

# Spiritual Deception

by Darwin Hostetler

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*Spiritual deception is a growing threat that can lead us away from God's truth and will if we are not vigilant and rooted in His Word.*

**Duration:** 1:03:04

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 11:16, Psalm 119:147, Matthew 6:33, Luke 21:8, John 8:32, John 14:6, 2 Corinthians 11:14

**Topics:** "Spiritual Deception"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his rebellious youth and the deception he fell into, thinking that the world had something to offer that God didn't. He warns young people against making the same mistake and emphasizes that following the ways of the world will come at a cost. The speaker shares a personal experience of relying on God's intervention when his daughter had an accident, highlighting the importance of surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus. He also addresses the lack of conversation and focus on the forgiveness of sins and the joy of serving Jesus in Christian circles, suggesting that there is something missing in these discussions. The sermon concludes with a call to prioritize talking about Jesus and His work in our lives above all else.

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## Transcript

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Well, we bring greetings to you this morning.

It's good for us to be here with you again. As I sat this morning and watched you come in here, different ones I watched you just file in, and one after another, and somehow the question just came to my mind, I wonder if all of these people know why they're coming here this morning. You know, you're here for a reason.

You know, you probably didn't stop and ponder that. You know, when you got up this morning, you probably didn't consider while you're eating breakfast, you know, why I'm going to church this morning. But I hope that you've opened your heart enough at least to the Word of God today that as you sit here and you heard the preaching this morning, that you allowed it to soak down into your heart, that you'll allow it to do something for you.

Because you can leave this place this morning or after this is all over, you can leave just the very same way you came if that's what you want. That's all you came for. But if you came this morning because you want to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus, you want to hear something from Him this morning, and you just allow Him to settle down over your heart, and if you open your heart to Him, you can go home a different person, different than what you came this morning.

I really appreciated the children's lesson this morning. You know, that was an adult lesson. That wasn't just for children.

That was for every one of us here. You know, to consider the reverence that God wants out of us in a worship service. You know, sometimes we don't get as practical maybe as we could or we even should.

But, you know, when I think of the people of God meeting together to worship God after all He has done for us, that we come and we just give Him a few hours of our time. But, you know, we just kind of slouch around and doze off and think about last week and whisper, you know, and that's not just children whispering. Adults know how to whisper too.

You know, it's good for us to consider. Well, this morning I'd like to bring a message to you that's been on my heart for a while. I've preached it at home and felt led to just share it with you this morning.

And a message that I think I desire to be an encouragement for you to help strengthen your foundation wherever you are in your walk with God. You know, in the walk that we have as a believer, you know, we continually need to be strengthened in Christ and strengthened in the faith and lifted up. And yet we have all the while that is happening, there is an enemy that we have that does seek to destroy us.

He seeks to put things in our path, in our way that hinder our growth or actually will stun your growth or stop you dead in your tracks and we need to be aware of that. And if I was to title it this morning, and I'm a very poor one on titles, they always have to come chase me down and wonder why I titled something because I forget it. And I guess, you know, all good preachers are supposed to have a title, but I'm not very good at them.

But anyway, spiritual deceptions is what I would title it this morning. And those don't seem to really go together, but I hope that you will see what I'm talking about until we get to the end of the message here this morning. In 1 Peter, just a few verses here, 1 Peter 5, verse 8 says, Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

And all of us will recognize, we clearly see that there is a lion out there. We see the roaring lion. We see the evidence of his work in the world around us, whether it's drugs, rebellion, you know what those are, the terrible sin that is taking place in the world around us.

And most of us this morning, we recognize and we do see when there's the roaring part of Satan. And the deception that he plants in our minds, you know, or in the minds of his people, most of you that are sitting in this room, you see that side of him. And you're on guard for that side of him.

But I would like to just point our direction this morning, our minds in a direction that we're not always so, we don't always see quite so well. And also in 2 Corinthians 11.14, it says there that Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. You know, that's not quite so easy to see, is it? It takes discernment for us to see when he is transformed into an angel of light.

And that's the part of the deception that is in the world today that I would like for you to just look at, for us to look at this morning. And we live in a day when there is an incredible amount of deception that is coming down upon the church of Jesus Christ. False doctrines and all kinds of things that come our way.

In John 8.31 again, He says, Jesus said to His believers here, He said, If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed. You know, and He's giving them a warning here. If you continue in My Word, that tells me that there are going to be some that won't continue in His Word.

That tells me that there are some that are going to look somewhere else. They're going to back another way, look somewhere else rather than the truth that is in the Word of God. But if we continue in His Word.

That means we have to stay there. That means we have to follow Him. That means we have to continue to seek to Him, to look to Him for direction.

