

# Take Up Your Cross

by Michael L. Brown

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*Michael L. Brown's sermon emphasizes the necessity of self-denial and the profound significance of taking up one's cross to follow Jesus authentically.*

**Duration:** 1:27:38

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:24, John 12:20

**Topics:** "Following God", "Surrendering Sin"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of making a firm decision to follow God and live a holy life. He shares a story of someone who faced a life-threatening situation and was willing to die for their faith. The preacher also highlights the positive impact of Christianity in helping those in need around the world. He shares a personal testimony of experiencing God's grace and being set free from addiction. The sermon concludes with a reminder that sin should not be an option in our lives and that we should fully surrender to God.

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## Transcript

Living God, our Father, our King, I pray, Lord, for your spirit to be here in power. We don't take for granted the open heavens. We don't take for granted, Father, the working of your spirit here day in and day out.

Look upon the hearts of your people. Look at the hunger. Look at the thirst.

Look at the desire. Look at the need. And speak to us, I pray, God.

May the eyes of our understanding be open. Lord, if there's any sin, any barrier, any obstacle, any hindrance that stands in the way of any of us receiving, we ask you, God, right now to cleanse us and to wash us and to purify us. May the sword of your spirit cut to the very depth of our being.

May it reveal the motives of the heart and the mind. May it be a tree of life to those that take hold. In Jesus' name, amen.

Men, you can be seated. I want you to turn with me to Matthew, the 16th chapter. Take up your cross.

What does it mean to take up the cross? One time while ministering in Korea at lunch, that was the main meal we'd have every day. After the morning sessions, which went all morning, we'd have a lunch break, and then we'd have two afternoon sessions, and then a dinner break, and then go all night in the night

session. But for dinner break, I just wanted to rest a little and pray.

So the main meal we'd have would be lunchtime, and every day someone would want to take you out. They'd say, so-and-so is the host for the luncheon today. And I'm a very simple person when it comes down to diet.

I like to eat the same thing every day. I'm happy to do it. All through elementary school, basically first grade through sixth grade, I had a peanut butter sandwich with no jelly for lunch every single day.

And I took the crust off. I didn't like the crust in those days. Then in junior high, virtually every day I had a hamburger and french fries for lunch.

I know it's a health food fanatic kind of diet. I understand that. But when I go to Korea, I found one Korean meal that I really liked called bulgogi, this marinated beef with other things and rice.

And I really like it, and it's an inexpensive meal, and I was happy to have that every single day. Happy to go to a Korean restaurant, we'd sit on the floor, and I was happy to have that every day. In fact, it's the only Korean meal I've ever had in Korea, and I've been there half a dozen times.

But often they'd want to take us to a different restaurant. American restaurant in Seoul, you know, with the Olympics and everything in 88. There's a lot of American enterprise there.

You'll see 7-Elevens there. You'll see Kentucky Fried Chicken, and there was TGI Fridays. We'd go to these different places.

Well, this one particular day, a wealthy woman, very well-dressed. You could see she had been a woman of the world in terms of style and fashion, well-educated. She wanted to take us out for lunch.

God had been dealing with her heart. I don't know how recently she had been saved, but she was fairly new in terms of seriously following God. She had begun to go to the Missions Bible College where I was teaching in the daytime, and she took us to this expensive steak restaurant, nine of us.

In fact, some of the workers that were there, some of the Korean helpers, were just in jeans and weren't dressed well and felt very embarrassed going into this place. Candles on the table. This is lunchtime.

I looked at the menu. I couldn't believe it was going to be like \$30 for each of us, and she insisted that we all got, you know, a nice expensive meal. And it bothered me that she was spending so much money.

We didn't need to spend that money. It's fine to go out and have a nice meal, but I was just thinking, she doesn't need to do this. But I wanted to honor her because I knew she wanted to bless us.

She was doing this to show her love and to show her appreciation, and it was a gesture on her heart, from her heart to us. And we sat in this restaurant, and there, you know, candle lit. And, you know, I'm always trying to think, make sure you use the right fork for the right thing, and put it all down the right, you know, when you're in these kind of restaurants.

And we're all sitting and talking about the things of the Lord. And they told me, you know, that she's really serious about going after God. And I looked at her across the table, and I said, I want to thank you so much.

This is through a translator. I want to thank you so much for your generosity and for blessing us with such a fine meal. Thank you.

I appreciate it very much. And I want to do something special for you. You'll be back in the classes this afternoon.

You'll be in the meeting tonight. I, as a token of my appreciation, want to do something special for you. She looked at me, I said, I want to help you to die.

You know, the candles there on the table, and all the other Koreans sitting there smiling because they were on fire. And she tried to smile, but I think she knew that death would not be pleasant. I want to read to you from Matthew chapter 16, verse 21.

From that time on, what time? After Peter publicly confessed you are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Now, understand this.

Everything in our lives in terms of our faith in Jesus goes back to the cross, that he had to die for our sins. The Messiah came into this world and died a criminal's death, but it was not the expectation of the Jewish people in that day that the Messiah would come and die a criminal's death. There were varied expectations about what he would do when he came, and there were some traditions having to do with some suffering on his part, but no one was expecting the king of Israel to come and be turned over to wicked men and crucified and die.

That was absolutely not their expectation, any more than it's our expectation that when he comes in the clouds of heaven, someone will pull him off the horse and shoot him. You understand it was totally foreign to their thinking.

So Peter, when he hears this, don't forget Peter has just confessed him as the Messiah, the son of the living God. Remember when he came into Jerusalem, what's called Palm Sunday, when he made his triumphal entry into the city, the crowds are hailing him. Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Those were words of welcoming the messianic king, words taken from Psalm 118, that were understood to be welcoming the king, the Messiah. They thought this is exciting. I mean, they must have had in the back of their minds, the disciples, these prophecies about his death and all that.

And he had been talking about it a lot, but they must have been thinking, well, whatever that means, we don't really know what that means. He's the Messiah. Yes, all Jerusalem's welcome.

Oh, it's happening. Yes. They'd seen all the miracles.

They'd seen people raised from the dead. They'd seen the religious hypocrites confounded. They'd seen they'd seen the hand of God outstretched in ways they had prayed for and wept for for generations.

They weren't expecting him to die, especially a shameful criminal's death. This is Peter. Jesus has just commended Peter.

Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father in heaven, Peter, Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. Isn't that awesome? We do the same, but not in as many words.

Never, Lord, he said, this shall never happen to you. Don't you remember moments ago? I told you who you were. Have you forgotten so soon? Remember flesh and blood and your father in heaven showed me who you were.

That's not going to happen to you. You're the Messiah. Jesus turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan.

Have you ever gone from the heights to the depths in a moment of time? From I can't believe God has blessed me. I can't believe he's used. I can't believe he's opened this door of ministry to me.

One hour later, I can't believe I blew it. Get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me.

You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men. Anything that seeks to have the blessing of God and bypasses the cross is satanic in its thinking. Get behind me, Satan.

