

# Devotion to Jesus - Part 1

by Michael Koulianos

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of personal devotion to Jesus and yielding to the Holy Spirit, highlighting the dangers of corporate understanding and the importance of engaging the presence of the Lord in the secret place.*

**Duration:** 1:05:19

**Scripture:** Psalm 91:1, Matthew 6:6, John 3:8, John 15:4-5, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25, Galatians 2:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Hebrews 10:25, James 4:8

**Topics:** "Jesus", "Devotion", "Presence of God"

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## Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the significance of personal devotion to Jesus in the coming year, urging the church to prioritize communion and the presence of the Lord. He highlights the need for a deeper relationship with God, warning against the dangers of relying solely on corporate worship without private devotion. Koulianos encourages the congregation to yield to the Holy Spirit and to embrace longer worship sessions, fostering an environment where the Lord can move freely. He stresses that true growth comes from a heart that seeks Jesus in the secret place, rather than merely performing in public settings.

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## Transcript

I feel like the Lord has spoken to us for this coming year. My mom and dad are here this morning. Would you welcome them? Mom and dad, would you stand? I'm gonna have my dad help with communion this morning.

We're gonna take communion. We're gonna take communion every Sunday for the entire year. And we have been, that has been a blessing.

And I don't know why the church has moved away from receiving the body and blood of Jesus, but it's really to our detriment. And I think the church is missing out on so much and is suffering in so many areas because we don't receive the body and blood of Jesus. But that's not gonna happen here.

Amen? And may that change all over the world. Take your Bibles to Psalm 91. I don't have a New Year's message for you.

I'm just not that guy. I kinda do, actually. Today, I'm gonna talk to you about the presence of the Lord.

And I do believe, if you are taking notes, I'm gonna have you write down a few things. If you're not, take them, change your mind. Winston Newton said, the only thing smarter than you is a piece of paper.

It never forgets. So you can type it in your phone. Don't scroll, and may the Lord deal with you.

And this is for our church family, many of you who watch from around the world, we consider you to be our family as well. You are part of this family. So thank you for tuning in.

I just got back from Dallas. I was at Upper Room's end-of-the-year event. And so many people came up to me and thanking all of us, not just me, but thanking our church community for worshiping with such a radical heart.

I met one of the speakers and worship leaders said, we watch you every single Sunday. And it's certainly not me. It's not my teaching.

It's what the Lord's doing here. I said, it's what the Lord's doing here. That being said, I feel like the Lord is giving us direction for the year and for our lives.

So I want you to write this down before we read Psalm 91. This is the year of personal devotion to Jesus. Personal devotion.

This is the year of spending time with the bridegroom. Now, every year should be this, but I feel the Lord accentuating this to us, reminding us. This is the year of yielding to the Holy Spirit together as a church family in the corporate setting.

So I just want to say there will probably be many Sundays that were much like this morning. Now, most churches, I think, sing for 22 to 30 minutes every Sunday and actually have it timed. That confuses me to the core.

It's to say that everything else we have to do is more important than worship, which is, I just don't get it. And it actually grows the numbers, but it doesn't grow the church. It doesn't truly grow the church because not every person in the seats is a saint.

Amen? How many of you know this is the Lord's house? I have a lot of friends in prayer house environments. And one of the things I've been telling them for a year to two years now is, you don't get to call it a house of prayer if it's not first his house because we don't know how to pray. That's what the Bible says.

We know not, Paul said, how to pray. I'm glad the sentence doesn't end there. But the spirit, so the answer is the spirit.

The first thing we need to do is be a part of a church community that is the Lord's. Yes? Must belong to the Lord. And that is conditional.

Must meet certain conditions for a people to be the church. Amen? Amen? Part of that is learning to yield to the Holy Spirit. And giving the Holy Spirit lordship over the gathering.

I mean, I have been walking with the Lord now since I was 12, so for seven years. And it's been a long seven years. All right? I've been walking with the Lord now for 33 years.

I have so much to learn in the spirit. But I've experienced a good bit in the spirit. And what I can say to you is, it is really hard to predict him.

While, I should say, at the entire time, he remains faithful and constant. But to think that when we walk through these doors that we know exactly what the Lord will do to the minute is a farce. Because Jesus says he is like the wind in John chapter three.

You cannot see him, but you see the results of his movement. He does what he wants. How many of you know the Holy Spirit is as much God as the Father and the Son? And he moves according to his will and his choosing.

And this is the year where we're gonna take risks together as a church family and watch the Lord move. I said, we're gonna watch the Lord move. I don't want him to pass us by.

And he, you cannot live on yesterday's man as grateful. We need to be thankful for 2022. What God did in this house is, I mean, I don't even know where to begin.

