

# God's Work to Be Done God's Way

by Paris Reidhead

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of doing God's work in God's way, highlighting the importance of obedience and the significance of the Ark of the Covenant as a representation of Christ.*

**Duration:** 42:23

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 6:1

**Topics:** "The Lord's Work"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of David and the capture of the ark of God by the Philistines. The background of the story goes back to Eli, who was Orthodox but had liberal sons, leading to a general degeneration in Israel. The Philistines captured the ark, but soon realized they wanted to get rid of it. The speaker relates this to the desire of the heart and the importance of understanding how God wants to do His work.

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## Transcript

In the beginning of the first verse of the sixth chapter of 2 Samuel, again David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand, and David arose and went with all the people that were with him from the vale of Judah to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubim. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, that was in Gibeah. And Uzzah and Ahiel, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God, and Ahiel went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments, made of firwood, even on hearths and psalteries, cymbals, cornets, and cymbals. And when they came to Nathcon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it.

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? And so David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David.

And David carried it aside unto the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. Now, this is part of a story that I've read for you, and you're living in part of a story here in this last third of the twentieth century.

And there is an analogy that I am trusting you will make, and to help you make it, I will make suggestions along the way. But let's just bear in mind that the modern mission era, which we are part of, can be said to have begun about the year 1800. And tonight there are more unevangelized in the world than there ever have been before.

We have tremendous improvements in communication and transportation, all of the tools and techniques and methods that are at our hand. And yet, strangely enough, on the basis of what we've done in the last fifty years, projected into the next fifty years, if you can have an average increase, we'll find that in fifty years from hence we'll be many, many times further behind in our task than we are today. And I think that we owe it to ourselves, in the midst of this Victorious Life, Deeper Life conference, to ask ourselves how God wants to do his work, and ask him to bring us to that place that we're prepared and ready.

Because, after all, that's the purpose. He said this morning that every Christian is either a missionary or a mission field. The same one who said, Come and rest, said, Go and preach.

And he breathed on them and said, As the Father sent me, and that word sent his mitto, missionary. As the Father missionaried me, so I missionary you. I send you.

And thus it is that we're brought face to face with the fact that every Christian is involved in this task. The provision that was made in the person of the Holy Spirit, as Peter said, the promise is to you, to your children, to them that are far off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call. Every believer has a birthright in Christ to know the victory through his death and power through his resurrection and the outpouring of his Spirit.

We're all in this together. And one day we're going to stand and give him a count when we meet him at the beam at the judgment seat of Christ. Well, now David loved the Lord.

He'd been chosen of God to serve him. He was a man after God's own heart. And yet here we find that something isn't going quite right.

The background of the story goes clear back to Eli in the time when Samuel was a little boy. You recall that Eli himself was orthodox, but his sons were extremely liberal, both in practice and in attitude and in heart and in habits. And the consequence was that there came a general degeneration in Israel.

The Philistines came upon Israel, and someone got the bright idea of bringing the ark down to the battlefield, and so thereby ensure victory for Israel over the Philistines. But what actually happened was that the Philistines, trembling as they did, yet united and came in and destroyed some 30,000 of the Israelites and went home rejoicing in the fact that they'd captured the ark of God. The only problem was when they got it home, they didn't know what to do with it.

They put it in the house of Dagon, the god of the Philistines, and the next morning when they came out, Dagon had fallen flat on his face. They stood him up and left the ark there. The next day when they came in, he'd fallen again on his face, and his head had fallen off, and his two hands had fallen off.

And so then they began to shift the ark around from city to city among the Philistines, and every place it went, trouble came. People were slain, sicknesses, scourge, mice overran the place. One area they were afflicted with, general throughout the entire place, a plague of hemorrhoids, a terrible visitation from God from one end of the country of the Philistines to the other, because they had committed sacrilege against the ark of God.

Now what is this ark of which I speak? We find reference in the instructions that God gave to Moses. There in the holiest of all, the inner room of the holy place, there was to be but one piece of furniture. It was the ark of the covenant, made of acacia wood, covered with gold, the lid of which was a bar of solid gold.

