

Baptized into the Fire

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon delves into the significance of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, highlighting the divine timing and preparation involved, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the underlying temptation to do one's own will, the importance of spiritual discipline and preparation for facing temptations, and the ultimate purpose of our existence being a test of faithfulness to God amidst trials and temptations.

Scripture: Matthew 3:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7, Luke 4:1, 1 John 2:16, Psalm 139:23, Proverbs 4:23, James 1:12

Topics: "Divine Timing", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

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Transcript

Presence really is, I don't know how to say it, felt. Presence dwells. Most of you guys came here because it was the cheapest option you could find.

You didn't have the money to go to the expensive place and you could have had access to all the wisdom of the world in that other place. And all we have to offer you is Jesus. And it sounds so trite.

If we were to put that on the website, nobody would come. But it just happens to be reality. And it just happens to be exactly what you need.

You know, this is the 10th message now in the new series about the life of Christ. Who was here when Pastor Ed gave that original message back in December? Saw a bunch of you guys were. This is the 10th message.

We haven't even gotten into his ministry days yet. Wow, the things that must be coming down the pike, right? You don't look very excited at all. How disappointing.

All right, we're going to be looking at a couple of episodes in his life. Jesus and John at this point are 30 years old and they've both been on their own paths in life. One living down by Jerusalem somewhere and one living up in Nazareth.

I don't know if they ever actually saw each other before this. I don't know. It seems to be a mystery.

But now their paths are going to converge. And Jesus will be leaving the life of obscurity from this point on. John's been down at the Jordan River preaching his heart out, baptizing people.

God's been moving. Revival has broken out down there in the middle of the wilderness. People are flocking there from all over Palestine.

And I'm sure that word got to Jesus. No doubt he heard about it. And I would imagine that there was something inside him that was yearning to go there.

Just to be in the meetings. Just to be where God is moving. Instead of the dead religion in the synagogues, God is there and God is moving and upending people's lives.

Just tremendous. But the Lord had not released him yet to go there. So he continued on just being a simple, quiet, obscure carpenter in a nasty little village called Nazareth.

All right, let's read here in Matthew 3 starting with verse 13. Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan. I mean, that alone.

You know, he must have been, like, maybe he had just finished a project or something. He just finished building a house or something. And then all of a sudden he felt it inside, that stirring inside him.

Now it's time, Jesus. And so he makes that trek down, you know, down through the hills and down into the Jordan Valley and down south along the river until he finds where John is ministering. Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan, coming to John to be baptized by him.

But John tried to prevent him, saying, I have need to be baptized by you and do you come to me? But Jesus answering said to him, permitted at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he permitted him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water and behold, the heavens were open and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on him.

And behold, a voice out of the heavens said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Man, wow. What that must have been like that day.

And I, you know, I have a feeling that, well actually Luke's version says that Jesus was there and he waited until everyone else had been baptized. So I, you know, maybe he got there like at the beginning of the day. He just wanted to see what God was doing.

And I could just imagine him just kind of off to the side, just a nobody, not trying to be something, and just enjoying. I mean, I can relate to it a little bit. When we went to Brownsville, Kathy and I, we didn't go there out of need.

We went there out of hunger. And we used to just love watching all those people flock to that altar at the end of Steve Hill's preaching and stuff. It was such a blessing.

And I can imagine Jesus being like that, even a lot more. And just, you know, just loving to see God moving in these people's hearts. And maybe John was preaching, you know, and calling these people to repentance.

There's nothing that Jesus loves more than repentance. Nothing he loves more than that. Because it means people are turning from the world, turning from their own self-will and their own ways, and of course their sin, and turning to God.

And maybe John started talking about the Messiah who is coming soon. And when he comes, he won't be baptizing you with water. He will be baptizing you with the Spirit and fire.

Luke's version said that he waited until the end, after everyone else had already been baptized. I mean, I just see his lowliness and his patience and just the opposite of being full of self-importance. The opposite of that.

And yet he's baptized, identifying himself with sinners, sinful people, you know. And well, I mean, actually it's a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that said that he would be numbered amongst the transgressors. And, you know, so there's that aspect.

And yet he waits to the end. It reveals, I don't know what his thinking was, but it reveals his distinctiveness. He was not one of them, in a sense, because he was sinless and pure.

So John baptized him. And, you know, this was one of the, I don't know, how do you say it? This was a Kairos moment for Jesus Christ. Kairos is the Greek term, one of the Greek terms for time, and it refers to a specially designated time.