The fact that we're here in this building is, I don't know what to say. It doesn't seem real for me. I know Ms. Debbie, Nathan and Kathleen, Jess, our family.

This is a very special place, and I can't believe we're sitting in this room. That's just one of many. What he's done in our hearts, what he did at Jesus 22.

We now own 30 acres of land. We're breaking ground in the spring. The Lord has done wonderful things.

We have the best, wild, most wild, hungry student body on planet earth. They keep me young, they keep me young, and keep me positioned before the Lord. What a gift all of you are.

Our worship team is growing. I don't know, how many musicians and vocalists are there? Just everything. 40 to 50, not including high school students.

The House of Bethany. The Lord is bringing these Levitical hearts. What an honor, what an honor to watch all that.

Yeah, it's beautiful, and it's gonna continue. Amen? We have much to be thankful for. Our health, gosh, I can talk.

I'm so grateful for that word. I'm so thankful for that. I'm very thankful for that, Jesus.

Jesus. Jessie had a skin cancer removed off her scalp in 2022. That was a difficult time, but the Lord is good.

We're standing, we're standing, amen? The Lord is touching our youth. By the way, I'm coming. I felt from the Lord in prayer that I need to come and start preaching there.

So if you want your children to get fried and come back super nice, send them. I used to be afraid of youth, not to preach to them, because they just stare at you, like some of you adults are doing right now. If you think you walked in the church that'll perform for you and make you happy, it's the wrong church, it's the wrong place.

We love you, but we don't jump out of Cracker Jack boxes to entertain you. We don't do that. I see some of you right now looking at me like that.

All that to say, the youth are gonna get touched deeply this year, and we're gonna follow them. We're gonna follow the kids. For such is the kingdom, the Bible says.

Suffer not the children to come unto me, for such is the kingdom. In other words, there is an element of King Jesus, a place in him that you cannot experience outside of hanging out with children and young people. Amen? So there's a lot that's gonna happen in 2022.

The Lord spoke to me in a dream last week for about four or five hours. Woke me up at three, I thought it was nine a.m. I thought I overslept, I got up real fast. I had enough energy to mow the lawn, but I didn't do it, babe.

I'm shocked that's not on her list. I woke up just filled with energy, and I thought, what is going on? I overslept, I looked at the clock, it was three. And then I went and spent time with the Lord, and he began to talk to me about this coming year, where we should go, the cities we should go to, who should go, started to see into our worship moments.

I saw our choir ministering to the Lord in a beautiful way in different cities. I can't unveil that yet, I don't wanna roll that out, because we haven't even had our first staff meeting of the year, which is Wednesday. So Carla would kill me if I told all of you before the staff, but it is gonna be a very sacred, special year.

We're gonna watch the wind of the Holy Spirit rip through America and other nations. Amen? Come on. So this will be the year of yielding of the Holy Spirit together.

We're gonna have really long worship sets. I'm just telling you now, I can feel it and see it. You're like, we just went for an hour and 12 minutes.

We're gonna have longer ones. Yeah, and the clock just is not the Lord here. It's good theology, I think.

The clock is not the Lord. And the reason I say I don't want the Lord to pass me by is, Oral Roberts once says, the anointing is either coming to you or passing by you. I wanna position myself to be touched by the Lord.

And I don't know exactly what the price is, but I do know he's telling us to die to our own structure. Amen? Amen. All right, let's get into Psalm 91 regarding this being the year of devotion to Jesus.

So go to Psalm 91 and then just look back up at me once you're there. Well, there are a few churches that were, well, there are many arising now. Actually, I'm seeing more and more leaders arise who are realizing the absolute necessity to have Jesus in our midst as Lord of the church.

If someone could kill their phone, that would be a great blessing. But there's a danger, listen carefully. There is a danger that lies on the other side of the road.

The danger is to gain, listen, listen carefully, the corporate understanding. When I say corporate, I mean our gathering, the understanding of how God moves in a gathering. There's a danger in gaining the language and understanding of the corporate setting and it not be undergirded with private devotion.

Amen? Amen? Okay, example. Does the Bible teach? We actually have a course on this at Jesus School where I teach on how to gather. It's important.

That's what we've been doing here for a few years is we gather with what we believe the scriptures teach and the promise of those scriptures is the Lord himself and so that's why we gather. So the Lord comes, amen? Now, one of the truths, two of them, I should say, regarding the corporate gathering and experiencing the presence of Jesus is thanksgiving and praise. I will enter his gates with? Thanksgiving.

In my heart, I will enter his courts with? All right, now thanksgiving is never meant to be silent in the corporate setting because it's called thanksgiving. You have to give it away. So you can't just sit and soak when the Lord wants you to declare it, right? And that's some of the stuff we've learned.

