42, Jesus said to them. Now they're just these same people, the people that have believed in him. He enters into a conversation with them and they're going back and forth.

And you get down to verse 44, this is what he said to them. You are of your father the devil and you want to do the desires, the lusts of your father. So these very people who had believed in him, and it sounds good when you just hear it, but you find out that they were just like these people in chapter 2. Jesus did not commit himself to them.

It was a superficial type of faith. Let me give another example. In Matthew chapter 13, the parable of the soils, Matthew 13 and verse 20, the ones on whom the seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

That sounds real, doesn't it? He receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the work, immediately falls away. Just as fast as he received with joy, that's how fast he fell away.

You know, it concerns me when I see somebody that too easily receives the message. I like to see somebody struggling and fighting over it. There was a Buddhist girl one time we were having Bible study with.

She said, don't pray for me. I don't want to become a Christian. And she fought those things, and fought and struggled with it.

One time I was talking to her about the law written on the heart, and how you know that things are wrong. And I said, it's not some western God that put that in you, and it's not some eastern God. It's the God of the world that created the whole world.

She started crying. She said, I'm going to have to think about this. That's good.

But when somebody immediately with joy receives, many times they fall away just that fast. Because, well, it's super, you see what, the seed was on rocky ground. It just had a little bit of soil.

And it just went down in a little ways. That's what we call superficial. That's surface.

And because it just went in, if you plant something real shallow, it comes up a lot faster than if you plant it down very far. And that's what happened to those people. But notice here, the terminology sounds Christian.

They immediately receive the word with joy. See, the Bible, in other words, uses Christian terminology to describe people that may or may not be a Christian. You don't know for sure.

Just like when Paul is addressing the letter to the church, and he says, brothers, this or that. Or if you see a brother committing a sin, such and such. Okay? That doesn't mean necessarily that they're a Christian or they're not a Christian.

It just means they're part of this group. They're not out there in the world. They're someone that's professing Christ.

And so they're spoken of according to their profession. Let me give you one more. 2 Peter chapter 2. And this one's very illustrative of this.

2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 20 and 21. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Now that sounds like Christians. If you just read that and you're open to what it's saying, it sounds like Christians. I mean, verse 20, they escape the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And yet they go back into the world and he said the last state is worse than the first. The first state was they were going to hell. The last state is worse than that because now they're going to hell with knowledge.

Now I say it sounds like they're described as true Christians, but you read the next verse, you find out what Peter viewed the math. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, a dog returns to its own vomit and a sow after washing returns to its wallowing in the mire. In other words, this thing is on the outside.

You take this pig out, wash it up on the outside, give it a chance, and it goes back to the mire. And so Peter himself does not view these people as real Christians even though he uses Christian terminology. I say it's important as you read the Bible to realize that.

Many examples of that. There are in Acts, you remember Simon the Sorcerer believed and was baptized and continued it says. But then he proved to be false because all he was doing it for, again superficial, he wanted power.

Beloved, you're going to see people that look like Christians, that appear to be real on the outside, you're going to see them fall away. That's going to happen. And don't let that overthrow your faith.

Paul says it upsets the faith of some, but nevertheless, talking about Hymenaeus and Pauletus, nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands sure. God, the Lord knows those that are his. You don't, but he does.

And you're going to see people that give the appearance of being real turn back and fall away. You need to realize what's going on. It's superficial faith.

That's what it is. That's really what it is. Well, how do I know that my faith is not just a superficial faith? How do I know that the faith that I've got is real faith? That's surely the question that comes into our minds when we start thinking about this.

And I want to give you three marks of superficial faith. First one is this, superficial faith, this shallow type faith, is based on a misapprehension of what's being offered. A lot of people, quote, believe on Jesus with a wrong idea of what's being offered to them.

That's what happened here in John 2. They were beholding the signs that he was doing, and they believed on him because they were beholding these signs. In other words, they thought they were going to get

bread and circuses and have a carnal Messiah by believing on Christ. And so they believed in his name in that shallow way.

And we see that kind of thing right through the gospel of John. You remember the woman at the well? He's talking to this woman at the well, and he says, if you knew, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that's speaking to you, you'd ask him and he'd give you living water. And so he's offering her eternal life.

