

Think Hard, Stay Humble: The Life of the Mind and the Peril of Pride

by Francis Chan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving one's brother and sister in Christ, and considering the impact of our actions on others.

Duration: 1:07:52

Scripture: Matthew 5:4, Matthew 22:39, Matthew 28:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24, Hebrews 13:7

Topics: "Pride"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the audience's awareness of the suffering and struggles faced by their brothers and sisters around the world. He emphasizes the importance of considering the needs of others, particularly those who are less fortunate and facing dire circumstances. The speaker urges the audience to examine their own lives and actions, questioning whether they are truly living in a way that reflects the love and teachings of Jesus. He highlights the significance of love and compassion for one another, as well as the motivation to learn and understand the word of God in order to effectively help and love others.

Transcript

I love that man. It's just, it's humbling to be up here. You know, I shared earlier about how the first time I saw him at Azusa Pacific, I was just giddy.

I was like a little girl at a Hannah Montana concert or something, you know. I mean, I was literally nervous. I mean, he doesn't know this, but you know, we're having lunch there at the cafeteria and I'm just waiting to see what he orders, you know, because I still remember what you ate that day.

He had pepperoni pizza. And it's what I wanted, but I was scared to order it because I thought, oh, maybe I should get a salad. I don't want him to judge me, like, you know.

And I thought, wow, I can eat pepperoni pizza to the glory of God. This is great, you know. So it is a little surreal to be up here, but it's just my life.

It's just nothing makes sense outside of the grace of God. You just look back, you go, how in the world did this happen, right? Our salvation. You look at just the disgusting things you've done in life and to think, and

then God loved me, and then he took me out of that, and he wanted to use me, and it just, it's just, this whole thing just fascinates me.

And today I've been given this topic, think hard, stay humble. Think hard, stay humble. And so I want to start with a question.

How do you stay humble when John Piper picks you to speak about humility? I've struggled with it, you know. It's good ammo at home when my wife and I are disagreeing, I go, you know what, he asked me to talk about humility. Has Noel ever asked you to talk at a women's conference and teach her about humility? You know, it's just a whole, but it's been a great topic.

Honestly, it's been a great topic. I've been given the text of 1st Corinthians 8, verses 1 through 3, and I love it. In fact, would you stand and join me as I read God's Word? Let's just stand in reverence to his Word right now.

1st Corinthians 8, verses 1 through 3. Now concerning food offered to idols, we know that all of us possess knowledge. This knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. Father, help us to respect, absolutely revere your Word tonight, God. Not just by standing for it, not just by exegeting it, God, but literally taking it as these words coming out of your mouth, God, and so that it would transform us.

God, help us to understand this Lord's Spirit. Speak through me. God, would you just speak and encourage us by your Word and show us how to honor you through obeying this passage.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You can have a seat.

I actually am so glad that I've been given this topic because it's affected me. It's affected me greatly, this idea of staying humble and this passage itself. It's affected my actions because I have a tendency to be self-centered.

I have a tendency to think about myself and wake up and think, what do I want? What do I want? What do I want? What do I feel? What would I like other people to do for me? And this passage is so much about love and it convicted me about how often I will speak without loving the person that's right in front of me. I'm not thinking about them. I'm not thinking about loving them.

I'm just saying things. And I've been praying. I've been saying, God, I want every person I face, Lord, help me to look them in the eyes and really care, like really think about them.

I really want to love them like this passage calls me to. I remember when I first started speaking at conferences, I was getting ready and another guy who was speaking at the same conference, he asked me, he goes, Francis, how do you get ready to get in front of a crowd? How do you prepare your heart to speak? And I told him, I go, you know what I do is I think about God himself being in the room. I think about almighty, holy God, him being in the room, that I'm going to face him one day and I and I picture him in the room and I just think, God, I want to speak in a way that pleases you.

I think about God being in the room and say, God, I don't want to be scared of anyone else. I just want to say whatever you want me to say. And so give me the boldness to it, to do this.

I just want to please you. So then I looked at him and I go, well, how do you prepare? And because he was kind of he's like, wow, that's really that's really good, that's really insightful, that's great. And I go, how do you prepare? And he says, you know what I do? He goes, sometimes I'll just, you know, backstage, I'll just peek out and I'll look at people's faces and I'll say to God, I go, God, I really love these people and I want them to know you and I want them to love you and I want them to serve you in a greater way.

So please give me the words that would that would love them best. And he goes, sometimes I look out of the faces and I go, God, I don't really care. I'm not I don't feel any affection, any affinity.

I'm not recognizing them as my brothers and sisters. Help me to love them. And I ask God to help me love.

I thought, wow, that's I've never thought of that. I never entered my mind, you know, I was taught how to preach, but no one actually told me, well, you should actually love the people in front of you. It really it was it was a great thought.

And and I don't think that because you get caught up in other things. So I even have in my Bible, I I have this little check. I have like seven questions I ask myself before I speak, because like that old hymn says, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.

You know, I get sidetracked. I get distracted. I start thinking about other people in the room.

I started thinking about other things. And especially when when I feel nervous, like I did earlier this afternoon, I've told my preaching students before I go, if you feel nervous, it's probably because there's sin in your life. And because you're you're thinking about a person, you're thinking about pleasing someone.

You want someone to approve of your message rather than thinking about God. And then the nerves often are not because you love the people. It's because you want them to love you and you want them to like you.

And so think this through. And so I have these questions. You know, the first question is, am I worried about what people will think of my message or am I more concerned about what God thinks? And the second question I ask myself is, do I genuinely love these people? Do I do I genuinely love the people I'm about to speak to? Because so often I just forget these things and I get sidetracked and sometimes I get nervous.

And that nervousness is usually because of sin. I remember one of my first conferences I spoke at was at my alma mater. You know, when I went back to master's college for the first time and and I was preaching in front of John MacArthur and the whole faculty and and I I'm giving this message.

I still remember I preached out of Psalm 139 and every joke I told, I'd look over at MacArthur to see if he'd let you know what I'm talking about. Every time I try to go on the Hebrew, I'm like, you know, looking over. And, you know, so I'm done with the message.

