

# Protect Your Testimony

by Michael Koulianos

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*Protecting your testimony means protecting the purity of God's history in your life and not compromising for temporal gain.*

**Duration:** 56:07

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:8-9, Genesis 25:19-34, Exodus 10:3-8, Matthew 4:8-10, John 6:12-15

**Topics:** "Testimony", "Protecting Your Testimony", "The Importance of Integrity"

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## Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the importance of protecting one's testimony, which encompasses not only the story of salvation but also the ongoing work of God in our lives. He warns against compromising our faith for temporary gains, using biblical examples like Esau selling his birthright and the temptations faced by Jesus. Koulianos encourages believers to remain satisfied in God's presence, as true fulfillment comes from Him, not from worldly pleasures or success. He stresses that our calling and testimony should be rooted in a deep relationship with God, leading to a life that reflects His glory and love.

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## Transcript

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone. Is everybody grateful for the blood of Jesus? And we're going to have a prayer line to rebuke those extra pounds. You know, we're a little quiet in the first few songs.

You were in a carb coma. We broke through, though. Thank you, Jesus.

Give the Lord praise one more time. That was glorious. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Jesus. All right, Jessica's not here this morning. My son is in a golf tournament in Jacksonville.

And I'm not there, which proves that I love you. But pray for me. Theo's like, what's mom going to do? She's going to get you there.

He's like, okay. But Jess sends her love. She's at the tournament.

And I'm not. You already heard that. Oh, Jesus 21.

I think 300 or 400 registered in the last day or two or something. So people are flying in from all over. Can we throw up that slide? If you haven't registered, you're going to be sorry if you wait.

It is already going to be jam-packed. And we're doing whatever we need to do to get as many people as possible in. I want the lost to hear the glorious gospel.

Where is Carla? Oh, she had to go in the back. I have to ask permission to do something. So I won't do it without Carlos.

Yeah, I won't let you know yet. But trust me, you want to get there. And I think, what are we, three weeks out? Two and a half weeks.

Gosh. And this is our seventh one. Man, isn't that crazy? So you know everyone who will be there.

And most importantly, Jesus will be there. And side note, you don't want to miss church prior to the event and the Sunday after the event. It's going to be a massive family gathering, even on Sundays.

And it's going to be a glorious, glorious, glorious time. I am so excited to hear that choir sing. Out under the heavens.

I just love the whole thought of it. Thousands are going to be born again in Jesus' name. Thousands.

Say amen. Thousands born again. Thousands healed.

Thousands falling in love with Jesus. Millions seeing it online. Amen.

So you can go to [Jesus21.tv](http://Jesus21.tv) if you're watching right now. And you want to come, come on. Come on.

The borders are open. Come to America. Come to Jesus21.

For those of our friends all over America, we'd love to have you. Please be there. Amen? All right, let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the glory of your word. And the glory of your presence. And the glory of the name of Jesus.

Cut our hearts open. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Thank you, Joel. Love you, buddy.

Ushers, could we get communion at least available? Do we have it here, Carla? I think we're supposed to take communion today. I didn't think we were, but I feel that in my heart, so. And the people said? Amen.

All right. I want you to take your Bibles to Genesis. I want to talk to you today.

I had another sermon ready to roll on the incarnation. And I'm going to start the incarnation next week. I want you to go to Genesis chapter 2 and Mark verse 8. The Sunday mornings and Sunday nights have been growing in the glory of God.

How many of you heard the report of what happened with our children two Wednesdays ago? How many of you have not heard the report? Just wave your hands. It's fine. Not a trick question.

It's cool. You're still saved. The glory of God fell on a Wednesday night at youth.

And our children were literally some on the ground, parents bringing them out. We bought them ice cream and put it in the lobby. And none of the kids wanted the ice cream because Jesus is way better.

They're just like, we're not leaving. We're staying right here in the presence of God. Ryan and the team, I think Janae led that night.

It was just beautiful. So grateful for our team who's serving this next generation. It's so important.

And I really feel like we crossed over into something fresh. Two Sunday nights ago, Amy began to pray and I felt this stirring for the youth. And I could feel in my spirit that it was a prophetic moment.

And I think we're going to have some youth events just for the youth. And so I want you guys praying about that. We're praying through it, seeing what that would look like.