That's just thanks. It's good to have a heart filled with thanks but he's asking for thanksgiving. So if you have a lamb, if you were alive in the biblical times and he wanted that lamb to be offered, you don't just get to cuddle with it as your pet your whole life.

That's an example between having a thankful heart and the difference between that and thanksgiving. You've got to offer it. It's got to be sacrificial.

There has to be an element of death in it and that's why praise is called the sacrifice of praise. So we enter with thanksgiving. We enter his courts with praise.

Praise is all about, listen carefully, what the Lord has done, his great and mighty acts. Biblically and yeah, personally, of course, you can praise the Lord for all he's done in your life but I'd like to encourage you to go beyond and further back than just your own personal testimony and begin to look at the scriptures and allow the revelation of the scriptures to cause you to have really a life filled with praise. All right, now listen carefully.

But if you start believing that you can just thank him and praise him really quickly and that he'll be in your midst just the way you want him to be, that is to make the structure the Lord and not the person. You can't just say, I'm gonna sing two songs that have lyrics filled with thanksgiving and two praise songs. That does not automatically guarantee that the manifest presence of the Lord will be there.

That's the danger, listen carefully. There's a danger there. It's actually religion.

It becomes religion in the settings that actually speak against religion. We adapt our own religion when we think that we've got the formula that draws the Lord because we're missing one very important key. He is a person.

He's a person with feelings and desires and he exists beyond time. That means he's on his own clock. So to think that he enters every time with the same shout is religion.

To think that he enters every time with the same dance or with the same anything is religion. He refuses, listen, he refuses to be robotic. As I said earlier, he is the most consistent and the most new at the same time.

So we don't just learn this structure. I know what I'll do. I'll just do some thanksgiving and praise and the Lord will manifest himself.

He's not a genie. No, no, no, no. We're missing one very important, two very important keys.

One, he's a person and two, death. Death to self invites him. Death to self invites him.

The cross, the cross invites him. The cross-filled life invites him because the self-denial, death to self is the very platform by which he raises us and moves us daily. Are you tracking with me? So it's really important that we don't become experts at his corporate movement and amateurs regarding his private touch.

That's very dangerous and I see it everywhere. When we have, I'm just being honest, when we have guest speakers or worship teams like at our events, I watch them when they're not on the platform like a hawk. We have no idea, Jesse will tell you.

I usually do it with a smile. Michael's so quiet and shy, he's always worshiping and I'm watching him. Young, old, I don't care because in that environment, I have a responsibility.

And if you don't worship when you're not leading, you'll probably never come back again because it tells me something about you. It tells me who you really are. And if you're really good here, but you're not engaged 20 feet away when somebody else is here, it tells me something about your heart, about your reality.

And if people say, man, what is with those events? Why does God come every time? Actually, Jess posted something this week and the post was, it was a video. I don't know, some little cool social media thing he did. But, oh, who did it? Well, anyways, it was on you.

It was on your thing. It was all of our speakers worshiping, like sitting at their seats or standing there. None of them had the platform, another team did and they were worshiping like they did.

That, that right there tells you why the Lord moves in the crowd. Those are trusted vessels. So there's a big difference between being a mouthpiece and a vessel.

I don't wanna just be a mouthpiece. That's part of the ministry. I wanna be a vessel that carries the Lord wherever I go, whether I'm in front of people or not.

Does that make sense to you? Just gotta be real careful, real careful that you're not really good here and an amateur when you shut the door. In fact, if I could choose between the two, it would be that you would be a master in the secret place and an amateur up here. Because we can work with that up here.

And you don't just have to be on the worship team or the preaching team. Do you know ushers here actually have an authority that's delegated? Some people don't like to listen to ushers. They don't like to listen to me.

It's a complete blindness to the Lord and his kingdom and how he operates. Ushers are here to serve you, yes. They actually carry an authority.

Those praying up here have an authority, should be honored, right? And in heaven, if I were a betting man, amen. We may see a lot of ushers closer to the throne than some of the best speakers. Amen.

What we're looking for is reality, authenticity. And this is 2023. God wants to allure you, allure you into the secret place to teach you not only about himself, to teach you himself.

Psalms 91. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God.

In him will I trust. All right, let's look at the progression here. He who dwells, say dwelling.

Dwelling. He who dwells in the secret place, okay. Notice the Lord is not looking for visitors in the secret place.

I'm telling you so many of your issues, I'm not gonna say your life's gonna be just easy, you'll never be persecuted, never be attacked. I'm not saying any of that. But I am saying that so many of your issues will dissolve in his glory if you build a dwelling in secret.

Most of us visit secret. Now the thing about the life of secrecy, listen carefully, is that it's like a coliseum that slays idols. But people who are always grasping to be recognized, grasping for their gifting to be recognized, I'm not saying any of you are here.

