

God Pursues a Love Relationship

by Henry Blackaby

Henry Blackaby emphasizes the importance of experiencing a personal love relationship with God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and active obedience to His will.

Duration: 1:09:48

Scripture: Luke 12:54-56

Topics: "Relationship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a woman who was executed in prison. Before her execution, she sent the speaker two videos, one of which told her story. The speaker then created a special edition of the video with a cover that said 'Special Prison Edition.' The speaker also talks about his experience in Angola prison with his son and how the warden realized the importance of knowing if an inmate was a believer after going through a study on experiencing God. The main message of the sermon is about recognizing the activity of God in our lives and in the world, and how it should determine how we live and counsel others. The speaker emphasizes the urgency of living according to God's activity and extending the kingdom of God. The sermon also references a moment in the life of Jesus from Luke chapter 12, where Jesus talks about discerning the signs of the times.

Transcript

When people ask me questions, I never know where my answer may show up. This is my first time in Indianapolis, and as we were flying in, I was noticing all the snow out. We have had snow in Atlanta, where we live, and having grown up in Saskatchewan, in western Canada, where at times the wind chill temperature would be 110 below.

And that's the only place I ever know where, in the wintertime, when they give the weather forecast, they'll give you the actual temperature, the wind chill temperature, and how many seconds it would take for exposed flesh to freeze. I'm serious, they would give that last one. And I was driving all over that part, 500,000 miles, starting churches, and always carried a survival gear in the car.

Every winter, someone would be found frozen on the side of the road, including policemen. And so, that's a little different than Atlanta. But it's good to be here, and see a little snow when we flew in.

I want to take just a few moments with you, knowing where your heart is, in encountering people, and out of your own experience with God, seeking to bring them into a life transforming encounter with God. Just a

word about experiencing God. Many, many people would say to me, I wanted to know how in the world can I experience in my life what I know in my head.

And they didn't know how to go about it. They had the correct doctrine, or the correct truth, but they didn't know how to experience in their life what they knew in their head. And so, I was seeking to help them in that direction.

And if you remember the phrase underneath experiencing God, is knowing and doing the will of God. And I've come to sense that God has put a spiritual DNA in... He told me he was going to walk out on me. Do you want me to dial you again? You got to watch this guy down here.

I've known Mark for many, many years. And he's a dear brother. And one of those special people that God has chosen to use, and the founder of this group itself.

But I've discovered that most people are restless until they know the will of God, and are doing the will of God. But they don't know how to go about it. And so when we put experiencing God together, it was fascinating because someone from the publisher said, you ought to call this knowing God.

And I said absolutely not. The phrase knowing God has the connotation of head knowledge. I said I want it called experiencing God.

And they said well we'll let you do it. But seminary professors will not like that term. I said I'm not writing for seminary professors.

I'm writing for the common person who wants to know how to know the will of God, and to do the will of God. And I had no idea how God would use that modest Bible study. And the seven realities really came from my connection with Claude King.

I told them I'd never written before so I didn't know what I was doing. And they said well we'll put an editor with you. And Claude King, whose name is on the book, was the editor.

And he's the one after a while said really Henry what you're teaching is seven realities of experiencing God. I said that's it. I'd like to use that term, which I have.

And they are really a progression of the activity of God in the life of every believer. Beginning with God is always at work around you. And he is pursuing a love relationship with you.

And he wants to bring you into the middle of his activity. And so he speaks to you through the Holy Spirit's activity in Scripture, prayer, circumstances, and the church. And whenever God speaks it will create a crisis of belief.

Not a crisis, but a crisis of belief. Because once God speaks to you, whatever you do next will reveal what you believe about God. And that crisis of belief will nearly always create a need to make major adjustments.

Abraham could not stay in the land of Ur when God spoke to him. Amos couldn't stay, the prophet couldn't stay herding sheep and taking care of sycamore trees. He was given a message and told where to deliver it.

The disciples could not stay at the fishboats or Matthew at his receipt of custom and go with God at the same time. And all the way through history from Hudson Taylor, could not continue in England in his medicine, but went to India. And William Carey, and you go down through history, you'll discover that people encountered Scripture.

