

Following Jesus

by Dan Augsburger

To be a follower of Jesus means to surrender to God and allow Him to work through us, making a long-term commitment to no longer belong to ourselves, but to belong to God.

Duration: 1:27:47

Scripture: Matthew 3:16, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Following Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, Dan Augsburger discusses the concept of following Jesus. He emphasizes the importance of willingly sacrificing one's own desires and ambitions in order to live according to God's will and advance His kingdom. Augsburger uses the analogy of an auction to illustrate the idea of giving our best to God and not settling for less. He also highlights the humility of Jesus, who voluntarily left heaven and took on human form to fulfill God's plan. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to wholeheartedly commit to following Jesus and living a transformed life.

Transcript

Hi, this is Dan Augsburger. You are about to hear a message on what it means to be a follower of Jesus. I shared this message in April of 2011 with some young adults of a Korean church in southwestern Michigan.

It's good to be here. Do I need to raise this higher so that people can hear me? Just it's for recording purposes, so okay. It's good to be here.

I didn't realize I was going to have that kind of introduction, be honest with you. I was actually thinking about John the other day and wondering what he was going on. I didn't realize he was your youth pastor.

I'd forgotten about that. So anyway, it's a privilege to be here. I pray for the opportunity actually to go and share with others about Jesus because I believe that a relationship with Jesus is the very best thing that can happen to a person.

I've done many, many things in my life. I don't quite know yet what I'm going to do when I grow up. I went to Andrews and I thought I was going to go into radio and television, but I didn't do that.

I first worked as a hospital administrator. Then I felt called to go into ministry, so I went back to the seminary. And then they asked me to go into nursing administration.

And then I lost my job and I went into executive search, which I did for 14 years or something, and made more money than I thought was legally possible. Huge amounts of money. Placed one guy at an insurance worldwide director of quality that paid me \$62,000 to find one employee for them.

That's serious money. Placed five or six people like that and you've got a real good year. But then the Lord kind of put a burden on me to learn about prayer because I needed some answers to prayer.

And Pastor Dwight discovered I had an interest in prayer and he began asking me to do more on prayer. And eventually I just ran out of time to do my recruiting business, so now I make less than I think is practically possible. I don't even have to pay taxes, to be honest with you.

But I'm sure I go to more places than most people do. Because when God is in charge, God will take you and bring you places you never dreamed you would ever go. And the nice thing is when you're really in relationship with Jesus the way he wants you to be, it's not about your ability, it's more about your availability.

And you're not concerned about your success, you're concerned about his success. That's what you're praying for. Because if it's all about my relationship with you folks, we will have wasted our time.

But if you connect to Jesus and God in a better way as a result of the time we spend, then you're strong anywhere you go, right? And sadly, sometimes I think in the church we have a bad habit of tethering people, if you understand what I mean by that word, attaching people to good speakers or whatever. And we shouldn't do that. We need to attach them to God.

We need to attach them to Jesus. Because if you're attached to Jesus, you don't need another person, you'll be fine. But if you're dependent on people, then not only do you need to be attached to the right people, to a person, but to the right person too, because attachment can lead you down a bad pathway as well.

So thank you for inviting me. And I'm here this afternoon because having Roy and James and some of you coming over to my house, I'm aware that there have been both exciting mountaintops and challenges as well. And I'd like to talk with you a little bit this afternoon about what it means to follow Jesus, okay? Have a serious heart-to-heart talk about what it means to follow Jesus.

And I hope that what I share will be simple enough and practical enough that you will never forget what I share, okay? Now, can you hear me well enough? I'm going to speak louder if I need to. I want to make sure. You want me to be right up to the microphone? I'll just do it like this.

How about that? Is that better? Good, okay. But before I do anything else, I'd like to have a word of prayer. And I'm going to kneel for this prayer.

Father in heaven, I thank you that I have the opportunity of being at this group this afternoon. And Lord, you know that I have prayed for Roy and Jana and James and the others that are working here many times. And I've been excited, Father, to learn about those that have been praying, have been meeting in small groups, doing those kinds of things.

And Father, I've come not to pretend to know better than they do how to walk with you, but just to share what I've learned that perhaps they can learn from you as I have been learning. So please draw near this afternoon, make my words clear, make my words simple, make my words effective, Father, that each

person would leave knowing you better, knowing better how to walk with you. I ask this in Jesus' name with gratitude.

Amen. One little adjustment. I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring.

There's a chance you will never see her in this world again. Whether you can consent to her departure and her subjection to hardships and sufferings of a missionary life, whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean, to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India, to every kind of want, distress, to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps even a violent death. Can you consent to all of this for the sake of him who left his heavenly home and died for her and for you for the sake of perishing immortal souls, for the sake of Zion and the glory of God.

Adam Judson was writing the father of Ann Haselden. He wanted to marry her, but he was warning the father that there's every chance that if you agree to my marrying her, you will never see her another time the rest of your life. Okay? Now, how do you think your parents would feel if someone wrote them and said, you know, I'd like to have your child join me, you know, on a missionary venture, and there's every chance you will never see this child again the rest of your life.

There's a chance they may die of, this person may die of disease, may die a violent death, something like that. Do you think that you would be likely to? Oh, okay. Thank you.

Is this better? It's on, right? How would you feel? How would your parents react if someone were to write them and say, we'd like your child to come with us, you'll never see them again? Would they be likely to say yes? Would they struggle? They would definitely struggle, wouldn't they? Her father didn't want to lose his daughter, but what he told her, he said, if you feel called, I will not stand in the way of God. I will allow you to go. Now, I'm a big fan of the Keswick Holiness camp meetings.

I teach church history, some at the seminary, in addition to doing seminars. And it's interesting that at Keswick, they used to recruit missionaries, and it's interesting how they would make the appeal, quite different than what we do in our day. First, they would have any missionaries that were there or retired stand up, you know, as a show of commitment that they've made in life.

And then they would next ask parents to stand up who are willing to send their children. And then after that, they would ask the children to stand up if they felt called to go as missionaries. It's interesting.

They realized that the parents could play a role. And we have in the desire of ages, the phrase that there's no limit to the usefulness of one who sets self aside, makes room for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. You know that phrase? It's from desire of ages, I think, page 250 or something like that.

Speaks of no limit people. And I'd like to suggest that if we are not no limit Christians, we are limit God Christians. Did you hear me? There's only one of two alternatives, either no limit Christians or limit God.

Okay? It's interesting, when Adoniram Judson and his wife went, they first went to India. They were wanting to serve God in India, but the East India Company was fearful that their presence would get in the way of commerce for the East India Company, so they refused them entry and they ended up going to Burma. That was a limit God company.

Now, it's interesting that Adoniram Judson had a lot going for him. He was already reading by the age of three. Back in those days, ships and seafaring was a big thing and he was already navigating at the age of 10, studying theology as a child, entered Providence College at the age of 17, could have done anything and everything that he wanted.

But while he was studying, he met a skeptic, convinced Adoniram that God didn't really have an interest in what was going on, that there was no such thing as a God, or at least not a God that was personally involved, and so he convinced him to disavow any knowledge or interest or belief in God. Okay? After graduation, he went on a trip. Adoniram did.