That means that the Word of God, you know, by the empowering of the Holy Spirit, has to be your constant guide every day in order for you to continue there. If we're ones that are willing to continue, then we will know the truth. What does the Bible say? You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

The truth will free you from deception. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. Now, in the Scriptures we find quite a lot, quite a few times where He says, be not deceived.

And there's a reason, again, that that Scripture is in there. And that reason is that the fact that we do have an angel of light that tries to deceive us. And I have a number of Scriptures that I'm going to be reading here.

You don't need to turn to them all. Starting in the Old Testament, He said, take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them. You know, and we say this morning, that's really not probably too apt to happen to us.

That probably won't happen to us. Or will it? Or can it? Might it just? Luke 21, verse 8, He said to them, take heed that ye be not deceived. You know, why is He keeping on coming to the people of God here and saying to them, take heed.

Listen up now. Listen. Be not deceived.

Don't think that you have it all sewed up. Take heed that ye be not deceived. For many shall come in My name.

Many shall come saying, I am Christ. And the time draws near. Go ye not therefore after them.

Galatians 6, 7, another one. Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 2 Timothy 3.13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. You know, we're seeing a pattern developing here.

There's a pattern that is going on here. You know, and He is saying to us, I believe the words today for us as believers that we're to take notice. We're to find ourselves rooted and grounded in the Word of God so that we will not be deceived.

Because it's getting worse and worse and worse. And the only way that you're going to stand it, the only way that we will make it is if this book, if the Word of God is in your hearts. If you're here this morning and you're sitting on the edge of something and thinking that you're going to be a friend of the world and a friend of God's, you're mistaken.

You're sitting here as an enemy of God. You didn't think about that when you were eating breakfast this morning either. That you're coming as an enemy of God if you're there as a friend of the world.

And James 1, he says, but be doers of the Word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves. There's various kinds of deception. You know, for someone to come and to deceive someone, you may go to someone or someone may come to you and by his cunning and crafty ways, you know, he may deceive you.

He may bring you to a place where you believe something that isn't true. And that's one thing. But when you're deceiving your own selves, that's even yet another.

When you find yourself slipping and you find yourself convincing yourself that something isn't the way it is, that Scripture doesn't actually say what it says, that's quite another. But many people are out in the world that will come and will try to deceive you. And, you know, many times you don't know until after it's all over why this was a deception.

You know, many times in the money world, we see people coming, they tell you they'll promise you great wealth. You know, you invest a certain amount of money and, you know, in six months we'll double it for you. And many of those things happen and people give hundreds and thousands of dollars to these people.

And they're deceived. Not only were they deceived by an individual that promised them something because their money won't come back, but they were also deceived by a spirit of greed and desiring more than what they should have had in the first place. But what is so dangerous about deception is that deception is mostly truth.

Deception is often mostly truth. Just a small amount of something in there that will veer you off to the side someplace. Very good.

It's very good. Many times we find that it is a lot of truth. And the easiest people often to deceive is ourselves.

What is often, the question that I ask here, what is often or what will you often find at the bottom of deception or at the root of deception? And usually we find a selfish heart. Something to benefit yourself. Maybe we twist the Scriptures or we tweak something some way so that it benefits ourselves.

We live in a world when divorce and remarriage is rampant and the preachers and counselors and so on across the world have told you it's okay. It's okay to go marry someone else's wife. And that's a lie from the pit of hell.

But many people have gone that way. Many people have begun to promote that doctrine or to believe it and to say it because it benefits themselves. Because they've got themselves in a trap.

They don't know how to get out. They don't know how to take care of it. And so, it's a benefit for themselves if they believe it.

If they go that way. That's where deception often grabs us. And I think often grabs us, as can I say, plain people, whatever you want to call us.

And I believe it is a danger. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it. Now, I'd like to go to the book of Genesis this morning.

Genesis 3. Look at some of the very beginning here of deception. And you know the story very well here in the Garden of Eden. There's three points here that I'd like to pull out of here just quickly.

In Genesis 3, this was the mega-deception here. Verse 1, we begin reading, Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God knoweth, or for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

Now, the first thing that I see here in verse 6 is that the woman saw that the tree was good for food. Who was that food to benefit? Was that food to... She was only thinking of herself. That this food was good to eat, so she didn't offer him a bite first.

She was looking out for her well-being, for her own self, for hunger. And she shouldn't have been hungry because she had everything she needed. It was just simply that she wanted something for herself.

It was her. And it says that she took of the fruit and did eat, and then she gave to her husband with her, and he did eat. So here we have... She saw here that this food was something that she could benefit from.