You remember what she said? I want that. Sir, give me that water. I want that.

In other words, she's saying, I want to be a Christian. Sir, give me that water. Problem is, she didn't understand what it meant.

Give me that water so that I won't be thirsty and have to come all the way here to get water. See, she didn't understand. It was a carnal, physical, surface, material type understanding of what was being offered.

Same thing in chapter 6. The multitudes, after they saw the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, they wanted to take Jesus by force. You remember this? They wanted to take him by force and make him king. They didn't understand what was being offered.

Maybe we better turn to it. John chapter 6. John chapter 6 and verse 14 and 15. When therefore the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, this is of a truth, the prophet who is coming to the world.

Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself alone. They follow him. He goes to the other side and they follow him over there.

And you get down to verse 26. Jesus answers them and said, truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw signs. That is not because you really understood, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

They had a carnal idea of what was being offered. Now look at this. Just one more thing here on this before we go on.

Verse 34, he's talking about the bread that came down out of heaven. They said to him, Lord evermore give us this bread. I want that.

So you're witnessing to somebody, you're telling them about bread from heaven and they say, I want that. And they don't have a clue what you're talking about. You've got to discern where people's hearts are and how much they understand of what's being offered.

Again, Simon the sorcerer wanted power. He thought that's what he was going to get. And so he believed and was baptized.

Now, this happens no matter how pure of a gospel that we present. The Lord Jesus Christ presented the purest gospel ever presented and there was all kinds of people following him with a misunderstanding of what was being offered. That's a mark of superficial faith.

It happens no matter how pure the gospel. But if we deliberately preach a carnal, debased, man-centered gospel, you're going to get people coming with superficial faith. You're going to get them coming by the droves.

And that's going on a lot today. I mean, you know, start out. How many of you don't want to go to hell? Well, nobody wants to go to hell.

Well, you can escape from hell. How many of you want to have peace and be happy all the day and not have any problems? Well, who doesn't want to have peace and be happy? How about this? If you came to Jesus, you could get free from those drugs. You could get free from alcohol.

Oh man, my life's a mess. I would like to be free from alcohol. You know, it would make things a lot better.

Don't you see that doesn't have anything to do at all with God? It doesn't have anything to do with an apprehension of God at all or what God's really offering. It's just stuff for me. It's centered on me.

How about this? Come to Christ and you can have financial freedom. It used to be called prosperity. You can have prosperity.

You can have, you know, it's a carnal reason. And it's even the terminology. I mean, those terms are used, financial freedom.

And this is, we're told this is what will really draw people to the Lord when they see how Christians have financial freedom. You realize how carnal that is? I mean, you could have it all together and have your bills paid if you were a Christian. How about this one? You come to Christ, you could have a happy marriage.

I mean, that one is presented a lot. You know, you could have a happy marriage. And it was a few years ago we had a guy come to the campus there in Kirksville, and you'd know his name.

He's a world-known guy. And the title of his message, Maximum Sex. And the idea is if you become a Christian, just think how much better your sex life could be.

Do you realize what this is? It's a prostitution of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Offering men things. And like I said, you give that kind of a message.

And you present the gospel to people that you're going to get something. Men will try to use God to get something that they want that's big, that's bigger than God to them. See that? What's the real God? The thing they value over here that they want to use God to get.

One of the hardest things that you can do is try to counsel with people that are having marriage problems, and try to get them to really seek the Lord, because He's the Lord. They're wanting to seek God so they can get their spouse back. They've got marriage problems.

That's why they're coming. I had a friend that I worked with, a motorcycle guy, a drug guy, and everything else. But we were good friends.

And he came one day to the church building and knocked on the door. And he was sobbing. He fell into my arms.

And he said, I want to become a Christian. And I said, well, Darrell. And I sat down with him.

And I wept with him. And I talked to him. And I found out, you know what the problem was? His wife was leaving him.

And after about an hour of talking, I said, Darrell, you know, I really don't think you're wanting to be a Christian. I think you're wanting your wife back. And he said, yeah, that's right.