That was what young people did in those days. And as a part of that journey, one night he stayed at a motel and as he was sleeping that night, maybe some of you know the story, you heard some sounds coming from the room next door. You know the story? Okay.

I heard this noise coming from the room next door. It was someone who was sick, someone who was crying out during the night. The noise, the cries, the moans, the anguish grew and finally went completely quiet.

And as this had been going on, Adoniram had been wondering strange thoughts. He began to wonder, for example, I wonder if this person is ready to die? What will happen if this person dies? Are they ready to meet their Maker? And then he would think of himself, how can I think of this? Just think of my friend Jacob Eames. What would he say if he knew that I was troubled at all about a person's soul? As I mentioned, finally it all went quiet.

And so Adoniram went to the innkeeper the next morning and asked, what happened? And the innkeeper said, a man died. Really? He asked, well, who is this man? And he said, why his name is Jacob Eames. The very friend that had convinced him to not believe in God was the man who died in the room next door.

At that moment, Adoniram said, I must change the course that I'm pursuing. I'm going to go back to God. I believe in God.

And I'm going to spend the rest of my life trying to warn people to be prepared to meet their Maker. I must plan my life to please the Lord. Did you hear me? I must plan my life to please the Lord.

That's something that all of you need to be doing. That's something that I need to do, even at my age. Everything that we do with a mind of how we can serve God and how we can please God.

Well, Adoniram Judson prayed with friends, eventually went, as I mentioned, with Ann Haselton. They went over to Burma. Now, it wasn't easy.

Now, there was opposition. For example, there in India, as I mentioned, there was the East India Company that blocked him from entering, went to Burma. There, he spent three years studying 12 hours a day the Burmese language.

Can you imagine spending three years studying 12 hours a day to learn a language? He was convinced he needed to learn the language. He needed to translate the Bible. There wasn't a single Burmese Christian, so they were all by themselves for years and years.

Six long years went by before there was the very first convert. Six years. Now, many of us are into fast food and we're into fast results as Christians, too.

Would you agree? We pray and we expect God to have answered within, what, a week, two, three weeks at the least, right? And if it hasn't happened, what do we tend to say? Must not be God's will, right? Or we kind of forget. We move on. There's little expectation sometimes that God will act if we're praying.

They went for six years without a single convert. Here's the first question I want to ask you this if you would have been the person there. Now, please understand, by the end of his life, they could count 210,000 Christians in Burma.

Okay? Praise God. He didn't quit, right? But would you have remained faithful year after year after year after year until you finally had the first convert? We're not talking about 30s or 40s, just the first convert. Unfortunately, there was a disagreement with a British about that time and he was accused of being a British spy and he was thrown in jail for 21 months.

And often the way they made sure the prisoners didn't run off is they would take their feet and they would hang them up in the air so only their shoulders were on the ground and that's how they would be during the night. And his wife would bring food and she begged and begged for those in charge to set him free. Eventually, he was.

Well, the work progressed. The gospel began to open blind eyes, as I mentioned, and he died in 1850 at the age of 62. At that point, he'd been in Burma for 38 years.

He only came home on furlough one time after 34 years. Okay? These are people that were making a commitment for the long term. You know, how can I say this? When you become a Christian, it is not the kind of, you know, wet your finger and test the wind and see how things go.

It is making a long-term commitment to no longer belong to yourself, to belong to God. Did you hear me? And that means that if God wants to give you results, you know, in two weeks, praise the Lord. But if God doesn't want to give you results in six years, just as great a praise the Lord.

Do you hear me? You see, that's part of the reason I come here this afternoon, because I think that we kind of have this assumption that we're going to pray, we're going to work, and then there's going to be results. And when they don't happen, we wonder, number one, is there something wrong with us? And number two, we wonder, where is God? You know, what is going on? And yet sometimes God just has his way of working. You know, I have to say that one of the reasons God doesn't give us quick results is because if he gave us quick results, we would not learn half the things we need to learn to be strong for him.

Did you hear me? If, for example, those of you who are in leadership here just said, well, we're going to do such and such a program, and you got the whole campus out, you say, praise the Lord, we're going to just put our posters up, and we're going to have the results every time. Would you learn about prayer? Probably not. Would you learn about patience? Probably not.

Would you learn about the science of soul winning? Probably not. Okay. And it's because God cares too much that he is gracious and causes us to wait sometimes.

Okay? It is not humility when God is humiliating us. Did you know that? Okay? It is not delay when God doesn't give results right away. If we've committed everything into his hands, yes, we need to pray.

We must not assume that things are as they should be. I'm not saying that. We should pray.

We should strive. But we should never get frustrated with God because God knows what he's doing. He's never late.

He never makes a mistake. And our part you know, if you were to go to, for example, to the vineyards out here in the summer, and you ask the branch, what does it mean to be a branch? What would they say? My part is just to stay connected and to allow the sunshine to come when there's sunshine. And the rain, you know, when the rain comes, that's my part.

Because my life isn't my own, really. My life is just the sap coming from the larger branch flowing through me. That's all it is.

Okay? That's your role. That's your role, you know, as young adults who are motivated and surrender to Jesus. Well, Adam and Irma had the potential to be anything he would have wanted, but he made a huge, huge decision for God.

And in the minds, I'm sure, of many of his friends, they said, he's crazy. What a waste. So much ability wasted as a missionary where no one knows about him.

And yet you and I would agree he made a wonderful decision, didn't he? Absolutely. Another missionary by the name of John Patton said, as I lay down my pen, let me record my immovable conviction that his is the noblest service in which any human being can spend or be spent. Okay? Working for God is the noblest thing you can do in any area of life.

Okay? It is the noblest thing. That doesn't mean that everyone is called to be a pastor. Okay? Because God needs engineers and doctors, everything else.

Don't get me wrong. But no matter what you do, your employment is to fund your soul winning. Okay? Did you hear me? Soul winning is not something you do on the side.

Soul winning is something you do all day through because you have, I pray, a witnessing lifestyle where you're saying, God, today, give me the opportunity to share with someone. Give me the opportunity today, Father, to share something. Okay? He said it's the noblest service.

And that if God gave me back my life to be lived over again, I would, without one quiver of hesitation, lay it on the altar to Christ that he might use it as before in similar ministries of love, especially among those who never yet heard the name of Jesus. He gave his best, his son to me, and I give back my best, my all to him. Now let's imagine that you went to an auction.

And I don't know if you go to auctions much, I don't, but I've been to a few where sometimes they'll give you a box full of stuff. There'll be books and some other stuff. And you see something you really want and you bid on that.

Okay. And you win the auction. How would you feel if later the auctioneer said, I've decided to only give you the junk in the box.

And I'd like to keep actually what you really wanted. I've decided not to sell it. Would you feel cheated? Absolutely.

How many people, when it comes to Christ, they say, well, I've surrendered my bad habits. I've given up this vice and that vice. Is that really what it means to surrender? Would you be happy if you paid the price, you know, just to get the junk or the vice, the things that aren't of any value anyway? You see, God wants not only your best, but all of you.

Guess how long? For all time. Not just some of you, some of the time, but all of you, all the time for the rest of your life. Do you want to really fully surrender to Jesus? It's all things all the time for the rest of my life.

Have you made that kind of surrender in your life? You need to, you need to. Because if you've truly made that kind of surrender, it doesn't matter what's going on. Nothing's going to change in your life.