There we see the self that lies at the bottom of deception. Then we see that it was pleasant to the eyes. It was beautiful to look upon.

It was something that, again, her eyes were going after. Her eyes were seeing, this really looks good. This is something that she desired because of what her eyes were telling her here, that this is something, this will really do something for me.

It's beautiful. And, you know, how would that be of benefit to her? And then she says, it would make me wise. You know, when there again, what did she want to benefit from that? She had everything that she needed in this garden.

Everything was there. Everything was... They were walking with God. They were talking with God.

Everything that they had was supplied for them. And still here she found herself because of the eyes, pride of life, you know all that whole story, the lust of the flesh, found in John. That's where she found herself.

And all of this wisdom that she wanted, that she could be like God, that was to benefit self again. That was all to benefit self. And that's many times where it comes from.

Many times as we get to a place where we're faced with these things, and we simply make a decision. Rather than making it based on the Word of God, we make a decision based on whether it feels good to our flesh, whether it's good to me, whether it will benefit me in the end, or whether it won't. And you know what? The reason we're here is to glorify God.

The reason we're here is that we can take the message of salvation to a lost world, not so we can benefit ourselves in any way. Be not deceived. These things get pretty practical here.

Now, this morning, I mentioned divorce and remarriage. That is a very, very common one that most of you will recognize very quickly. And on many doctrinal things, we can find spiritual deceptions.

We can find deceptions that just deviate from truth. They deviate from the Word of God enough that it actually ends up being just a religious setting, a religious something, many times occultic. And Satan does want us to fall into that trap.

But you know, even... Those are pretty obvious often to us. But what I'd like to look at this morning is some very simple things that can happen to us, that can happen to just normal people like you and I this morning. Things that we don't so often think about.

Things that we deal with in everyday life that become deceptions to us, that become something that hinders us in our walk with God. And we don't even think about the fact that we've been there. And I have just picked a few things here that I'll mention.

And just to give you a flow of my thoughts, my train of thought that is going here. And I want you to know from the very beginning that if you happen to fit one of these categories, I'm not picking on you this morning. But in the last years, I have noticed that there is a... at least in our area, and I think it probably is here too, I notice a drive for organic food.

And does anybody here, do you see a drive for organic food in this part of the world? And it's good, isn't it? I agree. We're full of pesticides and sprays and things and all of that. Our stuff is full of them.

And I am sure that the way many times the way we eat isn't the best for us. You know, we drink Mountain Dew, you know, and I don't much, but we do as a rule, you know. And we do a lot of things that probably aren't the best for us.

Anything. Is there anything wrong with eating certain foods? Yet, you know, no there isn't. Is there something wrong with eating white flour? I'll just pick on you this morning.

If you're an all whole wheat fella, I'll pick on you in this. You might say, this isn't sounding very spiritual. And you're right, it isn't.

But you know, I see a drive across the country about the food that we eat. And it very quickly can become a gospel to us. Did you ever consider that? And I've watched that come and go and have wondered, you know, why is it so easy for us to talk about the things that we eat? But it isn't so easy talking about Jesus.

And that's become a struggle to me. And as I watch this thing happen, I see many times that we take, and after church is over, you know, we have so ingrained our families in maybe a certain way or a certain way that we eat. And things that we do and things that we don't eat, that we can't even comfortably go to somebody's house and eat what they eat.

You know, when I go to Haiti, I eat what they eat. And recently back in the mountains, I sat down at one of the pastor's houses and they had a bowl of something on the table. And I took one look at it and I'm like, I hope I get to dish up my own food.

Because I didn't know what most of it was. And well, I didn't get to dish up my own food. And since I was the visitor, I got the most.

And it wasn't something that I really cared for. You know, some of it was okay. And some of it wasn't.

You know, intestines and so on doesn't really crank me. But, you know, hey, there we are and we eat because we're there. And we don't want to offend them, but I find us going to people's places sometimes and we have lifted up such a standard of the way that we eat in our home that we go to someone else's place and we can't even eat their food.

You know, this thing has become a gospel to us. It's not Jesus. And I'd like to just encourage you, you know, if you believe that, if you have some of these things in your heart, Amen! If you feel God telling you that you and your family should eat whole wheat bread, God bless you! I can stand behind you.

You know, they used to tell us at home, I remember from years ago when I was a little boy, we had this little saying, the whiter the bread, the quicker you're dead. And, you know, possibly it's true. But, you know, we need to keep first things first.

And one of the things that I see happen sometimes is we have so indoctrinated our children into these little things that without even knowing what we have done, you know, we have brought us to a position that we're up here somewhere because we do or don't do this, and someone else is down on a lower level. I think God doesn't like it. This thing has become a gospel to us.