Upon this bar was the chair of him, with their outstretched wings, angelic forms, and they hovered thus, resting upon the corners, the edges of the mercy seat, and their wings overspreading. And the presence of God is said to have dwelt between the wings of the chair of them. Now this ark is a picture of Christ, for in the wood and the gold you have the perfect illustration of his deity in the gold and his humanity in the wood.

The wood overlaid by the gold shows that integral union between the human and the divine and the person of the Son of God. God who became flesh and dwelt among us, God with us, Immanuel. And here he is pictured in the ark in the holy place.

Then that bar of gold, picturing God in his great grace and mercy, be resting upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But it was God the Son, the infinitely holy One, by the vehicle of his humanity, his body, his human personality, able to enter into death. For the mercy seat was the place where Moses once a year came with blood, sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat.

This is what the publican in the temple cried, literally, God be mercy seated to me, a sinner. And it was the picture of God between the wings of the chair of them, looking at the blood that was sprinkled upon the plate of gold, resting upon the ark of wood covered with gold. And this was the law which our Lord had perfectly kept.

He gave it, and he's the only one who kept it. The lawgiver became the law keeper, that he might die for the lawbreaker. There also was a pot of manna, speaking again of this that came down from heaven, of the one who was to say, I am the bread of life.

If any man eat not of me, he has no life, but if you'll eat my flesh and drink my blood, then you'll have my life in you. And so the mercy seat speaks of Christ. Christ in the midst of his people, our wonderful, wonderful Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God who invaded time and history, and by his coming, by his life and his ministry, his death, his burial, his resurrection, opening for us this new, this living way.

How marvelous it is that when he died, this enormous curtain in the Herod's temple was read from the top to the bottom, the curtain separating the holy place from the holiest of all, indicating that a new and a living way had been opened, and through the person of Christ, to a union with Christ. Now, this is the ark, picture of Christ in the midst of his people. Our ministry is to preach Christ.

This is the good news, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and that he was buried and he was raised again the third day according to the Scripture. We send out missionaries, and they carry this ark, if you please, this testimony of God invading time in the person of his dear Son. This is the message

that we carry.

This is the testimony that we bring. And the ministry at home is again, whether it be in church or home or school or office, wherever you go in that sense, you are a bearer of the good tidings. Now we are to understand what happened.

Here the ark has been captured by the Philistines, possessed by them to the point where they are desperately eager to get rid of it. Have you ever had that happen, where God has given you the desire of your heart and sent leanness to your soul? Well, this is what happened to the Philistines. My, how they wanted that ark.

It reminds me of the man who was out mountain lion hunting, and he climbed a tree after the wounded mountain lion. And he yelled down to his friend, Harry, come on up and help me hold him. And then there was a scuffle and a scream, and a few moments later he said, no, no, come up and help me let go of him.

And this is what the Philistines were concerned about. They wanted help in letting go of the ark, because they had more than they bargained for. Well, they went ahead and called the priest of Dagon and said, how will we move this? And the priest said, well, be careful of one thing, don't send it back without an offering.

So they made little golden mice, and then they made little forms of an ulcer, and made that out of gold, because there had been this affliction throughout the coast of the Philistines. And they put these in a coffer. Then they made a new cart that had never carried a load.

And they thought, well, we're going to make this really hard. We'll not only make a new cart that's never carried a load, but to see whether this is God that's judged us, we'll take two milk cows that have never been taught to pull a cart. And not only that, we'll get two milk cows that have calves, and won't want to leave them.

And we'll take these wild milk cows and put them in the yoke, and we'll shut their calves up and leave their calves off and tie them up. And then we'll just stand back and see what this God can do. And there are two roads to Beth Shemesh.

There's a shortcut, a highway, and then there's the other road. And if they take the road that's smooth and a little bit longer, but it's the highway, it's the road that goes without so much danger, then we'll know that God did it. Well, that's sort of a fixing thing, isn't it? And this is exactly what they did.