Peter Buller, the Moravian said, if I had a thousand tongues, I would praise Christ with them all. Okay. Then there was another couple, Betty and John Stam.

They served together in China with the China Inland Mission. She wrote the following poem. She said, Lord, I give up my own plans and purposes, all my own desires, hopes, and ambitions, and I accept thy will for my life.

I give up myself, my life, my all utterly to thee to be thine forever. I hand over to thy keeping all of my friendships. All the people whom I love are to take second place in my heart.

Fill me now and seal me with thy spirit. Work out thy whole will in my life at any cost for me to live is Christ. Work out your will at any cost.

Well, they went to China with Hudson Taylor, and within one year, they lost their lives to the communists. Within one year, they lost their surrender. So I asked the question this afternoon, how are such disciples made? How are such disciples made? Do you think that they're made by just going to a few rallies now and then? No, no, no.

Essentially, with the disciples of Jesus, they were called from their trades. They were instructed by his discourses, observed the way that he worked, equipped and empowered and sent on missions, given specific information on what to expect. But did they really learn? It seems to me almost incomprehensible that they were often arguing over who was going to be greatest.

Notice that isn't strange. They were with Jesus, the Messiah, and they were all arguing over who's going to be the greatest. They looked for an earthly kingdom.

They resisted thought of anything that would humble them. In the end, they denied and abandoned him. But suddenly at the day of Pentecost, they became fearless.

And I guess the question that comes is, how did God bring about the change in their lives? How did God bring about the change? What are your thoughts? We can have a bit of discussion here for just a moment. How did God bring about the change in their lives? He died. They recognized Jesus' death.

He left. Okay. As in the resurrection, you're saying, okay, he sent back the Holy Spirit.

He left and the spirit came. Had Jesus been talking with them all along about what the real life was? Absolutely. I believe it's number one.

They finally heard, they finally understood, and they accepted his pathway. Okay. It is very possible that there's some of you, and I can say this because I can speak of myself and I know about myself, have been going to church all of your lives, but you've not been hearing really what they've been saying in church.

Either that or you've only been partially hearing what they're saying. I only found Jesus when I was a senior in college. It's interesting that my junior year, I was the essay leader of religious activities at Andrews, and I was preaching sermons Friday night for Vespers.

At PMC, I was a highly visible Christian leader, but I only found Jesus as my savior the summer after I served for the first year. Then they elected me to be the same position the second year, and what I did was completely different. It's interesting.

It was after I was a very visible leader that I finally found Jesus as my personal savior. Somebody gave me a book called *The Life of Victory*, and as I read it, I realized I didn't know what it was about. When I finally found Jesus as my personal savior, I went to my dad and I said, Dad, why did you never tell me about this? He said, we've been telling you about this all of our lives.

Now, I was in Fiji, and in Fiji, I was working with the pastors there, and I made a statement to the pastors there. I said, perhaps there's someone here who has never accepted Jesus as their personal savior, and a pastor put his hands up and said, how dare you suggest that a pastor not know Jesus as their personal savior? I said, please forgive me, but I can only speak of my own experience. That same pastor came to me later in the week and said, when you first came, I was convinced I knew everything you knew, but he said, by the end of the week, he said, it was just me and God, no one else.

He said, I had to admit that I didn't know the experience that you were talking about. So you need to hear, then you need to understand what you're hearing, then you need to accept it, and then you need to commit to living it. Okay? Well, I was asked to speak on discipleship.

How do you make a disciple? As I thought about it, I thought, well, the easy place to start is when Jesus said, you know, come follow me, and I will make you what? Fishers of men. I said, well, I'll just talk about the experiences of the disciples. But the more I thought about it, the more I prayed about it, the more convinced I was that when Jesus said, follow me, he was actually meaning for them to follow him actually as from his birth upwards, because it changes it completely.

You know, for the disciples, it was mainly just going along with Jesus and seeing miracles and healing a few people, these kinds of things. But there was a whole side to being one of the disciples of Jesus that they were missing, which Jesus had learned for 30 years. Did you hear me? 30 years prior to his ministry beginning.

And so this afternoon, I want to talk with you a little bit about what it means to follow Jesus from his birth. And I think you're going to find it quite interesting. First of all, look at Philippians chapter two, verses six and seven.

Philippians chapter two, verses six and seven. It says there, let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus. Philippians chapter two, verses six and seven.

It says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant and coming in the likeness of men. And we'll read verse eight to seven. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Well, the decision to die on the cross, the decision to make that voluntary sacrifice actually was made in heaven long before he came to earth. It was not easy for Jesus to leave. He voluntarily left his father's side where he was, you know, one of the Trinity was born to the most humble circumstances.

Okay. In the most humble circumstances to parents, et cetera. So here's the first question I have to ask you.

Do you recognize that in following Jesus, that you're making a decision to walk in a very humble way? Have you ever thought about that? Jesus talked about the need to deny ourselves, take up our cross. How often each and every day and follow him. It's interesting that in the days of the crucifixion, when you saw a man carrying the cross, you knew that, that they had forced the cross upon him and they were forcing him goading him on maybe with, with the points of a sword or something to carry the cross to his place of execution.

And those watching knew that that was the end of that man. But Jesus said, what he said, take up your cross voluntarily, take the instrument of death and embrace it. If you want to follow Jesus, you'll have to understand that you're, you're voluntarily choosing to die to your own wishes, your own desires, your own ambitions, your own plans, and live for one purpose.

And that is to know his will in order to do it, to advance his kingdom and to bring honor to him. Are you glad to be a Christian? The whole change of life, whole change of life. Okay.

So that was the first thing. He voluntarily left the courts of heaven, became vulnerable. Then he was manifested in a humble way.

His divinity was veiled with humanity. He, he, he took upon himself. Hi Barbara.

He took upon himself, uh, humble humanity. Okay. And then it says, um, in Hebrews 10, look at Hebrews chapter 10, five to 10 verses five to seven.

It says there, therefore, when he came to the world, he said, sacrifice an offering. You did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. Hebrews 10, five to seven, but a body you have prepared for me and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin.

You had no pleasure. Then I said, behold, I have come in the volume of the book. It is written to me to do your will.

Oh God. Okay. He left the courts of heaven to make a voluntary sacrifice of himself.

Okay. Came to give himself. So that's the first point.

When he came from heaven, he came to live for other people. He came to serve. He came to, to in a humble way.

Now let's, let's talk about his, his birth. Look, if you would, in the book of Matthew chapter one, as I studied about this on my own, I was really quite amazed by what I found. Matthew chapter one, it says there in verse 21, um, Joseph, you know, I'd been wanting to put Mary away as a public example because she was with child verse 20, but while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take you.

Mary, your wife for that, which is conceived in her is of the what the Holy spirit. Jesus was conceived of the Holy spirit. Do you want to know power in your life? You must also know the conception, which is of the Holy spirit.

It's sad. It's sad that in our church, there's a reluctance to almost talk about the Holy spirit. There's a fear when yet Jesus said, this is the best thing.

This is even better than my being here is you're receiving the Holy spirit. But how many of you have intentionally said, I must know the birth of the Holy spirit for myself. I must know the power of the Holy spirit in my life.