We think we have something, but I think it's a deception. We cannot build on it. The clothes we wear.

You know, maybe it's something like maybe you're a person that feels like you shouldn't have insurance on your car. Maybe you shouldn't go into debt. You just want to be debt free.

Well, God bless you. I'm behind you if you want to be debt free. But, you know, those things are not Jesus Christ.

They're not the person of Jesus Christ. And that's what we must build on. Just a couple of examples here.

For my family, my first two boys were born Caesarian, and we decided we wanted to have babies at home. And the doctor told us, you can never do that. It will just never work.

Your wife will never have a child at home. Anyway, we've had six at home now since. And it worked well.

But, you know, when the very first time we were just going down this road, and we were praying and seeking God, what should we do here? How should we do it? And we had an Amish midwife that the last minute we found out she was dabbling in witchcraft. And so we said we didn't want her at the birth of our

child if she was doing that. And we were just a few weeks away from a birth, or a week actually, I think.

And so we started the last minute praying that God would show us, bring us a midwife. One that we could trust and have confidence in. And, you know, we found a midwife the last minute.

And she came to me. She wanted us to come over and visit with them. And so I went over and we talked a while.

And she asked me, you know, what would you like that I would bring to this birth? You know, and we had two Caesareans, so I didn't have a clue as to what I should say, you know, as to what she should bring. And so I said, well, what could you bring? What should you bring? What are our options here? Well, and she mentioned she could bring oxygen, you know, or she could bring, I don't know, just a handful of few things, almost nothing, that she talked about bringing. But then I said, well, what would you really like to bring? And she said, my Bible.

And my, I thought, wow, this is spiritual. All she wants to bring is a Bible, you know. And we were just kind of, our eyes were just opening up.

We were just beginning to get on our feet and walk by faith in the Lord Jesus. And we were, you know, cleaning houses as we went and rejoicing about what God was doing. And all of a sudden I was like, whoa, this is, you know, this is a spiritual giant that I've met here.

All she wants is a Bible. You know, how beautiful this is. You know, and it took me actually a while to find out.

It took me a few years until I finally discovered, you know, there's nothing spiritual about that at all. Nothing at all. There's nothing spiritual about not having oxygen at a birth.

Or having oxygen at a birth. And I began to see how so quickly we can take some little something that it grabs a hold of us and we begin to build on this thing. And it's not even a building block.

It deceives us. It pulls us. It pulls our attention off of our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One that paid for us.

It doesn't, you know, not having oxygen at a birth doesn't give us victory over sin. It doesn't bring us peace or joy or happiness. Now, we're maybe happy that we didn't have to use it, or we're happy for it if it happened to be there, and we did have to use it.

But it doesn't bring us joy in the Holy Ghost, which neither does all of the other stuff that goes with it. So as you're building, as you're walking with God, I look back so many times and I see myself, where we have been, what we have come through, what God has delivered us from. You know, and I look back at those things and I see that some of them were just things.

Some of them were not spiritual at all. Some of them were just things. You know, and I'd like to encourage us this morning.

If you're going through some of those stages in your life, you're looking at where God has you today, you look back to where He has brought you, you know, I'd like to just encourage you that you must build on the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else. Those other things really don't matter.

What do you build on this morning? You know, what happened for us is we had our baby at home, and it worked well, and pretty soon we had another one at home, and pretty soon I started seeing other people, there's other people, they actually go to a hospital to have babies. Can you imagine? Go to a hospital to have a baby. You know, see the spirit that comes? See what happens? Because we're holding this thing up that really isn't supposed to be held up.

It's very good. I'm all for it. And we wouldn't go back if we don't want to go back at all.

But we're holding that thing up. And soon an attitude begins to develop in our minds. Those people go to a hospital to have a baby.

Imagine. And then our children hear it, and pretty soon other people at church hear it. All of a sudden we spread this thing around and we've lifted up a standard that's higher than what God lifted up.

That isn't right. We're building on something that God didn't build on. He didn't even intend it for a building block.

It's a spiritual feel-good something, spiritual deception that comes. I'm not sure the terminology is quite right there. But it's a deception.

And it begins to... Actually, the fruit begins to spoil on the very tree that it's growing on. And it makes us think more highly of ourselves and of our, can I say, doctrine than we ought to. And Romans says there, For I say through the grace given unto me to every man that is among you and not to think of himself more highly than he ought to.

Then in Philippians we talk about in honor, esteeming another better than themselves. You know, and in our mind, those things don't happen when we begin to build on that. Because when we build on the Lord Jesus Christ, the spirit of jealousy, the spirit of isn't among us, isn't there, the spirit of seeing others down here somewhere and pulling ourselves up, you know.