Wild milk cows that have never been taught to pull, calves led, blacking and bleeding away and tied to a tree or locked up, and then they just stand back and say, oh, let's see what's going to happen. And what happened was that the cows went on as though they'd been trained for years, didn't hesitate a moment, took the road that would lead them to Beth Shemesh with the least danger to the cargo, to the ark, and the five lords of the Philistines went along in the brush at the side and watched these oxen without any direction carry the cart with the ark, gently and carefully picking out the place so that it wouldn't be spilled, and bringing it and then seeing the people of Beth Shemesh look at it and come and take it. And the lords of the Philistines went home and said, we're well rid of that, because that was certainly God.

The people, the ark stopped by a large rock, and so they queued the carts for fuel and slaughtered the two oxen as an offering, and there the ark stayed for some time. David has come as king now, he's in Jerusalem, he's reigning, but it's very lonely there without the presence of Christ, without the glory of

Christ manifest, illustrated in the ark. And so David's desire is to bring the ark back, because this is, after all, the whole heart and center of Israel's worship.

It's the place where God dwells. Now, David knew the Lord, he'd already written the twenty-third Psalm, he'd already had great dealings with God, he'd walked a good way with Him, he'd gone through all these years of persecution by Saul. Many of the Psalms have already been written, and he's there.

He should be taught in the things of the Lord. He's the one that says, thy law is my meditation day and night. He ought to know the Word.

But he went down to bring back the ark. And can you see him when he comes into the house of the man who's caring for it, and he says, how did it get here? Oh, they said the Philistines made a new card. Well, that sounds very good to anybody who has a new card around here, that we will do the same thing.

This is the thing. David thought that he could do the thing the way the Philistines had done it. Now, the Philistines speak of the world.

They always speak of the world in the types of Scripture. And the world performed a service in respect to God that he honored because of their ignorance and because they weren't in covenant relationship with him. But here's what happened.

When David, who was in covenant relationship with him, was in blood covenant with him, who had the Word, tried to do the work of God the way that the Philistines had done it, God wouldn't honor it. And this, I say, is the tragedy of the twentieth century. I'm afraid we've been trying to do so much of the work of God in the way of the Philistines, instead of coming back and finding out how it's done.

Well, the ark was placed on the new card. Oxen were brought. They didn't go as far as the Philistines did.

They got well-trained oxen. And they started to take the ark back to Jerusalem. But it says, And the oxen shook it, and Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark.

Isn't it amazing when God was working even with the ignorant Philistines, he got the ark safely there without anyone touching it? But here, because God's people were doing a good thing in the wrong way, it wasn't possible. And the consequence? Well, the consequence was that Uzzah died. And it says that David was displeased with the Lord, and David feared the Lord that day, and so they just put the ark in a house nearby and shut it off, and David went back to Jerusalem.

But he didn't go back in joy. He didn't go back in pleasure. He went back in grief, because this meant that he was going to have a lonely job as the king of Israel without the presence of God, and the glory of God, and the blessing of God.

Well, the consequence? Apparently, we have no record of it, but apparently David did the thing then that he should have done earlier, and he called for the Word. He called for the Scripture. He went to the book to find out the manner and way that God wanted to move the ark.

It was in Exodus, the twenty-fifth chapter, that he discovered that Kohath of the children of Levi had been assigned, the sons of Kohath, to the task of carrying the ark. Now, we could trace down Kohath and discover why they were given this particular high honor, but Kohath was chosen. His name there, his sons, were the ones that were to carry the ark.

Moses would go in and bail the ark and put over it the fine, fine linen, and the scarlet, and the purple, and then the badger skin, so that it was all covered. Then the sons of Kohath would come in, and here is the wonder of it. On the ark there were two rings, rings of gold, or covered with gold, in which two staves went.

And these staves would be put through the rings, and then the ark would be lifted and carried on the shoulders of the sons of Kohath. But an interesting, and a strange, and a wonderful thing, it said that these sons should be thirty, and not yet fifty. Isn't it strange that there should come a time when one would be standing before the Sanhedrin, and they should look at him and say, well he's not yet fifty, and we know that he was over thirty.