Jesus said, unless you're born again, how by the spirit, you'll never see the kingdom of God. And I can tell you in my own personal life that I used to have a ministry that was, that was very local, but as I surrendered more, God suddenly just, just, just opened it up much greater. And then when I began seeking after the Holy spirit, I began discovering that God began doing strange things that, that went above and beyond my words.

Okay. It's, it's, it's what the Holy spirit does innocent through us that makes the difference. It's not our clever words.

Okay. It is not our clever words. Okay.

So Jesus had to be conceived of the Holy spirit. And then, um, we know about his birth, right? What do we know about his birth? Jesus was born where, where in a manger in Bethlehem. Why was he born in Bethlehem? Because the Jewish people were being oppressed, right? If you read the first chapter of desire ages or something close to that, it talks about how he was in the fullness of time.

It was a time of, of extreme darkness for the, for the people at that time that Jesus came, his parents, uh, you know, in the eyes of other people were not married yet. You know, his, his mother was of questionable, you know, background that, that, that he was there, uh, pregnant. Um, Joseph had married before that he, he would have stepbrothers later.

It was a poor family. He would be raised in poor Nazareth. It was, you know, kind of the, the least ideal situation possible for him to, to come to this world in.

Would you agree? But those circumstances were intentionally chosen by God for him. Sometimes when things are not going so well, we, we get frustrated. If only things were, were better.

Oh, if only my circumstances were better, things could only be different. And yet, when we look at the birth of Jesus, God intentionally had him come to parents who were in Bethlehem where they were forced to go by, by, by the Romans. They didn't have any room in the end.

You know, he was born in a crude manger. The King of the time immediately began to attack and actually killed all the babies under two in that town because of him. They had to flee to Egypt.

Later, they came back to Nazareth. And you know what the expectations were for Nazareth. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Do you want to follow Jesus? God will so orchestrate your circumstances that he will make your life a life of dependence on him, where you learn that things are okay because he's in charge no matter what you see around yourselves.

Okay. That's interesting. He, he was born, as I said, there.

He grew up in very humble circumstances. He was dedicated to God. How long was he at home? I already mentioned that.

What, 30 years, right? Is it strange to you that Jesus spent so much time at home before he began his ministry? You would have thought God would have started maybe at the age of 20 or something, but God waited till longer, right? This is the point. Jesus lived to obey his father, his father's time, his father's words. Everything that his father said was what Jesus was going to do.

Here's something that may be of interest to you. Do you know how we learn to submit to God? Who knows how we learn to submit to God? By submitting to the people around us. How do you like that? You see, Jesus learned to submit by submitting to his parents.

And you and I, we learned to submit to God by submitting to the people around us. Although Jesus would never submit and obey to such a degree that he disobeyed his father, right? But it's true. If you want to follow Jesus, you'll have to accept the fact that you learn to submit in submitting to people around you.

So those people who frustrate you sometimes are actually a blessing in disguise. You know how you deal with frustration as a Christian? Praise the Lord. Somehow this is good.

I just don't understand it yet. It helps to have that kind of attitude. Okay.

He grew up submitting to his parents. Okay. He was studying the scriptures.

Okay. Notice what happens next. So it talks about how, how Herod, you know, persecuted the babies in verse 13.

We read about the flight into Egypt. There was the massacre of the innocents. Then they finally come back in verses 19 and onwards.

And then it says in those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Okay. And then it goes on to where Jesus comes along.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent him saying, I need to be baptized by you. And are you coming to me? And Jesus answered and said to him, permitted to be.

So now for thus, it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed him, um, and he agreed to baptize. Why did Jesus need to be baptized? Why did Jesus need to be baptized? What are your suggestions for that? Did Jesus need to have something, you know, washed for it, unquote forgiven.

Excuse me. He was setting an example. That's true.

He was saying an example. That's part of the answer. What else? Okay.

Okay. What else? What happened when you were baptized? Let's put it that way. What happened when you were baptized? I don't know if all of you have been baptized yet.

Yeah. You get your names on the church membership. That's true.

That's true. What else happens when a person's baptized? Your sins are washed away. That's true.

Ellen White makes an interesting statement. She said that there are those, she says, the reason there's so much perplexity in the church is that many have been baptized, but they were buried alive and self came back out of the water, just as alive as before. Believe it or not, when you were baptized baptism, yes, is a symbol, you know, an outward symbol of an inward change.

Okay. But it's also a public declaration that from now on, I belong to Jesus. And look at Romans chapter six, if you would look at Romans chapter six.

Actually, let's start with Colossians. Colossians chapter two. It says there, verse 12 speaks of how it says in him, you were also circumcised starting at verse 11 with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead, buried with him in baptism in which you also were raised with him through faith.

Look at Romans chapter six, Romans chapter six, verses three and four. It says there, therefore, we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For we've been united together in the likeness of his death.

Certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection. And then verse six, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. You know what baptism is as well.

It's the funeral of the old man. When I baptize someone, you know what I tell them? People listening, I say, you need to say goodbye to this person because they're not the same person. Okay.

Before they were concerned about what you had to say, you know, they, they, they were interested in hearing everyone else's opinion, but after they're baptized, they no longer care. Okay. They no longer care.

They used to be, you know, wanting to go with you to, to, to, to movies and, and, you know, and just go out and have a great time and, and live kind of with, with, with one foot in the world and one foot in the, in the church. After today, both feet are in the church. That person is dead.

That person is gone. Say goodbye. When you were baptized, did you realize that that was what you were doing? Did you realize that? Most people don't.

Most people don't. You see, when Jesus died on the cross, not only did I, he take our sins to the cross, but he took us to the cross as well. And by faith, we believe that we died when Jesus died.

Okay. To use a longer word, that's what you, what's referred to sometimes as positional sanctification. Okay.

That by faith in what the word of God says, we believe that we died. Then there's experiential sanctification. That is what happens on a daily basis.

And then there's ultimate sanctification, that which happens when Jesus returns. Okay. But by faith, when you were baptized, at least positionally, you died.

Okay. And so it's the funeral. It's, it's, it's the end of the old man.

Jesus made a public declaration at his baptism, I believe, that he was completely dead to self and that the rest of his life would be completely motivated by the glory of God. I mentioned this because living for Jesus is holy, hard, tedious work sometimes. And don't get me wrong.

I have more friends today in more places than I ever dreamed of having. And I've seen more miracles in my life now than I've ever had before. And I wouldn't trade what I do now for all the tea in China or whatever.

Okay. It's, I can assure you, I can assure you that this is the best life. But it's always a life surrendered to God.

And it should be 24 hours a day. Not one moment off duty. Okay.

That's what he wants. So going back to Matthew chapter four, and we could take, you know, uh, entire hours on, on each thing that I've talked about now. But so Jesus is tempted and notice what happens as he comes out of the water.

Verse 16 of chapter three of Matthew, when he had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water and behold, the heavens were open to him. And he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and the lighting upon him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

As a result of his choosing to be baptized, as a result of his complete surrender, the Holy spirit came down upon his life in power. Now, as you know, in, in the church these days, there's a real drive, a real push to seek after reformation and revival. You can't have one without the other.