I thought, OK, I got through that. I got through that. I get in the car with my wife.

We're driving home and she just looks at me and she goes, what was that all about? And what are you talking about? She goes, you were so not yourself up there. I could John MacArthur was in the room. He was in the front row.

And she goes, here's where she goes. Let me get this straight. You were preaching about the presence of God and you were worried about the presence of John MacArthur.

And it's like my wife, you don't even know who he is. I go, this guy, you know, how many books he has written, you know, how, how, how wide his influence is. He is one of the, you know, the best expository preachers of our day, you know, and if I say anything wrong, he'll write a book about me.

I mean, it's just, there's a lot of, a lot on the line here, you know, and as I'm talking about just all the wonderful things, you know, he has done, she looks at me and here's her response. She goes, yes, Francis, and all of his righteous deeds are as filthy rags. Thank you, my helper, you know, but it was just such a good reminder.

And, you know, last, last night, my wife says to me, she goes, honey, just, just be yourself. Okay. Don't try to sound intelligent.

So here I am, but, but I, you know, I, I confess, you know, there, there was a nervousness earlier on yesterday, throughout today, but just God in His graciousness, you know, I mean, some of my heroes are in this room, you know, and I know some of yours are too, men that you respect, men that have caused you to fall more in love with Jesus. And I'm so thankful that even as I was preparing everything, the Lord really did get me focused. He got me focused and he got me thinking and to where I was just thinking about you, even as I was preparing this over the last couple of weeks.

And I said, Lord, how did you just please use whatever giftedness you've given me? How can I use that to love you? Because that's what this passage is about. It's about, loving your brother. And I began to pray, just God, give me words that would help encourage, to spur you on, to stir you up to love and good deeds.

How can I encourage you as a brother? I prayed for, I prayed for our time here. I prayed that not even just in the sessions, but all around that you would look at each other genuinely as brothers and sisters. I mean, that's just the heart of God.

He wants to see his children here, just madly in love with each other. You know, I was praying for that. I mean, think about this.

I will be looking at some of you a hundred years from now. Think about that. And I tried to prepare in light of that and thinking, I'm going to see your face a hundred years from now, 200 years from now.

So with that perspective of you being my brother, you being my sister, okay, what can I say to you today that will matter at that point? And I'm just praying, oh God, help me, help me love them. And this passage is so perfect and so perfect for this conference because this passage is addressing people that technically have the right theology. It's like they were right in their theology, yet before God, they were still so wrong because of their lack of love.

And so I just want you to know, the Lord's really helped me. He's taught me so much through this passage. And the main thing is he gave me a heart for you, to love you.

And I hope that as you look at me, you just see me as literally your brother, an eternal brother. And that God wants us to have so much love for one another. And I prayed for you.

I hope as you're watching Rick and knowing Rick Warren, everything he's gone through, that you were praying for him. I was praying for him last night, praying for him this morning. Every person that's speaking up there, I just look, that's one of our soldiers right there.

That's one of my brothers up there. God, use him. You know, as you were preaching, I was just like thanking God for you, you know, and just going, God, just keep him strong.

Keep him going. I just love these guys. See, 1 Corinthians 8 verses 1 through 3, the issue here is this.

He talks about this food that's offered to idols. And a lot of the Corinthians had come out of this pagan background where they worshipped these idols. They spent their lives worshipping the idols.

The best I understand it, this idea of meat that was offered to idols, some of them believed that the meat that they were about to eat was actually inhabited by demons. And so sometimes they would offer that meat right before the idol. And the idea was the idol would actually cleanse the meat of those demons.

And so somehow the idol would come and chase away all of those demons into that meat. And so that when they consumed that meat, now it was clean. And now it was inhabited by their God or their idol.

And there was a sense of worship. And they kind of had grown up doing this. And so here was this meat that was offered to idols.

And so some of the Corinthians who were more knowledgeable were just saying, look, there's no such thing as an idol. I mean, that's not really a God there. So just eat the meat.

It's not a big deal. But these guys, I mean, they had spent their whole lives struggling with this. And in their conscience, they're going, I can't eat that.

I feel like it's almost like a worship of that idol. And I can't do it. But these more knowledgeable believers were saying, just eat it.

There's no such thing as an idol. And the Bible says they kind of wounded their conscience. And Paul's point was, yes, you're right.

Those idols are not really God. But that is not the point. The point is you weren't thinking about your brother.

And for him, he didn't feel right in his conscience taking that. And yet you pushed him towards that. And you weakened, you wounded his conscience.

And Paul's point is, why would you do that? He goes, why in the world would you do that to your brother? In fact, I love what Paul says in verse 13. He says, if food makes my brother stumble, I'll never eat meat again unless I make my brother stumble. Paul says, I love that guy so much.

He goes, man, if I knew that me eating meat, him seeing me eating meat would cause him to stumble. He goes, I would just stop eating meat. I'd go vegan.

It's just not that big a deal to me. I'd stop. I love him.

And so, yes, would I be right and okay? Because he goes, but you're not thinking about your brother. He says in verse 11, he says, I love this. If his conscience is weak to, I'm sorry.

And so by your knowledge, this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. He goes, you're hurting your brother for whom Christ died. And then if that's not enough, verse 12, he says, that's sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak.

You sin against Christ. Paul says, technically, are you right? Yes. Yes.

The idol is not real. Okay, great. He goes, but look what you did.

You got your brother whose conscience wouldn't allow him to eat that. You forced him into it. You ate of it yourself.

And you're like, come on, just eat. It's not that big a deal. He goes, if I knew that I could hurt my brother doing that, I would never eat meat again.

I would have just stopped it because I love him so much. That's my brother for whom Christ died. This is what I admire so much about Paul.

I know we all admire his theology, his understanding of God. But the thing that I admire so much about Paul equally, and maybe even more, is his love for people. Don't you just see that in his writings? He just had a passion for people, didn't he? Whoever he was around.

