

Christophany

by Eric Ludy

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeing Jesus in every text of the Bible, and how this understanding is the key to unlocking the mystery of Scripture and understanding the glory of God.

Duration: 1:17:02

Scripture: John 12:32, 1 Corinthians 1:23, Colossians 1:15, Colossians 3:1-2, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Christ Centrality", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of seeing Jesus clearly amidst the confusion and distractions in Christianity. It emphasizes the need for the Spirit of God to reveal Jesus to us, the significance of Christ's work on the cross, and the essence of making everything about Jesus. The message challenges believers to refocus on Jesus, cleanse distractions, and prioritize the centrality of Christ in their lives.

Transcript

Father, remove scales from our eyes, from our souls, and may we behold the living God. May we see, may we discern. May the confusion that swirls about Christianity, that denominationalizes it and causes it to be such a cloudy mess, may the hypocrisy melt away, and may we see the true person of Jesus.

May we see what faith really is. May we see what the body of Christ is. Holy Father, we can't do it.

This is a work of the Spirit of God, and we invite the Spirit of God to come, to be welcomed, to lead and to rule and to general this environment. Lord, may these words be your words, and may they lift high the person of Jesus and the great work of Jesus upon that cross. It's in the precious name we pray, amen.

There's a big word for you. The name of this message is extremely important, and for those of you that hang around me, know that I don't just throw around big words. This is actually not as hard of a word as it looks at first.

It's Christophany. I'm gonna define Christophany for you because it's extremely critical. I don't care if you never use the word again.

It's not that I'm trying to add a word to your vocabulary. I'm adding a concept to your spiritual library. In fact, what we could say is, if you have a spiritual library that is missing this concept, what I would encourage you to do is liquidate it, start with one singular volume on your bookshelf, and have it be Christophany, and then begin to rebuild the bookshelf, okay? That's how central and foremost and

preeminent this particular message is.

This has the potential to radically alter your entire perspective, and yet it might not teach you one new thing. It has to do with positioning that which matters most into the right spot. For instance, if you're building a house, you wouldn't want to start with a chimney, and yet a lot of us in our Christian life do exactly that.

We are handed a chimney. We come to Jesus, and someone has their pet doctrine, and the one who invited us into the presence of Christ, which was such a blessing to start with, they hand to us, first thing, the kitchen sink of Christianity or the chimney of Christianity, which, by the way, have a place and are very important, but what do you do with a kitchen sink? Could you imagine how awkward that is? And most of us have our Christian, and we're lugging around a kitchen sink and setting it down everywhere we go, going, whoa, this is exhausting. We have no idea.

We cannot make sense of it. It doesn't work. You turn on the faucet, and nothing comes out.

You read in the Bible, and it says it's supposed to work. There's supposed to be rivers of living water that flow out of it, yet nothing's coming out of your sink. It's frustrating.

Let's make sure we build correctly, and that's what this message is about. Christophany. See, I actually really like the word.

I have a poetic side to me. It just doesn't come out very often, but Christophany's a poetic word. I can imagine a song called Christophany.

So, Ben, you need to work on that. This is Christophany, and this is my simple word. If you just wanna get the most simple definition, just take the first sentence, seeing Jesus in the Bible.

Now, that's an elementary school rendition of it because a good theologian's definition of Christophany is going to be, you know, the angel of the Lord that Jacob wrestled with. That would be called the theophonic angel. In other words, the God manifested angel.

It's not just an angel, it's God. And so, that would be called the theophonic angel. I would call it the Christophonic angel.

It's God, but it's more specifically Jesus. It is the manifestation of God. And so, if you look at the Old Testament, you're going to see Jesus, okay? So, seeing Jesus in the Bible, seeing him here, seeing him there, seeing him everywhere.

And not just in the symbols such as the Ark of Noah, the manna, the rock in the wilderness, the tabernacle, the high priest, the temple, the king of Israel, but in the themes, the circumstances, the characters, the stories, the literary styles. He is the histories of Israel reenacted in a singular human life, the law of God incarnate. The proverbs come to life, the prophecies fulfilled.

He is the word of God made flesh. You see, all of that Old Testament leads you to one singular thing. That's Jesus Christ.

I know that sounds like an oversimplification, but that's what it is. You want to study the word of God. You must know what the word of God's endgame is.

It doesn't matter if you memorize the whole thing if you don't know what it aims towards, if you don't know that it's about Jesus. You see, it's not just Psalm 22 that's a Christophany, which talks about the cross. It's not just Isaiah 53 that is a Christophany when it talks about that he bears our sins and our transgressions.

Those are Christophanies, but I'm going to say the entirety of Scripture is a Christophany. It is all about Jesus. The great theme is Jesus Christ.

You know what the great theme of the church is? It's a Christophany. We're meant to be pictures, evidences of Jesus in all we do. Every word you say, every dimension of your life should be a Christophany.

And so that's why I say remove all the books on the shelf of your Christianity, stick one volume up there. This is supposed to be about Jesus. Now start building the library.

The great metropolis Christ. This is a quote that Ben gave me once he knew my message. This is good, this is really good.

But this is a quote from Charles Spurgeon, okay? And it was a young pastor coming to an elder, well-known pastor who was sort of, I'm guessing his like discipler. And so he gave a sermon, and guess who was in the audience? You know, that great elder pastor that he trembled before. And so this is the conversation that flowed after the young man gave his sermon.

Upon finishing his sermon, the young man went to the old pastor to ask how he had done. What do you think of my sermon, sir, he asked. A very poor sermon indeed, he said.

A poor sermon, said the young man. It took me a long time to study it, I no doubt of it. Why then do you say it was poor? Did you not think my explanation of the text to be accurate? Oh yes, said the old preacher, very correct indeed.

Well then why do you say it is a poor sermon? Didn't you think the metaphors were appropriate and the arguments conclusive? Yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon. Will you tell me why you think it is a poor sermon? Because, he said, there was no Christ in it. Well, said the young man, Christ was not in the text.

We are not to be preaching Christ always. We must preach what is in the text. So the old man said, don't you know, young man, that from every town and every village and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London? Yes, said the young man.

Ah, said the old preacher. And so from every text in scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the scriptures. That is Christ.

And my dear brother, your business is when you get to a text to say, now what is the road to Christ? And then preach a sermon running along the road towards the great metropolis Christ. And, he said, I have never yet found a text that had no such road. I will make a road.

I would go over hedge and ditch, but I would get at my master. For a sermon is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill unless there is a savor of Christ in it. Okay, now that's good.

This is what we build our Christianity around. When you are a newly born babe of Christ, when you become a Christian, this is where we start. You must get to the metropolis Christ.

That's where every road will lead. And then we introduce someone to the Bible. And we teach them what is known as a hermeneutic, which means a manner of approach in the Bible, your tool in which you reason through the Bible.

And that is, it's a Christophany. It is all to take you to one. And that one is not an idea.

He is not a thought. He's not a philosophy. He is a person.