Now, I could have very easily led him in a superficial faith decision, and fight around for a year trying to get him to read the Bible every day, and what have you. And finally, he gets that far away look in his eyes, and he's gone. Because of superficial faith.

It's not an understanding, you see, the first mark of this. No understanding of what's really being offered. And it happens all the time.

Girls, if you want to put a big stumbling block in the way of a non-Christian guy becoming a Christian, I mean, you want to make sure he doesn't become a Christian. You just spend a lot of time with him and witness to him about Jesus. And tell him that you can't marry him, unless he becomes a Christian.

You'll be guaranteed you'll have somebody that'll, quote, accept Christ. That's why, because he wants to get you, that's why. Worst thing, if you want to, if you have a burden for a non-Christian guy, direct him to your Christian guy over here that you know that'll witness to him.

That's his best hope, that's his only hope of seeking God for the right motives. Find out whether he'll still come to church then. This happens all the time.

Well, God will not be a means to an end. You don't use him to get something that you consider to be of more value. He is the end.

That's the only way you can become a Christian, is if God is the end. Second mark of superficial faith. We don't have a whole lot more, one more after this.

Second mark of superficial faith is it's based on a misapprehension. Not only of what's being offered, but it's based on a misapprehension of the one who's offering it, the Lord Jesus Christ. These people here in John 2, they thought he was some kind of a carnal messiah who was going to overcome Rome and make everybody happy.

They had the wrong view of the Lord Jesus Christ. That happens all the time. Many people come, quote, believe on Christ, thinking that he's some kind of a cosmic Santa Claus to fulfill all your, quote, needs.

In one way, I don't give a hoot about your needs, and God doesn't either. The thing that matters is Jesus Christ, and he doesn't exist for us. We exist for him.

He created us for himself. All things were created by him. That means he created us.

We owe our existence to him, and all things were created for him. And that's the reason we're alive. He's not here to help us and to meet our needs.

We're here to glorify and honor him. We were created for him. He wasn't there for us.

He wasn't created. We're the created ones. I've actually had people... We're talking here about the second point, second mark of superficial faith.

It doesn't have any idea who Jesus really is. I've actually had people that I've counseled with that I think they really tried to believe on Christ because they felt sorry for him. I actually had a girl tell me that.

I said, what do you think of Christ? She said, well, I thought a while. Well, she said, I feel sorry for him. You know where that kind of thing comes from? Here's Jesus.

How many of you have seen this picture? Jesus is outside the door, and there's no handle on the door, and he's knocking. You poor Jesus. You know he can't get in.

Only you can open the door. And he's out there in the cold. You know the rain's falling down on him.

He's out in the cold, and the rain... Won't you have mercy on him? Let him come in where it's warm, you know? He can't do anything. That's the way he's presented. Now, the problem is the Bible says that's not the real Jesus.

He says, I am the one who opens and no man shuts. I'm the one who shuts and no man opens. You remember what it said about Lydia? Whose heart the Lord opened.

He can open that door. Don't worry. He's capable of opening that door.

He can do that. You don't have to worry. You don't have to try to have mercy on him.

You don't have to have mercy on him. He needs to have mercy on you. You see, no one can be saved by, quote, believing on a Jesus who doesn't exist.

A figment of their imagination. The only way you can be saved is believing on the real Jesus. And God has got it set up so that nobody gets into heaven without knowing who Jesus is.

I mean, that's what he said. You remember in Matthew 16? They're walking along there and Jesus said, who do men say that I am? Well, they said, some say this, some say that, some say you're one of the prophets. Well, who do you say that I am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

He knew who he was. He didn't say, I believe you're the Christ, the Son of the living God. We say I believe something whenever we don't believe it.

You know, I believe it's going to rain. That means I'm not sure. But whenever Peter said that, he said, you are the Christ.

He confessed, he saw the reality. What did Jesus say? Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah. You didn't get that down on this level.

Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but my Father who's in heaven. The way you become a Christian is by a revelation of who the real Jesus is. That's the way you become a Christian.

You remember in John chapter 1, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and he says in verse 14, the Word came down and became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John says we saw something about him that's different than anything that exists in this realm.