Probably the most shocking statement is Romans 9, right? Romans 9. Every time I read that, I'm surprised by it. We're in Romans 9, verse 1. Paul says, I'm speaking the truth in Christ. I'm not lying.

My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. Every time I read that, and I've studied it over because I'm going, that's impossible.

I mean, I think I love people. I care for people. But I can't imagine ever making a statement like that.

I wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers. I thought, gosh, that's got to be hyperbole. That's hyperbole.

Whatever it is. Exaggerating. He can't really mean that.

I was trying to sound smart. Look what happens. Okay.

But the whole thing of him just saying, okay, because I love you, but the thought of being cut off from Christ, haven't you thought that before? Like, I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that for anyone. And that's why, because I think he's exaggerating or maybe even lying.

I'd love that he starts the passage saying, I'm speaking the truth. I'm not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit.

You're going to think I'm lying about this. You're going to think that this love can't be real, but I'm telling you the truth. I'm not lying.

My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. He goes, I hurt so bad. I mean, those words, he goes, I have this great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

Does that describe you right now? That you have a great sorrow and an unceasing anguish in your heart for those you love who are lost. Unceasing anguish. See, and then when I look at Paul's life and I see how he went from place to place and just trying to win people to the Lord and tell them the good news, and he just wants them saved so badly.

And you see all the persecution he goes through and he's willing to go through. Then I go, you know what? That passage really does make sense in light of his life. When you look at his life, you go, I think he believed that.

You remember what Rick Warren said last night about we believe those passages we actually act upon. You know, we believe those doctrines that we actually live out. And you look at Paul's life and you go, well, I think he really did have that great sorrow and unceasing anguish.

I really think he really could wish that he were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers. Some of you in this room, you think really hard. You really do.

I mean, this conference is so right on for you and you love it. You cheer it on because you think very hard through the scriptures. And I guess my challenge to you tonight is how hard do you think about people? How hard do you think about the lost? When Thabiti was talking about how we care for the Muslims and how we want to reach out to them, you know, it's interesting.

I was sitting on a plane on the way to Africa and I sat next to a Muslim guy. I just started asking him about his beliefs. He started asking me about my life.

And I told him how Jesus just changed my life. And he says, you know, he says, he goes, I just hope you're not one of those radicals. I didn't say anything.

He just goes, man, I hope you're not one of those radicals. He goes, I used to wait tables and I'd have these Christians that would just preach at me. And I'm like, yeah, those guys, you know, and, uh, but you know, I'm just praying, you know, like, like we were talking about, you can think two things at once.

So I'm listening to him and I'm praying to God, God, help me on this. And what in the world do I say? How do I love this man? How do you know? Cause I'm sharing my testimony, everything else. And he just, he just was so turned off by Christians.

And a few minutes later, we're talking about other things. And I just, I don't know, let's talk about whatever. And then he goes, why, why are you going to Africa? I go, you know, I'm, uh, and I went there a few years ago and, uh, I just saw these kids, you know, these kids, they had nothing.

They were just, you know, to see them digging through trash heaps and just for water, looking for food, looking for anything that you just, there's no education there. They're just dwindling away. I said, it broke my heart.

I went back, you know, and started selling things. Got my friends that started selling things. The church started, you know, giving more and more.

And so we started, you know, building these schools out there for them and, and teaching them how to farm and teaching them how to do this and that. So that, you know, and I go, I'm going back to see some of that. I go, I'm so excited.

And he just looks at me, his eyes get all big and he goes, that is amazing to me. He goes, so you're one of those. This is what he says.

This was, this was so fascinating. He looks at me, he goes, you know what? I prayed that I would meet someone like you. He goes, I never understood.

That's the one part of my life. He goes, he goes, I can't understand the charity of some believers, like why they would sacrifice their own stuff for someone else that they might not even know. He goes, tell me about this.

And suddenly he's interested. And I said, well, you see, I see in scripture that I'm supposed to become like Jesus and Jesus had it all, but he didn't consider that equality with God, something to be grasped, but he emptied himself. And so as believers, I believe we're supposed to do the same thing.

The Bible says that he laid down his life for us. And that was an example that we should lay down our lives for our brothers. And that's why we do what we do.

But it was just, I loved how it was when he saw that we loved things changed for him. Here were these people that he was disgusted with these, these radical Christians. And yet it was something about our love for people that intrigued him.

When's the last time you wept for the lost? So when I was in high school and I became a Christian, I just started looking at all my friends differently that didn't know Jesus. I mean, it consumed me that, that grief, that sorrow, that unceasing anguish that Paul talked about, man, that was me. I would cut class to tell people about Jesus.

I mean, it's not that I didn't want to cut class anyways, but it's just, I still remember, you know, I'm getting conversations. I would just forget about class. This is bigger.

I remember getting my high school yearbook when I was a junior, we got our yearbooks. And, and I just started thinking the seniors that are graduating in a couple of weeks, I'll never see them again. And I just got on the phone.

I just started calling every single one I knew. And we go, man, this is going to be the weirdest phone call you've ever received. I go, but you know, I mean, we kind of know each other.

I just think we'll never hear from each other again. And, and I got to tell you about something that changed my life and just start going through this. I remember being in junior college and, and, and it's just my passion for my friends.

I remember trying to start a Bible study on campus and, you know, and just thinking I'm going to reach this whole, my, my whole school. I gotta say, they're my friends. I love these guys, man.

I remember waiting tables. I remember waiting tables at this restaurant. And, and I don't know if you guys have ever waited tables, but you get so close to the other waiters and waitresses, you know, you're, you're, you're just this little, you know, click, you get together and you complain about your customers.

You complain about the managers. You just bond. And, and, and, and every, uh, every night though, every night, I remember they would all go out and they all get drunk and they would, they would take me along so I could drive them all home.

And, you know, and, and, and I just remember just sharing with them. But I remember just one day having so much fun. We went to six flags and we just had a great time.

I just remember coming home and just weeping and just begging God, going, God, you can't let these people go to hell. I love Lori. I love Harming.