I'm really not, but I'm sure we all deal with that. But that sort of thing, even good things, we want our ministry to be honored, we want this, we want that. Typically, not typically, always, it is a sign of the lack of satisfaction that's found in private.

It's because no pastor can give you what Jesus can give you in private. Are you tracking with me? You know, like when Pamela Gray, her family got so touched in 2022. It's been a good year for you.

When we baptized Joseph, I don't know, when you almost stomped my foot off, remember? Did the Pentecostal dance, it was awesome. Highlight of my year. Do you know what I saw in her? You know why she worshiped that way? Because it was like a pent-up flood of what had been sowed in secret.

She now saw it manifest in public. There's nothing left to do but to worship in those moments. So the secret place, listen, it is a coliseum that destroys the enemies of the soul.

The monsters of the flesh die there. They're destroyed there. Because when you're alone, titles die.

The Lord has never called me pastor. Never. And if you're spending a lot of time in there, but there's not a nature exchange in there, something's wrong in there.

If you're less like Jesus, after spending hours in there, something's wrong in there. And that's what I want to help you with. Because this is literally the spring, the source, the source of the unlimited aquifer that fuels the river of life, that carries you throughout this life.

It is being with Jesus alone. Now, we have a room where we meet at Jesus School called the Bethany Room. When the building is done, we will have the Bethany House.

It's beautiful. And that will be where people can gather and pray. This has been part of our DNA since we started Jesus School.

Every Thursday, you'll notice, is not a teaching day. It is completely worship and prayer and the receiving of communion, and then we go out and preach the gospel on the streets. We had to give a day to the Lord.

Mandatory for staff, no phone calls allowed. You cannot just get ministry work done. I can't tell you of the dozens of conversations that have come my way regarding we are losing out and missing out on

productivity.

What is the point of productivity if there's no oil on it? I mean, what's the greatest thing you can produce but a heart that loves the Lord? So what are we declaring when the staff shuts down on Thursdays and seeks the Lord? We're declaring He is more important to us than our assignment. Because the assignment isn't accepted if the heart isn't burning. Are you following me? Now, that's gonna increase in the near future to three days, not for our staff, but there'll be three days where people can come and be with the Lord.

That's a beautiful thing, because we learn to engage the presence of the Lord, we learn to minister to the Lord. For a worshiper or a musician or a vocalist or somebody who's working on the media team or a dancer, that is an amazing opportunity to lose the desire to perform. Now, the trailer's been full, that we meet in a little trailer, which I love.

I love that it's not fancy. People have been coming. It's been beautiful.

But there'll be mornings where it's not full. It's no less beautiful. Because our attendance doesn't determine success.

The Lord's arrival and remaining determines success. Amen? Now, so there'll be, in the near future, more opportunity to do that. But what's the trap? The trap is that that replaces personal devotion.

And I have seen that happen in prayer settings, house of prayer settings. I'm not talking about IHOP. Mike Bickle's one of my dear friends.

Gosh, I mean, have we not all been so blessed when he joins us and teaches here? I'm not talking about the brand or the actual ministry. I'm talking about ministries that value the house of prayer. The danger is that they are very good at the gathering and very weak at the secret place.

And that creates an idol in the gathering. It creates an assumption that isn't true. And what you'll notice is the lack of understanding, listen carefully, how to go deep into the glory.

How to go deep into the glory. I'm talking about something here that might even sound like a foreign language to many of you. Many of you here have never been in the manifest presence of Jesus.

You think you have. And maybe the way you rated it is the room got loud or everyone had their hands up or the video had 50 million views. That's not the glory.

I'm talking about something more holy than words can give justice to. I grew up in the glory of God right here in my room. I know his touch.

And he has come our way that way three or four times this year. But most people, most churches settle short because they've not been there in private. They don't know what he smells like.

They don't know what he feels like. They don't know. If you think I'm talking about an actual fragrance, I'm not.

You have to track with me. But they don't know that sound. That hush.

Or that eruption of praise where 2,000 people get possessed by God in a moment like that. You can't just dial that up. You can't pick the right set like we experienced on Friday night at the pastor's conference.

You can't just, it's not about the set. It's about decades of history of thousands of lives saying yes in private. All of a sudden it crescendos like a pent up flood and God rewards us with himself.

Because you can't respond that way outside the presence of the spirit. How can 2,000 people respond the way they did at the same moment for almost a half hour? How do you teach that? That's the Holy Spirit making sure that when the King of glory walks in the room, Jesus himself, that he receives the worship that's due his name. He possesses a people.

They become living epistles in that moment. And he makes sure that the second person of the Godhead is rightly worshipped. That's what happened that night.

But you don't even get near there. You don't even get within 100 miles of that without history. Not talking about healing.