And the Spirit of God uses the Word of God like a sword, doesn't he? The sword which the Spirit of God wields is the Word of God. And so every time I open the Word of God, I know that God has assigned the Holy Spirit to make sure I don't miss what God is up to in my life. And I think one of the, I hadn't planned to bring this, but let me read for you what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit.

In John 16 verse 12 and 13, Jesus said, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. And when I've read that, I've had to fall on my knees and say, oh God, is there much more that you want to say to me, but I couldn't take it. My walk with you is such that I couldn't receive what you want to tell me.

Would you deal with me radically, because you told your disciples there were many things that he still wanted to say to them, but they could not receive them. But he said, however, when he, the Spirit of Truth, has come, and I always like that designation for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. And it's the truth that sets us free.

And so the Holy Spirit's assignment is to take the Holy Spirit, to take the Word of God, and apply it into my own areas of life, every area of my life. And wherever the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and applies it to any area of my life, that is the moment he can set me free in that area of my life. But he says, the Spirit of Truth has come, he will guide you into all truth.

How many is included in all? All. When the Holy Spirit works in your life, he guides you into all truth. It may be truth relating to your marriage, or your children, or your grandchildren, or your workplace, or your church, or the nation in its trauma right now, or the world in its dysfunction right now.

The Holy Spirit will take the Word of God and guide you into all truth about every area of your life. But then he says, he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, that's what he'll speak. Who's the Holy Spirit listening to? The Father.

Now that's pretty crucial, because when the Father, who always has the purposes, when the Father is purposing to do something significant in my life, in any area of my life, he assigns the Holy Spirit to make sure I don't miss it. And so, the Holy Spirit is always listening to the Father. But when he speaks to me, he doesn't speak on his own initiative, or his own authority.

He speaks on the basis of what the Father has just been saying to him. And he, whatever he hears, he speaks. And he'll tell you things to come.

Does God know my tomorrows? Does he know what I'm going to face? Does he know how to prepare me for my tomorrows? As was mentioned, I work with a great number of the nation's top CEOs from major companies. And I have a regular telephone conversation, an hour in length, ten hours in a week. And I'll speak with these CEOs, and I usually do a devotional.

Then I let them interact with each other. And on one of these occasions, I said, You need an unhurried time with God every morning. Because he's the only one who knows how to orchestrate your day.

And if you have an unhurried time with God in the morning, He will guide you to some things. He'll guide you away from some things. He will alert you to people you need to get ready to confront or to talk with.

I said the best time saver of your day will be an unhurried time with God in the morning. One of these most powerful CEOs, his response was, Henry, you don't know how busy I am and what all I have to do. And without thinking, my response was, It's obvious you don't know who you're going to meet.

Well, about a month later on the phone call, he said, Henry, I took seriously what you said. And I'm now getting up at 4.30 in the morning. And he said, It's the first month I've ever led one of my employees to the Lord.

Isn't that something? And I have the enormous privilege of working with these men and women. One of the women, who's now retired, who was CEO for a major health care system in America, said to me, Henry, I just have a burden to go to Lebanon and to bring together the Christian businessmen who were both Arab and Israelis into a conference. I said, Be sure and let me know how that goes, will you? When she came back, she said it was a life transforming experience for her and for them.

She said, Out of that retreat where the Arab and Israeli believers came together, she said, I'm convinced that the transformation of many nations of the world will be done by Christian businessmen in the marketplace. And I'm seeing that happen. I'm watching major changes happening not only in America but around the world because the men and women I work with all have global companies.

And I've said to them, You are in a most fortunate position because in your position in your company, you can walk into the office of the president of almost any country of the world and you may be in a country where the missionaries are having a great struggle and the nationals are under great oppression. And there you sit in the office of the president of that country. And you can make a radical difference.

Well, I'm watching these top CEOs doing exactly that. And it's incredible the difference they're making globally. Well, God has a love relationship with you.

And he has an incredible purpose for your life. Would it not be sad to live our life and never know what God had intended to do? And we stand before God and he'll say, Let me tell you what could have been if you'd only understood how I wanted to work in your life and then through your life to make a radical difference. I have written *The Experiencing God Day by Day* for the military.

And I put it in a very special cover. And I've gotten pictures from Iraq of two levels of soldiers in the dress uniform all holding up *The Experiencing God Day by Day* military. And not too long ago, I had an older lady bring a young man to meet me in our church in Georgia.