I love Ron. You can't do that. Do something.

And I, I can't do anything for them. You know, you say the prayer of a righteous man is powerful, effective, and I want all the sin out of my life. I want to be as righteous as I can.

I just want you to hear me. I want you to save these people. Man, I've, I've, I've felt those times of this unceasing anguish.

I'll never forget when my, my grandmother was dying, probably the most painful time in my life. You know, she'd come in from Hong Kong. This is the woman that raised me for, for, for part of my life.

I loved her and everything else, but she didn't believe in Jesus. She had a stroke and they were waiting for me to get to the hospital before they turned off the machine, you know, and she was brain dead, everything else. It was just me and my brother and my grandmother in that room.

And I just remember getting down, you know, and just, just screaming in her ear in Chinese as well as I could just trying to explain the gospel and saying, God, I know, I know you can't just save her. You know, you can't just let her into heaven, but, but I know she's supposed to be brain dead, but you can change that. Can you, can you just get her to hear my voice? That's all I'm asking.

Just let me share some of the things I never got to share and I wanted to share. And so I'm just in her, I'm bawling. I'm just crying like a baby, grabbing her hand, saying, grandma, please believe, you know, you were wrong.

You were wrong. I'm telling you, this is the way to heaven. You gotta get it.

You gotta get it. And as I'm sharing, I'm just hoping, I'm hoping like maybe she'll, she'll open an eye, give me some sort of sign, Lord. Maybe she'll squeeze my hand and just, just, just show me that you hear this message.

And there was nothing. And you just see that EKG monitor when it's going straight. And it's just, just, just, man, I thought it was going to go nuts.

There's the one time I wanted to take this book and just toss it. Because if I believe this, my grandmother was going to suffer right then. And then it's been 20 years and it's been suffering that whole time.

Are you kidding me, man? And then I want to erase these things. I don't want to think hard about the truth about the wrath of God. I don't want to think hard about people like that.

But it's, those are the things that motivate us. Those are the things that motivated Paul. He goes, because I've got this unceasing anguish, I gotta do something.

And I remember as, as she's dying, my brother is in the room, not walking with the Lord. He just, he just looks at me, you know, and I just looked at my brother, listen, Paul, I don't ever want to see you like this. I

don't ever want to see you in a hospital room, wondering where you're going.

You got to change your whole life. You got to give him your whole life to Jesus. I didn't, you know, not just this little prayer, prayer that, I mean, you follow him.

You, you seriously follow him. You need to, you need to turn. And, and, and my brother was like, gosh, I thought I believed until I, I saw you talking that day.

And I realized I don't believe, I don't believe like you believe. And as I was sharing, he just looked at me, he goes, okay, okay, okay. I'll change.

I'll change. And, and, and I'm just thinking, you're, you're just saying it, you're just saying, you know, in my mind, but sure enough, a few weeks later, he goes, Francis, I, literally everything, um, I, I've changed, you know, the girls living with, you know, that's, that's all over with, you know, I, I, I, no more drinking, no partying, no nothing. He goes, I'm even driving the speed limit.

You know, I don't go that far, you know, but it's just a, but, um, it really was that time. It really was, you know, when then it was a couple of years later, he goes, you know what? I think I want to be a pastor like you. I think I want to go to seminary and I want to, and, and now he's a pastor in San Francisco and works with the homeless and in the Bay area.

And he takes these home. Yeah. It's just, it's everything you pray for.

Right. You know, because it's your big brother and you're always scared to talk and you're intimidated and everything else, but there's at that moment, you're going, I don't really care. There's only one thing in my mind, and this is unceasing anguish for you.

And that's what motivates us to talk. It's, it's just this love. And, and, and then that's why Paul, Paul's looking at these, you know, uh, these believers and, and he says, I got, I got to tell you how much I hurt.

I've got this unceasing anguish and I'm just, I'm just curious, how much do you, how much do you love? I remember as elders, we, we, we sat down one time as the elders at Cornerstone and we all just started confessing. We said, you know, I think I used to love people more. I think I used to just hurt for the poor more.

I used to love the lost more. And then I started learning, you know, and then I just, someone told me, well, you know what, your theology isn't quite right. So why don't you step out of that environment and let us teach you first.

And then you start learning again, these Bible studies and go, wow, I really don't know my stuff. You know, so you go through there. I better go to Bible college and just, you know, and you get further and further away from the unbelievers.

Then you get to Bible college and you realize, well, I really don't know anything. And so I better go to seminary and you go to seminary and it's like, wow, I really don't know anything. And you just keep going down this, this trail where I got to know more, got to know more, got to know more, got to know more.

And that's good. Let's do that. Let's pursue that.

But somehow we, we leave this, this world of lost people so often, you know what I'm talking about? And we, we, we get secluded and we get out here and we think hard about the scriptures, but we're no longer thinking about people. And somehow the apostles were able to do both. They grew in their knowledge of God, but they also grew in their love for people and this unceasing anguish.

It never stopped. They kept pursuing and thinking. And so I got to ask, is that true of you? I mean, are you, are you still loving? Are you still burdened like you once were? Do you mourn for those who mourn? Does it break your heart that right now you've got brothers and sisters? They'll never sit in a room like this and have this kind of teaching ever.

They're just trying to find water so they can survive right now. What does that do to you? Like, like there's mothers just going, I can't even know this stuff you're debating in that room. I just know that I got to feed my kids somehow today.

What does that do? What does it do for you to think about kids in Thailand right now, little girls that were abducted and they're just being raped repeatedly right now while we sit in this room? What is it? Does it do anything? Is there a love? Man, man, I, I loved what Al Muller was talking about. And he's talking about this younger generation and the way they were thinking. And the whole idea is that's what we got to think hard is so that we can help them change their mindset.

Cause I'm worried about them. I'm worried about their eternal destiny. If they keep thinking with that type of worldview, they're not headed to this eternity with God.

Does that break your heart? Is that what motivates you? I mean, why do you learn? Do you learn because you love? Cause you love so much. And you think I got to help them somehow. I got to love these people somehow.