Not as much as I'm grateful for the word of knowledge that came to this precious family. And they are too. But you can do that and not spend time with Jesus.

So the secret place, listen, must become a dwelling. A dwelling. Now, he who dwells in the secret place of the most high.

Give me 10 extra minutes this morning. I said I would never do that again. Let's stay in the spirit this morning.

Forgive me. It's the new year, yeah. Grace and mercy, all right.

He who dwells, so he who lives there. In the secret place, those are Jesus' words in the gospel of Matthew. I say it every time we have an altar call.

Go in your room and close the door. And pray to your father who's in secret. And your father who dwells, hold on.

There's somebody else dwelling there too? Do you miss that? Remember, I'm on 50% hearing because of this dumb in-ear. That has me on it, by the way, swinging a golf club. It actually does.

There's an emblem of me hitting a golf ball on my in-ear. I thought I'd be humble and do that for you. I want you to see the connection here.

He who dwells, speaking of us, is invited into a place where somebody else is dwelling. Your father who dwells in secret. Go into your room, Jesus said, and close the door.

For your father who dwells in secret will reward you openly. I'm here to tell you, if you go into secret, you will meet the other one who dwells in secret. The father lives in a place called secrecy.

The more secrets you have between you and the Lord that he has instructed you to keep, the stronger the dwelling place will be. If everything you get in secret, you post, you're weakening the structure. You're weakening the culture of trust between you and your father.

He lives in the realm of secrecy. There's certain things you can talk about, but certain things that people will never know until you die and your children open up your heart. Your prayer journal.

See, the church needs to become less cheap and more holy. I don't know how else to say that. Maybe I'm doing a good job or not, but we need that mystery on us again, that saintliness, that holy glow that the apostles had when it says that the church was even afraid to eat with them at certain days because there was such power flowing through them.

There was a mystery on them. And there's a mystery that comes upon us that is alluring, that's endearing, that's inviting when somebody looks at you and their hearts think, I know he knows more than he's sharing with us, and that's awesome. Right? That pulls you.

It makes you wanna be discipled by someone when you can hear, even though they're not sharing the, they're not sharing the subject, they're not sharing it in detail, you hear the fragrance on them. You can hear depth on them. You hear a well in them.

Yes or no? Okay, that's what I'm talking about. That is only found in secret. Now listen, your Father dwells there.

Now most people who don't pray, listen carefully, claim the second line of verse one. I abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I don't need to spend time with Jesus alone.

I am always in prayer. Liar. Impossible.

If the Bible's true, that's impossible, because secret dwelling precedes abiding. You can't just spend Tuesday at the coffee shop with Jesus if you didn't spend Tuesday morning in your bedroom with Jesus. Doesn't work that way.

And I've heard people say, oh, I heard a man of God say, I asked him, do you pray? And the answer was, no, no, I'm always in prayer. That's not what the Bible teaches. So listen carefully.

The secret place is the breeding ground for the abiding life. In John 15, just for the sake of time, we don't have to turn there, but Jesus said that we are to abide in him and his words in us. And if that happens, whatever we ask, he will do it.

And that one has thrown people off so many times. It's like, wait, is he saying there, if I ask for a Bentley with 24s on it, and my name engraved in the back, I can just do that and I'll get it? No, no, no. What happens is, is when his words abide in you and you abide in him, you ask for the right stuff at the right time because a relationship has been birthed in secret.

As I said earlier, in secret, there's nobody to impress. What are you gonna do for him in the moment that causes him to go, wow. Biblically, there are a few things that cause him to go, wow.

Great faith and no faith, or lack of it. He marveled at the unbelief of the disciples and marveled at the faith of the Gentiles. But when we step out in faith and the Lord moves through the gifts of the spirit, that doesn't wow him.

He's doing it. The Lord will never ask you how to do something. Wow, amazing gift you have there, Michael.

Don't worry where you got it. How did you pull that one off? That's not how it works. Now, listen carefully.

How many of you want to sense the Lord's presence in a traffic jam on I-4? It's when we need it most. Now, I'm not saying this is me, all right? Let's just say your daughter's birthday was in August. Just say that when it's 400 degrees here.

It feels like Vietnam in the jungle or something. You're in a rainforest. And again, I would have no experience with what I'm saying right now.

And let's just say your daughter, when she was growing up, wanted to spend that midday in August at Disney every year. Well, let's just say you were a man of God. Again, this is all very theoretical.

And you were a man of God, yet your flesh was being so tested. And you were trying to figure out why you had to drive an hour and 10 minutes to get there and fight the traffic, and then pay so much money to get in to suffer. And let's just say you were frustrated at your wife for not changing your daughter's mind about where she'd like to go for her birthday.

And let's just say it was \$25 for a turkey drumstick and \$15 for a Mickey ice cream. All of this, again, very theoretical. I've never had any trauma.