You're not looking at it from God's point of view. You don't see this from the heavenly point of view. Your position is a stumbling block to me.

You don't have in mind the things of God. You have in mind the things of men. Now, I don't know what was going through Peter's mind.

I don't know if it was the next second that Jesus immediately turned to his disciples, or if he waited a couple of seconds. I don't know. Seems that he just continued talking, but I like to think of it like this.

Just in my own mind, may not be true, but I like to just think of it like this. Maybe Peter says to himself, boy, I blew it. All right, I don't understand.

And sometimes you can think in a split second. If you're in ministry, you know you can be preaching a message and having a dialogue with God in your mind about a total other subject, and the Lord's dealing with you about something while you're preaching other people. Sometimes you can review your options in a split second when you're presented with a difficult decision.

Maybe Peter in that split second thinks, okay, I had it wrong. I don't understand it. He's the Messiah.

I know he's going to rule and reign, establish the kingdom here, destroy the wicked out of the earth, and bring peace. I understand he's going to do all of that. I don't understand this death on the cross stuff, and being beaten, and I don't understand that.

But if he has to die on the cross, who am I to get in his way? I'm wrong. It's just stupid me. If he has to die, if he has to suffer, so be it.

Let him go to the cross. Let him die. I was wrong.

Maybe that's what Peter was thinking. But look at what Jesus says. Then Jesus says to his disciples, if anyone would come after me, it's not just me, Peter.

Remember I said follow me? But Jesus didn't mean like follow you and watch all the miracles, and follow you and hear all your great teaching, and follow you and be like one of the inner circle. Isn't that what you really meant, Jesus? You didn't really mean follow me when I go to the cross. You didn't really mean that, Jesus, did you? And follow me the way of rejection and scorn, and you didn't really mean that, did you, Jesus? It's kind of like follow me, and this is great, exciting thing, sure better than catching fish, right? Isn't that what you meant, Jesus? Then Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone would come after me, anyone, doesn't matter who you are, doesn't matter whether you believe this or not, doesn't matter whether you accept it or not, doesn't matter what your religious background is, doesn't matter what your church teaches or what your religion teaches, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

He must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul, or what can a man give in exchange for soul? For the son of man is going to come in his father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

The only thing that's going to matter is the verdict of eternity. The only thing that's going to matter is when Jesus comes back, what is his view on the subject. The only thing that's going to matter is not all the praise of man and all the opinions of people.

The only thing that's going to matter is when he comes and sets up his kingdom, who's in the right with him and who's in the wrong with him, who's commended by him and who's condemned by him. That's all that's going to matter. I want you to see before I go any further how foundational this truth is to the New Testament, that if you want to follow Jesus you must die, that if you want to follow Jesus you must take up your cross.

Let me remind you before we look at the scripture that the cross meant death, that the cross meant the end of this life. I wrote a chapter in the book *How Saved Are We* called *It's Time to Die*, and after I wrote that chapter I came across one of the most famous messages that A.W. Tozer had ever written. It was often distributed in tract form called *the old cross and the new*.

I couldn't believe how many of the same things I had written that he had written. Same themes, same thoughts, except what he did was so much more powerful and deep. But he made the comment that the old cross killed the sinner.

The new cross redirects him. Any cross that doesn't mean death is not a cross. If someone receives a death sentence they may have three choices, death by hanging, death by electrocution, or death by lethal injection.

But they don't have a fourth choice, death by being imprisoned for five years. That's not a death sentence, that's a punishment sentence, but if you're fed that's not a death sentence. The cross does not just mean some type of Christianity, or some type of religious exercise, or some type of spiritual expression.

The cross means death. When that person picked up the beam, took up their cross, and headed to the place of crucifixion, they were saying goodbye to this world. Whatever they were doing they would do no more.

If that person had been a murderer they would murder no more. If they had been a thief they would steal no more. If they had been a rebel they would rebel no more.

They were coming to the end of this world. They would never see their family again in this world. The only exception would be if they rose from the dead.

Otherwise it was over. When I say the exception would be if they rose from the dead, I mean that's the way that we live. As having died, we now live in newness of life.

This same truth is repeated in Mark the eighth chapter and in Luke the ninth chapter, but I want you to go to Luke the ninth chapter where you have the parallel passage. Look at what Jesus says in verse 23. One key word is added that is not found in Matthew or Mark.

Then he said to them all, if anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. There is a once for all crucifixion. When you are born again you die to the old way of life and you begin to live in newness of life.

There is a daily taking up of the cross where you say no to the things of this world, no to the pull of this world, and afresh say Lord I am yours. The old man no longer lives, I live to do your will. Go to John's Gospel the twelfth chapter.

When I preach, my messages are normally one-point messages. In these day sessions I will preach slash teach, which means it'll be a one-point message said three different ways approximately. You've gotten the point, you will get the point.

John 12, some Greeks or Greek speaking Jews come up to the feast Passover. They want to see Jesus. They've heard a lot about him.

They want to see him. The disciples tell Jesus and in verse 23 he says the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Man that's cool.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Maybe it's gonna be like fireworks. Oh maybe he's gonna go like that like he did on the Mount of Transfiguration and like the earth will quake and the mountains will shake and he'll glow and be true and then all people will come and bow down.

Whoa, he's gonna be glorified. Maybe these people from a distance hearing it and say boy did we come at the right time. He's gonna be glorified to hear Jesus is about to be glorified.

This is gonna be big. I tell you the truth. Why does he have to do this? Why does he always have to burst our bubble? You know whenever the big crowds came that's when Jesus sifted them out.

Did you ever see that in the Gospels? Huge crowds would follow him. See when God's moving in power crowds are not a problem. What I mean is it's not hard to draw a crowd.

John Wesley was asked how he drew the crowds. He said I set myself on fire and people come to watch me burn. It's been said you don't have to advertise a fire.

You know when God's moving, when miracles are taking place, when sick are being healed, when demonized are being set free, crowds will come from all over the place. Then you got to sift him and you got to find out who's serious with God and who's not. Jesus had no trouble drawing the crowds.

In fact the trouble was to get away from the crowds. To just try and get alone and pray. To just try and get alone and have a meal.

Sometimes he couldn't even eat. When he'd go to eat sometimes the crowds would come breaking in there. The son-in-law of John G. Lake.

Lake died in 1935. His son-in-law died some years ago. Wilford Wright.

But he told us back in the 80s when we had met him that sometimes Lake who had a phenomenal healing ministry in South Africa for a five-year period, the early part of this century. He said that sometimes Lake would go away to an isolated village where a friend had a place where he could stay. Kind of the middle of nowhere and he'd go away just to rest.

And within an hour crowds would be forming outside. Word would be everywhere. Within a few hours they'd be coming from all over with the sick.

Jesus would sift the crowds because he was not interested in all the numbers. He wanted to know what was really in people's hearts. He wanted to know those that would be in it for the long haul.