The end game of scripture, just like the end game of a treasure map, is not the map itself. The end game of a treasure map is the X that marks the spot, but not just the X where you stare at an X on a piece of paper, but to actually live out and to walk the very paces of that treasure map, and to, in reality, find the treasure known as Jesus Christ. There's no good that you're gonna find from studying a treasure map if you don't follow its instructions and get to the treasure.

The one-message church. Sounds like sort of a boring church. This church is always saying the same thing.

And every message goes back to that. And there we go. And yet again, I had a complaint about our books that they're always talking about surrendering to Jesus Christ.

Every one of their books, they're always saying, surrender to Jesus Christ. What else is there? If you wanna be successful in your fatherhood, you better surrender to Jesus Christ. Yeah, you wanna be good in your dating life? Yeah, you better surrender to Jesus Christ.

Yeah, you wanna be great in your decision-making in life? Well, I have something to tell you. You better give your life to Jesus Christ. Let him have the pen and write the story.

There is only one solution to man's ills, and that's Jesus. I know it sounds boring, because it's like we keep repeating the same thing. But if that's the answer, that's the answer.

And by the way, I never get bored of giving it. And so if you're hanging around me, you're starting to get a little disturbed by the fact that Eric's messages always seem to come back to the same metropolis. You need to realize that's where I'm headed.

If you don't wanna head to that metropolis, this is probably a miserable place to be. That's where we're going, to the metropolis Christ. So this is the one-message church.

If Paul had one message, this is it. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. You see, Paul himself is providing us with a north star.

He is supplying us with an understanding like a compass. All of us have the scriptures, but we can debate about what it's about. Oh, it's about this, it's about this, it's about this.

And Paul says, hey, guys, let's fix our compass to the same north. You see, if we all fix our compass to the same thing, which is Jesus Christ and him crucified, guess what? Then we'll be able to navigate this together. Our problem is we're all picking a different north.

And I'll tell you, I'm gonna go through some of the norths that we've been choosing as the body of Christ, as opposed to Jesus Christ. And it leads to chaos. It leads to disunity.

I don't mind as the church of Jesus Christ coming to a solid position that we take and literally dividing from those that are not willing to stand with the integrity of scripture and the truth of who Jesus Christ is. But we must have a similar north as the body of Christ. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Did Paul know anything else? Yes, of course he did. But if he's gonna bake it down and he's gonna get down to the brass tacks of what this is about, he's gonna say, it's a Christophany. It all leads to Jesus and that cross.

You know what the entire Old Testament is a road sign that's going to say, he is coming and he will look like this. And when he comes, this is the way he'll behave. This is what he'll do.

This is how he'll live. And he must show these qualities. It's called the Messiah test or the Canon test.

He had to match perfectly with all the Old Testament. If he didn't, you know what the Old Testament says? You should stone him as a false prophet. Jesus himself set the stage that he would be stoned if he didn't match it perfectly.

Yet guess what? He did match it perfectly. Everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus, but not just the person, but the work of what he would do. And this Jesus must die on a cross and he must be raised in three days.

The Old Testament points to this as the fulfillment. You see, everything in the Old Testament leads to Jesus Christ and him crucified. You know that the resurrection only has context if you understand Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I recognize that the resurrection, you shouldn't be left out. I also recognize that the ascension of Jesus Christ shouldn't be left out. And I also recognize that the outpouring of his spirit should not be left out.

But the centerpiece is Jesus and him crucified because everything that follows flows from that high mountain. That high mountain, Jesus, and that great work of the cross is where all the rivers flow from that feed into all the land and bring all the nutrients and all the nourishment to the soil of men's hearts. In Jeremiah, we have a foreshadow of this.

But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, sayeth the Lord. Jesus, the most basic tool for rightly handling the word.

If you're going to learn how to rightly handle the word of God, this is gonna sound very simplistic. And I don't care if I sound ignorant in sharing it, but I'm gonna say this, your greatest tool, if I'm gonna hand you something, it's a person. It's not an idea, it's not a philosophy, it's not a method, it's a person, Jesus.

The entirety of scripture is about Jesus. All scripture pertains to Jesus Christ. And so the subtitle, everything in scripture pertains to Christ.

He is the key to unlock the mystery. See, the Jews didn't understand the scriptures. Not that they didn't understand the words.

They didn't understand the meaning. It was a great mystery. That's why in Colossians it says, the mystery hidden for ages and generations has now been revealed.

You see, the Jews would stare at the text and they would philosophize about the possibilities of what it could mean. They knew a Messiah was coming and they sensed that he would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. They knew that he would come out of Egypt somehow.

I mean, how is he born in Bethlehem and comes out of Egypt? There's certain things they knew and they could discern these things from the text, but there were so many things they didn't understand, which is obvious because when God himself came to this earth, guess what? They rejected him and ultimately crucified him. Talk about missing the point. Everything in the Old Testament pointed to one and they missed it.

You see, Jesus is the most basic tool for rightly handling the word of God. It's like a key. You ever seen one of those science fiction movies where they have like a cube or something and they can't open it? And they find this mysterious key, stick it into the lock and turn it and the whole thing opens.

That's scripture with Jesus. You see, when you stick Jesus into the Old Testament, you know the Old Testament starts to make sense. It's like, whoa, that actually makes sense.

You know, Psalm 22 makes complete sense to a Christian with Jesus stuck into it, but read Psalm 22 as if you don't understand Jesus. You're like, what in the world is he talking about? He's not talking about himself. His hands and his feet are pierced.

They divide his garments and they look upon him gaping. I mean, what is this? How would you have any context and any understanding for it unless you understand Jesus? Jesus is the interpretive device for all the Old Testament and by the way, for all the New Testament. It's Jesus.

So here we are, John 5, search the scriptures. This is Jesus talking by the way. For in them, you think you have eternal life.

You think you have eternal life in this text, but you know what this text is? It's nothing more than a treasure map. And they are they which testify of me, saying the scriptures are not the life in and of themselves. I am the life and this scripture testifies of me.

But what's he talking about? He's not talking about the New Testament. He's talking about the Old Testament. He's talking about all the scriptures previous to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, first and second Corinthians and on.

The scriptures are they which testify of Jesus. And he will not come to me that you might have life. Where is the life? It's in a person, not in the text of scripture.

Then opened he their understanding. Who? Jesus. This is on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection.

He's talking to the disciples and it says, then he opened their understanding. Who opened their understanding? Jesus. To do what? That they might understand the scriptures.

These are well-groomed Jews. They know the scriptures, don't they? No, they didn't understand them. What did they need? What was the key that they needed? They needed Jesus.

And once Jesus was resurrected, he had what they needed and he imparted it to them and suddenly they could see the scriptures. And beginning at Moses, this is speaking of Jesus, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. For had you believed Moses, you

would have believed me.

For he wrote of me. He wrote of Jesus? Yes! Moses was even writing of Jesus, is what Jesus says. Isn't that an extraordinary statement? The strange magnetic pull away from center.

Okay, now, what I've said is sort of hard to argue with. It's like, it's not about Jesus. You don't wanna argue that.

Okay, that's sort of obvious that this is the North Star. But why is it that we have such a propensity to be pulled away from center? Why is it that we would see something so obvious and yet diminish? Now, some of it has to do with intellectualism. This just doesn't sound intelligent.