What do you do when, instead of loving people, you want every foreigner in the park to fly home and stop jamming up the lines? And then the Lord whispers to you, that's why you don't have a state tax. Stop whining. Okay, Lord, keep them here for a little bit.

What do you do in those moments? You abide. Abide. It's the only way to make it through such a crucible.

Really, really though, in moments where your flesh is skyrocketing, what's the remedy? But to abide in the manifest presence of Jesus. And this is what I'm saying. If you don't have a well, a dwelling place that has been constructed and built day after day, listen carefully, you do not take a day off.

This isn't works, this is life. Why would you want a day outside of his glory? Why would you? This isn't me saying you're bad if you don't. No, no, I'm just asking the question.

If you know who Jesus is, why would anyone not want to be with him? He's life. He fills your being with life, fills your cells with life, gives you a reason to live, a reason to wake up in the morning. He sets you free.

You start loving people who are unlovable. You start to fly higher than the snake line, higher than the pain line. You wonder, you look at your life, you go through all of these things.

You stand there with joy and you can laugh and enjoy your family. And when everything in the natural is hitting you, it's punching against you. All of these things that the world would go, man, wait, y'all are gonna build that building? No, the Lord's gonna build the building.

We're gonna watch him do it. I said, we're gonna watch him do it. All of these things that look like pressure, you can still laugh in the midst of them.

Why? Because you're eating food the world doesn't know about. You have got to be with Jesus if you want to love him. Now, once I do, that abiding place is constructed.

But it must be daily bread. Yeah, I will tell you. I'm not talking about like a plane, like if you're sick.

But if you start consistently hardening your heart and your neck to the pull of the Lord to be with him daily, eventually the moments where you used to feel him throughout the day, you will not. You will not sense his presence. And that's where the flesh strengthens.

Now, that's the danger of becoming very good in this room. If the nations are being fed, there's a well here, there's no doubt. And I'm honored just to be a small part of it.

I'm just one of you who has the honor of ushering you to Jesus. But there's a danger, and that's what I want us to guard against. It's getting really good here, and inconsistent in private.

We can't do it. Let me tell you somebody who did that. Samson.

Samson. Remember when Delilah finally cut his hair through her nagging, by the way. No, really, really, that's what the enemy does, is he consistently pokes at your armor through victim-like tone.

Pastors, if you're watching, doesn't matter how many people are in pain around you, don't you dare leave the presence of Jesus thinking that you're helping the people. He pokes away at that armor and weakens. Finally, finally Samson is worn out by the consistent assault of the enemy.

What does he do? He gives away his secret. He shares with Delilah what was between him and the Lord. And she shaves his hair, and the hair always speaks of the glory, not the gifting.

The glory lifts, the moisture lifts, and when the moisture lifts, the anointing follows. Now what does Samson try to do when he wakes up? The Bible says he attempted to shake off the Philistines, that's public, like he did before. Listen to the next few words.

But he did not know the Lord had left him. Wow, what does that look like here? That looks like not spending time with Jesus all week long. Let's just say you're on the worship team.

You're too busy to be with the Lord. And you come up here. Well, we're all on the worship team after Jeremy's wedding ceremony, so this is for all of us.

We walk in, you walk into the church, haven't spent time with the Lord, but we come in here, and we become products of what the Lord is doing in the room, and we start believing that if we do the exact same thing every time, the Lord will come our way just that way. And we do what Samson did in public. We shake off like we did before, not knowing the Lord's not in it.

Now, here's the thing about the Lord. He comes with pomp and circumstance. He comes with fire, he comes with wind, but he leaves gently.

I'm not talking about that indwelling presence inside of you. No, no, Jesus said, I'm with you always. I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about his abiding glory on us as a people. All right, write this down. Whoever or whatever you give the secret place away to will be the very person or thing that attacks your destiny in God.

Say it again. Whoever or whatever you give your secret place away to will be the very thing or person that comes to steal your destiny in God. Say it, give me Bible.

Say it, give me Bible. All right. Hezekiah invites the Babylonian envoy to see the treasure of the Lord.

He takes people who are outside the covenant into the secret treasury of the Lord that's filled with treasure, speaks of the secret places of God. The treasures of God, the treasures of the spirit. What happens? Isaiah comes back and says, who'd you just bring in here? And he said, the Babylonian envoy.

What did Isaiah prophesy? They're coming. Who conquered Israel? The Babylonians. You say, well, how could Instagram do that to my life? Oh, go compare yourself long enough.

See if jealousy doesn't sit in. Go follow somebody else's life long enough. See if you don't lose God's voice on your direction.

That's right. Scroll on your phone rather than seeking the Lord. See if your eyes shine and your face is glistening.