And you don't often put someone else in the ground. You don't often put someone else physically down. But what we do is we put ourselves up, thus making the gap between us greater.

We don't just run somebody into the dirt, but we pull ourselves up as we're better and so that distance between us gets big. And our family sees it, and soon the church sees it. Many other people see it.

And it affects others. And it becomes a gospel. And we don't want no part of it.

No part of it. And so maybe this morning, then another question for you is if you were to ask your children or your wife, husbands, you know, what is the topic that I like to talk about the most? What do you suppose they would say? You know, in our Christian life, we must keep the main thing, the main thing, which is Christ. You know, but it's easy for us to let our minds and our business and our work and our efforts go other places.

So, when you sit around the table at supper time, breakfast time, when you're together with your family, what are some of the topics that so easily get talked about? Is it others? Is it the kind of shirts you wear? The kind of food you eat? You see, we very quickly, this thing, the pendulum comes around, very quickly we begin to put our emphasis on all these things. And most of these things, almost all of these things are important. Almost all of them are very good.

But they must be done right through Jesus Christ. Our emphasis, our focus, our drive cannot be on those physical matters. They just cannot.

What about after church? You know, when church is over, we've heard the preaching, we were singing, you know, we were praising God, our spirits are lifted heavenward, and the service is over, and we're dismissed, you know, and you turn around and you meet someone next to you. What happens? You know, I find so quickly the conversation goes elsewhere. So quickly the conversation leaves us.

Why is it that it's, you know, so hard for us to stand around in the circle talking about the forgiveness of sins that God has brought us? We don't hear that often. Or just the joy of serving Jesus even when there's a difficulty. You know, just having three or four brothers standing in a circle.

You know, I watch a lot at home and sometimes I don't get to listen to every conversation, but I observe and I see who's talking. And sometimes I walk past the group and just listen in a little, and then I go to the next one and kind of observe what's happening. And it's a joy to my heart when I come past a group and they're talking about Jesus.

Talking of One that saved us and sanctified us and the One that we're walking with by faith. But you know, it seems that it's the hardest thing to talk about. You know, it seems something is wrong there.

It seems there's something that is missing. We sing the song in our service, I'd Rather Have Jesus Than Anything. Then shouldn't it be, I'd Rather Talk About Him Than Anything? If we really mean that, it should mean that I'd Rather Talk About Him Than Anything.

It should be that way. But yet instead, we do find ourselves slipping back into a rut. You know, we talk about the furniture we sold this week.

You know, and we talk about the barn that we built. And, you know, the list goes on. You know what they are? Is it because our affections maybe, our building is going somewhere else? Is it because we have our direction, you know, or something is pointed another way? Maybe we pitched our tent towards Sodom a bit.

You know, maybe not the whole way, but maybe we just kind of angled the thing that way a little. You know, maybe it's time to re-pitch a little. The principles, things that by principle are given to us by God, that we feel that God has given us personal direction for our family, whether it's food or clothes, or any of those things, you know, bless God for that.

And as you walk with God, He wants to teach you those things. He wants to guide your family. He cares about every little thing of your life.

He cares about all of those things. You know, and God bless you when you have found those. But don't allow the best of those things.

Don't allow Satan to take the very best of those things and turn them against you. I find in my life that those issues that I face, that those things that I look at, those physical things, although they are very right, as soon as they are taken out of a place, as soon as the emphasis goes to them, instead of because of Jesus Christ and relationship with Him, I find that there is very little grace available. There is very little grace there, if any.

But rather, if we have our heart in a right place, where we are continually seeking after the Father and building on Him and what He has to say and what He has to do, we find forgiveness of sin. We find victory over sin. We find that there is a joy in serving Jesus.

And we find that we come to that Hebrew's place of rest that was talked about a little here this morning. There is a rest for the people of God. And you can find yourself resting.

Sometimes I hear people say that the Christian life is so hard and it's so dangerous and it just wears them down. And I'm like, come on! I think it's a great life if we walk it by faith, if we keep our eyes on Him, if we're not cumbered with all the things, if we don't let all these distractions come in to drag us down. They drag us down sometimes for years.

We find ourselves, you know, stuck on something that really has no power in itself. And we're stuck there. Brethren, don't let yourself get stuck somewhere.

You know, let God broaden your horizons a little. And let Him just show you how those things can so easily become a deception to you. And the effect that it has on your families.

You know, the effect that it has on your children. You know, it is our hope. It is our desire.