It sounds too easy, like even a child could access this and we want to sound like theologians. And as a result, when we become theologians, we become the greatest idiots. As opposed to becoming little children that are able to say, Jesus is the center.

You know that you can become very intelligent off of this as a basis, but you might not be deemed intelligent by the world. Paul called it foolishness. He was deemed as foolish when he made Jesus and him crucified the primary point of his existence.

Don't be duped. There's multiple scourges. I'm just gonna go through like three or four of them, and they change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man.

Okay, there's this propensity in us to change the glory of God into the glory of something incorruptible. And so we take what is obvious and what brings glory to Jesus Christ, this whole thing is about him, and suddenly we turn it in some creative fashion to be about our intellect, to understand things, to discern things, to reason things. And now we've taken the glory of God and somehow tried to transfer the glory to ourselves.

I can interpret, I can understand these great mysteries. The mysteries are solved in Jesus, not in you, in Jesus. And so in the second part, and they change the truth of God into a lie and worship and serve the creature more than the creator.

Isn't that interesting? The creature instead of the creator. Who is this all about? The creator, Jesus. And yet what do we do? We end up serving the creature, that which the creature can create, that which the creature can deduce, that which the creature can come to.

And we turn and we have our big huge pile of human doctrine, our thoughts and our meditations instead of the simplicity of Jesus Christ. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. Beware of this, lest you be cheated from the center and from the North Star.

You see, if anyone is attempting to cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, now they're gonna be like, I wouldn't fall for philosophy and empty deceit. We'll just wait till we continue in this message. You see, and not according to Christ, for what is the conclusion that Paul adds on here? For in him, in Christ, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

You want God? You only get him through Christ. Don't allow anything to cheat you from this, to take you off course, and to get you focused on something that isn't centered. So let no one judge you, by the way,

this is in a series of comments by Paul.

I'm just breaking them up into their pieces so they're easier to digest. So let no one judge you in food or in drink or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substances of Christ. Now I just, right in that one sentence, just marked a couple different denominational splinter groups in Christianity right there, where they make their emphasis something other than Jesus Christ.

Does it not matter? Should we completely avoid? Should we not have a day of rest in the week? That has nothing to do with the discussion. Stay focused on Jesus and let no one judge you according to these things. Jesus is your end game.

This is about him, not a petty side issue. Let's stay focused here. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly popped up by his fleshly mind.

I love that line, intruding into those things which he has not seen. You know how many of the great philosophies of Christianity take us into realms that are heady? And no one, everyone's guessing. It's like, well, I think it's this.

And we spend our time in some erudite environment where we are pondering grand things that we have not seen and we don't understand, but there are clear things in scripture to illuminate the person of Jesus that we are avoiding. Do not be cheated from your reward. And then look at this, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding fast to the head from which all the body nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments grows with the increase that is from God.

It's from the head. We focus on Jesus. Jesus is the head of the church.

The seven great ology baits. Now this is gonna sound intimidating at first, okay? You ever heard of biology? That's an OG, okay? An ology. How about psychology? You see, it's ology, a science, a field of study, a body of knowledge.

And so look at my title, The Seven Great Ology Baits. You see, Jesus is the center. However, when you break down Christian thoughts and doctrine into its ologies, into its side fields of study and make those your focus, it's a bait away from the head.

It's a bait away from the center. So what I'm gonna give you is the seven great ologies that we are facing as the church of Jesus Christ today. Now let me make something clear.

Each of these ologies have validity, but only under the banner of Jesus Christ as the center. So, cosmology. I know that sounds like something, when I first heard that word, I was thinking of someone doing makeup or, you know, I don't know what it, I don't know what word I'm mixing it up with, but that's the study of the cosmos, which is a study of origin and beginnings, okay? So a good creationist that spends all their energy studying creationism could easily fall into this category of a cosmologist that is focused on a field of study, even for the glory of God, but has a tendency now to be losing sight of the head, okay? Now I'm not gonna say this isn't important.

I think it's extremely important in our generation. Eschatology. Now, by the way, if you forget all these words after we read them, that's fine, okay? I'm not just trying to impress you with a list of big words here.

In fact, I've made up some of the words that you're gonna see here, okay? So don't take them too seriously. Eschatology, by the way, I didn't make up eschatology. It's the study of what is to come, the ending.

It's very fascinating to certain people, and they will spend great deals of their life, and everything they study in the Bible all has to do with the ending, and they miss the now. They miss Jesus. You can be so fixated on the ending that you miss Jesus, even though the whole ending might be about Jesus coming, and to talk about Jesus the whole time.

Theology. Now, you'd say, why didn't you put that first? It makes sense. It's the study of all things pertaining to God.

It's not necessarily the study of God. It's the study of things pertaining to God. For instance, it's like the difference between making a loaf of bread and studying the ingredients list, and actually eating the bread.

There's a difference between the two. Now, what we would encourage is that you know how to make the bread, and you know how to eat it, because the whole point of making the bread is to eat it. It's not just to know the ingredients list, but how many of us know the ingredients list, never put the ingredients together, stick it in the oven, and eat it? That's where people fall short with theology, is they might have right theology, but they don't have Jesus.

Could you imagine? I remember one of my buddies once talking to me about frazzled ice cream. Frazzled ice cream is some legendary thing. By the way, it doesn't exist.

But he was saying that could you imagine, it's like this legendary thing that when it touches your tongue, it literally has been designed to maximize taste buds. So no matter what taste buds you have, it just fans them into flame, and whatever it sets on your tongue, it just tastes so delectable, better than 100 of the best foods combined. And then when it goes down your throat into your digestive tract, it literally heals the entire body.

And it has this medicinal quality to it. And so if you have a digestive tract problem, gone. It's over.

Now you work as you ought to work. Not only does it taste good, but then it heals you, it changes you. Oh, happiness.

Now could you imagine studying the list of ingredients for this frazzled ice cream? Could you imagine forming small groups, having people write songs about frazzled, and we all sing them and raise our hands and bend our knee, and no one ever taking a spoon out, dipping it in the frazzled ice cream, sticking it in their mouth, and tasting and seeing how good this frazzled ice cream really is. You see the difference between saying, oh, I heard that frazzled ice cream tastes so good, or even declaring frazzled ice cream tastes great, and then never trying it for yourself. Don't be duped.

Don't be baited into theology and miss Jesus. You see, theology is wonderful, and I'm not about to put it down, but if you go after theology and not after Jesus, you sometimes end up with nothing in the end. So theology, the study of salvation, one of the greatest debates throughout Christian history, has been on this exact point.

You ever heard of Calvinism-Armenianism? Fracturing the body of Christ right down the middle on this exact point. Now let's discuss this very briefly, because I'm not gonna go into Calvinism versus

Armenianism. That's probably the worst thing I could ever do in here this morning.

Imagine there's a cold cellar. It's frigid cold in it. It's dark.

You can't see anything. Most of us don't even realize that that's where we live. We're empty, and it's getting colder and colder.