See if it's not the voices on Instagram. You prioritize those social media platforms enough. Every time somebody takes a shot at you on there, it'll crush you.

If you drink from the fountain of the Lord, you fly above all that stuff. I'll give you another example. Where does Judas betray Jesus? In the garden.

The Lord's secret place of prayer. Want more? I just gave you Samson. How about David? Where did David bring Delilah into? Sorry, where did David bring Bathsheba into? The king's chamber.

Who caused judgment in David's kingdom? How did he lose his next child? Through Bathsheba. Whoever or whatever. It'll happen every single time.

Solomon brings foreign wives into his kingdom. Well, who shows up and fills the temple? Foreign gods. The gods of the wives fill the holy place.

God has to judge the kingdom. Whoever or whatever. You choose in place of being alone with Jesus will come your way to have its way in your life.

Refuse it. Gotta refuse it. What's that look like? You go into secret with your Bible.

If you're using a device, I do use my iPad to read certain versions. Put the thing on airplane mode. Put it on airplane mode.

You cannot, you can't see the Lord with one eye. He's too marvelous. He won't let himself be experienced with a half-hearted approach.

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. The 100% of your meditation, of your thinking, of your beholding must be upon Jesus if you want to see and behold the Lord. Amen? Ludie, can you help me? I want to, I want this morning to be a morning of consecration.

It's really the same heartbeat of this devotion. Dad, would you come up here? Do you all have your communion? Okay, can we pass out? Do we have the communion to pass out? Let's do that. Here, Dad.

Let's go down here, actually. I want us to listen carefully. If we could actually just hold our breath.

Hold off on passing it out right now, just for one second, sorry. I want us to, just every head bowed and eye closed, if you don't mind. I want us to come to the Lord this morning.

And based on the prayer, or the invitation I gave earlier, for those who are struggling with addiction and bondage and all of these things, I have the sense in my heart that many of you need to just be set free completely, meet Jesus for the first time, or come back to Jesus. Maybe some of you have drifted, you've fallen away, and the Lord is here in his love to reach out and pull you here to himself. And imagine receiving communion today, his precious body and blood, as a liberated, redeemed son or daughter of the Lord himself.

There's power in that communion. But this meal is for the family of God. And I cannot, as a pastor, serve the meal without at least sharing the gospel with you.

Jesus longs to set you free. He suffered and died, he's alive today, he's here in this room, and you can leave today, listen carefully, not having the penalty of your sin, with the stain of your sin being removed, the weight of your sin, the power of your sin can be broken by coming to the Lord Jesus. Now, for those of you who were walking with the Lord or haven't been walking as closely as you'd like, I wanna open the altars for you as well.

Maybe your heart's just not burning like it used to be. Maybe you don't, you haven't been reading the scriptures, you have no hunger for God, or maybe the hunger for God is at a bare minimum. This is for you today, this is for you today.

That's a dangerous ground, it's a dangerous ground when the heart starts hardening and the neck starts stiffening, and I believe the Lord brought you into this room this morning to touch your life. Actually, would everyone stand please? If while I'm speaking, you say, Michael, that's me, that's me, I wanna be free, or I wanna come back to the Lord, I want you to lift your hand quickly and put it up. Thank you, Father.

If you raised your hand or wish you did, listen carefully, or you're with someone, maybe you brought them here and they need the Lord, I want you to look at them right now and say, look, today is your day, come to Jesus, I'm gonna go with you. Or you don't even have to say all that, just say, I'll go with you, and get down here. If you raised your hand or you wish you did, come down here, and I wanna pray with you.

Come on, many of you raised your hands, just come, come. There's no shame, there's no shame. Thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord, come.

Oh, come on, guys, this is so wonderful. Come, come, come, there's no shame here, none at all. I want the teams to get around them as they're coming, get around them, guys.

Come on, these front rows, I want you to stand around them. Yes, thank the Lord. Guys, can we give the Lord praise? You're gonna take communion here at the altar.

And it's gonna be beautiful for you. Oh, Father, can we pray this out loud? Heavenly Father, thank you for your mercy, for your grace, for your love, for your kindness. You're holy, and I've sinned against you.

I walked away from you. Forgive me, I know you hear me. You promised to.

And so I confess my sins, and they are many. But your blood is powerful enough to cleanse everything, all of my shortcomings, all of my failures. Set me free this morning.

Deliver me from sin. Deliver me from the devil. Deliver me from myself.

And let me see Jesus, my precious Lord, my Savior. Jesus, I declare, because I believe in my heart, that you are the Holy Son of God, who suffered and died to take my sin away, and to bring me to you, to restore me to the Father. To restore me to the Father.

Thank you for dying. Thank you for your blood. Jesus, I believe that you're alive today, and that you're coming back again to rule and reign forever.