We saw a unique divine glory, and that's the only way you can become a Christian. You've got to see something of that unique divine glory of Christ. That's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4. God who

commanded light to shine out of darkness is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That's the way you become a Christian. So the question is, has God ever shone in your hearts and given you a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have you seen the unique, self-attesting divine glory and beauty of Christ? Have you ever seen him, or do you think he's some kind of carnal messiah like these people did? They didn't have any understanding of who Jesus is. You know, it's almost, when you really see who he is, you almost can't just say the name Jesus.

You might have to say the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the way you feel, because he's God among us. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Last point, the last mark of superficial faith, number three, is based on a misapprehension of the cost involved. People who have superficial faith, they don't realize what's involved in being a Christian. You don't have to read very far in John before these same people here that believed on him, they started getting that far away look in their eyes, and they got interested in other things.

Many of his disciples turned back and didn't walk with him anymore. They didn't realize, you know, if it's going to mean that, I'm not going to do that, and they turned back. Repentance is costly.

It really is. It's costly. It doesn't pay for anything, but it costs a lot.

It hurts. Matthew 16, 24 to 26, if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake in the gospel shall find it.

People say, well, that's talking about rewards. Well, you've got to read the next verse. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? That's talking about salvation.

Taking up your cross, following him, losing your life. John 12, 25, he who loves his life loses it, but he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. There's no body that gets into heaven that doesn't hate his life in this world.

That's not an option, beloved. You've had people lie to you. If they've told you that you can love your life in this world and still keep it to life eternal, they directly contradicted what we just read what Jesus said.

No man can be my disciple. He said that. Impossible.

What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Luke 14, 22, 26, and 33, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. So therefore, no one of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. He's not talking about super-Christians.

He's just talking about what it is to believe on him. It's going to cost you everything to be a Christian. It really is.

It's going to cost you everything to be a Christian. You're not doing anybody a favor by giving them the impression that that's not the case. It's going to cost everything.

One thing that God does insist on in saving a man is that he be his God. God does insist on that. That seems pretty reasonable, doesn't it? He says concerning the new covenant, I will be their God and they will be my people.

He insists on that. I'll be your God. I love that.

I am so thankful for that. This past year, God dealt with me and some sin in my life. Just to know that he would not let me go on, he will not settle for not being my God, absolute my God.

I love that fact. If you're a Christian, you will. You do love that.

God has determined he's going to be your God. What a blessed thing that is. You don't have the power, but he does, to ensure that he's your God.

You can tell what a man's God is by the things that he gives his life to, what he centers his life around. He's got five minutes of free time. His mind goes back to that.

You can tell when you talk to somebody. It doesn't usually take very long to tell what their God is. You get off to talking about the latest 3 gigahertz processor and some people, man, they light up.

You know you've gotten on to the right thing. That's the thing. Everything.

They're excited. You talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, it's, yeah, yeah, I did that. Let's get on to things that I'm interested in.

People center their lives around lots of stuff. Some people, it's running. Some people, it's baseball.

Some people, it's electronics. When I was in college, I studied physics. By the time I graduated, I began to learn what you're facing.

Once you get to the graduate level, you're facing guys, you've got to realize you're facing guys that worship this stuff. I mean, you've got to compete with somebody that studies all day and all night, and then whenever he has any free time, he goes home and does it for fun. That's their life.

It really is. It's their life. I knew a guy in electrical engineering, he'd studied all day and night, and he'd come home and build contraptions, you know, electronic stuff just for fun.

That's what he centered his life around. It was everything to him. Now, the world will not get mad at you at all if you worship running or if you worship baseball or if you worship concert, piano, or whatever.

People do it all the time, and they get praised for doing it. But if you start worshiping God, they'll go wild. If you make God the center of your life and everything centers around Him, and you can say whatever a Christian can say, for me to live is Christ.

If I don't have Christ, I don't have any reason to live. Now, you start having God be your God, and the world will say you're crazy. And that's what it is to be a true Christian.

God insists on being God. That's all. He says no big deal.

He just wants to be your God. That's reasonable, isn't it? That's what it is to be a Christian. You believe on Him as your God.