And the only way is if I can understand this stuff. And first John 4 12, it says this, it says, no one's ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

I love that verse. Cause it's talking about the love that we're supposed to have for one another in this room. Those of us who call ourselves, I mean, everyone, everyone look at me right now.

Just look at me right now. I mean, when you look at me, honestly, do you, do you love me? Like, do you look up there and go, man, that's my brother, man. If Francis is ever in trouble, man, I am right there with him.

As you look around at the people around you, I mean, is it that type of love? It's because somehow we were supposed to embody that. There's, there's something about this verse in first John one. It says, no one's ever seen God.

You get, you get it. No, no, no one here's ever seen him. Unbelievers will walk.

There's some of you in here. You don't, you've never seen God. You, you don't, you don't even have a relationship with God right now because you've never seen him.

But, but what this verse is saying, it says, if we love one another, if we love one another, God abides in us. Like somehow if we could love each other, the way God wanted us to someone who doesn't even know God, who's never seen him should be able to walk into this room and somehow see the love of God. It's

almost like, and I want to be careful not to overstep some, you guys can correct me later, but it's just, it's, it's almost like, you know how Christ embodied God, the incarnation God in flesh.

It seems to me like it's that duty is almost passed on to us. Like we are that incarnation because they're not going to see God. But if we would love each other, the way God called us to, if they would see this love in us, they would actually get a glimpse that God's love would abide in us.

I mean, as people come into your gatherings, do they see so much love that they actually get a glimpse of God? Or do they just see a lot of, a lot of knowledge? So even Paul, Paul, this, this first phrase, when he's concerning this food offered to idols, there's that phrase, he goes, we know that all of us possess knowledge. And you see how that's in quotations. We know that it's some phrase that they were using.

It was kind of, well, everyone knows this. And Paul's not against the knowledge. You know, when he says this type of knowledge puffs up, he's not saying don't think, don't think hard.

He's talking about this attitude here. It's, it's, it's, uh, the best I, as I was trying to study and trying to explain it, the best I can understand, I remember when I was eight years old, I was on the playground and I remember a phrase that this girl said that I'd never heard before. I said something, then she looked at me and she goes, no, duh.

And I just remember going, what does that mean? No, duh. But you know what? No, duh means it's just that attitude of, come on, everyone knows it. That's, that's the attitude here of, of these people with so much knowledge.

You're going, you know what? We all know we all possess it. It was this attitude. Come on, everyone knows there's no such things as idols.

And what Paul's saying is, you know what? That kind of knowledge is, is, is puffing up. It's, it's just, it's all about you. This cold, uh, stale, ooh, you have this knowledge.

In fact, in verse, verse four, he explains, he goes, yeah, he goes, therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know, we know you and I know we know an idol has no real existence and that there is no God, but one for, although there may be so many, so many, uh, maybe what in the world for, although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many Lords. Yet for us, there is one God, the father from whom are all things. And for whom all for whom we exist in one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

He goes, okay, we know that we know that we know people can say, oh, that's God. That's God. That's God.

And we know better than that. You're right. You're right.

We know that. But then in verse seven, he goes, however, not all possess this knowledge, but some through former association with idols eat food as really offered to an idol and their conscience being weakest defiled. He goes, okay, great.

You've got this knowledge, but not everyone has this knowledge. Don't you understand? This guy's not ready for it yet. Okay.

Be mindful of where he's at. You know, you have this attitude of, well, he should know that we all know that he goes that that type of knowledge that just puffs you up. But he says the love is supposed to build up.

It's this puffing up. I was reading something MacArthur wrote years ago, and he said, he actually wrote 35 years ago. I thought, wow, 35 years ago.

His knowledge is essential, but it's not sufficient. Knowledge is essential, but it's not sufficient. And writing about this passage, he says, it's we need this knowledge.

Of course, that's what this whole conference is about. We need to think we got to know the truth. He goes that that's that's that's essential, but it's not sufficient.

It's not enough just to have the knowledge. That's why he says in chapter 13, you know, you know, the passage, the famous love passage, chapter 13, verse two, if I have prophetic powers and I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I'm nothing. He doesn't matter if I have all not.

I mean, knowledge is important. It's essential. We need to think hard.

So it's all been about, but that's not enough. Because Paul says, even if I had all knowledge, but I didn't love, he goes, I would amount to nothing. That means some of you could be brilliant and worthless.

Seriously, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's points. It'd be like a great basketball player. You never misses a shot, but he keeps shooting at the wrong basket.

You know, and he walks away going, Hey, I was five for five today from three point line five. You're like, but you're killing our team. You're shooting at the wrong bad.

He goes, yeah, but I did not miss it. It's, it's, it's that, it's that same attitude that Paul's talking about here. Oh, you're so brilliant.

You're so brilliant. Yes, but you're killing our team. You're not building up the brothers.

You're making them feel dumb. You're wounding their conscience. You're not stirring them up to love and good deeds.

You just keep making them feeling out. He goes, you, you, you, you're by your knowledge. This weak person's destroyed.

That's great that you're brilliant, but you didn't build up your brother. You actually destroyed him with your knowledge. See, because when you look at people, do you love them? Do you think, let me use my knowledge to build this person up.

And I, I've read some statements on, on blogs, on tweets, on comments after every article. And I read some of these things that brothers will write to brothers. And I go, where is the love? You know, you ever just look and you just go, man, I'm looking on and it just, it just burdens me.

It's like, wow, you really just said that. How, how was that supposed to build this guy up or anyone else who read that? I thought we weren't supposed to let any of these unwholesome words come out of our

mouths or out of our fingers, you know, except that's what, which is going to build one another up because he said, that's what love does. It builds up.

It looks to build up. You guys know who Johnny Erickson Tata is? That is one of my heroes. When I thought about this, I thought about her.

For those who don't know Johnny Erickson, she's been a paraplegic, I believe over 40 years now, started an amazing ministry, you know, gets wheelchairs all around the world. But I don't know her real well, but we get together every once in a while. And I remember last time we got together a few months ago, we're talking and she just starts hurting like her.