He wanted to know when he died and rose from the dead and sent his spirit down. And now it was up to his disciples to take this message out. Who would stand against the opposition? Who would be strong in the face of threats and death and persecution? Who would live a holy and pure life in the face of temptation? Who can be entrusted with the message? Luke 14, the crowds follow him.

Maybe the disciples are excited at last. Wonderful. Awesome.

The crowds are here. This is tremendous. This is wonderful.

Great crowds follow him. You know what he does? He gets up and teaches. I'm still in John 12.

I'm just getting to what he says in John 12. Great crowds follow him in Luke 14. You know what he does? He gets up and says, if anyone doesn't hate his father and mother, brother and sister, his own life, he can't be my disciple.

You think his disciples saying, oh no. Not now. We got the crowds.

Bigger crowds we've ever had. Word's gotten out. Now he's got to give the hate your father, hate your mother message.

I can see him going. He really does. You got to know what he means.

We're close and we know what he really means. He doesn't mean hate. Would he be saying, hey, he taught all your father and mother, didn't he? Look, stay around.

Please don't leave. But he knew what he was doing. He gave something that sounded very radical in the ears of the people.

And those that had ears to hear would understand what he was really saying. Others would get turned off and leave. Those that were sincere.

I'm amazed with people, even in terms of revival. Those that want to hear the truth will stick around and find out the truth. Those that come, and it could be with your church, it could be with your ministry.

Those that want to come to destroy, they'll find everything they want. I don't care how perfect your church is running, how wonderful your service is. If someone comes to tear down and destroy, they'll find everything that they want.

Someone wants to find out what you're really about. If you're right with God, they'll find out that you're right with God. Jesus finishes that teaching in Luke 14.

He says, here's the way it is. Unless you forsake everything you have, you can't be my disciple. He didn't need to make deals.

He didn't just say, tell you what, here's what I'm going to do for you. He didn't need to do that. He was the son of God.

Manifesting the glory of the father, opening blind eyes, raising the dead, setting the captives free. He himself is the way, the truth, and the life. He doesn't need to come down to our level.

He says, now if you want me, you've got to leave everything. Because we've had so little of the moving of God in our midst for years, and so little of the glorification of Jesus in our services, we've had to rely on other things to try and draw people in and try to make deals. You know, it's kind of like, let's make a deal.

And if you'll ask him in today, in addition to eternal life, you will get this. Oh, really? And if you'll order now, if you'll put your salvation on credit card, you can even get this bonus. Just trying to make a point.

I know I've never quite heard that done, although it's probably done somewhere. John, the sixth chapter, the great crowds follow him after he feeds the multitudes. And what does he say? He keeps talking spiritually.

They keep thinking naturally. They come because their bellies were full. He starts talking about he's the bread of life.

They want the bread. They want to eat the bread. They want to do the work.

What do we have to do to do? He said, believe. They're talking work. He's talking faith.

They keep getting more and more natural. He keeps getting more and more spiritual until he says, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Picture the disciples.

Look on their faces. Eat the flesh of the son of man. You have no life in you.

Jesus, the people will understand you. They're going to think you're actually talking about eating your flesh and blood. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

Picture him saying, it'd be one thing if he said, it's not so bad to eat pig every so often. Bacon and eggs won't damn your soul to hell. That'd be pretty radical for a Jewish preacher of the first century.

But maybe, maybe they could have taken that. But my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. I have a chapter in my book, Let No One Deceive You, called, Was Jesus a False Prophet? And what I do is I send out a band of critics to follow Jesus around to determine whether he really is who he says he is,

using the same methods by which revival is attacked today.

And you can come to the end of the story pretty quick. They've exposed him. He isn't real.

See, we're used to these things. We read them in our Bible. It's God's word.

This is Jesus speaking truth to us. But you put yourself back in the first century and you hear some of these things, even if you're one of his. His disciples didn't understand it also.

They said, this is a hard saying. He said, are you going to leave also? They said, well, where are we going to go? You have the words of eternal life, and we know who you are. We know you're the one sent by God.

We know you're the only savior, the only way. We know all that. We know you're the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

We know that. But we don't have a clue what you're talking about, Jesus. Now, the hours come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

I tell you the truth, John 12, 24. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

Now, remember, out of the disciples that heard Jesus speak what he spoke, out of the 12 apostles, Judas was a traitor. So out of those 11 that heard Jesus say, you've got to take up your cross and follow me, you've got to lose your life, 10 out of 11, according to church tradition, were killed for the faith. Their skin peeled off, thrust through with spears, crucified, or according to tradition about Peter, crucified upside down because he didn't feel he was worthy to be crucified the way his master was.

Paul, the foremost among the apostles, beheaded. Think of that, friends. They literally died in the course of following their master.

But I want you to see this theme again in Scripture. I've been opening up Scripture and just expanding on simple truths. I'm going to apply them to our lives in a minute.

Let's keep going, though. We can find this in Matthew, we can find this in Mark, we can find this in Luke, we can find this in John. Let's go over and look at some of the epistles.

Let's look in Romans, the sixth chapter, as Paul teaches about baptism. Romans, chapter six, as he's taught about God's overwhelming grace and the free gift of God that makes many righteous through faith in Jesus. He then asks, well, should we keep on sinning that grace may abound if grace was given because sin abounded? Should we sin more so there'll be more grace? He says in Romans 6, too, by no means.

We died to sin. How can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, may live a

new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with or rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Let's look at another epistle. We know that Paul told the Corinthians that he died daily.

Could be different levels of meaning to that. Let's look at a direct application, Colossians, the third chapter. Really, when you look at it, although there are some difficult passages in the Bible and some things that may not be totally clear to us in terms of how we apply them, how we benefit from the genealogies, how we grow by reading about some of the Old Testament laws that don't seem particularly relevant.

There may be certain passages in Revelation, you know, we don't quite follow all the meaning of some of the visions and symbols. The bottom line is the word is pretty clear. The bottom line is the word is pretty simple, black and white.

I remember talking to a rabbi when I was first saved. It's a Jewish believer. My dad wanted me to talk to the local rabbi.

My father was glad I was off drugs, but now wanted me to go back to tradition, although we weren't a really religious family at all. But I've been Jewish enough to not believe in Jesus and to go through some of the religious rituals, you know, when I became 13 and so on. I remember talking to this rabbi.

We became good friends and he said to me, you just have such a way of being just so black and white, simplistic about everything. And he was saying that in a negative way to me. I was talking to a friend of mine, bass player in our band that had gotten saved right before I did, helped lead me to the Lord.

This friend said to me in response to what the rabbi said, the Bible has a way of being black and white. You know, you read in Scripture, you read about obedience and disobedience. You read about blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

You read about the wise and the fool. You read about the wicked and the righteous. You read about heaven and hell.

It's amazing how it's either or throughout the word. And death is one of those definite kinds of things, you know. I realize that sometimes checking out of a grocery store, you might see National Enquirer telling you Elvis is not dead, but friends, he's dead.