Holy, holy Son of God, receive me as a living sacrifice, as I receive you, in Jesus' name. Jesus Christ is my all in all. Amen.

Now, for those of you who came forward, just lift your hands. Actually, it's for the whole house. Everyone, just lift your hands.

Lord, clothe them, clothe them, clothe them in the precious presence of the Holy Spirit. From front to back, this entire room, clothed in the presence of the wonderful Holy Spirit. Empower them, Lord, to live this life, a life of victory, a life of peace and joy and strength, and to the very end, in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Can we give the Lord praise? Thank you, Lord. Now, listen, listen.

Yes, thank you, Lord. Those of you who came forward, inconsistency is not your destiny. It's not your portion.

That's a lie. You can live in a greater strength and glory every single day, and we wanna help you do that. All of you should have received a pamphlet.

If not, make sure they did, guys. Some don't have it. Maybe they put it in their pocket.

If you didn't get one and you came forward, just, would you wave at us? I see some of you don't have one. Yeah, let's make sure everybody gets it. Look, in that pamphlet, that's not a promo on our church.

Those are the keys to living a victorious life in Jesus. This will change you and your family and the generations after you. I think this precious young lady needs one as well.

All of you, I want you to look through that pamphlet, and I want you to reach out to us and connect with us. We have a table in the lobby that gives us the opportunity to walk with you and to serve you, to make sure you're baptized in water and trained in the word of God and that you learn to live with other believers and to share your faith. This is very important.

And I want that part just to start today. I want you to tell somebody what happened to you here. Tell them about Jesus.

I want you to leave here, start the new year telling somebody about Jesus today, okay? The moment you leave, amen? Isn't this wonderful? Can we thank the Lord, guys? Okay, can we get these sweet people a communion, please? They're gonna receive communion up here and it's gonna be beautiful. I'll do it, yeah. I need to hear from my dad.

Dad, you wanna come up here? You can use that. This is wonderful. Start our year receiving the body and blood of Jesus.

I'll do the body. Now, Jesus said we should do this often. Often.

In remembrance of him. And that word remembrance means to relive, to meditate on, to experience in the heart. So right now, can we just close our eyes? Now, Father, you told us to examine ourselves.

And we do ask you to cleanse us, wash us clean before we receive your precious body and blood. Cleanse us, Lord, of all we do, all we've done. Thank you for your grace and your mercy.

Now, Lord, we remember when you told your disciples, take, eat, this is my body. This bread, it's my body that is broken for you. Take and eat it in remembrance of me.

And your body brings healing. Your body brings union with you. Your body brings strength.

Your word says, I am the bread who comes down from heaven. You said, I am the living bread. So, Lord, fill us today with your very presence as we receive the body, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We break it now and lift it because you were lifted on the cross and your body was torn. We break it. And now we receive in Jesus' mighty name that every person who's broken in this room, physically, emotionally, in the heart, that you would be whole in the name of Jesus.

Let's receive it. Thank you, Lord. Praise you, Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus. We love you, Lord. We love you, Jesus.

Thank you, Lord. I'm reminded when Jesus said, unless you eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, you cannot have a part with me. And many of those who gathered around him said that this saying was a hard saying.

And they left. But there were those who remained with him. And Jesus turned to them and said, what about you? And they said, Lord, where will we go? You have the words to eternal life.

I thank you for your presence, Lord. Yes, Lord. I thank you that even at this moment, your eyes are going to and fro this place, seeking to make yourself strong in those who are loyal to him.

When I behold this cup, I behold your tangible evidence of your loyalty to us, Lord. And we receive the blood of your new covenant as the expression of our honor and our esteem for your loyalty. For the life of the flesh is in the blood.

Amen. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Let's receive it.

Thank you, Lord. And whenever I receive, I always just wait there for a moment. Never wanna just rush through that.

Thank you for your blood. Let's just thank him. Thank you for the blood.

Thank you for the blood. We can't believe that you bled for us. You bled, you gave your life for us.

What a wonder, what a wonder. Thank you. Oh, can we just thank him in the heart? Thank you, thank you, thank you for your holy body and blood.

Now, Father, clothe the people in your presence today. Wrap them in your glory. Keep them, keep them in the will of God.

Let this be the greatest year of our lives as a church family. Thank you for all you did among us, but we thank you for more. Thank you for more.

Come and live with us. Can we say that? Say, come and live with us. Say it again, come and live with us.

Father, I know you hear this. Come and live with us. Say it again, come and live with us.

Say it again, come and live with us. Say it again, church, come on. Come and live with us.

Oh, Lord, come and live with us right here. Come, say it again. Come and live with us.

You hear your people, Lord. That's our desire here, that you'd make this your home. In Jesus' name.

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