Isn't it interesting that the one who's pictured in the ark should himself take two staves, and those two staves be laid one the other to form a cross, and he then should carry that cross and drag it through the streets of Jerusalem up to the hill of Calvary, Golgotha. And isn't it marvelous that those two staves should suspend and uplift and present the one who's pictured by the ark, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it is, there hanging upon a tree, this one whose God come in the flesh, the acacia wood of his humanity, the gold of his deity, perfectly, gloriously joined, inseparably united, and that acacia, the humanity, gives him the vehicle by which he can get under the law, and then under the sentence of the law, and then to death.

That he could break the power of death, and lead captive him who had the power of death, and pay the full penalty of sin. Now do you see why God couldn't allow David to break the type? He couldn't allow David to spoil the picture. Philistines, they don't understand.

They have no part in these things. Let them make a new card. It's all right for the Philistines, but it'll never do for the people of God, because God's told them how to do it.

I come to Minneapolis, my heart is always filled with joy and grief. I lived here. I was thinking today that it was down at South St. Paul, Red Rock Camp Meeting, Southside of the Cudahy Packing Company.

There were a group of people that gathered and gathered for nearly a hundred years. Grave creatures were there that year that God, in sweet, mysterious grace, saved a boy. John L. Brasher of the Logan told me he's a hundred years old this week, and shortly.

Joseph Owens, Paul Reeves, my, the glory of God was there, but they moved. Red Rock, for all impact purposes, has disappeared. I think of Medicine Lake Bible Conference, how the prongs came from all over the state, and I'm told that nothing is there.

Oh, how easy it is. For yesteryear, the way it was done, then somehow to have it disappear. We try to do the work other than God's prescribed, other than the way He's planned.

How quickly the candlestick is removed. How soon the heart seems to vanish. God is so sensitive, He's so concerned, He's so determined that your life and your ministry and your work shall be the way He's established, the way He's planned.

And so here we see David, back in Jerusalem, searching the Scripture, and there he finds that God said through Moses that the ark is to be born unto sons of Levi, on their shoulders, men thirty, not yet fifty. And back again he returns, now this time to do God's work in God's way. Can you understand now why he danced before the presence of the Lord? For it wasn't just that the ark was coming back.

It wasn't just that the presence of God would now be there in the seat of His reign and His authority as King. It wasn't just that. It was that the pressure and the power and the influence of those years when he'd been hiding among the Philistines, when he'd been influenced by them, when he'd been under the pressure of them, had been broken.

And he'd been released from all these things, and he'd been now brought into that tender, loving tyranny of the Word of God, where God could bless. Oh, how important it is for us to understand it. How significant it is that you should realize in your ministry, for you have a ministry, you're part of this, that God is exceedingly jealous of the glory of His Son.

And He's determined that if you are to bear the vessel of the Lord, first that you should be clean. Be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. He specified Kohath, because Kohath had not been involved in the rebellion.

He'd been clean from all of that which had transpired, never lifted his voice against God, had not been among the number that had bowed down before the golden calf. And so he says to us, be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. And how important it is, therefore, that we should deal with anything and everything the Spirit of God shows us.

Because this is holy work, this work of witnessing for Christ and interceding for the lost, and exercising the weapons of our warfare, spiritual, not carnal, for the releasing of men from the snares of sin. And so he says, be clean. That's the reason why He's so jealous.

Because your task is the task of uplifting His Son, this One who came by way of the Incarnation, joined Himself perfectly to humanity, became the Ark, the Mercy Seat. When you come to this task, you come clean, clean through His precious blood, clean through a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men, clean through the mirror of the Word as you've gazed upon it and invited the Spirit of God, clean through a heart that's been cleansed of all purpose save to glorify Him. But it's not only a heart that's been cleansed through the blood, but we find that these two staves are there, these two rods of wood that form a cross.