It's not one of these debatable kinds of things. When someone's dead and they're buried, it's over as far as this world is concerned. When the Bible talks about death, it's not just talking about a kind of a spiritual lofty concept.

It's talking about something concrete, real, definite. Colossians 3, since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. By earthly things, by the way, he doesn't mean enjoying the beauty of the ocean or providing for your family. By earthly things, he means primarily worldly things, things of the flesh, the things of this world.

Now, if you're consumed with the beauty of the ocean and not the beauty of the creator of the ocean, then obviously you're worldly and you're earthly. But the earthly things he mentions in the following verses, but he says, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Why? For you died.

There it is again. You died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

And because you died, therefore, verse 5, put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry, because of these the wrath of God is coming, coming on those who are disobedient. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived, but now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.

For you died. Just read you something that Hudson Taylor said about the cross, about the universality of the cross. Hudson Taylor said an easy, non-self denying life will never be one of power.

Fruit bearing involves cross bearing. Are you willing to abide in him and thus bear much fruit? Hudson Taylor also made it plain, saying that there are not two different kinds of crosses, you know, one for the super saint and another for the superficial saint. No, we follow the example and pattern of Jesus.

He said, we know the Lord Jesus became fruitful not by bearing the cross merely, but by dying on it. One more quote from Hudson Taylor. I'll find it later.

Better yet, buy the book and find it yourself. What does it mean to take up the cross? What does it mean to die? Most of us understand what Paul wrote in Romans 6, that it means death to sin. Death to sin.

Did you ever hear the story about the funeral? Maybe you just lost a loved one and were just at a funeral and even to make light of a funeral offends you and I don't mean to offend anyone. I'm sensitive to the fact that there's some things that you ought not to joke about. But I heard this and there's some truth to it and that's why I'll share it.

There was a man had died. He'd been a drunkard all his life. Beaten his wife, abused the kids.

Ungodly man. And at the funeral, the minister got up and began to speak about Bob, what a wonderful family man he had been. What a hardworking man he had been.

How in spite of some of his flaws, he was a good man. The wife turned to her son and she said, could you go look in there and see who they're talking about? Let me tell you how death does change someone. Doesn't change the inner person.

That inner person will either go into the presence of God and be blessed. Or that person, that spiritual being will be separated from God forever and cursed. But when someone dies, listen, if there had been a murder spree and that murderer dies, he's not going to murder anymore.

If that person had been an alcoholic for years, they're not going to have another drink. When they die, they die to sin, don't they? They're not going to speak another angry word. They're not going to terrorize anybody anymore.

They're not going to break into another home. When they die, they die. When you get saved, one of the fundamental things you understand is you're being saved from sin.

One of the fundamental things that you understand is that you die to sin. In other words, sin is no longer an option in your life. That is an entry requirement.

Not that you free yourself from sin in order to get saved, but you are saved in order to free yourself from sin. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. As I taught on grace last week, one of the things I emphasize, as we often do, is Jesus saves us from our sins, not in our sins.

If you say, Jesus is my Lord, remember what he said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven. He said, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do the things that I say? When we say, Lord, Jesus, we are saying, I am yours. We are saying, I am your servant, I am your son, I am your daughter, I am devoted to you, God.

I do not live for the flesh any longer. It's not your option to go out and get drunk if you have a bad day. It's not your option to put on some steamy movie if you're a little frustrated with your relationship with your spouse.

It's not an option. I can think back sometimes just having a disagreement with my wife. Actually, it was one time that it happened.

I remember now. It's one time, but I remember it well. I remember it so well, it feels as if it happened several times.

Now, contrary to Steve, who said that, of course, Jerry always figures out after a while, it takes a while to figure out that he was right. He was joking about that with a big smile. Somehow, I haven't had that privilege.

I think I remember being right one time, but most of the time, either my wife is right or I'm just quicker to apologize. I'm not sure which. I remember one time, you know, having an argument about something.

It had to be something stupid, you know. Just having an argument about something and it was late at night. We were talking and, you know, we just kind of ended our conversation disagreeing on this particular point.

I mean, we weren't mad at each other in some hostile way. You know, we love each other and, you know, there's no junk like that. But whatever it was, you know, she was going to go to sleep.

I stay up very late many nights. And I remember the frustration because I was angry, but I couldn't sin. You know what I mean? Like sometimes if you're angry, if you're angry in the world, you know, you might go out, get drunk.

If you're angry in the world, you know, you might put your fist through a wall. If you're angry in the world, you might start cursing at that person you're angry at. Or you might go out on some food binge or something.

You might, you know, put in some ungodly video or something like that. But as a believer, I was angry over the, you know, the difference that we had and I had to deal with the anger. But I remember it so distinctly.

What are you going to do? Sin is not an option. I wasn't bursting to sin. It's not like I said, oh man, I can't get out and go get drunk.

I mean, I wasn't, that wasn't it. But I just remember that reality settling on me. I mean, I have to admit, I was tempted to have like a bag of M&Ms, just a little outlet for the flesh or something.

But you know what? What can you do? Sin is not an option. In fact, holding on to a bad attitude is not an option. In fact, if the other person is 90% wrong in this dispute, if there's 100% to the whole thing and they've got 90% of the wrong and you've got 10%, you don't have the right to wait for them to ask forgiveness for their 90%.

If you take up your cross, it means death to sin. You need to realize it's not just a matter of the big, bad, outward sins that you gave up when you first got saved. If you were into those big, bad, outward sins.

If you were sexually immoral, if you were a drunkard, if you were a drug addict, if you were a thief, if you were a murderer, if you were this, if you were that, now you're cleaned up, now you're living for God. It's not just that. It's sins of the attitude.

Friend, I don't care if somebody abused you and you have been going through a hell of suffering and it may be far more acute inner agony than anything I could dream of. Still, you don't have the right to hold on to bitterness. You don't have the right to hold on to a bad attitude.

You don't have the right to say, I'll forgive, but I won't forget, which is not true forgiveness. In fact, Jesus commands us, our Lord commands us to forgive from the heart. And Paul tells us, this is how we forgive, the same way we have been forgiven.

Do you realize what it means to take up your cross with respect to dying to sin? Sir, that means you do not have permission or the right to think lustful thoughts about another man's wife or another woman. Ma'am, you do not have the right to sit and be entertained by sinful soap operas. You saying, can I watch good soap operas? I was calling all soap operas sinful.

I've often mentioned this, but some months ago I was just praying and I said, Lord, I was talking to the Lord. I said, Master, as I said that word, Master, something struck me. See, when we say, Oh, Father, Father, Father, I've got to pour my heart out to you.

Father, I'm burdened. Father, I've got. Father, child, we're coming as a child, aren't we? We're coming dependent.

We're coming, looking to him, leaning on him, trusting in him. He's our strength. He's our life.

Father, I'm just your child. We say wonderful words of Psalm 23. I don't know.

I saw the Lord is my shepherd. I like nothing. Shepherd.