And we believe we have the promises in the Word that if we take the Word of God and we instill them into our children, we teach them daily, direct them, show them where to go, show them how to live and so on. We believe that we have something, a fire that we can hand to our children. A fire that they can get a hold of.

They'll see for themselves their need of salvation. And we can point them to the Lord Jesus Christ. And God can deliver them from sin.

God can show them that there's victory over the sin in their lives as a young person. God shows them that. God will take them there.

We can lead them through all of that. But if we just lead them through a bunch of things and rules and regulations and stuff, there's no grace there. Yes, there are principles.

And I believe we need to teach them. And direct them. But, brethren, this morning, through all of that, Jesus Christ must be the Supreme Person.

He's the reason. It must be kept in perspective. Or else many of those things just become a deception.

And we will not pass the torch on to the next generation. There are many here, probably at least many sitting there in this room today that are first generation Christians. And you're hoping, by the grace of God, you're hoping to change that.

You're hoping to hand a torch to your children. And have an environment that your children can grow under. Can thrive under.

That the Lord Jesus Christ will be exalted and He'll make a difference in their life one day. But the only way that will happen is if our emphasis and our driving force is the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only way.

What was the heart of David? You know, as I consider all that David did and the struggles he went through, the trouble he was in. Yet, his heart said, every day will I bless thee. When you go through thick and thin in the trials of life, do your children see that you're looking to the Lord Jesus, that every day I'm going to bless God? Come what may.

Even when you have trials in your life. Do you bless God for them? Do you thank God for them? You know, that's where it really meets the road. Where when it comes right down to the fact where there's a test.

There's a test that happens. And you find the grace of God to be faithful. You know, our children and people looking on, they look at all of that and they see there is something there.

Papa passed the test. He passed it. But that test, that doesn't happen when our focus isn't on Christ.

And I know this morning that I have confidence that your focus and your desires are for the Lord Jesus. You know, I believe that with all of my heart. You know, it's so easy for us to lose just a bit of sight.

And I think God needs to on occasion just shake us up a little and bring us back and say, I want you to see me is what God says. Every day will I bless thee. Early in the morning will I praise thee.

You know, I don't know. I'm sure there's some of you that or probably many of you that one time or another you've had financial struggles. And you've had times when you know, the money was thinned and you just didn't know for sure where it was all going to come from.

You know, have you chose to bless God? Have you made a choice in your heart just to bless God for what He has brought you through? Yeah, maybe you just lost \$50,000. Did we choose to bless God? It's not hard for us to bless Him when it's going good. It's not hard.

But you know, David's example said, every day will I bless Him. We have a young family that comes to church that tells me the story of his grandfather that reminds me much of George Mueller. He was a praying man.

He was a missionary to the Indians out in South Dakota somewhere. I'm not sure just where. And he said many times, he said his grandfather ran out of food to a place where there wasn't a piece of bread in the house anymore.

Boy, none of us know what that's like. None of us. I have three freezers full.

You know, we don't know what it's like to be out of food. But this man often would gather him and his wife around at the table and just thank God for the food that they're about to eat. You know, when they didn't have anything in the house.

And just bless God. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness that all these years never left Him down. Just thank You, Lord.

And from the bottom of his heart, just rejoice that God is going to take care of him. God has one more chance to prove Himself strong. And he's praising God.

You know, and just that quick about there's a knock at the door and someone has an arm full of food. You know, and we sometimes think that those things don't happen anymore. You know, I think the reason they

don't happen anymore is because we don't give them a chance.

We don't give them a chance. You know, we're to a place where we have everything sewed up to a place that we almost don't need Him anymore. You know, it's kind of sad, you know, to see all of that happen.

But, you know, even we're right where we are today, you have a choice to bless God in the middle of a very trying time. We still face trying things. Sometimes it's emotionally.

Sometimes spiritually. Sometimes, you know, maybe it's something at church or maybe it's something in the business. But we have a choice to make to keep our eyes on Jesus.

Not go to the right or to the left, but keep our eyes on our Father. Sometimes we have issues in our home with our children. Well, we have to choose one more time, where am I going here? Am I going to the root of things? Am I going to keep focusing on what God would say, what His Word says, so that I'm going the right way? So easy for us to get deceived.

So easy for us to just, well, maybe if I did this, maybe if I did that, you know, and we forget to go back to the Word of God. See what God says. Sometimes we do it thinking we have really arrived at something.

You know, and God says, no, something's wrong with that picture. I was reading in 2 Chronicles just in the last few days. Here, I read, I think it was King Asa that had a disease in his feet.

And, you know, he had just come through a wonderful victory, a war that took place, and they called on his God, and God delivered him mightily. Spared him. Fought the fight for him.