I mean, the majority of our crowd is pretty young. All of us are young, I like to say, in comparison to the Lord. And the old saying, if you're breathing, you're part of this generation.

So we're young and we all get to be a part of what God is doing. But seeing what it did to my children was amazing. I mean, my kids have grown up in meetings.

They've been in a lot of services. Probably enough just to make them go crazy, to be honest with you. But my kids are straight shooters.

If you guys have ever spoken to them, you discovered that. They don't really mince words. And the first thing they said is Jesus was in that room.

It's just such a blessing to hear that. And so our heart is really to live in a way that impacts the generations behind us. So I want to talk to you tonight about something the Lord, or today, about something the Lord deposited into my spirit on that Sunday night where the youth, I don't know if you guys saw it, but dozens of youth ran down to the altar.

And we began praying for them and the power of God hit them. They were shaking and sobbing under the glory of God. And so for people who think you have to offer youth like a bunch of programs because they're too immature to experience the presence of God are just deceived.

It's just not the truth. In fact, the youth should be leading the way. I want to get behind an army of young people and follow them into the glory of God.

They know what they're doing. They're better at it than most of us. Trust me when I tell you.

So something I said that night was this, as I was ministering, was don't lose your testimony. And I don't just mean your testimony of salvation. I mean don't lose the testimony of God's history in your life.

Protect it and protect the purity of what the Lord has been building. And so today I want to talk to you about protecting your testimony. Okay, say that out loud.

Protecting my testimony. Go to Genesis chapter 2, verse 8. I think this will be, if you hold on to this teaching, one of the most memorable you've heard on a Sunday morning and hopefully something you carry the rest of your life, okay? Genesis 2, 8. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden. Eden was much bigger than a garden, but God chose the region of Eden to be the hub of the garden.

Now, the word Eden means pleasure. The garden was created so that Adam and Eve could walk with God in fellowship. Does that make sense to you? That is also where they were called and it was also their assignment, which tells me this, that our assignment and calling must live in the place of pleasurable union with the Lord.

He planted the garden in Eden. And to the degree that you refuse to enjoy the Lord's presence, you will try to replace that enjoyment with worldly pleasure. I was playing golf the other day.

Theo and I took on two Gator alumni who were on my team and we lost on the last hole by a shot. I'm still recovering. Didn't even sleep the next night.

But anyhow, we're going to get Adam next week again. And one of my buddies was talking to me about another friend who was struggling and with just some areas of his life. And instantly my response was, it's a satisfaction issue.

Anytime you take something that is temporal, that is a creation, and attempt to use it to appease pain, it is a satisfaction issue. So those who are most satisfied in God are those who most easily refuse the pleasures of the world. It's not because they say no better than anyone else says no.

It's just they say yes more often than the others say yes. They say yes to God, therefore, in that one yes, there are a million no's resting within it. Part of it is just they're so full.

So being free from sin is not a matter of merely fighting. It's a matter of being so full that you have no room. I didn't want to eat super bad on Thanksgiving.

I know, I sound like a real loser. And the reason I didn't is because I had to play golf the next day. So I was like, man, if I pound food, for me, if I eat a lot of carbs and sugar, my heart races all night, I feel way off.

So I was like, I don't want to do that before I play. So I waited till Friday afterwards, after we lost, to have a satisfaction issue and splurge. And Jesse makes a buttermilk pie that is to die for.

And so I went in and ate the buttermilk pie. And then after I had the buttermilk pie, four pieces, Ryan and Yohan came over the other day. They're like, yesterday, did she have any more of that buttermilk pie? We didn't, and then we asked her to cook it yesterday again.

She's like, no, I'm done cooking. Well, somebody offered me food after I ate the four pieces of buttermilk pie, and there was no room. So there was no room for the mashed potatoes because I was full.

And that's how you want to live in God. The one who is most full doesn't have a taste or time for compromise. So we see a garden placed in Eden.

My calling must be placed in pleasure, must be placed in fellowship. It must be birthed from that place. And there, look at verse eight, there he put the man whom he had formed, and out of the ground the Lord made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. How many trees right there? Say two. Who made the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Say God.

God will always place another tree in the garden. Don't miss this. The devil did not create the tree.

The devil cannot create. He is a counterfeit copier. I could go on and on about that, and I don't want to offend some of you.