Sheep. Lord, I'm just a sheep. You guide me.

You leave me. What a sheep. No, sheep are dumb.

Sheep just know how to follow the shepherd. You take sheep, you know, 20 miles from home and say, get back home. Even with a printed map with paw prints on it, friends, hoof prints, whatever, you know, they

won't make it.

They're not bloodhounds, you know, and they're not sheep. Lord, you're my shepherd. I'm just a sheep.

I'm just a little lamb. Lord, you're a mighty warrior. Oh, he's the mighty warrior.

I'm in the army of God. He's my champion. He's my commander in chief.

I will put the enemy under my feet. I'm a soldier in God's army. That's your command, sir.

It struck me when I said the word master. It resonated back in my heart and mind was slave. Master slave.

A slave lives to do his master's will. And as I've said many times, it is not radical for a slave to do his master's will. I'll come back to that in a minute.

You know, the word of God tells us in the new covenant, the laws written in our hearts. The law of God says, don't covet. Don't steal.

Don't murder. Don't have any idols before me. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Some people have a hard time with Steve saying that normal Christianity is to be white hot. To be in passionate love, devotion to the Lord Jesus. To eat, breathe, drink and sleep Jesus.

All right, let's forget that. Let's just go back to the first and greatest commandment. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength.

How's that? Never been rescinded. Never been changed. Do you understand, friends, that your body is not your own? That your mind is not your own.

Look at what it says in first Corinthians, the sixth chapter. We take up the cross. It means death with respect to sin.

See, growing up Jewish, I didn't believe in Jesus at all. I had no relationship with him. He was as foreign to me as Mohammed was.

Even though I learned at some point that he was Jewish, I remember asking a friend kind of jokingly, when did he become Catholic after he rose from the dead? And I had no conception of things. To me, Protestant, Gentile, Catholic, Christian were all synonyms. There was them and us.

Even though I wasn't a religious Jew, just conservative Jewish home. In fact, this is, growing up, one of the stories I remember hearing about Jesus. I remember hearing, my dad told me this story.

My dad told me this story about a boy that was real trouble. Jewish home, and they put him into every Jewish private school they could. Every special center for working with troubled kids, Jewish troubled kids, and nothing worked.

This kid rebelled and fought tooth and nail, and he got kicked out of every school. So father, in desperation, put him in the public school system, and it was even worse. He was totally out of control.

Finally, on his last legs, with no other resort, this Jewish father sent his Jewish son to a Catholic school. And the kid came back, perfect behavior that day. It's the kind of story I heard growing up.

And the father said, son, what's happened to you? You're changed. What did they do with that school? He said, well, he said, you know, some of these other schools, they like sometimes take out a belt, give you a spanking. They got someone nailed to the wall in that school.

That's what I understood of the gospel and Christianity. Gets the point across, I say. I didn't understand the meaning of the cross.

I remember seeing, you know, go on the subway with my dad in New York City, and there you'd see, you know, Jesus saves. Had no meaning to me. No meaning whatsoever.

You know, there was the Jewish joke, Jesus saves, Moses invests. And, you know, I'm just telling you, these things had no spiritual meaning to me. Do you understand? No spiritual meaning to me.

November of 1971, November 12th of 1971. My eyes were open, and I believed that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead. I believed it for the first time.

God opened my eyes. He met me. I had a problem, though.

I wasn't willing to change. See, I didn't have to be a rocket scientist or an advanced theologian to realize that shooting heroin and playing in a godless rock band. And singing songs like a friend of the devil is a friend of mine by the Grateful Dead.

That that lifestyle was not conducive with following Jesus. You understand? I realized it meant either or. And I was not willing to repent.

And for five weeks I battled, one foot in, one foot out, back and forth, yes or no. And it was like a huge mountain to me to say I will never put a needle in my arm again. It was a huge mountain.

To say I'll get off dope for a while, I'll quit shooting other drugs for a while. I could have said that, but I knew following Jesus meant death. I understood enough to understand that it meant you take up your cross, you get on the cross, and you die to those things.

No more. No more. It was December 17th of 71.

Just overwhelmed by the joy of the Lord in our little church. I've often told people that we didn't have contemporary Christian music in those days. So I went from Led Zeppelin to Make Me a Blessing.

From Jimi Hendrix to There is Within My Heart a Melody. Singing these little songs, these little hymns. In my heart there rings a melody, singing these things.

Just filled with the joy of the Lord. And I looked at my life. You know, just in that split second I thought back to everything I'd ever done.

From which I derived pleasure of feeling good from drugs to just doing good. To the joy I had in music. Whatever it was, I looked at, I reviewed my life just in a split second.

I said, this is the joy of the Lord. I've heard them talk about it. This is the joy of the Lord.

Pure, free, wonderful. Different and more beautiful than anything I'd ever known. And I said, what in the world am I doing? I felt as if the Lord had just taken me out of the mud and washed me from head to toe.

And put a beautiful white robe on me. And I was going back in that mud. And I said, Lord, I'll never put a needle in my arm again.

Just like that. Encounter with His grace and goodness. Just like that.

And that was it. Just like that I was free. But listen.

It's the same with every area of sin in our lives. Sin must be the exception to the rule. See, some of us, listen to me.

Some of us leave open the option of sin. We leave open the possibility. Okay, I'm going to get rid of all these videos.

But I still have that one option with cable. I know I can get this one station in if I fiddle with things a little bit. One option.

Or I'm going to serve God. But in the back of your mind, that's if all goes well. If everything goes wrong.

If I lose my job. If all hell breaks loose against me. Maybe I'll go back a little.

Or some, just you've raised your standard without dying. There's a difference. Okay, I won't do this, this, this, this.

I know it's wrong in the sight of God. This is not so bad. Friends, death is death.

Death is absolute. Sin becomes the aberration. An unclean thought comes in your mind.

You turn from it quickly because that's not who you are. An angry word comes out of your lips. An angry sentence, you turn from it quickly because that's not who you are.

And you turn to the Lord, you're instantly cleansed and washed. Sin is no longer the habit of your life. And because sin is no longer the habit to your life, you won't just accidentally slip one day and go on a rampage and shoot down a hundred people.

Oh, I just slipped. It just happened. It could happen to anyone.

No. That doesn't just happen. That's when sin is the pattern, the dominant force in someone's life.

When you die with Jesus, you are freed from sin. And you now walk in newness of life. You live a brand new life.

You live a changed life. You live a converted life. Have you died sin? I didn't ask, have you sinned since you've been saved? All of us have sinned since we've been saved.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. We can live a pure and holy and righteous life free from the domination and bondage of sin. But Jesus explained it in John the 13th chapter.

And this is the image that helps a lot of people. When he went to wash his disciples' feet, Peter said, you'll never wash my feet. Lord, that's a servile thing.

You're not going to wash my feet. Jesus said, if I don't wash your feet, you have no part in me. He said, then Lord, wash everything.