Pretty soon, you'll just die. There's eternal separation from God. You don't even know it, but somehow, some way, you are awakened to the fact that you're in a frigid, cold cellar, and it's only getting colder.

And if you don't get out of this cellar, you're doomed. How did you find that out? That's a good question. That's where soteriology comes in.

And we have whole debates over how someone awakened to the fact that they're in a cold cellar. And then there's a door, a little light shining under the door. Somehow, some way, you've seen the door, and it's a door out of the cellar.

And behind this door is a stairwell that goes up into a warm, new climate up above. It's life, it's freedom, it's the abundance of life. It's Jesus Christ.

Now, somehow, you need to get to that door. The door is open. Who opened it? And then we'd have debates over how the door got opened.

Now, let me give some facts here. We can't awaken ourselves from our stupor, from our blindness, from our deafness. We're deaf, we're blind, we're dumb, and we're dead.

So unless something comes in and awakens us, we can't even see. Now, we can just all agree on that, just good, solid theology. However, who is it that awakens us? It's Jesus.

Who's that door? It's Jesus. Then we've got a stairwell, and then we have old debates about how people get up the stairs. Are you telling me that you walked up the stairs yourself? I don't know.

All I know is I got upstairs. Well, you better figure it out, because if you think that you walked up those stairs yourself, then you're saying that you saved yourself. Huh, am I? And then someone says, well, maybe I was carried.

Well, maybe it was an escalator. Who knows? Here's one thing we do know. The way to the Father is Jesus.

It's a person. He's the awakening grace. He's the door.

He's the way to the Father, and he's the one that keeps you in the presence of the Father. It's a person, not a philosophy or a theory. You are saved by a person, not by a doctrine.

And until we get that straight in Christianity again, we're gonna spend our time frittering away the best of our hours, and it's usually the best of our men, in side rooms devoted to discussing nothing. Let's get back to Jesus and him crucified. Sabotology, now I made up that word.

But the study of the Sabbath and the particular day for honoring this rest. There's an entire section of Christianity that spends their time discussing the different nuances, the Old Testament, of how they translate into the New Covenant, which by the way, have their place, just like soteriology, just like

eschatology, just like theology. However, this becomes the primary focus.

Where the Sabbath day and what day you celebrate is actually the defining point within the Christian faith. The Christian tradition. And we will divide and separate on this point.

Etiquetology, another word I just made up. The study of moral excellence and appropriate behavior. You know how many Christians spend their life thinking about what they can do and what they can't do? It's their entire focus.

They want to please God. Just like in all these other areas, no one is purposely saying, oh, I don't wanna focus on Jesus. However, we want to be right.

We want to be moral. We want to be good. We want to live the way we're supposed to live, and it becomes a fetish and a fixation.

Who is the one that can live right? His name is Jesus. He's a person. By the way, in every single one of these, you're gonna notice, because I'm gonna come back to each one of these ologies.

Powerology, another made up word. The study of endowment and the expected evidences of indwelling grace. Okay, so let's go to etiquetology.

You have everything from head coverings to the height of dresses to smoking, because you had C.S. Lewis who smoked a pipe. It's like, great, thanks a lot, C.S. So you have all these issues. I can't tell you how many times I've been together with young men that have discussed if smoking a pipe is appropriate if C.S. Lewis smoked one.

It's just like, hey, guys, whoa, focus. And that's a form of etiquetology, okay, where we get sidetracked into marginalized issues, as opposed to saying, what is this about? I want to live in such a way where Jesus is seen. That's all I care about.

And if Jesus is seen with me with a pipe in my mouth, then I don't care if I don't like pipes, I'll stick one in my mouth. But if everyone's distracted because of a pipe in my mouth, I will smoke no pipe till the world ends, that I not trip up one of my brothers. This is about Jesus, that they would see Jesus, that I would see Jesus, that I'd represent Jesus.

Ticky-tack ridiculousness. So then powerology, well, you're not saved, brother, unless you're speaking in tongues. We just opened up a can of worms.

By the way, I'm not gonna try and solve that one for you. Okay, we have a good chunk of Christianity that says that the primary evidence of life transformation is a gift of the Spirit, known as speaking in tongues. What is the evidence of life transformation? Jesus, the fruit of Jesus coming out of your life.

That's the primary. So when we start dealing with powerology and getting distracted and sidetracked on what it's about, guess what? There is a very real power in Christianity, and we must understand it, but it must fall under the banner of Jesus. This is all about Jesus.

He's not gonna set us free as the church washes clean and then make it about something different. What comes out of our lives is the evidence of a person. It's the evidence of an indwelling person known as Jesus Christ.

The ology of allologies. So if we're gonna talk ology, I'm gonna give you an ology. And if you wanna study an ology, if you're one of those intellectual guys like I just have to have an ology, don't strip me of my ologies, man.

I'll give you an ology. Okay, I made this ology up too, but it's a good one. I don't know how to pronounce it.

I need a good, I need that one guy from Blue Letter Bible, it's like Strong's G472, crisscrossology. But the thing I want to emphasize is what Paul emphasized. It's not just Christ, it's Christ's work.

See, Jesus is enunciated and all the nature of the Father is enunciated in him and in the work of the cross. The cross is the full enunciation of him, his nature. Everything about God is revealed in and through the cross.

And so this is the study, this is the great focus. And this is the great key that unlocks all the other ologies. You wanna understand all those other ologies, you get to know this ology.

And suddenly all the other ologies have context in place to be understood. So this is Christ's crossology. The quest to intimately know Jesus Christ, to be found in him, to win him, to comprehend, understand, and intimately behold his work, to know the power of his resurrection, to know the fellowship of his sufferings, to deliberately make Jesus and him crucified, the great centerpiece of reasoning and thought, the magnetic fixation of all philosophical deduction and the central doctrine and interpretive key to all life and truth.

It's Jesus. The Christophany. The Christophany in scriptures becomes the Christophany in us.

And now when people look at our lives, what do they see? They see evidence of Jesus. They don't see an intellectual man who knows his Hebrew. And I'm not saying you can't be an intellectual man who knows your Hebrew.

I'm saying that isn't the defining attribute of a man transformed. A man that has been taken hold of by Jesus Christ will reveal Jesus Christ. That's the primary fruit that comes out.

So your powerology needs to flow out of that. So instead of calling it Christ-crossology, I have a more simple word for you. We'll call it Christianity.

You know what the primary word is in Christianity? Christ. I didn't put it there. It's just there.

The evidence of a believer is that they are all about Jesus. They are transfixed with Jesus. They've looked upon Jesus, been transformed by Jesus.

All they want is more Jesus. All they wanna give is Jesus. Christianity.

Which means entire givenness to the person of Jesus, entire focus on the person of Jesus, entire allegiance and obedience to the will of Jesus, entire desire to be intimately close to Jesus, and entire confidence in the nature and work of Jesus. Paul's singular focus. So let's discuss how Paul evidenced this and described it.

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. What does he want? He wants the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord. That's the knowledge he wants.