And she said, This young man wants to say something to you. And he lowered his head and said, Just want you to know my chaplain gave me a copy of *Your Experiencing God Day by Day*. And I want you to know that little book got me safely through my term in Iraq.

And I keep hearing from people whose lives have been helped and encouraged. Then I also not only did a copy of that with a military cover, I also did a copy for a prison edition. I've had a longstanding involvement with prisons across America.

Some of you know the name Carla Faye Tucker, who was executed in Texas, but she had with others killed some people. And in Gatesville Prison, she got a hold of *Experiencing God*. And that changed her

life radically.

And she began to teach Experiencing God on death row. And so many became believers. The ladies themselves renamed their section Life Row.

And then she was taken out and executed. But before she was, she sent me two videos, one telling her story. But I have then put together a copy with the cover saying Special Prison Edition.

And I've been in Angola prison with my oldest son, one of the largest in the nation. And the warden said to me, Henry, when he was in his Sunday school class, they were going through Experiencing God. And he said, as I went through that study, it suddenly dawned on me, I had one of my inmates who was to be executed that week, and I did not even know if he was a believer.

And so he said, I can't force the material on people, but he said he made available to every man on death row a copy of Experiencing God. And then he made available that daily devotion to all 5,300 inmates. And he said when he went to that prison, it was the largest and bloodiest prison in the nation.

He said because of Experiencing God, his prison now is a model prison for the rest of the prisons. So he invited my son and I to come. And he took us down death row.

It was fascinating. The first person we met had terrorized Baton Rouge for a year and a half. And this man had brutally raped and murdered 19 women.

And here he was on death row, would never get out. He would be executed there. But when I came by and he realized it was my son and I who had done Experiencing God, and he had been through that, he reached his great big old hand through the bars and shook my hand and smiled.

And the warden turned to him and said, you were baptized two weeks ago, weren't you? He said, yes. I went on down death row and came to another cell, smaller man. And he introduced Richard and I as the authors of Experiencing God, which they had taken.

And he said, I want you to sing for these two men Amazing Grace. I want you to know I've never heard Amazing Grace ever sung like that. And I just filled a whole area with that marvelous message of Amazing Grace.

And with a lot of amens coming from there. There's other stories, but I don't think I should share that. But I wanted to take a moment and talk to you about God has a deep desire to have a love relationship with you.

And there are a number of scriptures that I want to just touch. And I have some notes. And by the way, when all of you know that when a pastor puts down his watch, it means absolutely nothing.

So we don't have a watch or a clock at the back. I have to go by this. But I do want to start with a verse, and I don't know how far, how long I'll get.

One thing about being able to speak twice. Whenever I don't get done in the first one, I'll sort of drop into the second one tomorrow morning. And by the way, tomorrow morning I'll be speaking on hearing God's voice.

How important is it to know when God is speaking? Jesus said one word from him is your life. And how do you know when God is speaking? How do you recognize his voice? And what does the scripture say about that? We're going to talk very thoroughly about hearing God's voice tomorrow. But there's a moment in the life of Jesus that has greatly touched my own life.

And caused me to ask some very serious questions of God. And it comes from Luke chapter 12, verse 54 through 56. It may be a familiar scripture to many of you.

But I want to read those three verses. Then he also said to the multitudes, whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, a shower is coming, and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, there will be a hot weather, and there is.

Hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky and the earth. But how is it that you do not discern this time? Standing in their midst was the Savior of the world. Before the foundation of the world, God had planned for this moment.

And all the way through the Old Testament scriptures, there was description of where he would be born, what he would be like, what he would teach. They had all of that, but they did not recognize that it was him. Not only did the religious leaders of God's people, with all the scriptures, not only did they not recognize him, they crucified him.

And we can be rather hard on them. You had the scriptures. You were the religious leaders of the people of God.

How come you missed him when he came? But we need to remember to ask the question very seriously. When will be the final return of our Lord? How near is the final return of the Lord when all time will cease and eternity will begin? The disciples in Matthew 24 asked Jesus that question. Lord, when are you going to come back and when will be the end of the age? And Jesus took time to describe what would be in place just before the final return of the Lord.