You know, we have time like a half hour or an hour or a day, whatever. That's chronos. That's just, you know, some basic word for time.

But Kairos is special. It's referring to something that only happens on occasion. When God moves in and wants to do something, maybe he wants to give you a revelation.

Maybe he wants to touch you in a special way. Maybe he wants to convict you, whatever. I wonder how many Kairos moments you guys lived through, and you were completely oblivious.

God was there to speak to you, to do something for you, but you were so caught up in your own thing, and you missed it. But anyway, I think Jesus had a Kairos moment with God here. I mean, he was baptized, not out of sinfulness, but, well, he said to fulfill all righteousness.

He was identifying himself with sinners, and the Holy Spirit came on him in bodily form. What does that mean? I don't know. I mean, I looked up the Greek words, and they mean exactly what it says, bodily form of a dove.

I don't know what that means exactly, but I believe this was a life-changing moment for Jesus Christ when the Spirit came on him in that way. I mean, he was pure before that. You know, the angels are pure.

Have you ever thought about that? Pure like a little child. You look at a...well, I don't know how pure children are actually, but two-year-olds are not pure. Two-year-olds are a nightmare.

But you know what I mean. They haven't been fouled by sin yet, and angels are kind of like that. I wonder if Jesus...I don't know.

I don't want to take that too far, because I don't know what I'm talking about. But later, Jesus would say, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am distressed until it is accomplished. And what he's

referring to there was what he experienced on the cross.

That was a baptism of fire. And I mean, the title of my message is baptized into the fire, because that is what happened that day. He was baptized into the fire, and from here on out, it is going to be nothing but fire until he hangs on that cross and passes over.

And you know, his whole ministry would culminate in the cross. People weren't saved because he was a great preacher. They weren't saved even because he lived a godly life, and they could emulate him.

They were saved because he died on that cross. And this is the day. We were watching The Chosen the other night.

Well, I don't want to get into it, but they really had just a moment in there. It was the episode with the wine turned into water. No, they did it the other way, didn't they? It's not that I don't read the Bible.

I just have a really rotten memory. But anyway, yeah, there was a place in there in that show, and they really brought it out beautifully, where they said, once this happens, there's no going back. And that was what Jesus experienced here.

He knew when he went under that water and when he came out, he was going into the fire. So this was his last private act, and we're going to now going to part two, you know, which is in the next chapter. So we're going to spend a little time considering this temptation that he faced.

Mark mentions it in two verses. John doesn't mention it at all. Luke and Matthew give a little more time to it.

Let's go ahead and just read this. I just almost don't even want to read it. You know, can I not read it? You guys know the story, right? You're not convincing me.

Do I need to read it? You know the story? Okay, I'm not going to read it then. Now, the typical way to do a message about the temptation is you have an introduction, then you have your three points, which are the three temptations, right? Then you have a conclusion. I mean, any good preacher would know that's how you preach this text, but I'm not going to do it that way because I'm not a good preacher.

I would rather just give you guys a few things to think about out of this story, okay? Number one is this, consider the Holy Spirit's involvement here. In the baptism, Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. Then he introduces this passage by saying, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, full of the Holy Spirit.

It says that about some other people. Stephen was full of the Spirit and so on, but it was not the same. It was not the same.

When Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, it was completely more than. I don't know how to say it, you know, just complete filling of the Spirit. And when he returned from the Jordan, was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness.

The Spirit descended on him, filled him, led him around in the wilderness, and it says in verse 14, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. John mentioned that the Spirit, when it came, when the Spirit came on him, the Spirit remained on him. You know, this thing was a Holy Ghost operation from beginning to end.

This was the Holy Spirit's operation and Jesus was brought into it and went through it, and he went through it to prepare him for what he was going into, which was a life of fire for three and a half years. Mark says, immediately the Spirit impelled him to go out into the wilderness. And that word impelled, I looked that up too, and it means really, it's usually used as to throw something.

You know, if I had a ball, I could throw the ball. And that would be the word that you would use. So that's really, literally what it's saying is the Spirit threw him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And you know, you're gonna find, guys, as you grow in the Lord in the days ahead, you're gonna find that the Lord is going to throw you into situations that you wish you didn't have to go through. I mean, think of this thing with Jesus. The sense I get is there's a little bit of reluctance on the Lord's part.

Do I really need to go through this? You know, I mean, Matthew said the Spirit led him, and you know, and you get the sense of his meekness. He just was led like a little boy by the Holy Spirit. But here, in Mark's version, he's thrown into it.