Now, that's not the way it is with superficial faith. There's no real repentance. There's no sorrow for sin.

There's no longing for holiness. No real desire to go on and know God. Let me tell you the difference between true and false assurance.

True assurance, when you get assurance, you believe my sins are gone. I'm not going to go to hell. As soon as you realize that, you say, I want to follow God.

I want to know God. Your thirst for God and wanting to know Him, like some of these things we sang tonight, you want to know God. Now, false assurance the other way around.

I'm afraid I'm going to go to hell, and the burden gets removed. Man, I'm not going to go to hell anymore. Now I can get on with my life.

That's false assurance. That's false assurance. All of this is why the Lord Jesus dealt with souls the way that He did.

He refused to put a band-aid on a cancer. If you're involved in witnessing to people and trying to deal with souls, if you're going to be a true prophet to them, you want to follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the woman at the well.

He's talking to this woman, and he says, Now, I've got this living water, and if you would ask me, I'd give you living water freely. She said, Sir, give me that water. In other words, in our language, she said, I want to be saved.

I want to be a Christian. Well, bow your head and pray this prayer with me. He didn't do that.

You know what he said? Go call your husband. That's the one thing she didn't want to talk about. That was the big problem in her life.

She already had too many husbands, and the one she had now was not her husband. You see what he's doing? He's cutting through the superficial stuff, getting down to reality. The reality of what it is to really believe.

And so he says, Go call your husband. Now, the rich young ruler, exactly the same thing. Here is a man, I don't think any of us have probably ever had this happen, have eternal life.

What did Jesus say? He said, Go sell everything you have. Why did he say that? Because that was that guy's God. Sorry, it said he felt a love for him.

He loved him too much to lie to him. He said, Go sell everything you have. Now, he did not say to the woman at the well, Go sell everything you have.

That wasn't her problem. And he did not say to the rich young ruler, Go call your wife. That wasn't his problem.

He only had one wife if he had any. He was a nice, moral guy. He dealt with the thing that was their problem, the big thing to them.

I love this story, and it's a true story. In the great lakes, the eagles sometimes will come down, you know, they come down and get these fish out of the water. And sometimes an eagle will get a hold of a fish that's

too big for it.

And this literally happens. They'll take that fish up out of the water, and they're carrying this big fish, and they get so weak, man, they're starting to get weaker and weaker. All they've got to do is let go.

They'll hold on to it. And you find the dead eagle washed up on the shore with the dead fish still on his claws. Now, what's Jesus doing here, this woman at the well? Fact is, she's got a big fish in her life that she's holding on to.

She says, Sir, give me that water. I want that water. He says, Go call your husband.

In other words, you're going to have to let go of that fish. Rich young ruler, it's his riches. We've got to deal faithfully with men's souls.

If you're still holding on to the big fish, you're lost. You've got superficial faith. That's exactly what you've got.

Somebody led you to pray a prayer before you realized that you had let go of that fish. You didn't even think about that fish. Well, it's there.

And God's talking to you about it. You know what happens when you lead somebody in a prayer, get them to do these things when all they have is that superficial type of faith? Jesus talks about it in Luke 5. He says, if you try to take new wine and you put it in an old wineskin, what happens? In other words, this wineskin, he's an unregenerate person. You try to put the new wine in the old wineskin, and that new wine begins to ferment and expand.

In a little while, the old wineskin pops. It can't take it. And two things happen.

The wine is spilled out on the ground, and the skin is ruined. Now, how does that work? Well, it works like this. And I've done it.

I've seen it. I mean, I used to do this. I used to go knock on doors and lead people in that superficial faith and meet with them for a long time.

And like I said, try to get them to read the Bible. And finally, they fall away. And what happens is the wine is spilled on the ground.

People look at them, and they say, oh, look, that's what Christianity is. That guy, he said he was a Christian. Now look at him.

Now, the gospel is spilled on the ground, trampled underfoot, the reputation of the gospel. But the second thing is the skin is ruined. You go to that kind of person and try to talk to them and witness to them.

They say, yeah, I tried that. It didn't work. They're messed up because they've gotten something that wasn't real.