Head, hand, everything. Wash me head to toe. And Peter said, no, those who are clean, those who have been bathed, those who have been washed, don't need to be completely washed except their feet.

What he was talking about, remember in the ancient world and most of the world today, there's not running water going into people's homes. They didn't have showers, bathtubs in their homes. They would go to the public bathhouse or they'd go to the river.

And they'd wash. They'd be completely washed, head to toe. And then they'd walk home.

And when they'd walk home on the dusty roads, their feet would get dirty. They wouldn't walk all the way back. They'd go, no, I got to bathe again.

And then, man, how does this work? Because every time, by the time I get home, my feet are dirty. Right, that's the way it works. Your feet get dirty.

So you have a basin at home and you wash your feet. And when guests come, the first thing you do is you have someone wash their feet. The servant washes their feet.

Because their feet get dirty even if they've been completely clean. Their feet get dirty on the journey going through this world. That's the way it is with us as believers.

We've been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. We've been washed. We've been pronounced righteous by faith in His Son.

We've been set free from our sins. We now live for God. We don't do the things we used to do.

We're not who we were. But as we walk through this world, our feet get dirty sometimes. Sometimes the pollution of the world, just like going into a smoke-filled room, you come out smelling like smoke even if you didn't do anything.

Sometimes just walking through this world, some of the pollution gets on you. Sometimes just walking through this world, your eyes will steal a glance that's wrong. God, I'm so sorry.

You turn away immediately. In years past, before you were saved, you'd buy the magazine and go through it. Now just a glance was sin and you turn away.

But you took that glance. You knew it was there and you glanced. Your feet got dirty.

God washed me clean. And the next time you walk into that place, you don't even look near it. You die once and for all to sin.

If not, you need to take the nails of that cross and take that sin, whatever it is, pound them down. And say, it's over. Listen, there are single people here and you're living a holy life.

Part of the reason you're living a holy life is because you're not going with anybody. And you can be disciplined to not watch wrong things and read wrong things, go to wrong places. But if you had a relationship with a believer, your standards are not right.

If you met the right person, you might just do the wrong thing. You need to kill that. You need to say, by the grace of God, that is a dead issue in my life and I will keep myself pure and separated and holy until marriage.

Have you died to sin? That's why we always talk about cleaning house. That's where our dear brother who was baptized last night. Man, I thought that's a... Describe yourself as hard-headed, man? Hard-headed Irishman living in Texas? That will qualify.

But the good thing is when you get something in there, it sticks. And when you make a decision to go the right way, you stick with it. Talked about burning, what, 200 videos, roughly? Have you not just put the thing in a box but destroyed it? Have you died in your attitude towards it? Settle that issue today, friends.

What an unthinkable thing to come this far to sit in meetings like this in the midst of revival, which is known around the world for a holiness message and to come this far and then to leave still toying with sin. What a mockery. What a waste.

But see, dealing with sin, in a sense, is the easier part. There's the other part, which gets a little heavier. And I want to spend the rest of the time on this.

Have you died to your will? Have you died to your right to self-determination? Have you died to reputation? Have you died to what people think of you? Have you died to your own goals as opposed to God's? See, a lot of people just think of salvation as God cleaning me up, but it's more than God cleaning you up, friends. It's God turning the course of your life. Let's look at it like this.

Let's say someone got saved who was a hypnotist and a psychic. That person now is going to have to find a new career. Would you agree? If someone got saved who was a prostitute, that person is now going to have to find another way to make a living.

Would you agree? But it's not just because what they were doing was sinful. I had you turn to 1 Corinthians 6. I didn't read from it, but it says in verse 18, All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.

You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body. You're not your own.

That body is not your own. Woman, you gave your body to men. You allowed yourself to be degraded.

You gave yourself freely to make a living. But now you're saying your body is not your own. Whatever it is that we do to our bodies, they are no longer our own.

They belong to God. We should only do to them what is fitting for something that has been purchased by God and is now a holy temple to the Lord. But see, it's not just that.

It's not just turning from sin. It is that my will ends. See, for me, okay, the whole rock music scene was so sinful and corrupt.

My whole lifestyle was just bound with drugs, pride, and godlessness. Getting saved, I had to turn from that. But I could have had plans to be a surgeon.

I could have had plans to be a lawyer. I could have had plans to be a politician. I could have had plans to be a salesman and have a lovely home for a lovely family.

I could have had all these plans and I would have had to die to them just the same. Not my will, but yours. That is the way we live.

We die to our own agenda and now we live, Paul said for me, to live as Christ and to die as gain. Those are not just spiritual platitudes, lovely sayings. Because the verse earlier, he's talking about in that context, he doesn't know he's in prison.

And it seems that he knows in his heart he has the choice to be working for the Lord or to say, Lord, I'm ready to go and be martyred for his faith. He said, I don't know what I'm going to choose. I mean, it's far better for me to depart, be with Jesus, but I know that you need me so I'm going to stick around for a while.

For me to live as Christ and die as gain, that's verse 21 of Philippians 1. But what did he say in verse 20 of Philippians 1? For I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ may be magnified in my body, by life or by death, for me to live as Christ and to die as gain. You have been purchased by God to do his will. You have been redeemed to live for him and bear fruit for him.

You have been set apart to serve the master. Master, slave. I often use this illustration.

I had just used it while preaching and then it kind of jumped at me unexpectedly. I talk about if I stay at a hotel when I'm traveling and ministering, you know, you get up in the morning, you leave the bed undone. I still keep the bathroom somewhat neat.

I've been well trained. But, you know, you don't polish the sink or anything. You leave the towels out and everything and then you go out.

You come back later in the day and the room is all made up. Do you call the front desk and say, sir, sir, are you the owner of this hotel? Well, yes, I'm the manager. Sir, do you know when I was out, someone came and cleaned my room? The bed was made.

Is there a little chocolate mint left by the pillow? They gave me fresh towels. And, you know, I actually left like a toothpaste, like a little goober of toothpaste in the sink and cleaned it. The sink is like cleaning, shining.

No one's ever done anything like this for me, sir. You'd be listening on the other end of the phone. What are you talking about? It's just people, it's their job.

This house cleaning crew came through. They do that. Well, sir, have you paid them for this? Have you given them a bonus? No, I didn't give them a bonus.

They just get a minimum wage. They just get paid. Whatever they get, it's their job.

You don't fall down on your knees and kiss the bed and say, thank God there is a God in heaven who loves me. Sounds stupid, doesn't it? I had just given this illustration one time. We're down in the Virginia Beach area.

I was actually in Hampton, Virginia. And a correspondent from 700 Club with a photographer were going to interview me, discuss some things about the revival to have some footage to air in the future. And they wanted to come up to my room to do the interview.

I'd left in the morning, came back. It was like three in the afternoon. I was exhausted.

Just going to do the interview, rest for a few minutes before the night meeting. And I get upstairs right before them and I open the door. It's like, our house is on the market here.

You know, you get a call. The real estate agent wants to come in two hours. And you look around the house.