And the sense I get out of it is as humble and meek as Jesus was with the Lord, with his Father, and the Holy Spirit, that there was something about this that he did not want to go through. Let me put it to you this way. Who wants to go hang out with Satan for a month and a half, right? It says in Hebrews, because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

And that word suffering, suffered, is exactly what it sounds like. It means to suffer, and that's how it's used through the entire New Testament. Suffering.

Just like if I hit my hand with the hammer, that is going to make me suffer. There's something about this that caused him to suffer. The best way I can illustrate it, I mean, I can, I do understand it now like I never did when I was young.

You know, first coming to the Lord and stuff. But Gary and I were somewhere, and this is a few years ago, it's just one of those little incidents that stands out in my mind. I can't remember where we were.

Who knows? Hamburger stand or something. I don't know. We don't go to hamburger stands.

It wasn't at a hamburger stand. I don't know where it was. But anyway, there was a group of young guys hanging out, and they're fooling around, and they're carrying on and stuff, and they're using the phallus language.

Now usually, you know, language, okay, whatever, you know. I mean, I don't like to hear it. It makes me uncomfortable.

But when people start using my Lord's name in vain, it is like a dagger into my heart. It hurts me. It hurts me.

I don't know if you guys feel that yet. I hope so. I hope that you feel that when you hear someone take the Lord's name in vain.

It's painful. You know what I'm talking, does anyone here know what I'm talking about? Well, can you nod your head occasionally or something? Let me know you're not sitting there sleeping with your eyes open. I think it was kind of like that for the Lord, you know, that the Holy Spirit threw him into this situation, set the whole thing up, took him through it, but it was not something he enjoyed.

And he did it for the sake of you and me. He did it because it needed to be done. He had to prove that at his weakest possible point, that even then Satan could not win the battle, that Jesus could beat him even when he was at his very weakest.

And that's why he had to go through it. Second thing you can consider is the location this battle occurred in. It says it happened in the wilderness, and that is a really wild area there.

East of Jerusalem, going, you know, you get out there kind of a little bit to the north, kind of west of Jericho, there's an area out there that is just so wild and barren. I mean, there is nothing there even today. As much as the Jewish people have conquered that land, there's an area there that's like, yeah, it's just bad, it's wild, it's rugged.

But the wilderness is a place that is very important in God's economy. He uses it continually in people's lives. It was into the wilderness that Moses fled, and spent 40 years there before God was ready to use him.

Why? Because it took 40 years to get Egypt out of Moses. It was into the wilderness that the Lord led the people of Israel. And, you know, it says, in fact, the Lord said, I brought you here to test you and to humble you.

And what's unspoken, but is inferred clearly, is he also brought them there so that they could come to know him. They would not come to know him in Egypt. He needed to separate them out from the world, where he could reveal himself like he did to Gomer.

And, you know, guys, that's why God brought you here. That is why he brought you here. Not to come to a sexual addiction clinic.

He brought you here to reveal himself to you. And, yes, to humble you and to test you to see what's in your heart. What will this man do? I know what he's gonna do if he's out there in the world living a pseudo-Christian life.

Obviously, we know what he's doing in that setting. But what will happen to this man if I can transplant him and put him in this wilderness called Pure Life Ministries for nine months? Will he respond to me in this place where it's so conducive for him to come to know me? Will he humble himself? That's the test. And you are all being tested on that point.

The wilderness is a wonderful place because you get away from all the world's distractions, or at least most of them. And some commentators believe that Jesus went up into the wilderness, didn't have the slightest thought about facing the devil or whatever. I don't know.

You know, the Bible's silent about it. But that he went up there to commune with the Lord. Okay, God, what is next? You know, just sitting with the Lord away from everyone.

Fasting, praying, seeking God's will for how the Lord now is going to use him. And that in that setting, Satan came and intruded. It certainly does not surprise me about Satan that he would do that.

And that that's how all the temptation stuff happened. I don't know. Maybe.

Third, consider Satan's suggestions. Did he come in bodily form? Or did he come just quietly in in Jesus' spirit, you know, and just kind of whisper in his ear like he does to us? Not he, but demons. What do you

think? I don't know what to think, really.

But I have a thought that's kind of different, because I think commentators are pretty much split on that. Because some ways it seems one thing and some the other. But I have a different idea, and I could very well be wrong.