What can I do? I'll wait ten minutes and then we'll do that part. God created the tree. And why did he place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in that garden? The answer is love.

Because any time you remove the ability to choose, you remove the ability to love. You can choose to love. In fact, if I don't choose to love, my love cannot be proven.

Jesus chose to love us and proved it. The cross was the choice of love. It was the greatest declaration of love.

I'll never forget, my father-in-law was being driven to a crusade, I think in Madagascar. I think. Somewhere near there.

And his driver was Hindu. And his driver was driving him to the event. There were about 50,000 people there.

He pulled him up to the event, and the driver didn't get out. So my father-in-law said, aren't you coming? He goes, no, no, I can't go. He goes, why can't you come? I mean, what are you going to do? He said, I'm just going to wait in the car.

He said, you're just going to wait in the car? Why don't you come in and you can sit down? He goes, no, no, I cannot. I'm Hindu. I cannot come in.

So my father-in-law said to him, oh, you're Hindu. How many gods do you have? He said, 300 million. He said, wow, that's a lot.

He said, 300 million? Wow, amazing. He said, oh, yes, 300 million. We have many.

So my father-in-law said to him, I just have one question. Out of the 300 million, how many of them ever said, I love you? And the man got quiet. He said, none.

And then he preached the gospel to him. And showed him what the scripture said about the love of Jesus. Well, that man got saved and went into the event.

The point is, our gospel is the proof of love. The cross, the blood, the wounds, the incarnation, the descent of the Lord on the earth, all of this is the statement and the proof that our God loves us. This is a treasure.

So there's always two trees in the garden. I want you to see very carefully, look down there at verse 9. That second tree is not called, Daniel, is it called the tree of porn? No. Is it called the tree of lying? No.

Is it called the tree of greed? The tree of hatred? The tree of division? No. It's actually only called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It's the tree of morality without God.

It's the tree of wisdom without the one who is wisdom. The tree of knowing things rather than knowing the tree of life that is Jesus himself. That's why when... You ready for this? Let's say Merry Christmas already.

That's why when Jesus was raised from the dead, he was raised as a gardener. He was mistaken as a gardener. Working the garden.

Not working, but in the garden. And when they saw him, they mistook him to be a gardener. That was not by mistake.

That was the Lord's way of saying, I've come to redeem, not only redeem, but give you way more than what you lost. There is one tending the garden again. I will tend the garden of your heart now.

The last Adam, even in this typography, prophetically showing, I'm the last Adam who has the garden back. And the garden is my presence. And I want to plant a garden in your heart where you and I can walk together in the cool of the day in this region called Eden.

The place of pleasure. The place of the heart where God never leaves. It's amazing.

So there's always another tree in the garden. There will always be, listen carefully, another tree in your garden with a nice name. It might be the tree of opportunity mixed with a little compromise.

It might be the tree of growing your ministry mixed with a little compromise. It might be the tree of being noticed. This is a great one.

For the sake of the gospel, my name has to be great. Amazing. Some use the compromise in the name of winning souls.

That's the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That's what happens when you become an employee rather than a child. Can God win the loss through you? Oh yeah, sure.

But it doesn't mean the offering you bring in the age to come will be accepted. God, you saw. I don't want to die as though I were never anointed.

Anybody here this morning? Too much cherry pie. God used Judas to raise the dead, to heal the sick, to cast out devils. I don't want to be where Judas is right now.

Anyone else? God used Balaam. I don't want Balaam's eternity. When the second tree is wrapped, let's just say in a positive name, the label seems positive.

That's where the temptation sits in. And it's in making the wrong decision in the name of what seems to be good, but not in the name of what the Spirit is doing, it's in those decisions that you lose your testimony. See, you want, you don't know this yet, but you want on the day you die to look your family in the eye and say, look at what the Lord has done.

It is marvelous in our eyes. Turn your Bibles to Genesis 25, verse 19. This started way back in the garden.

Genesis 25, 19. This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac.

Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel, the Syrian of Perun-Aram, the sister of Laban, the Syrian. Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife because she was barren. Wow.

And the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah, his wife, conceived. But the children struggled within her and said, If all is well, why am I like this? So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb.

How would you like to hear that at the ultrasound? Two nations are in your womb. Wow, really? I'm going to gain a lot of weight. All right.

Two people shall be separated from your body. One people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger. So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb.

And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over. My Lord.