And He's determined that all that share in the ministry of calling His Son should know the cross. The Apostle speaks of this in Romans 6.6, you hear him say, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ. This is axiomatic.

This is part of the testimony. This is the association that was made. The Gospels preach in this light in Paul's day to everyone, Jesus Christ died for you, but since He died for you, He died as you, and since He died as you, you died with Him.

There were two people on that cross. Christ was on the front of it, dying for you, and you, in God's eyes, as it were, were on the back of it, dying with Him. Understand this, knowing this? Reckon yourself, therefore, from this day on, as long as you live, to be crucified with Christ.

See yourself there, with all ambition and personal pride and hope and everything that could come in that would any wise intervene in His lovely purpose. You bear the ark on two cross staves, two rods of wood, and therefore you only are ready to come to this work of witness that have first come to the cross. But how simple that would be, if all that was needed was a knowing.

He said also, reckon yourself to be dead. And speaking of Himself, He said, I'm always being delivered unto death. Oh, you can take that as meaning that He was constantly being threatened with persecution and martyrdom.

True. But I think something else was happening. I think the Apostle is using this expression in this way, day after day, experiences, circumstances, events transpired, which are to me like God's little wheelbarrow.

Oh, in this case, think of the Judaizers that followed Him wherever He went, and He'd go into a place to preach, and they'd open a meeting right across, and theirs was, Paul isn't an apostle. I don't know what the thorn in the flesh was. Some people think it was sickness.

Personally, from the use of the thorn in the Old Testament, I would assume that the thorn were people that followed Him wherever He went, made life miserable for Him. Whether that's the case or not, at any rate, this was His experience. And I think He's saying, He's always being delivered unto death.

In other words, there's always somebody right over there, right here, right behind Him, that's determined to kill Him. To keep Him in place. And so He goes somewhere to minister, and there they are.

They came in on the next plane, if you please. Or the same plane riding in the tourist section. There they were.

As soon as He got out there, they're, that's Paul! Don't believe him! He's no apostle. He doesn't have credentials. Paul says He's always being delivered unto death.

Always a little wheelbarrow behind Him, and somebody's pushing Him. Well, now, He's got one or two things to do. He can get up there and fight, or else He can say, well, thank you, Lord.

Must have been the push was permitted of you, and the wheelbarrow was arranged by you, so okay. And they just sort of wheel Him right back to the cross. He's always being delivered to death.

And these experiences, which might have caused resentment and antagonism and vindication and all the rest, no. Paul says, I die daily. So the cross was a grand tenet of theology.

It was a truth that He used in the moment of temptation. It was His way of meeting the frustrations and pressures that He couldn't control. But you'd certainly think that this man who was so marvelously filled with the Spirit and had the gifts of the Spirit in such abundance that all of them could be said to have been exercised by Him, would have come to a place where he'd have outgrown this truth, wouldn't you? Now, writing to the church at Galatia, he said, I am crucified with Christ.

I'm still bearing the ark. I'm still witnessing for Christ. I'm still seeking to exalt Him, God who became flesh and dwelt among us.

And there's only one way. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

The only way to bear the ark is on the two staves, the way God's ordained. And so he said, I am. That present perfect passive verb is, I have been in the past, but the effect of it continues until the present.

Well, that's about midway in his ministry. But Paul, aren't you ever going to get out of this cross? Life? Certainly there'll come a time when it'll be a mystery, won't it? You'll go on to another level, another plane.

But writing that prison epistle to the church at Philippi, he said, that I may know Him.

Oh, Paul, you've known Him since the Damascus road event. Oh, Paul, you've known Him all these years. Why use you such terms as this, that I may know Him? And then we hear him say, neither as though I were already perfect, nor that I've already attained, but I press toward the mark of the prize.

What is it? The mark of the prize is to be found at that day, hearing him say, you finished the course, you fought a good fight, you kept the faith as a crown of righteousness, you carried the ark the way God intended. But if you do that, then go back, that I may know Him in the fellowship of His suffering, in the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death. In just the time you feel that, boy, this death life, oh, I know that, now what's new? God's going to show you new areas in your personality, in your experience, in your relationship, where the cross hasn't reached yet.