Okay? I could be wrong. So don't leave out of here saying, Pastor Steve Gallagher is a heretic and says the wildest things. Well, I do say wild things, but I'm not a heretic.

I believe that, and I tend to think if this is true, that it happened at the baptism when he came up out of that water and the Holy Spirit came on. I personally believe that Jesus Christ lived his life with the heavens open. That when he talked to God, because there's no sin to separate him and God, that the heavens were wide open.

He could see his Heavenly Father, and he talked with him constantly in his spirit throughout every day. And not only that, I think when he interacted with people, and when he came across demon-possessed people, and you look at the exchanges between Jesus and these demons, and there's a number of conversations. And I think he was talking directly to the demon, and he could see the demon.

How else did he know there was a legion of demons in that demoniac? How did he know that there were seven demons in Mary Magdalene if he couldn't see? I'm saying it like I really know what I'm talking about, and I don't, and I acknowledge that. But I just tend to think, I tend to think it's that way. And so it's kind of both, you know? Where if I would have been standing there watching what was happening, Jesus probably would have just been hanging out, you know? And I would have just been clueless as to what's going on.

Why is Jesus talking to someone over there? No one's there, you know? But I think Satan, Jesus could see Satan clearly. And I think he saw the demons and every other foul spirit as he went ministering to people. And he would come into a place and see demons on a person, and would start casting them out.

You can also consider the underlying temptation here. Okay, it comes across as three different temptations, and they do fit kind of along the lines of what Eve was tempted with, and what we see in 1st John 2. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And all temptations generally come under one of those categories.

Okay, and so, you know, Jesus made it to where it kind of was shown that, well, that is what happened. But here's the bottom line. Dig a little deeper.

Go under the surface. And it really is one temptation. It was really just one temptation.

Do thy own will. That is the great quote or whatever theme of Satan's Bible, the satanic Bible. Do thy own will.

That's what it's always all about, no matter what. Do thy own will. You know, with the temptation to turn the stone into bread, Satan wanted him to use his miraculous power for his own benefit.

The temple temptation, Satan presented a path not in opposition to God's will, but in independence of God's will. And the temptation of the mountain, and the world, and all the world's glory, and all that. It was just an easy path to world power, where you don't have to go the way of suffering.

You don't have to go the hard path, Jesus. You're the Son of God. You're, you know, you don't have to go through all that.

You guys face this constantly, and this is what the Lord wants you to learn while you're here. It's not my will, but thy will, God. That's what he's here to teach you.

How are you going to overcome temptation if you can't get that? That's got to be in you, man. It's got to be an absolute, rock-solid resolution in your heart. Not my will, God.

I'm tired of my will. It's done nothing but ruin my life. I'm tired of going my own way.

I want to follow you. I want to listen to your voice. And lastly, consider the fact that this was only the beginning.

Luke said that Satan departed from him until an opportune time. I don't know how your, maybe your translation says another season or something. It's the same word.

It's kairos. That's the word. Opportune time is kairos.

Kairos is an eternal moment, you know, and those times are so tremendous. I look back over my last 40 years and I see those times when I met with God, and they were powerful. They're milestones in my life.

They mean so much to me. But you know what? Satan also creates kairos moments. His kairos moments are when everything is set up just right to tempt you into sin.

And he knows how to do it, brother. Let me tell you, he knows how to do it. And that's what happened here after 39 days of going without food and water.

And Jesus is at his utter weakest. I mean, he couldn't even exist without water, without some kind of supernatural sustenance. But anyway, somehow that happened.

And he's at the end. He's exhausted. He's weak.

He's starving. He just, you know, all those physical things which he experienced like we do. And right then, Satan stepped in to offer him a smoother path.

And you will find when you leave here that Satan will do that many times. You have many kairos moments, men, ahead of you. You need to know that.

This place, this time that you're here is not the beginning and ending of everything. This is only a time in the wilderness to prepare you for a whole lifetime where you are going to have these encounters with God in kairos moments where God will come to you if you're open to him. But you will also have those kairos moments with Satan when he is looking to set you up.

Jesus had, man, he leaves here. One of his first stops is Nazareth where, you know, all the people that he grew up with and cousins and uncles and, I mean, it's a small little village. Everyone knew everybody.

And he goes in there and within a few minutes of reading a few verses out of Isaiah, they turn into a killing hatred for him and treated him with disdain. Kathy and I last night, I don't know what you guys watched, but we watched Behind the Sun. It's just a one-hour movie about an Iranian guy who went back home and his family found out he was a Christian.