Well, that's our part of the world. They come out furry. So they called his name Esau.

Afterward, his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel. So his name was called Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them.

So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field. But Jacob was a mild man dwelling in tents.

Maybe he was a gamer. I like to stay inside. Oh, Lord, help us.

And Isaac loved Esau because he, listen to this, he ate of his game. But Rebekah loved Jacob. Now Jacob cooked a stew, and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary.

And Esau said to Jacob, Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary. Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, Sell me your birthright as of this day.

And Esau said, Look, I am about to die. So what is this birthright to me? And then Jacob said, Swear to me as of this day. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.

And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils. Then he ate and drank, arose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Every person in this room has a divine blueprint, therefore a divine testimony that God purposed and spoke before you were ever born. Additionally, there are multiple counterfeit testimonies that the devil would love for you to apprehend. Esau sold his birthright in the midst of weariness, in the midst of desperation, in the midst of the lack of natural provision.

He sold what was eternal for the temporal. So you mean, Michael, even if things are going really rough and I can't pay my bills, I shouldn't just move the dial a little bit? That's exactly what I'm saying. Don't you dare move the dial.

In the context and against the backdrop of the generations ahead of you and what your grandchildren will say about you and what heaven will say about you, yeah, don't you dare compromise to pay the rent. Well, what if I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed baked bread? My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches and glory. Don't level a case against yourself that's based on an inaccurate view of God.

You see God as being limited? You'll compromise real quick. This concept, this truth I should say, this isn't a concept, this is in the scriptures. This is such a broad stroke because it covers every area of the Christian life whether you're in business, whether you're church planting, whether you're a worship leader, whether you are married or have kids or you don't.

There's always the opportunity to choose the second tree out of desperation. I don't care what they offer you. I don't care how much they want to pay you.

I don't care what they promise you. Follow the word and follow the Holy Spirit. In the end you will be happy.

Is it a slower drip? Yeah, but it lasts. It lasts. Don't sell your birthright.

You say can I sell it with one decision? Yep. You mean just one? Yep. I have people all the time and I love them.

They're wonderful people but they're like you should do this and you should try that and you should set up this and you should have these people go into that part of town and get people to come here and all this stuff and all of these ways and systems that just aren't in the word but they're part of modern church vernacular and they're like just try this and in my head I'm going I'm not saying it pridefully but I'm saying I've tasted something you have not tasted and I've seen what the glory of God can do. I've watched it. I've watched it.

And that's hard to explain because people are seasons they're so-called somewhat successful they seem to have what most people would want especially if you use the world as your barometer which the church does too often. A lot of people must be good. There were a lot of people screaming crucify him.

Was the cross not successful because he only had a few there? I have found the glory of God in churches that are like little storefronts and I still go to some of them and I've watched these little groups be so generous and then I've preached churches that have 10,000 and built their buildings debt-free and raised 20 million dollars and I've preached my guts out paid my way to get down there preached the gospel prayed for the sick and they bought me fried rice. God bless you. Thanks for coming.

Next time it will be official. I'm not joking. Which is unscriptural by the way.

You don't muzzle the ox and the labor of the Lord is worthy of double honor. What am I saying? This little church had the culture of heaven. The big one had a big building and didn't honor what God did.

Don't you sell your birthright? For nothing. For nothing. And don't allow human worldly wisdom that is actually foolishness.

Don't allow that wisdom to come in shrouded in a so-called spirituality and it causes you to lose your birthright. Well yeah, you can do this. Just wiggle a little bit here and then fund the gospel.

Oh, sin to fund the gospel? I'll never forget. Oh, I wish you guys were there. I'm in my house.

This guy came in. This was years ago. Over 10.

We had a little apartment. I was living in Southern Cal. It was a two-bedroom apartment paying crazy money for it.

There was a crime scene next door. A guy had shot a guy. Bullet holes went through the apartment.

I had guys try to throw stuff through our window. And this famous preacher guy came in and he was basically telling me about how to receive offerings. And I just spoke up and I said, I have a question.

Jesus said, if my right hand knows what my left hand is doing and I do it for the wrong reason, he said, my reward is simply the applause of men. If I do things for the wrong reason, Jesus said, if I do things for the attention of people, I get a reward. And this is what it is.

The applause of men. Did he not say that? He did. So I looked at the preacher in respect.