Have you read it recently? Have you been concerned how urgent is the hour in which we live? And I am convinced when Jesus said, nobody knows the hour except the Father. Well, if the Father is the only one who knows the final hour of time, do you not suppose the Father who it is said is not willing that any should perish, that you would see an incredible increase in the activity of the Father seeking to draw people to himself? And that is exactly what I see. I do not know when I have ever seen such an activity of God drawing people to himself like I do now.

But there are several things that he said in that Matthew 24. He said just before the return of the Lord you will know when it is near. There will be earthquakes.

Did you go to Matthew 24 when you heard about the earthquake? And China had an earthquake and they had 70,000 die. And other parts of the earth have had earthquakes. And now there are continuing earthquakes and we are hearing about them.

But Jesus said just before the final return of the Lord there will be earthquakes. Then he said there will be pestilence like H1N1 and AIDS running rampant across the earth. But he had two other signs, two other ways to know the nearness of the return of the Lord.

He said there will be such tribulation as has never been from the beginning of time to that moment and never will be. And unless those days are shortened no flesh would survive. I have then done some meditating when I read that.

And my definition of meditation is when God brings you a truth you stand long enough in the presence of God until he tells you what he meant by what he said. And as I began to meditate I realized I am in a generation where we have never seen such a volume of suicide bombers and terrorists who have access to biological weapons, chemical weapons and may have access to nuclear weapons. And they are determined to release them to destroy as much life as possible on the face of the earth.

And I thought to myself I may be in the generation that is alive and remain when our Lord returns. How then should I behave? How then should I live? How earnestly should I go about what God has given me? And then the final one in Matthew 24 and I would encourage you to read it carefully that whole chapter. Because Jesus is answering the question when will the end of the age be? He said just before the final return of the Lord the gospel of this kingdom will be preached to every nation and every unknown people group.

And I am aware that in the last year and a half nearly all of the mission sending agencies of America met together. And they put out on the table every known unreached people group. Maybe that was given to them.

And they then said we will not leave this room until every unreached people group will be picked up by one of our mission groups with a commitment to take the gospel to every known unreached people group. And my mind went to Matthew 24. When will the final return of the Lord be? Well the gospel of this kingdom will be preached to every nation, every unreached people group.

And I am convinced that I may be in the generation that is alive and remain at the final return of my Lord. So we ought not to be too hard on those in Jesus first coming. How are we behaving with scriptures adequately given to us by God so that we would know the nearness of the final return of the Lord? And people have come to me and said Henry how come you are so busy? Even my wife says the only thing that I have failed at is retirement.

But and by the way my wife is here on the front row. And I know you would be interested. On June 3rd we will have been married 50 years.

If you meet my wife you will realize she is a survivor. But what a delight and a joy. Five children, four boys and God balanced our whole family with one girl.

And 14 grandchildren. Maryland's prayer life comes into being. Seven boys and seven girls.

And they are beginning to sense the call of God on their life. All four of my boys pastored, have felt the call of God in ministry. And our daughter is a career missionary in Germany with her husband.

And now our oldest grandchildren. The oldest will graduate from Southeastern Baptist Seminary this month. And the second oldest has just enrolled in Golden Gate Seminary.

And people would say you don't expect all of your grandchildren to sense the call of God into ministry or missions. And I would say I really do. And I will tell you why.

One day I was praying for my children and my grandchildren. With an unusual earnestness. And I happened to be going through Isaiah.

And while I was in that mode of prayer for my children and grandchildren. The Spirit of God brought me to Isaiah 59 verse 21. And this is what it says.

As for me, says the Lord, this is my covenant with them. Does God ever make a covenant with people? Does he ever make a covenant with a family? He did all the way through the scriptures. Do you think God wants to make a covenant with you and your family? Will God ever keep his covenant? If you know that God has given a covenant, you can look immediately for God implementing that.

And I have been doing just that. But listen to the rest of this. This is my covenant with them.

My Spirit who is upon you. And my words which I have put in your mouth. Shall not depart from your mouth.

Nor from the mouth of your descendants. Nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants. Says the Lord from this time and forevermore.

In other words. The covenant he made with me and my wife Marilyn. When he put his Spirit upon us.

And put his words in my mouth. Those, that experience will not depart from me. Nor from my children.