There's so much pain. She's just, you know, and I didn't realize that as a paraplegic, she would feel, she could feel so much pain, but we're talking and she just goes, ow, ow, ow. And she just calls I'm so sorry, friends.

I gotta go. I'm just in so much pain right now. And you know, you just start, you just get all teary, like, oh no, no, Johnny, you know, and then just recently she found out that she had cancer and that was diagnosed with, with breast cancer.

And, and so everyone's just hurting for her. And then, and then she starts her chemo treatments and her chemo treatments start wiping her out. And then a couple of weeks ago, we found out that during that time, she got pneumonia.

And I'm just going, okay, yours is just the sweetest woman on the earth. And you know, 40 years as a paraplegic in this, this insurmountable pain, and then she's got cancer and then she's in chemo. And then she's struck with pneumonia.

And while she has pneumonia, she types me a letter, encouraging me to stay strong. St. Francis, I love you. As a brother, you stay strong in the faith.

I believe in what you're doing. Are you kidding me right now? How can you be thinking about anyone else? When I have the flu, I'm only thinking of me. You know what I mean? But it's just this constant thinking of others.

I mean, that's humility, right? It's humility. It's not self degradation, not putting yourself down because that's all about self. Humility is about thinking of others, considering others more important than yourself.

And here's this woman in the midst of her pain, in the midst of her sickness is, is thinking, I should encourage Francis. I wonder how he's doing. And I just read her note and I just started crying.

Go, God, make me like that. I want to just constantly be thinking, how can I build people up? How can I, how can I just encourage you to keep fighting for, for, for the king, for our kingdom? How can I keep you focused on eternity? How can, when you are discouraged, when you're getting all the negative emails or press or whatever else, or how can I build you up? Because the Bible says that's what love does. It's, it just builds people up.

And in fact, Paul explains to the Corinthians who are using their gifts, gifts of knowledge, gifts of tongues, gifts of whatever to puff themselves up. He uses that phrase seven times in the scripture, six times it was to refer to these Corinthians. They're just thinking about themselves and building themselves up.

He explains to them that in chapter 12 or seven to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. Why did God gift you the way that he did? It's for us. It's not for you.

You're, you got to be constantly thinking, how can I build up the people around me? In verse two, he says, if anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. After he says, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. But then he says, if anyone imagines that he knows something, what does that tell you? These people with all this knowledge, they really didn't know anything in God's eyes.

If that matters to you in God's eyes, he's saying, yeah, you, you may think you're technically right, but you're just imagining that you're this knowledgeable, brilliant person. Because he says, if anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. See, in God's eyes, he says, it's not real knowledge.

You're delusional because if you really knew, you would know better and you would use your knowledge to love. That's true knowledge in God's eyes. That's the person who really gets it, who really knows.

See, there's this danger of puffing yourself up and imagining that you're this brilliant person. It's like the school bully. You remember the school bully when you grew up? You know, the toughest kid in the school, and just kind of imagines himself as a hero.

And just because he's the strongest person there, right? And he could beat anyone up. And you're just looking at, you're not a hero. You're a jerk.

You know, if you're a hero, you'd be defending the weak. You'd be lifting them up. You'd be using your strength to care for them and protect them, not to bully them around.

In the same way, with the intelligence, there can be these intellectual bullies who know so much and imagine themselves to be so knowledgeable. And Paul's just saying, you're imagining that. Because if you really knew, you would use your knowledge to actually build people up.

Because that's what love does. But instead, you puff yourself up and you imagine that you know all this stuff. It's just not real.

He says, but if anyone loves God, he is known by him. See the point here? He says, but if anyone loves God, he is known by God. He explains the power of love there.

He doesn't say if you know a bunch of information about God, then you are known by God. It has to do with love. Love is a little bit important here.

He says, in fact, he goes, if you love God, then you're known by him. It's not just about information. It's when that love is attached to it, then it actually creates something.

And here's such a beautiful thought, because he goes, it's when you love God, when you love him, when you think about who he is, and you just don't know all these facts about him. You don't just understand some truths about him, but you actually love him. That's when he knows you.

It's about this relationship. It's about how, and I love that phrase. One of my favorite verses is Galatians chapter four, verse nine, when Paul's talking and he says, now that you have come to know God, and then it's almost like he breaks, or rather, to be known by God.

I love that, to be known by God. It's a big difference there. It's like, okay, because all my life I was saying, okay, I know God, I know God, I know God.

Then when I read that passage, I'm like, wow, that's a beautiful thought. I am known by God. He knows me.

It'd be one thing for me to say, tell you I know someone. I don't know, Tiger Woods. That's a dumb one.

Whoever, let's just use him. But let's just say that then suddenly the next press conference, you hear Tiger Woods go, I just want to thank one of my best friends, Francis Chan. It's like, told you, he knows me.

There's something about that. This phrase when he says, when you love God, you're known by him. I just started meditating on that thought, to be known.

Why did Paul switch? He goes, now that you know God, and rather, here's a better way to say it, you're known by him, that God knows me. This is so deep to me. That means right now in heaven, think about this.

There's a being who sits on his throne. We in this room believe that he is sovereign. He's in control of everything.

He gave me that. You're breathing right now. Everything's going on.

It's all, all in his hands. The angels are screaming out, covering themselves. Holy, holy, holy.

He dwells in this unapproachable light. Yet if somehow, if you could go before God right now, and if you could just speak to God, if you could enter into his gates, enter into heaven and say, God almighty, do you know Francis? The thought that that God would look down right now on the stage and go, man, Francis, I love him. That's my son.

I love him. I know him. I love him, man.

That's, God loves me. Like the creator, the creator of everything, the all powerful one. He knows me.

Like in heaven right now, he sees me as his son. It's just like all the junk that was in my life, he sent his son and his son just paid for all of that. Now he just looks down and just to think, oh God.