I mean, he was in my house. I felt like I had a little leverage. I'm like, you're sitting on my couch, so now I'm going to tell you what I think.

I said, by you telling people to come up and give certain amounts and making a big show out of it, you're crushing their seed before it ever gets into the offering box. You're telling them they're going to get a harvest, but you're teaching them into disobedience. I said, welcome to my house.

Jess was like, oh my God. This was during that season of fasting and prayer that went on and I was, it's the wrong guy to come into your house and tell me that. I said, you're destroying the harvest of people by telling them to give in a way that dishonors God.

And God will judge every motive. You know what his reply was? Well, if I don't do it, they won't give. So when you run a ministry, oh, I got bills.

Let me move the dial. Yeah, you go pay your bills, you lose your testimony. You pay your bills and fill that stadium, you lose your birthright.

It does matter how we do it. I said, it does matter how we do it. It's proper to preach on holiness.

We should. We have to get it right. We need to know what true holiness is, which is full affection and adoration for Jesus by being severed from the world in this affection.

We love Jesus because he first loved us. We should be more convinced of his love for us than our love for him. That is the life of holiness.

But proof of holiness is not what you preach. In fact, I would say this, how you build is a greater indicator of a life of holiness than what you're preaching on the pulpit. It's the tough decisions behind the scenes that get heaven's attention.

Pharaoh and Moses, you're enjoying this? It's a little quiet. But I want all of you on that day, when you close your eyes to go, I didn't sell out. I kept my testimony.

What a testimony it is. Exodus 10, verse 3. So Moses and Aaron came. I'll wait till you're done churning.

It's a beautiful sound. So Moses and Aaron came into Pharaoh and said to him, Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go that they may serve me, or else if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory, and they shall cover the face of the earth so that no one will be able to see the earth. And they shall eat the residue of what is left, which remains to you from the hail.

And they shall eat every tree which grows up before you out of the field. They shall fill your houses, and the houses of your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians, which neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen since the day that they were on the earth to this day. And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed? So now the counsels of Pharaoh are going, Hey, maybe you should do it. Have you not seen the country? We have nothing left.

Verse 8, So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, Go serve the Lord your God. Who are the ones that are going? So they brought Moses and Aaron forward, and Pharaoh said to them, Go serve the Lord. Who do you want to take with you? And Moses said, We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds.

We will go, for we must hold a feast to the Lord. Then he said to them, The Lord had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go. Beware, for evil is ahead of you.

Not so. Now listen up. Go now, you who are men, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desired.

And they were driven out from the presence. of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was trying to bargain with Moses.

He was saying, You can go, but who do you want to take? Just take a few. Don't take the women, the children and the flocks. Let's negotiate.

Let's compromise. And don't. Just put it this way.

I have gone toe to toe with spirits of darkness. And what I can tell you, is that they will try to cut a deal. This is not theory to me.

This is real. Take up that stone and turn it into bread. You don't have to bow down and worship me yet.

Just do something that the Father didn't tell you to do. Let's meet in the middle. So Moses remembered the details of the calling.

He said, Let me tell you who is coming with me. Everyone. Everyone is coming with me, because that's the voice that came out of the burning bush.

That's my testimony. That's my encounter. I'm not trading it with you.

I'm not selling out for your favor. He even included the pets and the animals. Who's coming with us? The men are coming with us.

Our wives are coming with us. Our kids are coming with us. Our goats are coming with us.

Our chickens are coming with us. Everything we own is leaving Egypt. We are going to worship the Lord.

Even if I have to stay here, listen, and fight a little longer. Sometimes the temptation is this. Early departure from a trial for a little compromise.

Matthew 4, verse 8. Is this okay? Matthew 4, verse 8. Don't sell out for anything in the world. Are you hearing me, church? Don't you sell out for anything, regardless of the price. Matthew 4, verse 8. Again the devil took him, Jesus, up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Notice Jesus has fasted here. He's fasted down. Forty days of fasting.

He's in the place of despair and weakness, but he makes a different decision than Esau. Again the devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, all these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me. Worshippers, Levites, singers, this is for everyone.

Every Christian is a worshiper. But I'll tell you what, you are, as Reinhard used to say, you are a target of the devil, but you're also God's target to protect if you want to be protected. The devil is after worship because the Father is seeking worshippers.