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things. He suffered the loss of all things, not for a doctrine, but for a person. And do count them but dung that I may win, not a doctrinal position, not a magna cum laude in heaven for his doctoral studies, but that he may win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death. That I may win Christ, Paul says, that I may be found in him, that I may know him, that I may know the power of his resurrection, that I may know the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death. This is just a meditation, a reflection back.

This is Paul. For I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. So I'm just well-rounding what I'm saying.

Just to come back to that simple statement. Handling the seven ologies, making sure Christ retains his position of preeminence, because we can come to a conclusion. You could just be disgusted with all the ologies after this conversation, like, ew, ologies.

I'm going to encourage you not to throw them out, but I'm going to encourage you to immolate them in to Jesus and him crucified. And if you find that the streams of these ologies are coming forth from Jesus, the great metropolis, you know what? Your ologies will suddenly now be helpful to your life as opposed to a distraction from the center. So let's first of all look at how to handle these.

Let's go through cosmology. And again, we're not talking about beauty training here. What word am I thinking of? Is it actually called? What is it? Cosmetology.

Obviously I don't spend a lot of time studying cosmetology. Cosmology, the study of origin and beginnings. If you're going to study origin and beginnings, here's my advice to you.

It's the study of a person, and his name is Jesus. And he's known as the creator. So if you want to have a true understanding of cosmology, who do you need to know? You know, I would highly recommend that you get to know the creator of everything, who was there and you weren't.

And by the way, that scientist down the street at the local university wasn't there. I have a direct inroads to get you in with the one who created everything. You have any question, he can answer it.

It's a person. You want to understand cosmology, it's a person. So let's look at this.

These are just names. I didn't take scriptures out. All I did was take the names of God, the names of Christ specifically.

The almighty which is and which was and which is to come. He was, he's always been there. Listen to this, the creator of all things.

I didn't come up with that. The upholder of all things, the beginning of the creation of God. The father of eternity, the beginning and the ending.

The alpha and the omega, alpha being the first, omega being the last. First and the last, the life, that eternal life which was with the father, he that liveth. If there's life on this earth, where did it come from? From life, who's a person.

It's not some weird chemical reaction that took place on earth. You know, it's like this created some type of osmosis, or what word am I looking for? What's the blub blub thing? It's a pile of cells. What was it called? Amoeba, I think that's what I'm looking for.

It's like some amoeba-like creature. You know, it's like life. Jesus is the life.

You want to understand where life comes from, you need to know Jesus who is the life, who is the creator, and he's the beginning of the creation of God. He's everything that you need to know. You study Jesus, suddenly your cosmology just falls into place.

That's Jesus. It's all about Jesus, all for Jesus. Why'd he create things? For his pleasure.

It's for his glory. He did it. Ask him.

Number two, eschatology, the study of what is to come, the ending. So here's my encouragement. If you're gonna study eschatology, it's the study of a person.

Jesus, the almighty, which is to come. Who's in the future? Who's coming? Who's gonna be there? By the way, he doesn't change. There's no shadow of turning in him.

He's the same yesterday, today, and guess what, forever. So you get to know him now, and you actually know the future. It's Jesus, the almighty, which is, which was, and which is to come, the upholder of all things, the father of eternity, the beginning, and the ending, the alpha and the omega, the first and the last.

You wanna study the last, study Jesus. He is the last. I know it's a strange statement.

You don't usually say, and Jesus, I just wanna thank you for being the last. But he is. He's the bookends of everything.

You have security because he is the first and the last. We're not just floating out there hoping things turn out. He's in control.

You study him, and you have context. The author and finisher of faith, my keeper. Number three, theology, the study of all things pertaining to God.

So where do most of us go to find our theology? We go to the text of Scripture, and I would highly encourage that. However, if I'm gonna teach you how to be a good theologian, here's my starting point. It's the study of a person, Jesus, the image of the invisible God.

You wanna understand God, you get to know Jesus. The fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him. You want to know God, get to know Jesus.

He is theology 101. He's the word. So here you are turning to the text, and I can say, well, yeah, but Jesus is what the text is all about.

So you get to know Jesus, and suddenly he's the interpretive device for the entire word. The word that was with God, the word that was God. He is the word of God, the word of life, the word that was made flesh, the image of God, the image of the invisible God, the express image of his person, the brightness of his glory, the light, the true light, a great light.

You know what light is? To the Hebrew mind, it would be inspiration, light, understanding, knowledge. Who is the light? Who is the knowledge? You wanna know God, you get to know Jesus. The light of the world, the light of men, a light of the Gentiles.

So theology, the study of salvation. If you're gonna study salvation, you need to understand a person. His name is Jesus, and he is the man of salvation.

That's actually even what his name means. That's what Yeshua means, Joshua. In the Old Testament, it's the same name.

It's the one who brings the people into the land, breaks down the 31 empires, trounces them under his feet. Victory, the man who rescues, the champion. Where's your victory come from? Where does your saving come from? From a right doctrine? You're saved by a person.

That is who saves you. He's the savior of the world, a savior which is Christ the Lord, Messiah, the way, the door of the sheep, the builder, the foundation, a sure foundation. One of the ways I like to say it is he built the whole thing.

Here we are trying to figure out how we got from the cellar to the upstairs. Well, guess what? He built the whole thing. How'd those stairs get there? He built them.

He's a carpenter from Nazareth. He built that door. It's a nice door, and it's unlocked for you.

He personally is the door. He's the light that somehow shines into your dark cellar and awakens you. He's the whole kit and caboodle of salvation.

It's a person. Do I read all these? A foundation, a sure foundation, the rock of my salvation, the captain of salvation, a horn of salvation, the author and finisher of faith, my redemption, the strength of the children of Israel, a strength to the needy in distress. Where does your confidence lie? It lies in Jesus, the one who ever lives to make intercession for you and who will save you to the uttermost.

A refuge from the storm, a covert from the tempest, the hope of thy people, the lamb of God, a lamb without blemish and spot. I mean, he did all the work, too. The lamb that was slain, the lamb in the midst of the throne.

Sabotology, the study of the Sabbath and the particular day for honoring this rest. Well, once again, I know this is a shocker, but it's the study of a person, Jesus, the rest of God. The Sabbath, just like the rest of the Old Testament, just like the manna, just like the rock in the wilderness, just like the temple, just like the sacrifices are all fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

He's the history of Israel. He's the law of Israel. He is everything in him.

It's all about him. It's all for him. It's all to him.

And he is the Sabbath rest. He is the fulfillment of this. He's the Lord of the Sabbath.

He's a rest. He's God's rest. He's that rest.

He's the resting place. We rest from all our labor. And who do we enter into? Into the rest.

Yeah, that's how it works. He is the fulfillment of it. Does that mean that we should not acknowledge at all that we as humans must enter into a rest during our week? No, that doesn't mean that we avoid that.

There's still tremendous wisdom in this. We are built in such a way where we can honor God in that manner. However, do not let someone judge you based on these trivialities.

Make sure the point is about Jesus. Etiquetology, the study of moral excellence and appropriate behavior. I like this one.

Because it clears a lot of things up for those of us that are just trying to live perfect. By the way, I'm a big fan of being perfect as Jesus is perfect. Being holy as he is holy.