Well, in closing, let me just say this. It says Jesus did not commit himself to them. But isn't this something? When the faith is real, when there is reality, when the Holy Spirit is working, he will commit himself to you.

He commits himself to those who belong to him. Fannie Crosby, blessed assurance. Jesus is mine.

He's mine. I am my beloved's, and he is mine. He commits himself to you and lets you know that you belong to him.

That's not something. You remember how Jesus dealt with these people in John 2? It says that many believed in his name. Jesus did not commit himself to them.

Now, you know what happens today? Somebody comes forward or whatever with superficial faith, and they pray the prayer, and nothing happens. Why? Nothing happens because Jesus doesn't commit himself to them. And so you know what a lot of people do? You pray the prayer with somebody, and you say, now where is Jesus now? Well, I don't know where he is.

Well, he said he'd come into your heart, so where is he? Well, I guess he must be in my heart. I don't know. Well, thank God he's in your heart now.

Do you realize what you've done when you do that? Jesus did not commit himself to them. He didn't do it because he loved them. And he would not be a false prophet to them.

That's why. He would not put a band-aid on a cancer. That's why.

But whenever it's real, he will commit himself to you, and he'll let you know that you belong to him. There was a girl, a student, in fact she was a head of one of the campus groups there in Clarksville. It's been probably 10 years ago.

And she was coming to our Bible study, and she was quite interested and lively, and I thought, you know, it's not my job to figure out who's a Christian and who isn't. I just assumed that she was. And she went home for the summer, and when she came back in the fall, I was talking to her about how her summer went, and I said, you know, how was your time in the Word and stuff like that? Well, I didn't really read the Bible, during the summer.

I thought, what? I didn't read the Bible any all summer. And then we got talking a little bit more, and a few more things came out, and I found out, now this is a girl that's a head of a Christian campus organization. I found out she's living with her boyfriend, you know, like Adam and Eve.

And we began to talk more, and I began to realize this girl's lost. And all this time, she had been wanting to be, she'd wanted to join the Peace Corps. And when she found out that the Peace Corps wasn't really a Christian thing, she wanted to become a missionary.

And one night, she was at our home, and we were talking, and I said, you know, Jane, I said, you wanted to be in the Peace Corps, you wanted to be a missionary, you know, Jane the philanthropist, Jane the world traveler. I said, what if you just give yourself to God and say, Lord, whatever you want, I'm giving my life to you. Whatever you want me to be, whatever you want me to do, I give myself to you.

And she thought about it for a while, and she said no. She wanted to be a missionary more than she wanted to be a Christian. Isn't that amazing? And I told her the story about the big fish, and I said, you know, you're going to have to let go of your desire.

He that saves his life will lose it. That's what we're talking about. You've got this thing, and it's your God.

And when the push comes to shove, and you get down to whether or not you're going to give in to God, or you're going to hold on to that thing, you're going to hold on to that thing. That's what we're talking about of

superficial faith. There's no reality in it.

It's got the wrong God. It's got no concept of who Jesus is. It's got no concept of the cost and what it really means to love God and follow God.

She went away, and the next week or maybe a week or two later, after a Bible study, she came again to talk, and she said, I don't have any assurance. And I said, well, you're not going to have any assurance as long as you're holding on to that fish. She said, I've let go of it.

Now, what are you going to do then? I didn't lead her in a prayer. I talked to her more, exhorted her to seek the Lord. I said, you go put yourself on God's doorstep and cry out to him for mercy until he has mercy upon you.

That was on a Sunday night. The next day, our doorbell rang. My wife went to the front door, opened the door up, and Jane's standing there.

She just threw her arms over. She said, I'm saved. I'm saved.

Now, what happened? Jesus committed himself to her. He really can. He really does.

He does do that. He commits himself to those who believe on him. Well, we've looked at a lot of things here.

Maybe some things are new to you. Go back and study the Bible. That's all I ask you to do.

And ask God to teach you, because there's an awful lot of stuff going on that is totally wacko in terms of Scripture. Look at what the Bible says. God will be faithful, and he'll help you.

Amen.

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