And, man, you talk about all hell breaking loose and that's exactly what happened. They went from complete love, so thrilled to see their son back from America, to complete hatred, just instantly full of the devil. Did they play that for you guys? No? What kind of place is this? Well, that's what he faced in Nazareth.

Family and friends who turned on him and countless encounters with the Pharisees and all of it. And like I said, it's all going to culminate at Calvary. All of that awaited him.

When he was baptized, he was baptized into one long fiery trial. And yet, most of it would occur in the hidden life where human eyes could not gaze. We have no idea all that Jesus went through.

All right, I want to start wrapping it up because I want to get the focus on you. How can you be prepared for Satan's kairos moments? Wouldn't you say that would be like one of the important things for you to learn while you're here? First Corinthians 10, Paul said, No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. Every other Christian has faced either it or something like it.

But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able. But with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. You know, in sexual idolatry, I wrote about this.

I said, When I struggled with temptation, I actually doubted the Bible because this verse seemed so untrue to me. I hated it when preachers used this verse. They don't understand what it's like, I would say to myself.

And I came to understand later that it wasn't them who didn't understand, it was me. You know, the reality was I was just accustomed to being a loser. I had trained myself into being a loser with temptation.

I was like a flabby weakling getting into the ring with a hardened boxer who knows what he's doing. You know, I was just so weak from years of flabby living. I don't know any other word to use.

It just sounds like a good word. That's a good adjective, isn't it? Or is that an adverb? I want to give you guys a few tips from this passage here. Don't put yourself in situations where you're going to be tempted.

That's the first thing. Solomon said, Keep your way far from the prostitute. Do not go near the door of her house.

I mean, there is some solid wisdom in that. If you're trying to overcome something that you have fallen prey to time and time and time again, then you ought to stay away from places where it's going to be conducive to that kind of temptation, right? That's just common sense. The problem I used to have is I liked to think about the temptation.

I liked to just, it was kind of like, I think I, didn't I use the metaphor of delicious pudding or something? You know, I like to just sit and think on it. And of course, when you do that, before you know it, you're going to give over. I was like the little boy who was sitting or hanging around an apple tree in an orchard.

And the owner of the orchard comes up, and he sees this kid out there in his orchard, and right away he's suspicious. Okay, what's he doing? Why is he in my orchard? So, he goes up to the kid, and he says to the kid, Why are you standing under this apple tree? And the kid says, Because I'm fighting temptation. You guys aren't getting it, are you? You guys are one sorry audience, that's all I can say.

Either that or I'm a bad joke teller, and we know it's not that. You've got to stay away from situations that create temptation. And you know, really, I want to broaden it out into more of the whole world in a general sense.

Okay, obviously, don't go to the beach. Don't hang out at the beach. That's not the place for you.

You can't go there, unless it's in the dead of winter, and there's no girls around, then you can go there. But really, it's more to do with the atmosphere of the spirit of the world. Guys, you can't escape it totally.

Like even here, you go to work, you work with carnal people, worldly-minded people. I don't know what kind of stuff you have to hear every day. And it's good, because we don't want to totally sequester you, so when you get dumped back out into the world, you'll know you've had some experience.

You're learning as you go how to deal with that kind of stuff. But please, when you go home, you've got to make your home an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit, not for the devil. You know, and it's those kinds of decisions that determine victory and failure.

Those kinds of decisions you make, that kind of a consecration, that's going to determine, or it's things like that, that's going to determine whether you make it or not. And another thing, you can't wait until the day of temptation to prepare yourself for that battle. Now, I've got here, this is our magazine.

It's a little magazine, but it's a magazine. We send it out to several thousand pastors. This one, this just came out.

God loves a good fight. And I talk about Muhammad Ali in there, what a champion he was, and some of the reasons why he was a champion. And in that article, I said this, skill alone won't win a fight.

A good boxer knows that if he doesn't conquer himself in the gym, he will never overcome his opponent in the ring. You guys getting the sense of that? You know, and for you, I'm going to focus mostly on your devotional life, because that is the gym for the spiritual life, your devotional life. What kind of a devotional life do you have? I mean, Jesus just said it to the devil.

He said, man does not live by bread alone, but by every mouth of word that comes out of the mouth of God, right? I mean, we don't just eat a big meal on Sunday, and then go starve the rest of the week, do we? No, God created us to need food every day, not just every day, but several times a day. TJ eats like 15 times a day. Amen.