Because it's a command. However, you can't do it. And when you make Christianity about your effort and your willpower and your determination, you're being cheated of the reward.

But when you make it about him, well, look at this. It's a study of a person. Jesus, the righteousness of God.

You know what righteousness means? The way a man ought to be. And guess who is the way you ought to be? Jesus. So you're the way I ought to be.

That's right. Well, good for you. I'm glad you're the way I ought to be, but I'm not the way I should be.

He says, that's why I'm the door. You get in me. You get inside of me and I'll be the way you ought to be.

And then inside of me, I will endue you with power to be transformed, to be made new. But it's a process. You see, we grow up unto a full maturity, unto the person of Christ.

We're not just that, we're not done. He's done. And so our moral excellence is found in him.

You make him your focus, he deals with your issue of being a mess. And guess what? He doesn't just cover you with himself and forgive you, he transforms you in him so that now you're made a new creature. Now you begin to think new thoughts, you begin to behave in a new manner.

And you, in him, clothed in his righteousness, actually begin to behave differently, but it's not your focus. Your focus isn't, I need to make this right. If I don't make this right, then God's gonna be mad at me and cast me out.

Your confidence is in him. You're my righteousness and I'm a work in process. But dear Lord Jesus, continue this work and do it fast.

He was and is perfect. You know, he's the image of God. I mean, can you get a higher level of moral excellence than that? He's God! He's the perfect expression of it, the image of the invisible God, the express image of his person, the brightness of his glory.

Holy, harmless, the holy one and the just, the holy one of Israel, the holy one of God. You'll notice that none of us is gonna stick our name in front of that. You know, Eric is ha-ha.

Oh no, blasphemy. This is Jesus. This is Jesus.

But we want to be this. We want to try and show God our love by being this. He is this.

And we must allow him to be this for us. He's holy, holy, holy. He's merciful, faithful, undefiled, separate, perfect, glorious, mighty, justified, exalted, risen, glorified.

And he is our righteousness. He is our clothing. That's actually what it says in scripture.

He is our righteousness. He is our moral excellence. He is the integrity of perfection given to us.

He is the king of righteousness, my righteousness, my sanctification, he's even the process of making us like unto himself. He's a refiner's fire, fuller's soap. He's my helper, my physician, my healer, my refiner, my purifier.

Number seven, powerology. The study of endowment and the expected evidences of indwelling grace. So if you're gonna study power, here's my encouragement.

It's the study of a person, Jesus, who is known as the gift of God. You know how many people get in arguments over the gifts of the spirit? Well, you know what the primary gift of God is? It's Jesus. How did we miss that? You know what, we would not have any debate in the church of Jesus Christ if we got back to that as the center.

You know what, what do we all agree on? The gift of God to us is Jesus. And how does the church work? Jesus. How are we empowered? By Jesus.

His work on the cross has supplied us with everything we need for life and godliness. Everything. Where do we go in a time of need to find help? To the throne of grace.

Who's in the throne of grace? Jesus. So where do we go? To Jesus. What is the evidence in and through our lives? Jesus, more of Jesus.

What is the church supposed to express? Jesus. He is the gift of God. He's unspeakable gift.

He's the resurrection. He's a quickening spirit. Thou art as ointment poured forth, the glory of thy people Israel.

He's the first born from the dead, the first begotten of the dead, the first born among many brethren, the first fruits of them that slept, the first fruit that is gonna come out of the church, the first evidence that is going to crescendo forth out of the Christian life. Let's not wrangle over if it's tongues or not. It better be Jesus.

That's where I will stand. This isn't a debate on if tongues is a valid gift for today. Not at all.

It's saying primary, Jesus. If you're gonna evidence something in your life, let's make sure it's Jesus. I don't care if half of you never speak in tongues.

If you're showing Jesus, I'm very happy. You could say, half? Christ's crossology. The quest to intimately know Jesus Christ, to be found in him, to win him, to comprehend, understand, and intimately behold his work, to know the power of his resurrection, to know the fellowship of his sufferings, to deliberately make Jesus and him crucified, the great centerpiece of reasoning and thought, the magnetic fixation of all philosophical deduction and the central doctrine and interpretive key to all life and truth.

Christianity is about a person, and his name is Jesus Christ. Jesus, the great beauty. This is just Christianity, okay? First of all, it starts with the premise.

This is the overarching, not just theologies. This is the overarching grandness and epic nature and majesty of Christianity. First of all, it's swallowed up in his beauty.

We're transfixed, we can't look anywhere else. Why? Have you seen him? Have you seen my Jesus? He's extraordinary, he's beautiful, he's magnificent, he's epic, he's holy, holy, holy. Don't you see him? You don't wanna take your eyes off of him.

He's fairer than the children of men. Why would you wanna go to any doctrines of men or any philosophical treaties of men when you have Jesus? He's the cheapest among 10,000. He's the bridegroom, the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, a bundle of myrrh, a cluster of henna blooms.

Yea, thou art altogether lovely, thou art my beloved and my friend. This is the evidence, the Christophany of Jesus in the Old Testament. He is beyond beautiful.

He is the great beauty, the magnetic one. It's what the ensign is, which is another term for Jesus. It's the great magnetic pole to that high mountain.

It's the rallying point for all the troops. When all the troops need to gather, where do they go? They go to the ensign. Where's the ensign? It's up there on the hill.

You see that cross? Rush up to it. That's the meeting place. We meet there and let all of us descend into this earth to take it for that which we saw on that high hill.

Jesus, the great everything, for lack of a better word. The great everything. He's everything.

So, he's Lord over all. You know what a strong statement that is? Lord over all. He's my all in all.

He that filleth all in all. It's very hard to argue this message. It's just Jesus.

He's everything that matters. You want salvation. You find it in Jesus.

You want to understand where we come from. You need to know Jesus. You want to know where we're going.

You need to know Jesus. You need to know how to live this life well. You need to know Jesus.

You need Jesus. That simple. Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The great focus, message, and meditation of the believer. He's the focus of our faith. The catalyst of our understanding.

The object of our love and affection. The wellspring of our joy. The source of our peace.

The power of God unto salvation. The root of every doctrine. I just threw this one in here just because I think it's fascinating.

I, Jesus, am the root and the offspring of David. Who started this whole thing? Jesus. He's the creator.

But then guess what? He creates this whole thing called the Hebrew culture. And he builds it perfectly as a test case because he will step onto the stage of time, literally born out of the very system that he created. He started this line.

It crescendos to David and then we see this line going throughout the ages and one out of literally the loins of David will rule upon the throne. Jesus, the very one that started it, is the very one that steps onto the stage of time to fulfill it all. Oh, that's great.

Everything is about Jesus and him crucified. Every message is about Jesus, exalting him, glorifying him, and increasing our faith in him. Every message flows out of the exaltation of him, his work, and the purchase of his work.

Every discussion is about Jesus or increases our faith in his work. Every doctrine stems from the person of Jesus, the work of Jesus, and the victory of Jesus. Everything that is not born out of this faith focus on Jesus and his great cross work, increasing the understanding of it, but the adoration of him and the ever-increasing faith in him and his work is off-center and a distraction from the center.