Nor from my grandchildren. And I took that as a promise from God. And I have looked to see how God has touched all five of our children.

And called them to serve him with all their heart. And they are right now all very active in ministry. Matter of fact, my oldest son is the president of our ministry.

Our second oldest son is the administrator of all the international requests that come to our ministry. And our third son is our pastor. And our fourth son is a professor at Dallas Baptist University.

And our daughter is a career missionary with her husband in Germany. So, this is very, very real. Does God have a love relationship with you? See that statement.

Says that God loves me enough to make a covenant with me. And our family. And he told me what it will look like.

It is an awesome thing for God to say he loves you. But at this time, Jesus said, you don't recognize the time in which you live. Let me ask you.

He wasn't talking about the Roman Empire. He was talking about the activity of God. You don't recognize when God is at work.

I ask you, where do you believe God is at work around your life? Do you know how to determine how to counsel? Do you know how to give material to people? But do you know how to recognize the activity of God right now in our nation and in our world? Because if you know what God is up to, it will determine how you live. What you believe about the activity of God will determine how you live. And how urgently you live.

If you see the activity of God, and among other things, he's moving toward the end of all things. Would you live business as usual? Would you live carelessly and casually? And if your children were asked about the

way you live, would they say, My dad and mom really do believe that the hour is short. And they are spending their life, even their finances, to extend the kingdom of God.

What would they say about the way you recognize the time? When I first encountered that, I began to look across the nation to see if God's been trying to get the attention of God's people. Now you and I know that when a nation sins, God judges that nation. He has all through history.

And he's not going to bypass America. He could say to us, there has not been a nation that I have blessed any more than this nation. From its very founding to the present day, I have never let an enemy invade this nation.

And I have blessed this nation, but they have sinned grievously against me. Now the key to revival in the nation is God's people. Do we know the hour in which we live? And I began, of course, to run this through my own life.

And I realized that it may have begun by the way I believe that God often does not bring a solitary single judgment. But he begins and progressively judges what I call remedial judgments. And I believe the first of these may have been 9-11.

When God let us know that he can pull back the curtain and let the nations who are still to this day determined to destroy this nation. He could alert God's people to what's on the mind of nations of the earth toward this nation. And for a while we prayed, but then we quit.

And when was the last time you heard an earnest pleading with God coming out of 9-11? And when God's people quit praying, he then allowed Katrina. And he brought judgment against one of the most sinful cities in the nation, New Orleans. And many were killed and destruction still in progress.

And for a while God's people prayed, and then we stopped praying. I believe God was trying to tell us something that if a nation sins, God can judge it. But when God judges a nation, it's very thorough.

And then he looked to see if there's any idolatry. And the economy. Instead of turning to God, we've turned to Wall Street.

And to investments and everything other than God. And I believe God was then looking to see if God's people understood the activity of God. God doesn't drop in.

God's been here all along. And God is the one who orchestrates the course of a nation. And for a while God's people have earnestly prayed in this broken economy.

And many are still crying out unto God with an uncertain future for this nation. And so many things converging. But how are you going to respond to the activity of God? He said to these people in his day, you know how to determine a whole lot of things, but you don't know the time in which you live.

Do you know the hour in which we live? According to the activity of God. And my question is, if God's people will not thoroughly, radically return to God in great intercession with these remedial judgments of God, what would he need to do next to get our attention? How severe would the next one be? I was talking in our church with a very knowledgeable political person. He came to me, he found me and radically got a hold of me and said he had just learned that the top Al Qaeda leadership have announced in the arena of their activity that if America does not turn to the Shiite doctrines by 2020, they're going to bring a

destruction on America like we have never imagined.

And that that is already in place and already being orchestrated in a huge way. And my mind said, I wonder whether God's people understand the activity of God in this our day. He doesn't only come to bless, he comes to judge.

And when God comes to judge, it is a serious, serious moment. And so tonight, God is saying I love you. I don't want to judge you.

I want to avoid that. Let me give you an example. When God called Moses up on the mount, you remember he turned to Moses and said, and by the way, it is said that God spoke to Moses face to face as he spoke with a friend.

Are you a friend of God? Now he's a friend of yours. But are you his friend? That passage in John, I've heard the music people singing it. We're a friend of God.