And I don't know if you've seen the book on reformation revival that they've handed out. Uh, but there's a new compilation of the writings of Ellen White that is out on reformation and revival. Revival isn't rocket science.

Revival is not a feel good experience. Revival is where we have so gotten out of the way that the Holy spirit has been able to take over. Now, some people have the mistaken idea, and I'm actually using someone else's idea when they say this, that it's when you kind of get a monopoly on God, that somehow you have this power, but that's not true.

It's when God gets the monopoly on you, that you receive the Holy spirit. And when you die to self, which is what baptism is ultimately all about, where you say, it's not my will. It's not my desires.

It's not my ambition. It's not my life. I live to serve God.

When it is in that way, then the Holy spirit will come upon you, will begin to work in you and through you in ways you could have never imagined before. Do you want to know the Holy spirit in your life? Surrender to God, die to self, let God have all of your life all of the time. And he was able to use you in great power.

I have no doubt about it, but we must read further. We must read further. It says, then Jesus was led up by the spirit, where into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Did you hear what you just read? Jesus had just died to self. The spirit had come down with him in great power. The spirit was very present.

And the first thing the spirit does is drive him into the wilderness to be tempted. Did you hear me? And many people say, man, I'm just working for God. And why? And if you look at the life of Jesus, the first thing that happens is he goes into a wilderness for temptation.

Do not be surprised that the devil attacks you. Do not be surprised at the ways that the devil attacks you. Because I believe the temptations in the wilderness are indicative of the three great temptations that come to soul winners.

And I'm just assuming that every person here is a soul winner, because if you're a Christian, you've been called that way. Okay. And we could, we could talk about that because I think soul winning is, is not hard either.

There's a few secrets, you know, when we follow Jesus way. But there were three temptations, right? It says, and when he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, afterwards, he was hungry. Now, when the tempter came to him, he said, if you are the son of God, if you are the son of God, command that these stones become bread.

Do you think it was a temptation to Jesus to command the stones into bread? Did he have the ability? Did he even pray and say, I can't command, but I can ask my father, did he do that? No. What was his answer? Answer? He said, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

What was it? What is, what is the temptation that we see here? What is the great temptation? Excuse me. Presumption. Maybe, maybe most people put it on the second one where he jumps and expects him to be delivered.

But what are some ideas? Every answer is right. You know, I, I'm just interested in, in some ideas. I'm just saying that often people do that one to the second one more.

What questioning Jesus divinity. Yeah. Jesus is going to say, hold on.

I am God. I must prove that I'm divine. Self-gratification.

Okay. Taking care of, of, of one's needs. What is the, what is the one though to the soul winner? What's the temptation for the soul winner? None of us are God.

We can't say, Hey, I am divine. What do you paint in self? I think that's part of it. Yeah, absolutely.

What? Where our power comes from. I'll put it very simply. God, I'm living for you.

I can, my life to you. Why am I hungry? Am I not your child? God, I pray. People know I pray.

Why, why am I the hungry one? And they've got plenty. That's a huge temptation. Huge temptation.

You see, with that temptation, it really looks at our motives. Are we, are we Christians? Because we think through our prayers that we'll, we'll have some kind of advantage financially or intellectually. Are we Christians? Because it's the right thing to do.

Even if we don't do that much better, even if we don't seem to be that blessed. In fact, like Jesus, if we find ourselves hungry for 40 days, I mean, Jesus said his father was God up in heaven, the creator, right? Father, where are you? Father, where are you? I'm hungry. Haven't you noticed? And there's many a person who works for Jesus, who God allows that temptation to come so that they will know that their motive is not some kind of personal gain or something like that.

Okay. God will allow all of you to be tested that way. If you want to follow Jesus, you need to be prepared where he will sift your motives and he will actually come right down into your life and say, you say you're doing it because you love me.

Let's find out. Let's find out. You know, in the days of Jesus, Jesus had a problem.

He always said the wrong things at the wrong time. About the time they wanted to crown him, he said, you know, we need to leave. About the time, you know, that the circumstances were right, he would come up with something crazy like, unless you drink my blood and eat my flesh and people were leaving, they would say, no, no, no, no, not now.

Say that to us privately. Don't say to everyone here. But you see, Jesus wanted to make sure that everyone knew what the bottom line was.

Okay. Which is a radical relationship to a person who has a radical authority over your life and your financial gain or lack thereof, you know, your resources are no indicator, no indicator at all. The point is, is that, is that, you know, if, if, if you were to be sold as a slave, right? Paul called himself a slave.

It really wouldn't matter how much or how little you had, right? Because you don't belong to yourself. And when you surrender your life to God, you're literally saying, God, I give you control of my life and I choose to trust that you will take care of me. Now, that doesn't preclude, that doesn't mean that we don't pray and ask for God's blessings and, and, and, and, and, and do the things that we need to do.

There's God's part, there's man's part, but ultimately we are trusting God. And I found it fascinating as I thought about this, that, that as the Holy Spirit comes down upon Jesus after the baptism, the first thing the Holy Spirit does is drive him into the wilderness where his motives are sifted. And I believe that for all of you, for all of you, God comes along and says, you say that you love me.

I want to find out. Okay. You know, it's interesting that when the children of Israel went through, went through the wilderness, and I will read this to you.

It's from Deuteronomy chapter, I don't have it here, so let me just read it for you. I thought I had it here. It says, and you should remember that the Lord, your God led you all the way these 40 years in the wilderness to humble you and test you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

So he humbled you, allowed you to hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know that he might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. God said to the children of Israel, I allowed you to be humbled and tested so that I would know whether you actually lived on the basis of my word or you, or you obeyed on the basis of inclination for whatever seemed to work and help you. Okay.

So God allowed Jesus to get very, very hungry for 40 days. And Satan came when he was most vulnerable. And Jesus faced the temptation we all do, which is father, I'm your son.

Where are you? Where are you? That was the first temptation says verse five. Then the devil took him up into the Holy city, set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, if you are the son of God, throw yourself down for it is written. He shall give his angels charge over you.

And in their hands, they shall bear you up. Last you dash your foot against a stone. Satan took him up to the pinnacle of the temple.

And he said, Jesus, you're the son of God. So to speak, he should give his angels charge over you in their hands. They should bear you up.

Jump, jump, prove, prove that you're the son of God. What's the temptation to the soul winner with this temptation, the temptation that you all face all of you. What's the temptation.

What? That you must see results. You see, it would have been very easy for Jesus to jump because maybe he would have been rescued. And there's a lot of people who, you know, they talk of signs and wonders and, you know, you put on programs, you expect results, you know, you work and you, you expect people to say, we've had X number of, uh, of, of students that have joined me.

We've had a few baptisms, whatever. And when it, when it doesn't happen, what do you say? Come on, God, I'm working hard. We're putting the time to pray.

Aren't you noticing? And you know what God says, this isn't about results. You're in this because you love me. You're in this because you're serving me.

Whether there's a single result for six years, like Adoniram Judson or many. You see, we do what we do because we love him, not because we have to, or because, you know, we have to get some kind of number on the board. We do what we do because we love him, because he has placed us where he's placed us to bear fruit.

It's interesting. A great Christian man, George Mueller. How many of you have heard of George Mueller? Some of you have, he ran an orphanage in Bristol, England.