They lost very little, if any. And here he is, but now he has a disease in his feet. You know, and at the very end of his life, and he says that God, without turning there, I'm not sure if I can say it quite right, but he says God didn't bless him.

God didn't hear his cry because he turned to everyone else instead of him. He turned to the physicians instead of God. And it's so quickly for us, in many applications of life, to go to the physician, to go to something else rather than going to the Father.

Rather than keeping the Father first, His praise shall continually be in my mouth. You know, are you a person that continually praises God? Because the only way you can continually praise Him, if He's continually in your eyesight, continually looking at Him, continually patting your life after Him, then you can praise Him. Because He's a reality for you.

He's something that takes a hold of you and you'll have, because of the Lord Jesus coming, the relationship with Him, the flow that He brings through your life, you'll have something to praise Him for. You'll have praise. And that is a marvelous testimony of a Christian if you can have a praise for God continually.

And it will be a testimony to the world around you. It will be a wonderful tool that you can use as you fight the devil, as he brings thoughts your way, as he brings temptations your way. There again, your main, the person of your life, the one you owe everything to, is Jesus.

And He's that centerpiece of your life. And if you have a song on your lips, if you have a praise for Him, I can tell you the devil doesn't like it. I know from my experience, I'm a person that loves to sing.

I love to bless God in song. And I probably enjoy doing it privately as much as I do publicly. And I have found it to be a wonderful tool in the Master's hand.

You know, you're going down the road and some kind of thoughts bombard you, whether it's something that you see around you or it's a situation that you're thinking of. And these thoughts are continually just going in your mind. And you can begin to sing a song of praise to our Father, a song of surrender to the Lord Jesus, a song of commitment to Him, a song of thanksgiving to Him.

Oh, the burden gets lifted so quickly. Heaven is clear because you praise God. Because you have abundance of something that is coming through your life.

But the only way that something will be coming to your life is if He's part of it. You can't have Him as just a centerpiece in your life. You can't have Him as just a piece of something that exists with you.

It must be Him. In its entirety, Him. No one else.

Nothing else. The Lord Jesus. So easy for us to get doctrines and things and everything else in there.

And they're good. I'm not taking away from doctrines. But it is the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He alone is worthy this morning. And I just want to say to you, you keep Him first. You'll never be sorry.

You'll never be sorry. I'm a man of simple faith. I don't complicate things too much.

At least, I don't think so. And I have found the Lord Jesus to be the best thing that I have ever had in my life. And I have found Him to be real in every situation that I have ever faced.

And I'm talking down to very small, minute details that He cares about. You know, nothing is too small for Him. I remember the first time I came to a leadership seminar.

I don't know how many years ago it was. The night before we came, the night before I left, we were leaving the next morning. And before I came here, you know, one of my little girls somehow was doing something she shouldn't have.

She had a pen in her hand, something like this. And about the time, somehow she fell off of the sofa or something and this pen went through the back of her mouth and made a pretty ugly hole in the back of her mouth. And I looked at my wife and I said, now what do we do? This doesn't look good.

But there is something I don't know. I really don't know. I can't boast of a great faith in God.

But I just knew there is really nothing I can do, nothing we can do here except pray and commit this thing to our Father. He's the one that really knows about it. And so, we prayed.

We knelt around and we prayed and we said, Lord, You know all about this and it's not too hard for You. I'm going to trust You for it. And I think she soon went to sleep and somewhere before too long, when she woke up again, we checked and the hole was gone.

You know, it's time we need to just call upon our Father. Every little thing. And I could go on for a long time just on stories, little things that we have seen in our family that God moves.

But you know, in order for us to see Him there, in order for us to call upon Him, it's got to be the first thing that you have. It's got to be the main focus of your life. Is He really everything that you need? Yes, He is.

He's everything that you need. I remember as a young person, when I was 16, 17 years old, I was rebellious, thinking that the world had something to offer that no one else had. I remember thinking how I could go the way of the world, do the things I wanted to do and someday, you know, still settle down and it wouldn't cost me anything.

I'll tell you this morning, if you're a young person that has those kind of thoughts, you're deceived. You're simply deceived. Because it will cost you something.

It'll cost you... There's many memories that I have today that I wish wouldn't exist. But you know, I can't go back and do them again. But you're sitting here this morning, young people, you have a time this morning that you can once and for all, you can forget about that past life, you can surrender your ugly self to the Lordship of Jesus and settle it once and for all and stop running after those things.

Satan will tell you that you're doing okay and there's something out there that you can find, so you keep going just a little farther and a little farther and a little farther, you know, dabbling into the things of the world. But I'll tell you this morning, it's not going to cut it. It doesn't work.