We're a friend of God. And I want to stand up and say, read the first part of that scripture. The scripture says, if you keep my commandments, then you are a friend of mine.

If you don't, you're not a friend of mine. I believe God is trying to get our attention. I believe he's trying to say, I know your future.

But I want to see if you are recognizing my presence and my activity. And if that is orchestrating the way you live, the urgency with which you live, the decisions you're making, personally, as a family, in your workplace. Are you making decisions based on what you know of the activity of God and the love of God? Well, let me read for you from Ephesians chapter 2. I want you to sense the tremendous love of God and what it looks like.

By the way, I will not fold my Bible that way. I've done this many times. And then had a lovely little old lady come up to me and say, I don't think it's scriptural to bend the Bible that way.

So, I will unbend it. Here's what the scripture says. From Ephesians chapter 2. And you, he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Do you believe that? That because of sin, you're spiritually dead. No life at all. And when you're counseling, the major problem of most of those that you're counseling is sin.

Don't ignore the nature of sin and the consequences of sin when you're counseling. When you hear this story, put that in front of you. And put it in front of them.

And if you're counseling believers. Romans 6, 23 was not written to unbelievers. The wages of sin is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. That was written to believers at Rome. And is it true in the life of believers that the wages of sin is death? Yes.

It'll bring death to your marriage. It'll bring death to your family. It'll bring death to your walk with God.

To your prayer life. To your faith life. Sin has awesome consequences.

But we're not hearing much about sin in the life of God's people in the churches today. He's talking to God's people. In which you once walked according to the course of this world.

According to the prince of the power of the air. The spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. Not the sons of obedience.

There's an awful lot of foolish talk about the role of the enemy in the life of God's people. I'll say a little more about that. I believe the scripture in 1 John that says.

Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Retranslate it. Greater is the Christ who has all authority.

And by the way did not Jesus say all authority in heaven. And all authority on earth has been given to me. Does that include authority over the enemy.

Yes. Satan is very limited in what he can do. Very limited in what he can do.

He can only do what God permits him to do. But I hear a lot of foolish talk. About being afraid of the enemy.

I'm not afraid of the enemy. Because greater is he that's in me than he that's in the world. I just believe that with all my heart.

By the way let me read the rest of this. I get sidetracked every once in a while. Among whom you all once conducted yourselves in the lust of your flesh.

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And were by nature children of wrath just as the others. But God who is rich in mercy.

Because of his great love. With which he loved us. Even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

Made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. But what did he do? Listen to this carefully.

The sadness of my heart is that. Too many of God's people are ignoring the word of God. And ignoring the truth of God.

And living a life way below what they could. If they just believed him. Now listen to what he did.

When you were an enemy of God. He loved you. But what did he do? He loved you.

Even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. Made us alive together with Christ. And raised us up together.

And made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. When does he do that? After life? Or in the here and now? Right now. Are you living from that perspective? Are you living in union with Christ Jesus in the heavenlies? Where you can see from God's perspective? And has that affected your life deeply? In love.

He did that. Then he said. That.

Why did he do it? That in ages to come. He might show the exceeding riches of his grace. In his kindness toward us.

In Christ Jesus. In other words God so loved you. When you were his enemy.

He linked you with his son. And in love he raised you up with his son. And you now sit in the heavenly realms.

Where God functions. Your heart and mind and life ought to be incredibly God-centered. Not circumstance-centered.

Not people-centered. Not problem-centered. But God-centered.

Now. Watching. My time.

My watch. It stopped and said I got lots more time. There's a. In all of the work that you're doing.

And I could say. I pastored for over 50 years. And my first.

Arena of pastoring. Was in California. During the 60s.

And I met it all. I pastored in a. Rough town. On the East Bay area of San Francisco.

Where all the mafias seemed to gather. And the gangs gathered. I want you to know.

You think you have counseling. My Lord I had counseling. And it took me over to San Quentin often.

They let me out every time. But. I found myself.

With every conceivable kind of counseling. From the murder of policemen. Just.

Incredible. Kinds of murder. I was.

Involved in counseling with them. And bringing. The grace of God and the power of God.

To transform the people. And I watched it. And I had to have my life.

Absolutely firmly. Grounded. In my relationship to Jesus Christ.