And when I talk to him, man, when I talk to him and I, and I tell him, you know, God, here's the desires of my heart. Here's what I, here's how I want to bring glory to your name. Here's the things I want to do in ministry.

Like I see these answers to these prayers. I mean, I talk, I, Francis Chan talk to God and he answers me. Like I'll say, God, here's what I'm thinking.

Here's, and I'll see these things happen like supernatural, amazing, unbelievable things. And it blows my mind every time because it just reminds me I'm talking to God and he hears me. He knows me.

He listens to me. Whether it's silly little things to massive things. I mean, I could sit here for hours and just tell you story after story of just how God listens.

And each time I'm just, I mean, dumb, dumb, dumb things, the little things. They usually, I, at one time I was, I was golfing with some friends, right. And, and, and, and I'm not a great golfer, but man, I can hit the ball, you know, and they, they got these bigger drivers, you know, and so they, they out drove me.

I'm like, now I can't do anything, you know, and I'm, I'm walking away going, God, I want one of those clubs, you know, and I'm thinking I'm going to buy one. I'm asking for, for Christmas. I go, no, that's dumb.

I'm not going to, that's ego. That's a waste of money. I just can't do it.

And I just thought, no, Lord, I'm not going to waste the money like that. The next morning I go to speak at a, at a conference, no, at a little, little church plant. And when I'm done speaking, the guy goes, Hey, we hear that when you go to little churches, sometimes they'll give you an honorarium and you just hand it right back.

So, um, we didn't get you an honorarium. We bought you this driver. And I'm just the whole way home, just laughing going, come on.

Even the driver, every little thing. I mean, I can't tell you the times at least. And I, I mean, there've been times when we've cried just going, can we ever give to God? I mean, every single time without him, just blessing us and blowing our minds and answering every prayer.

Just, just, just two weeks ago, you know, I'm, I'm flying up to Seattle to speak at this conference and, and there's a girl's not sitting right here, but there's a, there's an empty space. And then, and then there's a girl right there. And I'm thinking I should pray for, I should find out what's going on in her life.

And, and I'm like, God, give me an opportunity, give me an opportunity and, and, uh, nothing, you know, and, uh, we, we just still small talk. And I thought, ah, and I just, I got scared. Honestly, I, I just, you know, I chickened out, I chickened out, you know? And then, so I get to Seattle and I speak to a bunch of pastors about courage.

And, uh, that was the topic I know. And, uh, the whole time I'm going, what in the world, why am I talking about this? You know? And, you know, I, I give this message, you know, it was a good message too. And, uh, and, uh, you know, get right back in the car.

I'm only there for like four hours, go right back to the airport, you know, go to sit down in my seat. Guess who sits right next to me. And we're just looking at each other laughing, you know, and everyone around us is like, what you guys were, I go, yeah, I mean, you know, and everyone's just laughing and they're going, you guys are going to end up married.

I'm like, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. That's not what this is. But, but to sit down and just to tell her, I go, you know what, this is not a coincidence.

And let me just, let me just tell you, let me just tell you what's what the Lord put on my heart this morning. And I was scared to do. And, uh, God, by his grace and well, yeah, that was a little much for you to reach over one seat.

So I'll put her right next to you, you know, on the way home. But I just, I just love that because this girl could walk away going, okay, that was really weird. You know, that was not just by about sitting next to some preacher.

It's about someone's pursuing me about God pursuing me. Uh, I was in a cab with another Muslim guy one time and, and I just sharing with him, you know, I just asked him, I go, what do you believe? I said, help me understand. Cause I've heard from different Muslims.

I want to understand like, are you going to heaven? Are you sure? And, and, and tell me how you know this, tell me how you know you're forgiven. And he went on and shared all this stuff. And then I laid out what I believed and we just went back and forth.

And then I, then I just started talking to him about knowing God. And, um, I, and I just started saying, gosh, you know, I just tell you when I pray, God answers me. He just, it's, it's been the craziest thing.

And I just started naming different examples and telling him the recent things that God had been doing in my life. And I go, does God do that for you? He goes, oh yeah. And I thought, you know, I'm, I'm listening to him and I'm praying to God going, God, that's not supposed to happen.

You know, like I, I like that. I don't, I don't get that. I really was bothered by it.

And so I just went on to another topic like, okay, what about, you know, and you just, he didn't, but you was the awesome thing. I, a few minutes later and I loved his honesty. He goes, Hey, you know, earlier I said, God listens.

I didn't mean that he actually, he doesn't. And I was like, I didn't think he would, you know, it's just no, seriously. I didn't say, you know, but it was, it was, it was bothering me.

It really was bothering me because I'm going, no Lord, I am so confused here because I know, I know you, I know you listened to me. And it really confused me that that man would say, yeah, that's what God does for me too. But then I love the fact that he was so honest and later to come back and say, well, you know what? No actually doesn't answer me like that.

And, and I could just see earlier. We, we, we said we, we quoted that verse. Yeah.

No, let, not the wise man boasts about his wisdom, but not the, you know what I'm totally flustered right now, but let him who boasts what most in the Lord. And, uh, but, but in, I like the way it says it in Jeremiah, Jeremiah nine versus 23 and 24 says, thus says the Lord, let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might.

Let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me. You want to brag about something, brag about the fact that God knows you brag about the fact that you know, God, you know, as we hopefully you're experiencing him in your everyday life. And that these truths and these promises that you've been thinking about in scripture, you really believe them to where, when you pray, you don't have a down, you go, I know my God's listening to me.

This is crazy. And, and I just been going around telling people that the answer is to prayer. There's a girl on the airplane.

This is an answer to prayer. This happens to me all the time. God knows me.

He listens to me. This is insane. You don't boast about how much, you know, you don't boast about your knowledge or might or anything else.

You boast. I'm known by God right now, the God of the universe knows me and he loves me. And he calls me by name.

Let me just close with a couple of thoughts. I was trying to think what is the most loving thing I could say to you today, based upon this passage of wanting to build you up and to think about you. And I love you and what knowledge I do have and what giftedness I have.