What does the devil offer Jesus? The kingdoms of this world. What is the plan of the Scriptures? That the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God. Jesus would reign as king, no doubt about it, but the path to the throne was much different than this temporary, horrible, appeasing temptation.

The devil will wait till you're weak and then offer you what you actually came to accomplish. He'll just offer it a little more quickly. You missed that.

He will offer you what you know God has promised you. He'll just offer it more quickly so that you get it the wrong way and then lose your soul. That is good.

I don't say that about my preaching very often, but that is good. John 6. Purity. Holiness.

True love. Addiction to Jesus. This is what I'm talking about today.

Don't sell the promise of eternity for anything. This is so funny. Jesus feeds the 5,000.

Right? Look at verse 12. So when they were filled, he said to his disciples, get the fragments that remain so that nothing is lost. So Jesus is a God of abundance who is against waste.

Wonderful balance. Therefore they gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Listen to this.

Then those men, when they had seen the signs, Jesus did, said, this is truly the prophet who has come into the world. Verse 15. Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he departed again to the mountain by himself alone.

Oh my gosh. You get a phone call. You get to go kick it with this new worship movement or I'm going to make you an influencer and it'll help the gospel and we're going to do all these things to help the gospel as if the gospel needs help.

No, we need help. The gospel helps us. Gospel don't need any help.

So I'm going to do this, act like a jerk here, be mean to people here in the name of the gospel, twist the thing, move the thing, compromise. All these people are doing is saying, oh, we see God's hand on you. We'd like to make you king.

Why don't you work for us? And the only reason we want you to be king is because we like that you feed us. That's the kind of kingdom I want. I want a king who gives me everything I want.

I would love barley and fish every day without having to work for it. So just give me what I want. I will take the king of kings aside and actually have the audacity to think that I can coronate him.

The one who is the eternal king cannot be enthroned by flesh and blood. He was enthroned by his father. Psalm chapter 2. So here Jesus is offered the kingdom again.

And look at his response. It wasn't like, oh well, I'll use your help. That'd be great.

What does he do? He runs away and is alone with God. So his satisfaction wasn't their attention. His satisfaction was being alone with his father.

So Jesus rejected, listen, can I have five extra minutes this morning? You need this, I need it. I'm preaching to me. Jesus rejected their path to the throne he already knew was his.

He is king of Israel. But he refused, listen carefully, he refused to be coronated by them and have them put a crown on him. He knew another crown had to precede heaven's diadem.

It was the crown of thorns. So Jesus chose the crown of pain even though it was a slower drip, a more methodical, painful process, knowing that if he does it the right way, once he sits on that throne, nobody can take him off. And you want that.

You want that. Trust me when I tell you, you want that. You want to know in your heart, I stayed with you every step of the way.

Your word is a lamp and a light. It is for my feet, which implies small steps, small steps of preparation. It is not a light for a highway.

It is a light for a path. God is not about birthing ministries that are led by people who have not been formed by him. God is more about turning you into the likeness of his son than giving you what you're dreaming about.

And when you walk with him, you've got to hear me, you're entrusted by God. The people you thought would support you the most will become battering rams, sources of fiery darts, jealousy, criticism, you name it, they will come after you. Lack of honor, dishonor, breach of trust.

You've got to know, I've been processed by God. God built it, God called it, therefore God will sustain it. You birth an Ishmael, they don't go away.

Well just look at the Middle East. It's the story of Isaac and Ishmael, it's still playing out. I wrote this down today, as soon as I walked in the presence of God, the Lord begins, I didn't get this message until I got to my seat.

Don't you love his glory? Things just come alive. This is what I wrote there, I have seen many forsake their callings by starting their own ministries. You say aren't the two the same? No.

Social media has given platform to people who are never called and it's hurt the body of Christ. Mike, why don't you take your wife on a date rather than just arguing with everyone. For real, tuck your kids in at night and read the scriptures to them.

I've watched it, even in our own world, over the years, last 15 years, I've watched people who I knew in my heart, it wasn't on them to lead and that's okay because leading is not the point. Loving Him is the point. So now you can just start an organization but you can't start the anointing, you cannot.

There's not a form you can fill out, not a donation you can give, not enough famous people to meet to be bathed in oil. It doesn't matter. I have watched countless people say I want my own ministry and organization.