And you're going to be as Paul was, aged, venerable, bowed with the care of years, face lined and back seamed with scars from where he's been beaten with rods. And we listen to this man as he dictates, and it's written for him because his hands are shackled and chained to soldiers at his side, that I may know Him, being made conformable unto His death. Pastor Avery, in that most valuable book, Three Aspects of the Cross, dwells upon the continuing aspect.

Oh, how wisely we see that, and how well that comes to clarify this, that it is to be viewed by you that as long as this ark of testimony of the incarnate Christ, God come in the flesh to live, to die, to rise again, to save sinners, the only way this message can be carried. It is on the cross stage. This is how it was intended.

And there comes a time when we feel, well, I've passed that point, now where's my new car? And sometimes God lets us take our new car, but it isn't long until we find that touching it to steady it. For on our hearts are bowed low before Him. Oh, to see, to understand, to recognize that God will never let His people do His work the way the world does.

And you will find that when denominations and groups that once had a testimony, and once had a ministry, and once had life, begin to look around and say, well, this, the Philistines here are doing it, and the Philistines there are, and it seems to work, and it gets the job done, and the first thing you know, you can hear the hammering in the offices as they're making new carts, and as they're bringing the oxen to pull it. But dear friend, you just look a little while and you'll search in vain for the candlestick. It'll be removed.

It'll be removed. God is so jealous of His side. He said the only way the ark can be carried is stays on the shoulders of men thirty, not yet fifty.

Those that have come to, in a sense, maturity, but the maturity is not that maturity of age of years alone, but the maturity of insight and understanding. As we saw, I write unto you, little children, your sins are forgiven you. I write unto you, young men, you've overcome the wicked one.

I write unto you, fathers, that you know Him who is from the beginning. I'm sure many of you tonight will look back and see the new carts that you devised. You'll see the times when you sat to steady the ark and imitate the Philistines in one way or another.

But oh, tonight the Spirit of God is calling us right back to that place that He brought David. And we sit with the word and we say, Lord, how do you want to do your work? And we hear this one brilliant that he was, oh, so brilliant, as a logician, spellbinding orator, eloquent philosopher. And he said, I came among you

determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

I did not come to you in the excellency of men's speech, lest your faith should stand in the wisdom of men. Here is a man that's learned that there's only one way to carry the ark of God. Have you learned it? Have you learned that the only way up is down, the only way to live is to die, the only way that wheat can bring forth is to fall into the ground and die? So yes, I've learned that.

But you know, we have to learn it so often. David knew it. David knew better.

David had read the Scripture. David had just been caught up with the activity and with his association from the Philistines when he'd lived among them for so many months. And the things that were important to God had seemingly lost their importance to him.

And because nothing had happened, he didn't think God cared. But God does care. He's so jealous of this ark, this testimony of his son.

And if you're going to have a witness for him, then you'll have to hear him say, abide in me. Abide in me, crucified with me to have victory over yourself. Abide in me, buried with me to have victory over the world.

Abide in me, seated with me to have victory over principalities and powers. And I will abide in you. Ah, here are the two cross sticks.

You abide in me, and I'll abide in you. And you'll bring forth much fruit. But oh, this is so costly.

Lord, you mean to say as long as I live, I've got to stay here on the back of the cross? And I never can initiate, and I never can develop, and I never can plan, and I've just got to stay here? And I won't be able to say anything's my own, my time, my life, my talent? You really mean that I've got to abide, live, dwell in you, crucified? That's what I mean. Lord, why can't we get this dying business over with? This isn't so nice, this abiding here. Let's get this thing through.

Oh, I know how you feel about it, dear child. But you see, the only way the ark can be carried is on two staves. You abide in me, crucified with me, and I'll abide in you.

And you'll bring forth much fruit. My Father will be glorified. There isn't any other.

This is the way God wants to do his work. Shall we bow together in prayer?

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