The house is generally pretty clean. But you look around the house. My wife says, oh no, two hours.

Cleaning this, cleaning that, emptying this, doing this, vacuuming here and there. The way my wife vacuums, she backs her way out of the room and I'll come walking in a minute later to get some. I just vacuum.

I mean, there's not a footprint. It's just perfect. I go into the room.

I open the door and room service hadn't gotten there. I mean, photographer and correspondent about to come in the room like, oh no, I've got to make the bed as quickly as I can. What am I going to do? I've got to get this in order and get this together and then just tell them, please don't come back over here because room service didn't get in.

You know, right after giving this illustration, it's like, room service. Call the front desk, what happened to room service? Come on, man. I've been out all day.

Where's room service? Can you get up here? You know, what's going on? I got people coming through. It was glaring. Glaring.

I bet God looks down at some of us. Oh, Jesus. Save your master.

You're my master. My Lord. He's looking down saying, what in the world are you talking about? I had jobs for you to do.

I had things for you to do. I had a plan for your life and all you're doing is trying to live your own life and ask me to just bless it because you're saying, what kind of nonsense is that? It'd be like room service not doing any of the rooms in the hotel and coming in to pick up their paycheck every week. Friends, you are not here.

I am not here. We are not here to do our own will. Our own will is meaningless in all this.

Our own agenda is meaningless. God did not ask my permission when he said, I'm calling you to preach. He didn't say, now listen.

Tell you what. We've got several possible options. We have different plans and each plan has different rewards but you can basically pick.

And if you want this one, I'll work. No, he said, you preach. You go against the grain and you witness to your own Jewish people and tell them they need Jesus.

You go to this country. You go here. You relocate to Pensacola.

You start a school of ministry. It's my privilege. It's my honor.

It's my extraordinary joy to do his will. It's the most hallowed, sacred thing that a human being can do. That you can do your master's business.

That you can be his servant. But I ask you, point blank, do you know that you are doing the will of God? Do you know that you have died to your agenda? Maybe you got saved and you were a successful business person and you repented of dishonesty on your job and the blessing of God has been on you and on your job. You still should step back and say, Father, how do you want me to spend the rest of my life? And if he says, I've called you to be a witness in that business community, you keep standing straight.

I'm going to bless you. I want to use you to give funds to help build my church around the world and I want you to win those business people to me and I want you to put your kids through these schools because I've got plans for them to educate and to do this and that. Yes, Lord, it's my desire to please you.

But if he says, okay, it's now my purpose for you to leave your job, to leave your career, to uproot your family from suburbia and to now go minister in Africa and to spend your life there, oh, and by the way, you'll all be martyred. Well, Lord, I choose, I choose option B. Option B is disobedience, spitting in the face of God. Option A is obedience How about option A, plan two? No.

And if you go, and if you leave everything in this world, and if you are martyred, remember, it's not radical for a servant to do his master's will. When the slave does what his master's told him to do, he's only doing what slaves do. I believe, hear me, I believe that every child of God needs to prayerfully meditate on the subject of persecution and suffering and martyrdom and to recognize the perspective of the martyr.

What I mean is this. Every one of us is called to die. Every one of us is called to take up our cross.

Jesus said plainly, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. We are blessed in this world. Many of us have material abundance.

Many of our homes, if we looked at the closets, we've got numerous suits, numerous dresses, numerous shirts, numerous pairs of pants, several pairs of shoes. We've got adequate living space for ourselves, for guests, for friends. Most of us do.

Most of us have cars, vehicles. Most of us have air-conditioned cars. We've got an abundance in this world.

And God, according to the scriptures, richly gives us all things to enjoy. According to 1 Timothy, the sixth chapter. According to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, God can make all grace abound to us so that in all things, having all that we need, we'll be able to give and be a blessing to many and be blessed ourselves.

There's no virtue in living on the street and starving. You're not more spiritual if you live in a hut than if you live in a mansion. Although, it is easier to get caught up in the things of this world living in a mansion than in a hut.

You may have a mansion because God blessed you. It could well be. But you need to step back and say, what is the mentality that willingly dies for the faith? What is the mentality that says, let them kill me? Like Tertullian said in the early church, the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church.

As quickly as you cut us down, we'll grow. What's the mentality that in the Chinese church, one friend was relating to me words that he heard from a missionary friend. There were house church meeting and two young men who had been in prison for their faith suffered terrible hardship, probably torture.

They were talking about their experience and all the people in this house church meeting began to weep. As they were weeping, the missionary asked the translator, why are they crying? What are they saying? And he said, they are saying, why did they have the privilege of suffering and going to prison and not me? You have to realize that people who say those things in accordance with Hebrews 11 say that they're looking for a better place than this. That they're looking for another country.

They're looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. That they recognize they are just passing through this world. And to live is to do the will of God.

To live is Jesus and to die is gain. Steve talks about a friend of his. Two guys, I believe, got in the car with him.

One guy put a gun to his head. Give me your money or I'll shoot you. And he said, you would really shoot me? He started to get excited because he thought that means I get to go and be with Jesus.

Actually happened to a friend of Steve's. The one guy got out of the car and spooked ran off. The other guy prayed to receive the Lord with the guy.

Yeah, we care about our families. We're compassionate. We care for the sick and those in need.

The gospel has done more to help needy people around the world build hospitals, feed the poor, educate the uneducated, teach hygiene, those things. Christianity has done more of that than any other religion. Period.

Nothing even resembles it in terms of good works around the world. The ministry of healing the sick, compassion on the suffering is at the very heart and soul of the gospel. But ultimately, we are only passing through this world.

And if I can best glorify God by laboring as a missionary in the jungles of Africa for 50 years, so be it. And if I can best glorify God by being a professor in an institution somewhere, so be it. And if I can best glorify God by having 10 kids and raising them in Jesus, so be it.

And if I can best glorify God by being killed for the faith, Stephen, by his death, glorified God even more than he would have with a wonderful miracle ministry. He had the privilege of being martyred for his faith. That's the only issue.

Lord, how can I most glorify you? How can I most draw attention to you? How can I fulfill your plan and purpose? I was struck when I asked at our orientation on Tuesday at our school, 500 plus students there. I knew that many had left business and careers, uprooted families, to come and train for ministry. Maybe one third of the people said that they had done that.

But what surprised me was that we had probably about 75 that raised their hands and said that they had dropped out of college to come to the school. Some from Christian colleges. I know at least one student that was on her way into her senior year at a school.

And her father, who loves the Lord, was going to pay for her to finish her education. But she felt, no, she was miserable there. A Christian school, she was miserable there.

She knew what God wanted her to do. And even if her dad wouldn't pay for her, she was going to come. Senior year.

But friends, it's not radical for a slave to do his master's will. Have you died? Have you died? What if it's the will of God to use you powerfully, but you'll be hated by millions? Your name will be maligned. Will you still follow him? What if it means that you have to be honest on your job and you've got to tell the truth to your boss, and you won't get that promotion that you were depending on.