And I had to believe when he said. Henry when you sit opposite someone. I just want you to know.

That all authority in the heavenly realms. And all authority on earth. Has been given to me.

So I want you to go and do this. And I'll be with you. There'll never be a time.

That I will not be present to give you wisdom. And understanding and guidance. Even the worst of situations.

I'll be there with you. Should that set you free? The key. Is the activity of God.

And. I wanted. To read.

I got my notes here but I. Can't see where I put the. Major note. Jesus makes the statement.

And when you're counseling. I believe this with all my heart. He said.
No one. How many is included in no one? No one can come to me. Unless the father who sent me.
Draws him. And then he says. And all.
How many is included in all? All who are being taught. By God. Will come to me.
That is an active. Activity of God. In every counseling situation.
In verse 40. Or 65 of that same. That those are verse 44 and 5. Of John 6. And then we're 65.
He says. Therefore I have said to you. That no one can come to me.
Unless it has been granted. To him. By my father.
No one that you counsel. Will ever come. To Christ.
Without the activity of the father. No one. But.
God is not willing. That any should perish. And I'm always believing.
That God is actively at work. In every solitary person. That I'm talking to.
And if I'm careful to notice. The activity of God. See our problem is.
We're trying to do something for God. And asking him to come and help us. And he will quietly say.
I'm not your servant. You are my servant. And I'm the master.
And you need to be where I am. And so when I'm talking with an individual. My first thought is.
Do I recognize the activity of God. In this person's life. No one will think the thoughts of God.
No one will talk about God. No one will ask questions. About the relationship to God.
Unless. The father's at work in their heart. Causing them to want to.
And I can jump into the middle of that. And say father help me to join you. And complete.
In my relationship to this one. What you have begun. And I have watched.
Hundreds of people come to faith in Christ. Out of some of the most broken situations. I've ever known.
From some of the worst situations. In California. And I just give you one example.
I taught our church. What a church is. And you remember Jesus.
Asking Peter. Who do you say that I am. And he said you're the Christ.
The son of the living God. And then Jesus said. You could never have come to that conclusion.
Without my father's activity. Therefore on the basis of my father's activity. And the life of his own.

Convincing them that I am the Christ. The son of the living God. I'll build my church.
And the gates of hell. Will not prevail against it. And so I taught our church that.
I said. We are a creation of God. He put us together uniquely.
He put his son. Who has all authority. As head over our church.
There's no limit. To what God could do through us. If we.
Are in the right relationship to him. And can hear him. And recognize him.
And then obey him. It wasn't long after that. As we taught the church.
How to live that out. That a gang formed. A gang of young adults.
Who were angry and bitter. At their families. At their authority.
Authority at everything. And they called themselves the untouchables. And they began to terrorize.
The low rent housing area. Where we had members. So I turned to our church.
And I said. I don't know if God's going to. Want us to be involved with him.
In redeeming this group. There were about 26 of them. One Sunday night.
We had a first unit building. With a low ceiling. Metal chairs.
And tile floor. Which makes for noise. One Sunday night.
The back door slammed open. And in came 26. Leather jacketed untouchables.
They noisily got a chair. And leaned it up. Against the back wall.
And put their arms like this. And looked straight at me. I was 25 years of age.
Pastoring my first church. But everything in me said. We got you.
The spirit of God had been preparing us. For such a moment. Do you know within the next 6 to 8 months.
23 of the 26 became believers. What do you think happened to that gang? It was no more. And one of the
youth officers.
Of the law enforcement. Of our city. Took me to a gathering.
Of the law enforcement of California. And in the middle of it. He stopped and said.
I want to get your attention. In the city where I have my precinct. The highest number of calls.
And crime. Came from one part of our city. Now the lowest number of calls.
Come from that same area. And this young pastor. And his church.
Is the reason. Why everything has changed. And I thought to myself.