It's interesting. He was a really rowdy kid. He was a serial thief and liar when he was a young man.

Eventually, believe it or not, as a result of seeing a Christian Neal, he was converted. That's interesting. He was going to the seminary to become a pastor all this time, but was anything but converted, even though he was in the seminary in his days, in the 1800s.

He, he began writing out his sermons very carefully and discovered over three and a half years that there was no fruit, no fruit at all. And one day he decided, he said, said, there's only going to be one thing that I'm going to be concerned about, and that is to be God's humble instrument and to honor God. That's all

I'm going to worry about.

He said, after that, there was much fruit. When he was no longer worried about, about, you know, look, you know, the, the, the, the, the, the perfect sermons and the perfect, you know, wordsmithing, he said, I'm just going to share from my heart. Suddenly God began to work on the people and God brought great, great wonders through him, spiritual wonders.

And God really blessed him. For those of you that don't know him, he had an orphanage that by the end of his life could care for 2018 children. But his rule was he never actually asked people for money.

He only asked God. So in 1874, he said this year, every day I fed 2100 people, the children plus his staff. I also support another 189 missionaries overseas.

I paid the school fees of 9,000 children in day schools. I published 4 million tracts. I also sent 10,000 pounds additionally for other mission work and printed thousands of Bibles without ever once asking anyone for money.

Great, great Christian. But you know, the secret to his life was, he said, I decided just to be God's humble instrument and to busy myself and concern myself with God's honor instead of my own. And when Satan said, throw yourself down with the whole idea of throw yourself down, everyone's going to notice it.

They're going to notice they're going to know that you're God. And today, if you look at Christendom, you know, that there's a lot of people that are concerned with signs and wonders. Would you not agree? Tired denominations are based on signs and wonders.

But God says, that's not my way. God says, do you want to serve me? Do it because it's the right thing. Do it because you love me.

Then there's the third temptation. Again, the devil took him up on an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, all these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.

And Jesus said to him, away with you Satan, for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve. What was the great temptation to Jesus at that time? What was the great temptation? What? Shortcutting. Okay.

What was he going to avoid by doing that? He was going to avoid the cross. The devil basically said, if you will worship me, you can, you can, you can miss the cross. You can skip that part.

How many of you wouldn't mind skipping the, the, the diet itself, take up the cross part in your own lives? You know, that's, that's how the devil still works. He says, I have a plan. I have a plan.

Even for good Christian programs, I'll show you how to do it. You know, and he comes up with his own little ideas of how, how programs should be, you know, and what you find is it's, it's more into entertainment than it is into soul winning. And then people wonder why there's not more results.

Sadly, sadly. And still today, there is the temptation to say, you know, look at, look at these other people, look at the great results they're having. Maybe it's not what we feel is quite right, but if God is giving them success, it ought to be okay for us.

That's still a temptation. No, no. It's interesting that after that third temptation, the devil gave up.

Why? Because motives for, for personal gain, motives for spiritual gain, you know, for spiritual reputation and also short cutting had been dealt with. And if those three things are taken care of, apparently one is good to go. But remember, after he was baptized, after the spirit came upon him, the first thing the spirit did was let him into the wilderness where his motives for serving were tested, were sifted.

And I really believe that, that God in mercy, when he wants to do a great work, he makes sure that our motives are tested and, and refined so that when he does bring the blessing, it won't go to our heads. And I really believe my friends that, that when, when we completely surrender our lives to God, when we allow God to humble ourselves, that, that he will so work in us in terms of making us dead to self, so to speak, that he'll be, he'll, we'll be able to bless us because that really is his goal when we're at the point that he can do that. Okay.

So the spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. He endured the temptations. And then it says, verse 11, then the devil left him and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

And then if you want to turn to Luke chapter four, I think it is, you have to kind of go to the story in Luke to, to finish the story. It starts in verse four, then Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the spirit into the wilderness. Then it speaks to the temptations.

And then verse 14, then Jesus returned in the power of the spirit to Galilee and news of him went out through all the surrounding region. The spirit led him into the wilderness. Then the spirit led him back out of the wilderness and word of him then spread throughout all the region.

Okay. The spirit was working. Do you notice that he was conceived by the spirit? He was, he was in effect raised by the spirit.

He was led by the spirit to be baptized, led by the spirit to go into the wilderness, to be tempted, led by the spirit to come back out and begin ministry. So I ask you this afternoon, where are you on that continuum? Where are you on that continuum this afternoon? Are you still needing to be born again? You know, that first part of being born by the spirit. Are you learning to submit to God by submitting to the people around you? That's not an easy one to learn.

Sometimes we spend a long time with that one. Are you, are you pursuing baptism in the way that God intends, which is truly a public declaration that, that the old life is history and that there's a new life now. I mentioned George Miller.

George Miller said there was the day that I died. And as he said, he bowed lower and said, died to the praise or the criticism of the world died to the praise or criticism of my friends and brothers and lived only to show myself approved under God. And he said, I died to my taste, my preferences, my will.

He said, there's only one thing I cared about. And that is what God cared about. That is why God blessed George Miller.

Do you want to be blessed like George Miller? People used to say to him, you know, God only blesses you because you're more spiritual. He said, no, no. He said to the degree that I want God's will to be done in my life.

To that degree, God has blessed me and made me a blessing. So are you, are you, are you dealing with that part of it? Or is God testing your motives, helping you realize why you serve him, because it's the right thing, whether you're poor, rich, or somewhere in between, whether there's any results apparently or not. And with an understanding that, you know, that it's all about dying to self.

There isn't an easy way. Jesus took up a literal cross, right? And he died. He died.

And, you know, if you read the book of Hebrews chapter 12, it talks about how, or is it 11 rather? It talks about how, you know, there was all these people who, who had faith and were delivered, but it says that the second half, all these people who were not delivered, right? Are you as happy with the second part of that chapter as the first part? We need to be happy either way. We need to be happy either way. Now, let me read just a few quotations with you, or just a couple of thoughts.

What does it mean to follow Jesus? To follow Jesus, to voluntarily follow in a humble dying to self journey. Do you want to follow Jesus? It's the humble dying to self way. Two, to follow Jesus, to live for one purpose, to live for the advancement of God's kingdom, and to seek to know and do God's will.

Okay? To follow Jesus, to submit to God, which we learn by submitting to other people. To follow Jesus, to live by every word, not just some of the words that comes from God's word. To follow Jesus, to voluntarily take up our cross, symbolized by baptism.

To follow Jesus, to rise to a new life where God has not only the first and the last word, but every word in between. Okay? Not only the first word and the last word, but every word in between. To follow Jesus, to even allow him to drive us into the wilderness of temptation, and not get discouraged and give up.

Okay? Praise God, he also will bring us back out of the wilderness to a life of ministry. Okay? Now, just a couple of quotations. This first one is from gospel workers.

Some seek to control their surroundings, thinking that if they are placed in favorable positions, the bad traits in their character will not be developed. But God orders our surroundings. Did you hear me there? And he will place us where we shall have test after test to prove us and to reveal what is in our hearts.

Again and again, we shall be brought into straight places that it may be known whether we are indeed crucified with Christ or full of self-love. How will this testing process end with each of us? The prince of darkness will put forth all his power to retain us in his possession. But we have a mighty helper.