In fact, you already had the mortgage go through for your new home, but now if you're honest and you tell the truth, you won't get that promotion. In fact, you may get demoted. In fact, your salary may drop substantially from what it is.

Will you follow Jesus? You need to step back. You need to pray. You need to give yourself, Lord, if it meant today was the last day of my life and I would now be put to death for the faith.

What a privilege. Think of the eternal reward. Think of the lives that would be impacted.

I don't mean dying in a car crash or dying of sickness or disease. I mean willingly laying my life down for Jesus. You start with that perspective and then you realize, okay, that's not the will of God that I get martyred today.

It's not the will of God that I stand on the street corner and preach and get stoned to death. Then, Lord, what do you want me to do with my life? See, it's not my own. We're already alive from the dead.

We now sit in heavenly places with Jesus. That's why the devil is under our feet because we're seated with Jesus in heavenly places. Our life is now hidden.

We're sitting with him in God. Now, I don't believe most of you are being called out of business and career. Some of you are.

I don't believe most of you are being called out of the course of life that you're on if you're devoted to the Lord, although some of you are, but every one of us is called to a radically different orientation. Why don't we witness sometimes it's because we want to preserve a carnal reputation that we have, a natural worldly reputation, and we don't want to be known as an on-fire follower of Jesus. Some of you that are really embarrassed to witness, you need to get the loudest T-shirt that's out there.

It was actually Steve's idea for someone to put together T-shirts because he's a witnessing fanatic. He said, make some T-shirts so that people, especially kids, teenagers will wear them everywhere they go and people ask, what is this? And it'll be an opportunity to witness. But if you are super shy, if you have a hard time telling people about Jesus, get the loudest turn or burn T-shirt that's out there.

Get one that says Jesus and, you know, day glow kind of picture, colors. And just wear it out. Say, I'm going to die to what people think.

I'm going to die. Now listen, there may be a better way to do it in terms of witnessing, but if that's the only way you can overcome the fear, overcome it first and then learn wisdom afterwards. What holds you back? Some of us, it's fear of what people are going to think.

Some of us, it's fear of financial loss. Some of us, it's fear of rejection. Some of us, it's fear of loss of comfort.

Friends, just die to it all. And if the Lord gives you 20 homes in this world, fine. And if he calls you to die in the streets of India, fine.

And if he calls you to be rich, fine. If he calls you to give it all away, fine. If he calls you to be loved and respected by many, fine.

If he calls you to be hated and rejected by many, fine. If he calls you to preach publicly, if he calls you to pray secretly, fine. If he calls you to pour your heart and soul into children and give yourself to children's ministry, and nobody will think you're some big shot because they don't know your name.

God says, you pour your life into kids. You pour your life into youth. Don't look at that as a ladder that you go up to and then you get promoted to someone.

You pour your life into what God's called you to. Or he'll raise you up to be the world's most famous TV preacher. Whatever it is.

You should say, Lord, he says to you, I'm going to use you. And the whole world is going to know your name and you're going to be famous. You know what your attitude should be, Lord? If there's no other way for me to do your will, if that's the cross I'm going to have to bear, fine.

Because you're not out for your reputation. You're not out for your agenda. Plus, trust me, if you follow Jesus and the whole world knows your name, not everybody's going to bless your name.

Jesus said, servant's not above his master. If they treated me like this, how are they going to treat you? It's time we take up the cross. It's time we embrace it.

I'll say this and I'm going to close. Go to Hebrews 13. As Jewish believers, there's a certain reproach that we have to carry.

We are considered mishumadim, traitors, apostates. In a religious Jewish home, if someone became a believer, the family would have a funeral for them and do what's called sitting shiva, taking the seven days of mourning. Shiva in Hebrews 7. Sitting and mourning for seven days as if that person had actually died.

Some of you have had to go against your family religious tradition. Some of you had careers and businesses and you left them to follow Jesus. Some of you going into the ministry was the exact opposite of what everyone had thought.

Your in-laws couldn't be more disappointed. And you've had to take that reproach. As Jews who follow Jesus, there's a certain reproach that we take.

And sometimes you wish it wasn't there. We want to be accepted by nature. We want people to embrace us and to like us.

We care about people. We love people. And when they hate us and turn against us, it can sting.

We're human beings. That's why Jesus had to tell us rejoice. Your reward is great in heaven.

It's a good sign. That's the way they treated the prophets before you. Look at what it says in Hebrews 13.

The high priest, verse 11, carries the blood of animals into the most holy place as a sin offering. But the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

Let us then go to him outside the camp bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. I remember at a three-day meeting with 10 Messianic Jewish Christian leaders, three days of prayer and fasting, we gathered together, February of 93.

I just shared that verse with them and I said, we need to stand and embrace the reproach. We need to own it. We need to take it and say, yes, Lord, I take that reproach.

You're going to have revival. You're going to have a move of God. You're going to have to embrace the reproach too because it's not going to be as accepted as traditional religion will be or as our old ways were to many people.

Lord, I embrace the reproach. Some of you go into a two-year school of ministry that could have been in the finest college in America in the eyes of man. You went where? The Brownsville Revival School of Ministry.

You were going to Harvard. Now you're in the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry. I don't know anyone who came from Harvard.

I'm just using that as an example. You already have a master's degree from this school and that you're going to a two-year school of ministry? Yes, Lord. What an honor.

What a privilege. You believe in Jesus. You're one of those fundamentalist fanatics that believe that if all the religions of the world, everyone's going to hell unless they believe like you and they put it in the way that's the ugliest possible way they can put it.

I believe Jesus is the only Savior. If that makes me hard-headed, dogmatic, narrow-minded in your eyes, then I'm hard-headed, dogmatic, and narrow-minded. But the way is narrow.

I embrace the reproach. Embrace the cross, friends. Don't run from it.

Don't shrink from it. Because the nice thing is the cross is the way to death and death leads to resurrection. And I'll tell you something.

There's nothing I'd rather do than everything God's called me to do. There's nothing I'd rather do than follow Him with heart and soul and mind and strength. There's nothing I'd rather do than His will.

Even when it involves sacrifice, even when it involves hardship. Most of us in America, sacrifice and hardship are relative terms. When it involves fasting, when it involves prayer, when it involves rejection, when it involves financial sacrifice, when it involves reproach, when it involves whatever it involves, Lord, what a privilege.

What a joy. See, when you delight yourself in Him, your whole life is transformed and that's why He gives you the desires of your heart. When you remain in Him and His words remain in you, that's why you ask what you will and will be given because you're in harmony.

Friends, get rid of the discord. Get rid of those dissonant notes. Get rid of the things that aren't in harmony.

Lay your life on the cross and say, Lord, I've died to sin. I've died to self-will. I've died to my goal.

I've died to me. I now live to do your will. I'm crucified with Christ.

I'm crucified with Christ. I no longer live in myself and yet I still live. That life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Jewel, stand to your feet with me.

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