Now, I'm going to read quite the little collection here. We're gonna do a meditation on Jesus and I just want you to love him. I want you to bow your soul before him and I want you to exalt him in your inner man.

Jesus, he who created the heavens and the earth, he who is God in the flesh, he who perfectly demonstrates God's glory, he who enunciates God's holiness, he who reveals God's perfect righteousness, he who brings us God's salvation, he who manifests the love of God, he who is the way to the Father, Jesus, he who was without spot or blemish, he who perfectly fulfilled the Messiah test, he who proved to be the son to the Father with perfect canonicity, he who fulfilled the scriptures and validated their authenticity and perfect integrity, he who took the wrath of the Father and was accursed for man's rescue, he who humbled himself and took on the form of a servant, he who was crucified in obedience to the Father, he who redeemed man with his blood, he who atoned for man's sin and was a

satisfying offering in man's place, he who was accursed, condemned in man's stead, he who destroyed the power of sin and death, he who overcame the devil, he who triumphed over the grave, he who died but rose again on the third day, he who rent the barrier between God and man, he who brought man forgiveness of sins, he who brought man cleansing from his sins, he who brought man victory over sin, Jesus, he who was man's robe of righteousness, he who condemned sin in the flesh, he who created an avenue for man's freedom from the law of sin and death, he who provided himself as man's vehicle for victory in man's passage unto the Father, he who ascended to the right hand of the Father in the heavenly realms, he who has given man a new life in himself, he who has made man a new creature in

himself, he who has supplied man a new citizenship in himself, he who has seated man with him in the heavenly places in himself, Jesus, he who is over all things, he to whom all things in the heavens and the earth are subjected, he who is King of kings and Lord of lords, he who went to the Father that the Spirit of God might come to believing man, he who purchased man the opportunity to have his very life, his very spirit, his very power within, he who made the physical body of every believing man his actual temple, he who in reality desires to live and move in the body of a believing man, he who will enable and empower the believing man to obey, he who will cause the believing man to actually triumph over sin, he who will cause the believing man to live as he lived, love as he loved and

do even greater things than he did while here on earth, Jesus, he who supplied us the great gospel that we might know his indwelling power, he who supplied us the great gospel that we might be more than conquerors, he who supplied us the great gospel that we might partake of his divine nature, he who gave us not a powerless form of religious godliness but himself, godliness itself and spirit power, he who causes believing man to be immovable and unstoppable, he who is the head of this immovable and unstoppable juggernaut known as the church, Jesus, he who has brought believing man into a place of heavenly adoption, he who has called believing man into intimate communion and fellowship, he who has placed his name upon believing man and set his seal of love upon him, he who desires to be

known intimately and well by those he has redeemed, he who has the deepest affections for those who have come to him in faith, Jesus, he who demands absolute and instant obedience, he who commands that man yield up his life to him, he who beckons man to pick up his cross and follow him, he who says count the cost before you come to him, he who says he will spew lukewarmness out of his mouth, he who commands man to repent from his sins, his old life, his old deeds and his every idol, he who commands that man walk in faith unswerving confidence in his ability to perform that which he promises, he who commands that man confess his sins one unto another, he who commands that man must forgive others as he has forgiven them, he who commands that man must renounce his every tie with darkness, he

who commands that man must deny himself, he who commands that man let not sin reign any longer in his mortal body, he who, when he begins a work, is faithful to bring it to completion, and he who doesn't just command but enables man to obey his every command.

Jesus, he who is the great rescuer, the great intercessor, he who calls his followers to live as he lived, and thusly rescue the weak, the needy, and intercede for the vulnerable and oppressed just as he did, he who calls his followers to take what he has freely given them and share it with those that do not have, he who calls his followers to reveal his nature, his behavior and his attitude in every circumstance, every encounter, he who first loved that his beloved followers might demonstrate his great love to this world about. Paul says, think on these things.

Now, the list I just gave you, you could say, well, he didn't say that. Well, it's sort of hard not to conclude that the things that Paul is mentioning in this list in Philippians is not the list I just read. Think on these things.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do. And the God of peace shall be with you.

He says, what you've seen in me, do. In the context of saying, think on these things. What is his meditation? What is Paul's message? And he says to the church throughout the ages, do it.

You've seen it in me, Jesus, him crucified. You keep your mind, you keep your discussions, your philosophies all aim to Jesus. If you're gonna start being one of those guys who's into theologies, then you must make sure your ologies fit this test.

If your ologies are taking you away from Jesus and his cross as the centerpiece of every discussion, every conclusion, your ologies are robbing you and cheating you of your reward in Jesus Christ. For I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Taking every thought captive to the

will.

One of the challenges you will face is when you're going through your journey with Jesus is there's so many things that egg you on to distract you and to turn your focus off of the center. And so you've been given equipment, as it says in 2 Corinthians, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. To the obedience of who? Christ.

So as we give our life to Christ, guess what? We have the equipment to make sure that our thoughts stay focused. There's a lot of bait out there. You hang out in the church of Jesus Christ today and you'll have a thousand side arguments.

I just want to encourage you, he's the cheapest among 10,000. I don't care how attractive that is, and especially for us men, we love a good intellectual debate. And by the way, I do too.

I love a good wrangling, even over words. It's like, you know what, that's ridiculous. I have a propensity towards that.

It all started when I became a Broncos fan and people would talk about how John Elway wasn't the best quarterback. And I would go into a debate with them, literally saying, you know, he's the best comeback kid, he can win any game. They're like, well, he lost four Super Bowls.

You know, that's the type of thing. You see, he had to be prepared for battle. And then now he's won two and he went out and retired on top.

See, this is a classic Broncos fan here. And guess what? I'm being cheated for my reward when I focus on that. You focus on Jesus Christ.

You may have a debate. You may have a good argument. You may have a good theology.

But if the end conclusion isn't more of Jesus in you, more of Jesus in them, this is a sidetrack. And this is not what we're about as Christians. So what is a distraction? Anything that turns the eyes of the soul away from Jesus and Him crucified.

That's a distraction. That's your new definition for distraction. But look at this.

What is a brilliant distraction? Anything that turns the eyes of the soul away from Jesus and Him crucified, the whole while convincing them that Jesus and Him crucified is their entire focus. Boy, if you could do that, you have yourself a system. Well, I want you to know, we all were born into such a system.

And it's a brilliant distraction because many of us are around Jesus and Him crucified and the concept of it. And yet we don't make it our meditation. We don't make it our chief end.

We don't make Jesus our end. We don't make Jesus and Him crucified, our message, our meditation. What we cherish, what we worship, He's done it.

We all know that. But we're distracted. How does a brilliant distraction work? Rightly handling the word of God, reasonable home construction.

Remember how we started? I said, I give you a kitchen sink, I give you a chimney. You see, it doesn't work that way. It doesn't mean the chimney's bad any more than your soteriology is bad.

It doesn't mean that the kitchen sink is bad even any more than your eschatology is bad. However, if you don't have a context for those things, they're meaningless and they're worthless. And you spend your life trying to get that faucet to turn on, it never will.