Okay? God will allow test after test to come for us to know if we have truly been crucified with Christ. Another one. In order that we may die to self, we are called upon to endure trial.

And when the chastening hand of the Lord is laid upon us, we are not to fret and complain, not to rebel, not to worry ourselves out of the hand of Christ. Okay? We're not to fret, we're not to complain, we're not to rebel, not to kind of work ourselves out of God's hands. We are to humble ourselves before God, pleading with him to give us rest and peace.

We enter the furnace of affliction with our hearts, darkened by selfishness. But if patient under the crucial test, we shall come forth reflecting the divine image as gold tried in the fire. Finally, the very trials that test our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us are designed to lead us near to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at his feet and receive the peace he will give us in exchange.

Trials allow us to bring all of our burdens and lay them at the feet of Christ. Okay? When you surrender yourself entirely to God, when you fall all broken upon Jesus, you'll be rewarded by a victory, the joy of which you have never yet realized. Okay? When you fall all broken, you will gain a victory you've never yet realized.

As you review the past with a clear vision, you will see that at the very time when life seemed to you only a perplexity and a burden, Jesus himself was near you, seeking to lead you into the light. Okay? Your father was by your side, listen to this, bending over you with an unutterable love, afflicting you for your good. As the refiner purifies the precious ore.

Okay? Those most difficult moments, that's when God is right there. Okay? I share this because it's easy. I was there at one time doing, you know, ministries with young adults when I was at Andrews.

And you get all excited, you work hard, but sometimes you say, why are we struggling? Why aren't there more results? I believe it's because God is actually preparing you to be stronger soul winners than you'd ever could imagine possible. Okay? You must not give up. You must pray with the same amount of enthusiasm.

If you have one person coming to meeting, you have a hundred. Did you hear me? You must all come. You must all do your part.

If you all do your part. Okay. And let God do his part.

People will begin to see Jesus because when we are emptied of self, it leaves room for Jesus to be seen. And Jesus said, if I be lifted up, not your church, not your programs. If I be lifted up, I will draw all men onto who? Myself.

Not to Dan, not to Jenna, not to Roy, not to James, not to the rest of you here. Okay? It's when we collectively die to self that suddenly Jesus is seen. And then I believe that's when the Holy Spirit begins telling people time to come.

And you know what? When God speaks, people know, people know that he's speaking and he will draw them. Okay. He'll begin to use you in amazing ways.

There's no doubt about it at all. In closing, I want to turn your attention to Romans chapter 12. You know the verse says, I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies.

What a living sacrifice, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 12 verse one. I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

When people put something on the altar of sacrifice in the old days, what did they know before they put, what did they know beforehand? You know, what would happen to the sacrifice result of putting it on the altar? What was the one purpose? To be burned. It was with the knowledge it was going to be consumed. You know, when we say, I want to give my life as a living sacrifice, it's given with the knowledge that God is going to consume it.

In life, perhaps even in death. Okay? Holy and acceptable to God. Completely, righteously, in a way that's acceptable to God.

So I ask you the question, how many of you, how many of you really want to follow Jesus? How many of you are willing to say, God, I'm willing to put my life on that altar and trust that you know what you're doing? And I'm fully prepared to have it consume me, however you wish. Because I love you. Not because I'm going to gain something personally, you know.

You know, I'll never be hungry if I do this. Or, you know, whether anyone ever sees any results or not, because I love you. Because it's the right thing to do.

And I will obey you even to the point of dying on the cross like Jesus. Okay? Because I'm not going to fall down and worship Satan or any of his ideas. Maybe today there's some that are saying, Dan, this, this is, this is, this is new to me.

Maybe there's someone here saying, Dan, I want to make that kind of sacrifice. I want to really follow Jesus. No.

You need to think about this, okay? You need to think about this. Do you think it's worth it? Anyone here that's saying, God, by your grace, I want to be one of those people? You can raise your hand if you want to. Yeah.

You know, remember what I said. It's turning everything for all time, you know. Everything, all the time, for the rest of your life.

That's what it's all about. Everything, all the time, for the rest of your life. Anything less than that isn't enough.

Last night, I was reading from a, from, from a man named F.B. Meyer. And he talked about the fact that when he came to God, he, he, he said it was, it was, he said I, it was as if I gave God the keys of my life. He says, I did, I realized that there was one cupboard in my life that I was unwilling to give the key over to.

And he says, it was as if Jesus was telling me, and Jesus said, have you given me all the keys? He says, well, no, I've actually kept one back, but it's not one that you're interested in at all. And Jesus said, oh, until you can give me all of them, I can't have any of them. Until you give me all the keys of your life, I really can't have any of them.

Because you see, that one key held back will keep all the blessings back, too. Please, before you fall asleep tonight, before you fall asleep tonight, talk to God. And make a decision to surrender all of your life, all of the time, in every area.

Give him every single key. Now, I'd like to do something. How about if we pray in groups of two in closing? Could we do that? Would that be okay, Roy? Feel free to... Can we have a Q&A? Absolutely, please, come forward.

Why, actually, so we can ask you questions? Yeah, please ask me questions, oh. Some things that were to be tested, Yeah. came with Israelites.

Yeah. And for me, the two are, two are failed and failedness. Sure.

And that test... I'm not sure if the words I used, you know, I think that much about, you know, to be able to answer that. But I think that any time... Let's go back to the children of Israel. The children of Israel were led in what I would refer to as the progressive journey of dying to self.

And they kept passing different points, you know, accepting God's direction, accepting God's way of deliverance, accepting God's timing, accepting, you know, God's remedies. All of those things were little journeys. And he kept bringing tests up.

And so, at first, it's a struggle. And I'm sure for the children of Israel, for example, when they went through the desert for three days when there was no water, they struggled with thirst. That's a legitimate, godly thirst.

There's nothing wrong with that. But it becomes an ungodly thing when you begin to complain and say, God, how could you have done this to me? You don't know how to take care of me. That's, I believe, there's two kinds of struggle.

There's the one struggle where you say, God, somehow I don't understand this, but this is for my good. And I will understand this. And I know that you're going to give me the remedy or the wherewithal to get through this.

Does that answer your question at all? To struggle, there's no sin in struggling. It's when you get discouraged. And I'm not sure we need to judge what's right or wrong.

It's just we need to help each other get through, I think. Did you have your hand up? Oh, okay. Any other questions? Yes.

The question is asked, I'll repeat it. What does it mean to submit to others? What does that mean on a practical basis? That's a good question, isn't it? Yeah. What do you think? Let's think about some situations.

Let's say that you're at home. Who are the people that you should submit to if you're at home? What? Parents. Absolutely.

That's biblical, isn't it? You know, I often think of Isaac who allowed his father to go out and find a wife for him, and he was 40 at the time. How many of us would want our parents to go look for a spouse for us at the age of 40? You know. What? What was that? I know.

Thank you, James. Okay. What about in a marriage? What? Yeah.

There can be a mutual submission, right? You know, it's interesting that someone said that oftentimes God makes dying to self real through people in your life. And don't take this the wrong way, but actually the author says sometimes through the overbearing husband or the sharp-tongued wife, and that's the part I don't feel comfortable with because I'm sure that no one here has a sharp tongue. But, you know, he says that actually in some cases it's at home.