End of story. It simply doesn't. But when we come and we just simply make God the Lord of our lives, nothing hidden, nothing held back.

Let Jesus be Jesus. Let Him be your Savior. You'll never regret it.

Don't let Satan dupe you into thinking you can run around and do the things that you want to do. It doesn't work. It doesn't work.

I would guarantee you that just about 12 hours or so later, you know, or whatever it was, maybe 24 hours ago now, that if Saddam Hussein had a chance, it would be different. Something would be different probably. You know, sobering thoughts, as I for the most told me last night that they hung Saddam.

You know, and somehow that sobered my heart yesterday just to consider that. You know, and how much of... You know, if some of those men that live those anti-Christ attitudes and lives, if they would speak today, it would make it, you know, the story would be so different. So different.

But you'll hear we're sitting here. We're a free people. We can come and go as we want.

No one was stopped this morning. No one was questioned this morning. Somehow we have a way of getting kind of lukewarm.

We kind of shift Jesus off to the back shelf. We kind of put Him aside. But that's not what... That's not the heart of God.

And I know for us, the heart of God for every one of us is that we just surrender our hearts to Him. Totally. Make Him that first person for us.

Make Him not only just that... a person. Everyone believes in a person, a higher power of some kind. But make Him the Lord of our life.

Let Him change you. Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

Let's bow our heads this morning and pray. Father, I thank You, Lord, for being with us this morning. Lord, I just pray that Lord, You would just be near to us and show us, Lord, where we are.

Lord, You are the God that wants to make things very clear to us. Yet it's so easy for us to just take things and go the way we want to go and do the things we want to do. We think they're very important.

In our eyes, they're very important to You, some of them. Lord, by doing some of those things, we have missed it, Father. Lord, I pray that You would help us to clearly see where You would have us to be.

Direct us, Father. I just commit this service to You. Lord, would You be exalted.

We want to honor You as our King this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God bless you. And you allow God to show you and direct you and lead you in His way. You'll never be sorry.

Amen. Thank you, Brother Darwin, for the emphasis again on the centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ and keeping our focus on Him. Many times we do have that tendency, don't we, to bring it into our earthly lifestyle, convictions, and so on, and put so much emphasis on those things that we forget the centrality of Christ.

All right. We'd like to open up this morning for further thoughts, comments, or testimony. Yes, back there.

Luke. Yeah, I just wanted to share. He spoke about praise and thanksgiving.

I've gone through some low points in my life different times. A mature brother said that a way to get out and to lift your spirits and your faith is through praise and thanksgiving. Different times I've done that.

Just going down the road or whatever, just start praising the Lord. And somehow through that, He showed me what's going on and what needs to be changed. If something needed to be confessed or repented of or whatever, I just thought that might help someone else.

Amen. Yes, that was a very positive thought concerning singing. It often reprograms the mind when it's cumbered about too heavily with the things of this world.

Yes, brother. Yes, amen. My thoughts went back to shortly after we moved here and my neighbor came to me and told me about her Mennonite friend.

And her Mennonite friend had said to her, well, if she wanted to watch TV, she'd just go to a different church. And I started telling my neighbor about the Lord Jesus Christ. And I told her about how I was in prison and I was doomed and I knew it.

And how He stepped in and saved me. And how all that she sees in my life comes forth out of that motivation. And so I thought today as the two messages came together in my mind, I thought about the bride that makes herself ready and that righteousness that comes forth.

It's a righteousness of faith. It comes forth. And let's thank God that we can do that, that we can go forward because of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ, that what comes out of our lives is out of Him and not that our works become our salvation, but rather the Lord Jesus Christ is our salvation.

And our works flow out of that. So I wanted to thank the Lord for that. I desire to please God.

I desire to search out the Word of God and find out what His will is for my life and walk it because of Jesus. So I just want to thank the Lord for that. Amen.

I was encouraged by both messages. I thank Nathan for pointing out that our salvation is in Christ and He is our all in all. And the outwork should be to be ready for Him.

And then, I'm not the best singer. When I drive, I pray. I find out that when I can pray, I don't care who's around.

I just drive down the road. I find it directs your thoughts and something happens when we pray. And I thank you for the encouragement.

And that's what we all need to do. If you can't sing, go pray. Amen.

That's another option. If you can't sing, pray. Yes.

Any others? Something in their heart to share? All right, I think we'll have another song. Excuse me. I want to take the time this morning to lift up the name of my Lord Jesus.

I am not taking the chance that I've had to praise my Lord's name. I just want to ask your forgiveness for that. Thank you.

Amen. All right, we'll have a song, Andy, and then we'll have a few announcements yet.

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