I am just not going to serve. I want my own and I watched them flounder and flounder and flounder and flounder and flounder because they forsook the voice of God to start their own Tower of Babel. And then once you're actually given something to lead you go, I'm not sure I can do this.

Help me Jesus and God goes, that's exactly why I gave it to you. The ones you see most convinced aren't as convinced in God, they're convinced in their resume, convinced in their ability. But when you get to the root of it, why do you want to lead so bad? Well, because I just think it's my time.

Why? What's in there? Why do you have to be the one out in front? Well, because I got a prophetic word. That's not what I'm asking you. Why do you feel the need to uproot God's process and plan so you can be out front? Do you have any idea what comes with being out front? Are you sure you want that? And we've taught a whole generation, go start your own ministry, go do your own meetings, go do all this.

And all of the sudden we throw them out there and we wonder why they crumble. If you can sing, oh yeah, come take the platform, you can sing, sure. What are we communicating? I'll use your gift, even if your character's not there.

And then when they fall, we back off them like David did Uriah and watch them die. We throw them out on the battlefield, they get real close to the fortress, somebody up on the fortress wall shoots a fiery dart at them, they get hit by the devil, and then we withdraw for the sake of PR. We put them out there way too early, they get clipped by the devil, and then we back off because we don't want to show any affiliation.

You don't just step into this stuff. Even David knew it. Am I preaching too long? All right.

David gets anointed with oil and then runs for his life. Lives in caves. Did God make a mistake? No, it was God saying, go to the cave of Adullam, go up to the stronghold, go live with the Philistines.

Did God make a mistake? Should Samuel have not poured the oil on them? Of course. What's the point? The anointing came, but before David took the throne, a process needed to play out. It's called the forging of character.

Don't rush it. Don't sell your testimony. Don't you do it.

And many have chosen crowds instead of the anointing. The crowds cannot anoint you. I don't care.

I've been so blessed. I've done stadiums. We're doing more.

We'll be in Kansas City. Jesus 21 will be phenomenal. Thousands will come.

But those moments, those people can't coronate you. Only God can. They can't pour oil on you.

Only God can. What we do is we say, oh, if you can just get before a crowd, that'll be proof you've made it. No, that's not proof you've made it.

Proof you've made it is when you get in an argument with your spouse and you say sorry first. That's proof you've made it. Proof you've made it is that you read your Bible every day.

Proof you've made it is that you're killing dragons. That you're slaying lions and bears behind the scenes. Proof you've made it is that you're in love with Jesus.

What is making it anyways? Who determined what that even means? We don't even know what it means. Jesus determined it. This is the first and great commandment.

To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That is making it. And if you get there, let the chips fall.

Oh my gosh. I like to preach to you all this way at Sunday morning. I'm so sick of getting business cards.

If you have one, save it for the next guy. I love you. Just tell me hello.

Oh yeah, this is what I do. I'm prophet so-and-so. I'm apostle so-and-so.

I'm evangelist so-and-so. What's your real name? What did your mama call you? What does God call you? I have never had an encounter with God and go, Pastor, apostle, evangelist, prophet, teacher, Michael. He's never called me that.

He's called me Michael. If you're not okay with that, that's an issue. What do we try to do in those moments? Just climb a little ladder.

And we climb this ladder and use that person and don't really love them. Take them out to eat so that we can just get to the next person that they know that I really want to know. And we climb this ladder only to get to a place that God doesn't even like.

And then we get there and we try to take a deep breath and we go, my heart's empty. Oh wow. I am still the same old Michael even after I got there.

And Jesus just sits there very gently and goes, I never called you to climb that ladder. I called you to climb into my heart. Don't you see that's why John the Baptist said, promotion cometh from above.

Well actually he said, it must come from heaven. I'm sorry, John the Baptist said, man can receive nothing unless it comes from my Father, comes from heaven. I want you guys to kill the grind.

Listen to me. I want you to kill the grind. I want you to kill the grind unfortunately that the church has introduced to you and on behalf of it, forgive us for telling you that this is success.

This is not success. Just get off that people mover that drives you and tells you to go somewhere and causes you to think that if you don't attain it, you have failed. And so you start grasping for straws and you think that you have to do A, B, C, and D to please God when all the Lord ever told you to do was to love Him, follow His voice and His word.

That's all He told us to do.

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