People that you don't want to submit to are the ones you learn to submit to God through. Did you hear me? James. Really? Okay, yeah.

Usually you learn to die to self, you learn to submit to the person you least want to submit to. Did you hear me? God chooses the people that you're around because God knows that those are the people that you'll be hardest to submit to. And often you will do it kicking and screaming.

Kicking and screaming. Literally. I don't know if that helps or not.

But you have to pray for wisdom, okay? Because in submitting you're never asked to disobey God. Even Jesus said to his parents, it must not be about my father's business. So his father's will in obeying God is always uppermost.

But after that, there's something about getting along with people where you have to learn to submit. And the only way to deal with it, I believe, is to say yes and thank you. Yes, Lord, somehow you've allowed this to happen.

Thank you, somehow this will be for my good. You know, if you look, for example, if you look at the stories of Joseph and Daniel, and you look at the stories of the little maid who was Naaman's servant, these were all people who were slaves by oppressors. There was anything but godliness about the way they were brought into the relationship.

But yet, it's because they submitted in a godly way that God made them such a blessing. So, you know, dying to self isn't just, well, I will endure this, but I'll let everyone else know how angry I am. Godly dying to self is where we die to self with a good attitude.

Joseph had such a good attitude that he was put in charge of Potiphar's house, later he was put in charge of the prison. Okay? You see, God is interested in having us be God's person, doing God's work, God's way, wherever he calls us to. And we can only do that when we completely die to self.

And, you know, if you want to be the prime minister of Egypt, you know, God's man doing that work, then be prepared to endure the same things Joseph endured, to be prepared to be God's man and be prepared to do God's work. Many want to serve in the roles, but few people want the actual preparation that needs to come. Okay? Anyone else? Any questions? I'm not sure I have the answers, but it's good to think about.

You know, I can share maybe one other story. It's a personal story, but it's one that you'll be able to identify with. At one point in my life, I was deeply in love with someone and I kind of thought we were going to get married.

But I'm an itinerant. I travel a lot. I used to go for two months at a time and live out of a suitcase and finally get back home.

And I realized the person I was dating was not interested in that kind of lifestyle. And so I said, it's not really fair to force a person into a relationship that they have no interest in. I didn't think they did.

Or at least I feared that maybe I had so much influence over them that they weren't thinking for themselves. So I prayed about it and felt led to tell this individual, you know, we need to kind of back off some. And you need to pray and decide if you want to be married to me with my lifestyle because, you know, I know how God is using me and I can't change that.

I don't have the right to change what I'm doing. And please understand, I know that marriage is about love and togetherness, but if you look at the great Christians of the past, trust me, they weren't always together. Hudson Taylor, madly in love with his wife, Maria.

But he said, in our marriage we were separated the equivalent of 27 years. 27 years that they were apart. Because God was using them.

Okay? People don't realize how long sometimes people serve God apart when they're married. So, you know, you can endure those kinds of things, but I just wasn't sure, so I said, you need to decide if you want to be married to Dan. And the individual asked me, he said, what if someone else wants to date me? And I said, that's not between you and me, that's between you and God.

I can't have any influence. And Dan, the eternal optimist, the Glastead optimist, figured they would say, yes, yes, yes, this must be God. But you know what? They started dating someone else.

And I just shrank to the depths of despair. And I stopped eating, I stopped sleeping. I was really messed up.

And I don't usually get messed up, but I was really bad off. You know, when you're so tired, you could fall asleep on your feet, but when you lay down there's so much adrenaline going through your body that you can't relax. There's a little bit tongue in cheek where you're afraid you're going to die, and then another moment you're afraid you're not going to die because it hurts so bad.

That kind of thing. Truly, it's a horrible thing. I remember that I was really going through a struggle, and I read one of these quotations on a Sabbath afternoon.

And I told God, I said, God, unless you help me, I'm not going to survive. And that evening God spoke to me, out of the blue he said, write her a letter goodbye. Wow.

I'd been second guessing if I'd made the right decision. Write her a letter goodbye, and by the way, your struggle is not with her, your struggle is with me. Do you trust me? Wow, that changed the perspective.

You see, I thought the issue was between us, but God said, no, no, no. The struggle is between you and me, because I've been leading you, but you're not trusting me. And I said, yes, God, I do trust you.

And immediately, just the peace of God came over my heart. And Dan slept that night really, really well. Praise the Lord.

I woke up at four o'clock in the morning, and my first thought was, guess what? Writing a letter. Thank you, thank you. I'd never written a letter like that before.

I was saying goodbye to the person, saying goodbye to the relationship, whatever. And in my foginess of waking up, there was a hole in the ground next to me, and I figured, I kind of imagined that she was down on the ground, and I was burying her. You know, I was dying to self, dealing with my problem, seriously.

I said, no, no, no, I love her way too much. I would never do that. I would never do that.

And God said, that's right. You don't have it quite right. You get in the hole.

I hold the shovel. You no longer need to worry about the relationship. See, dying to self is where we deal with the problem.

Dying to self is where we say, God will let you take charge. And we'll trust that you know what you're doing, that you will properly lead us, moment by moment. That's what it means to die to self.

Okay? And that was an area in my life. But for all of you, God knows the areas where you're not wanting to really give Him control. Okay? And He will allow things to come in your life that will test you exceedingly to

make sure that God is number one in your life, that you're completely trusting Him no matter what.

Okay? And God will orchestrate the circumstances providentially that you could never put together yourself. I mean, the kind of extreme things where you truly have to trust Him, and He will lead you in a way that will truly make you much stronger than you could make yourself. That's what it's all about in dying to self.

So, any other questions now that I've shared this story? That makes it a little bit more personal. And you know, if you don't learn the lesson the first time, you know how God works? He'll bring you right back to the same one, so the sooner you learn, the happier you'll be. I'll tell you one other thing.

God will only show you one step at a time. Only one step at a time. We often want to know the next five steps.

God's not into that. He says, I'll show you the next step, and if you obey that step, I'll show you the next step after that. And if you obey that step, I'll show you the next step after that.

That's a different talk on knowing God's will. So, we won't go further. Why don't we break into groups of two and just talk to God? What I've shared is kind of serious, and yet, let me tell you, that as a result of dying to self, you no longer have worries.

Did you know that? Because you have put all of your worries on God. You're looking to God to lead and guide and make of you whatever He wants. And God is in the business of bringing about success, not failure.

Much better than you could ever imagine or do on your own. Okay? Let's pray. I hope the message that you just heard on what it means to be a follower of Jesus proved helpful.

I, Dan Augsburger, shared that message with a group of young adults at a Korean church in southwestern Michigan in April of 2011. This is a very important topic. A topic that I think everyone should understand.

Unfortunately, many don't and therefore are quite confused and frustrated at times with God. They pray and ask God to bless them and instead of that, they find they're having problems. Things are getting better.

Things get worse. Where is God? Is this what it's all about? I believe as you heard in this message, that the way up sometimes is down. But God is in charge, and He knows what He's doing, and the end will be pure gold.

Now, I have collected many more resources on the same topic and you can find them at my website at www.path2prayer.com And if you prefer or would like to, you can also write me directly at dan@path2prayer.com Once again, I pray that what you just heard has been a blessing.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22661.mp3>

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