Well, he eats tiny little meals. But you know what I mean? God created you that way, he created you spiritually the same way. Your soul needs sustenance every day.

You were created to need it. And if you go without, if you start starving yourself, then guess what happens? You're going to be weak spiritually. You need time in the Word of God, and you need time in the presence of God.

And if you don't have those firmly established in your life, you will never overcome sexual addiction. You will not overcome. Because that is the place of power for your life, is spending time with God, spending time in his Word, meaningful time.

Another thing I can tell you is that temptation and temptations and the way of escape come in pairs. Aren't you glad that's true? I bet you didn't even know that. Because back in your day, when did you ever see the

way of escape, right? Or if you saw it, you didn't want to take it.

But every single time you were tempted, right there, God put a way of escape in there for you. He allowed the temptation to come. He has his reasons for allowing it.

It's the devil or your own flesh that tempts you. It's not him. But he allows it to happen for a reason.

But with it, he also provides, creates, that's what the word means, creates a way to get out. And as you guys start walking with God, and you start developing a real life in God, you're going to start being much more sensitive to the Holy Spirit in your life and in your heart. And it's an awesome thing.

You're going to start being able to actually hear the Lord speak to you in that still small voice. Go this way. Go that way.

He's going to tell you what to do, and he's going to nudge you in directions. And you know, because at that point, as you grow in the Lord, and you're no longer just full of yourself and just driven by lust of all kinds of lusts in life, and you start actually wanting to please God with your life, and you really want to walk with God, he's going to be speaking into your life, and you're going to be able to hear him, and he'll help you. And not only that, but because you've spent time with him, you are going to find that you have a power inside you to say no to that temptation.

Where you've been totally weak in the past, so was I, you're going to find that you have something inside you says, no, I will not go down that path again. I've had it with that. Anybody here want that in your life? That's what you signed up for, right? That's what's going to happen for you.

And lastly, I could say this. It could be argued that temptation is the whole purpose for our existence. A good argument could be made for that.

Meaning that, just like the Lord told the Israelites that he brought them into that wilderness to test them and to humble them. There is a test. In fact, earth is a testing ground.

That's why God created earth, the universe, all this stuff. It's just nothing but a backdrop for a play that's being acted out amongst mankind. And will they respond to God? The whole thing is a test.

We're on probation here on earth. Will we prove ourselves to be faithful to him when he allows those tests to come your way? Man, do you know what it's like to actually start to win those battles? It is a wonderful, wonderful feeling for the guilt to be gone, for the shame to be gone, for the spiritual weakness to be gone, to actually live in victory, to actually live in it, not just spout it off like some of these men's events, just painful to me. Because I know the reality of what's going on in people's lives.

They're all, oh never mind, I don't want to go there. At the end of the day, will we prove that we really love the Lord, or will our lives show irrefutable proof that we only loved ourselves? That's really what it's all about. That is the whole purpose for our existence on earth, is to face that test, and hopefully, certainly God wants it to go this way, hopefully that we will pass that test, that our lives will prove to be, to have been faithful to the Lord, that in the face of a fallen nature that wants to sin, that wants to be in self-will, that wants to go its own way, that doesn't want to be told by anyone, that we go against that, that natural inclination, and we say yes to Jesus.

Oh Lord, I just pray that this incident in your life will resonate inside these men, the reality of what you went through, that you went through victoriously, and that we can also give us the faith, Lord, to believe. Just like that song we just sang, I must tell Jesus. Jesus alone, Jesus alone can bear that burden, and it's true, Lord, and I pray that you'll make that real to all of us, God, that in the days ahead, Lord, especially the men in the program, while they're in this special, precious time with you here, as difficult as it can be at times, Lord, that you would instill something powerful inside them, that you would plant your spirit inside them, that it would grow, that this new life in God would become a new reality for them, that your spirit would overcome all obstacles and temptations that the enemy may throw their way, that you will show them what it means to be an overcomer, that you will show them what it means to live a victorious Christian life, that they would leave out of this place victoriously, and keep walking in victory, just like Doug the other night, 20 years since he was here, and now he's a missionary in the Philippines, and you're using him to help others, and so many others who have gone through this program over the years, and are walking as overcomers in the face of a very dark world, a world full of devils, Lord, I pray that you will make these men into winners, winners in your kingdom, to see themselves as that, not in some Pollyanna delusion, but the reality that they would know what it means to overcome, make that real in their lives, I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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