That's just what Jesus said. When he builds his church. That the gates of hell.
Will not stand up against. Nor be able to. Thwart.
The ongoing activity. Of the people of God. So what about.
Your life. He loves you. And I want to close with.
A very familiar passage from. Romans chapter 8. About. The love of God.
And listen carefully. Because. There's no limit.
To what the love of God. Will do. In your life.
And he is pursuing you. What shall we say then. Romans 8 31.
Well. I could go back as I always do. He who searches the heart.
Knows what the mind of the spirit is. Because he makes intercession. For the saints according to the will
of God.
For we know that all things. Work together for good to those. Who love God.
And to those who are the called. According to his purpose. For whom he foreknew.
He also predestined to be conformed. To the image of his son. That he.
Might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he predestined. Look at the love of God.
Ephesians 1 3. He says. Or 1 4. You know how. You know when God first chose you.
Before. The foundation. Of the world.
Before the foundation of the world. He knew you. And he's putting in place.
His eternal purposes. For your life. So it says.
Whom he foreknew. He also predestined to be conformed. To the image of his son.
Moreover whom he predestined. He also called. Whom he called.
He also justified. And whom he justified. These he also glorified.
What shall we say then to these things. If God is for us. Who can be against us.
He who did not spare. His own son. But delivered him up for us all.
How shall we not with. How shall he not with him. Also freely give us.
All things. Who can lay anything against. The charge of God's elect.
It is God who justified. Who is he who condemns. It is Christ who died.
And furthermore. Is also risen. Who is even at the right hand of God.

Who also makes intercession for us. Aren't you grateful. That Christ is at the right hand.
Of the father making intercession. For you. Who shall separate us.
From the love of Christ. Shall tribulation. Or distress or persecution.
Or famine or nakedness. Or peril or sword. As it is written.
For your sake. We are killed all day long. We are counted as sheep.
For the slaughter. Yet in all these things. We are more than conquerors.
Through him. Who loved us. For I am persuaded.
That neither death nor life. Nor angels nor principalities. Nor powers.
Nor things present nor things to come. Nor height nor depth. Nor any other created thing.
Shall be able to separate us. From the love of God. Which is in Christ Jesus.
Our Lord. God. Has pursued you.
In a love relationship. To himself. And.
Who will ever. Or what will ever. Be able to separate us.
From that love. Nothing. Can ever separate us.
From the love of God. Which is in Christ Jesus. The one you are looking at across.
The table. Or across the room. Who has a terrible story.
Is there any depth. To which a person. Can go.
With their sin. That the love of God. Does not go deeper.
And even though. What you are hearing. And what you are seeing.
To the human mind. Don't let that. Determine your counseling.
Your counseling. Is to lead them to understand. The incredible depth.
Of the love of God for them. And what God. Has done.
On their behalf. So that they could be made. A child of God.
And lifted to the heavenly realms. With Christ. Every solitary one.
I had that privilege. I was in California for 13 years. I met some of the worst.
Of the worst. And yet I saw. Scores come to faith in Christ.
And their lives radically changed. And when I was in Canada. I did the same thing.

So I've been where you are. Counseling. Was a major part.
But not just professional counseling. It is becoming a friend. To another.
Who leads them. To personal faith in Christ. Where God can save them radically.
That's your goal. Your goal is not to help them out of their distress. But to help them into a. Dynamic.
Life transforming relationship. To the living Christ. I have found that when they're.
Transformed by Christ. Every problem they used to have. Can be resolved very quickly.
Whether it's marriage. Whether it's the deepest kind. Of distress.
When they come to faith in Christ. They are now. Linked to the one who has all authority.
And there's nothing impossible with him. Watch for the transformation. Don't watch just for.
Change behavior. Don't rest until you see a transformed. Life.
Who has had an encounter with the living Lord. Let's take a moment to pray. Would you.
Pray for a moment in your own heart. And there may be some people. You're now dealing with.
That the Spirit of God brings to your mind. And he may be asking you. What have you told them.
What are you intending. To do. With them.
What truth about the love of God. Needs to so grip you. That it literally spills out of you.
Onto all those you counsel. Father. You let us become a friend.
To the friendless. To the broken. When death seems to invade.
And they lose their way. We have not lost our way. And you are the way.
Help us to lead them. Into the deepest moments with you. Father help us.
To see. Your word. To us.
You said. In your word you set before us life and blessing death and cursing. Choose life.
Lord we do that. We do that not only for us. For our families for our marriages for our churches.
But for all those we counsel. We want to choose life for them. Show us.
In these tumultuous times. What the word needs to be. That can set them free.
And we ask it in your name. Amen.

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