How can I build you up for the right things and, and give you a sense of encourage, where's an encourage one another and stir one another up. What can I say? I think, okay, what can I say based upon my love for you and based upon a knowledge that I'll see most of you a hundred years from now, what would I want to say? And here's my thought. Some of you have been studying Christ for years.

I mean, you've been studying the life of Christ, the statements of Christ, and you've been thinking hard about Christ. But, but does your life look anything like his? Can you say like Paul was able to say, imitate me as I imitate Christ. Look at the, look at the way I'm living.

Look at the way that I'm loving and imitate me. Because a lot of people can talk. A lot of people have knowledge.

Like in Hebrews 13, you know, verse seven says, remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God, consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Look at their lives too. Look at, look at how they live.

Can you imitate? Do they look like Jesus? Do you look like Jesus? Do you act like Jesus? Do you love like Jesus? Do you love like Paul? You know, we, we had this missionary speak at our church years ago. And, and at the end of it, he went to Papua, New Guinea, you know, won a tribe, the Lord, a little thing, beautiful story. At the end of it, he says, you know, I owe it all to my youth pastor.

This guy named Vaughn, who just loved me and told me this is what my life was supposed to be about is for the glory of God. And I thought, that's awesome. You know, and then the next week I had another guy show up and he was talking about sponsoring kids.

And when he was done at the end of his little spiel, he goes, you know what? I owe this all to my youth pastor, a guy named Vaughn. I thought, wow. And I found out those two guys were in the same youth group.

Next week, another guy from the rescue mission from the inner city LA came and he shared, he was a friend of mine. He didn't mention Vaughn, but, but, uh, but when he was done, cause he was a member of the church, I go, wasn't it weird that those two guys, you know, both mentioned how much impact their youth pastor Vaughn had on them. And, and he looks him, he goes, I know Vaughn.

I go, really the same Vaughn? He goes, yeah. And he tells me this story about, he goes, Vaughn's a pastor in San Diego. And, uh, and he takes people into the dumps in Tijuana.

And he goes, he goes, I spent a day with him. He ministers there in the dumps in Tijuana where, where kids are picking it out of the garbage, where, you know, kids are just dirty. And, and he goes, I was just with Vaughn and he would walk in the city and these kids would run up to him and he would just love them.

He would just hug them. He'd have gifts for them. He'd have food for them.

You know, he'd figure out how to get them showers, get them food. And he goes, and I would just follow him around that whole day. And, and here's the thing that Dan said to me, he goes, he goes, Francis, it was eerie.

He goes, the whole time I was walking with Vaughn, I kept thinking if Jesus was on the earth, I think this is what it would feel like to walk with him. He said, he's just, he just loved everyone he ran into and he would tell them about God and, and, and, and people were just drawn to his love and his affection. And he goes, he made the statement, Dan goes, he goes, the day I spent with Vaughn was the closest thing I've ever experienced to walking with Jesus.

That's an amazing compliment. The day I spent with Vaughn was the closest thing I've experienced to walking with Jesus. And it made me think, would anyone in their right mind say that about me? That's what I thought.

Would anyone say that? Would anyone say that about you? It made me realize that all this other stuff of, of, oh, you're such a good speaker. That's not the goal. Or people go, wow, you know so much Bible.

That's great. But at the end of the day, what would they say? Wow. It's weird hanging out with you.

I mean, I read about Jesus and then I walk with you and it's like the same thing, the way you just, you love so much to where it, where it hurts, where you sacrifice and you just give up. It's just this, this humble, you're just giving, giving, giving. It's weird.

And I realized, you know, that isn't that, wasn't that supposed to be the goal of all this knowledge of Christ that we'd become more like him. And I'm saying, Lord, that's, that's what I want. I don't want to be the best speaker in the world.

I mean, if I'm that, if I become that great, whatever, it just doesn't matter. I want to be the most intelligent person on the planet. It's like, what do you want to be known for? I want to be known for someone saying, wow, he's a lot like Jesus.

And so I just don't want us to fool ourselves in this room. This is what we were predestined for, right? To be conformed in the image of Christ. And aren't we supposed to walk as Jesus walked? And, and, and so it's great that we've thought so hard about Jesus.

But my prayer is that this becomes true knowledge and we actually become like him and that our knowledge doesn't make us arrogant to where we gloat about it and just show off what we know, but that we, we, everyone we come in contact with, we just try to love them and build them up and say to them, how can I lift them up with this knowledge that I have? And that's my prayer for us. I don't want us to fool ourselves, kid ourselves and imagine that we know so much. And maybe we, maybe we don't know anything at all.

And maybe some of us have even been using our knowledge to tear our brother down and hurt that brother for whom Christ died. And I don't want to be guilty of the Corinthians. And so I'm trying even right now, as I'm talking like, God, give me a love for them.

Let me believe what I'm saying. And I hope that as we leave here, that we, we think through our words and how we can build one another up. Um, and to think about each other as really brothers and sisters, so much so that if unbelievers came in here, they'd get a glimpse of God.

Father, I, I just asked that you would really help us prioritize things. God, I don't, I don't, I don't know what to think all the time. The best thing to dwell on.

Again, we dwell on Christ. We want to become like him. Father, give us a love.

I pray that my brothers and sisters in this room are built up right now and just encourage, believing they can do great things. I pray that they're, they do feel exhorted just to love one another, encourage one another. God, forgive us for the careless statements we make that may have actually destroyed or weakened our brothers and sisters and hurt them and not motivated them to greater ministry.

I thank you for the men of God and the women of God in this room that have used their knowledge to build others up, to cause them to love you more and to become more like you. God, I really want to become like Jesus more and more. God, help us to see him not just as a great savior, but as a great role model.

And our lives really would be conformed to his. And that people would see Christ when they saw our lives, and they would see God when they saw us love one another. Use our knowledge.

May we think hard about your word. May we think hard about people. May we think hard about our brothers and sisters.

May we think hard about the suffering. May we think hard about those who are lost and headed for an eternity apart from you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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