You have to build right. So let's study this real quick. I'm gonna give you a scripture, and I gave this exact illustration.

When I was originally making this illustration, I just randomly picked a scripture. And I did this, okay? So now I still have the same scripture I randomly picked then. Now it's sort of like randomly picked again for you.

And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them and He healed their sick. Now there's a lot of good stuff in this scripture. Okay, so let's go into it.

Jesus went forth, fascinating. He encountered a great multitude. He was moved with compassion.

Oh, good for Him. And He healed their sick. Wow.

Okay, now we're a student of scripture. Where do we start? You see, all of us could divide into four camps and say, you know what? I'm gonna take this one. Well, I think it should be this one.

Who decides where we start? And so let's go through this. Option number one, the kitchen sink. Do we start with the kitchen sink? Well, there's some of you in here that think we should.

Ah, I think this is people, people, and more people. Overemphasizing the multitude. Big churches is what God's about.

Pack them in. The more people that come to church, the more people that may end up getting into heaven. We're not sure.

This is a philosophy. Mega church. And it has become the focal point of modern Christianity.

I'm not saying everyone. I'm saying a whole sector of it. And so they take this one scripture and what would they emphasize? And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude.

A great multitude. You see it in the text? He saw a great multitude. He doesn't like to see anything but great multitudes.

Okay, and they build their whole ridiculous ology on that. Okay. Option number two, the guest room.

Okay, you know, we really need a guest room. Jesus was a man who thought of others first. And so you know what? We don't have a house here, but if we're gonna do anything, we're gonna build a guest room.

And so you start out your whole building process by building this little guest room, little teepee off to the side. Overemphasizing the need for compassion. By the way, does God want to populate heaven? Absolutely.

The lamb is worthy of his reward. So yes, of course he does. The harvest is white.

Let's go out and get them. But just follow. There's bait in each one of these.

Is compassion important? You better believe that it is. But if you overemphasize it and end up diminishing what really matters, you know what? You're being cheated of your reward. And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion.

You ever read Matthew 14, 14? It says very clearly in black and white, Jesus was moved with compassion. But we as the church are no longer being moved with compassion. We must make this the center.

We must be moved with compassion. And so this becomes the great point of the church, is that we must be moved with compassion the same way Jesus was. And as a result, we're not focusing on Jesus, the one who gives the compassion, by the way.

We're focused on the fact that we must be moved by compassion. Option number three, the chimney. I'm not against the chimney.

It's a nice thing. It's a great thing to have. However, when you make it the focus, it distracts from what really matters, healing.

Overemphasizing the need for healing. And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them and he healed their sick. He healed them.

You know what? There's entire denominations that have been split off because part of the church is not emphasizing healing properly. And by the way, it's probably true. It's probably true that they're not compassionate towards the orphan and the widow either.

It's a truth. It's also a truth that they're living in their sequestered life and they're not going out and engaging the culture with the truth of Jesus. These are all truths.

But there'll be a side swiping ology and they will take you off course if you don't make your center a proper center. Remember, move all the volumes off the bookshelf, get one book and start rebuilding. I don't care if you have to look like you're uncompassionate for a season.

Make sure your life is first and foremost about Jesus. Option number four, the surround sound 30 seat theater. In other words, this one doesn't matter.

How many of us spend time dealing with these types of things in the church? Are you serious? You're actually talking about that? That doesn't even matter. You see, these other things do that I just mentioned. But the surround, I can't even say it.

The surround sound 30 seats, that's a hard one. You should try that later. Straining to find meaning, overemphasizing things that are not even correct.

And Jesus went fourth. See, Jesus doesn't go third, he always goes fourth. When I'm getting in line, I don't go first, second, or third, I always come in fourth.

Fourth is spelled F-O-U-R-T-H. That's not what it means. And people, have you ever heard of the, what is it? The Faith Now movement, where Hebrews 11.

Oh, it's now faith movement. So now faith is a substance of things hoped for. Remember that statement? So they say now faith, faith is now.

Well, that's not what it's talking about. Grammatically, it's just a conclusion. Now faith is.

They have a whole movement about now faith. It's ridiculous. That's not what it's talking about.

Option number five. This is where I'm gonna camp. This is where I'm gonna press the point.

All of that, well except for this round sound theater, actually matter. They actually have a point in Christianity. And they can augment and increase the message of Jesus to this culture, but you cannot miss this.

Jesus, increasing Jesus and thus creating context and perspective for every other truth. So here's how we as Christians might approach this. And Jesus, now I know in this particular sentence, you're like, why are you making that so big? It's a point I'm making.

When you look at scripture, what are you looking for? You're looking for the Christophany. You're looking for Jesus there. You're looking to see more Jesus, know Jesus better.

So you emphasize Jesus and now guess what? Went forth should be really small. I just make it really small, okay? It's like, you're not distracted by that. That's not the point.

And saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them and he healed their sick. But they have context now. What should be large is large.

And now we see it in light of what should be focused on. Think on this, Jesus. Cherish him, adore him, worship him, know him, believe him, trust him, yield to him, follow him, obey him, marvel at him, suffer with him, live unto him and die for him.

Oh, and think on this too. Jesus crucified, cherish his work, know it, reckon it, yield to it, believe it, be transformed by it. Let it free you, remake you, renew you, protect you, preserve you, shield you, acquit you, redeem you, wash you, resurrect you, seat you in the heavenly place and supply reason, purpose and meaning to your life.

This is about Jesus. If I'm gonna give any final encouragement because this is the final sermon for some of the graduates here. Sunday mornings are very precious to us at Ellerslie.

But if you could leave with one thing, if you could come away with one book for your bookshelf, I want it to be a volume about Jesus. That it's all about him and it always, always, only will be about him. It's never gonna change.

Doctrine doesn't shift with the times. It stays like a rock fixed forever. You know what the doctrine's gonna be a billion years from now.

It's Jesus and more Jesus. And a billion years from now, you're still gonna look back with such a cherishing adoration upon the work of that cross because it enunciates the person of God, his love, his justice, every dimension of his mercy, his holiness, everything about him perfectly. That's my Jesus.

That's who he is. That's who I serve. That's who I worship.

And here I stand. That's the beginning and the end. It's Jesus.

And if it sounds unintellectual or anti-intellectual, you might need to allow God to renew your mind so that you can begin to esteem and appreciate the things that matter most in this universe. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, and more Jesus. Let's pray.

Father, show us Jesus. When we see Jesus, we see you. When Jesus is lifted up, all the ills of this dying world are solved.

That cross work is everything. Lord Jesus, I pray for those of us that have been distracted. I pray that we would recenter.

And even if we need to start over for a season, we need to cleanse out the library and we need to say, let's make it about Jesus. Lord, I pray that you would take us by the hand and walk us through this. But we just want you to be seen.

And I pray that you would make us men and women who do understand your word, who are astute with doctrine. But Lord Jesus, may it be the outflow of you and not the outflow of our own carnal mind. It's in the precious, great, almighty name of the one we love more than all of us, Jesus Christ.

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