

'His Name is Wonderful'

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself before the Lord and surrendering to Jesus Christ. It delves into the need for individuals to acknowledge their sinful nature and accept Jesus as their Savior. The message highlights the struggle of accepting Jesus as the Prince of Peace and submitting to His authority for true transformation and freedom from sin.

Scripture: Matthew 4:16, Isaiah 9:6, John 3:16, Romans 9:5, Hebrews 1:8, 1 John 5:20, Matthew 4:17

Topics: "Humility", "Surrender to Christ"

Description

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Transcript

It's in my heart to really glorify Jesus Christ this morning. But as I was putting this message together, I'm going to express some things towards the end of the message that some of you guys really need to come to grips with and face up to. So, you know, what occurred to me a while ago is that for some of you, this could be your breakthrough day.

It really could. This could be your breakthrough day. The day that you finally humble yourself before the Lord and really throw up the white flag.

This can be your day. I'll just tell you that right now. So when I was praying about what in the world am I going to preach on Christmas Eve, Matthew 416 came to me, and I'm actually going to be in Isaiah 9, but let's just read Matthew 416 in passing.

The reason I'm going to be in Isaiah 9 is because that's where this comes from. But Matthew cited this, what Isaiah said in verse 16, the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light. And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned.

Praise the Lord. And so, you know, I'm going to get into Isaiah 9. Primarily verse 6, because that is the great name of the Lord that is expressed in Isaiah 9, 6. And that is where the light that came through the countenance of Jesus Christ flooded that land of Galilee. What a tremendous time.

So I'll read this in a few minutes, but, you know, this verse, these verses that I'll be reading, was describing the time of Jesus Christ. It's, you know, the deal with prophecy is it's the law of double reference. Almost always with prophecies, it's a law of double reference.

There's usually something impending that's going to happen in the next few years. But the primary focus of the prophecy is generally much later. And that's the case here.

You know, Isaiah's, the Lord is speaking through him, talking about what the Assyrians are going to do to the land and so on. And it's a time of darkness. But he's really referring to what the spiritual climate would be like when the Messiah would come to earth, a time of gloom and darkness.

And that would happen in Galilee. Now, Galilee was viewed with disdain by the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem. And, you know, for some pretty good reasons, because the tribes in those, in that northern region, they were the first ones to intermarry with the pagan nations.

And they were the first to raise up an altar to a rival religion. And they were the first to backslide into full scale idolatry. And they were also the first to be carried off into captivity by the Assyrians.

So, you know, the Jews down in the temple area looked at Galileans pretty much with disdain. I mean, they weren't as bad as the Samaritans, but they weren't far off, you know. So, like I say, the first reference here is to the Assyrian invasion, but I don't want to take the time to get into that.

Really, the main focus is the spiritual darkness upon the land when Jesus Christ came. So let's read some verses here. I'm going to actually back up to the last verse of chapter 8 in the book of Isaiah.

Then they will look to the earth and behold distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be driven away into darkness. But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish.

In earlier times, he treated the land, he meaning God, treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt. But later on, he shall make it glorious by the way of the sea on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.

Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. I'm going to stop there. Now, this of course is about the Messiah coming to earth, but I want to make it relevant to us today.

Because all of us at one time in our lives, even you wives back there, God bless you. I'm so glad to see wives come and mothers come here and visit your loved ones. We're always happy to see you here.

But all of us, there was a time when we lived in spiritual darkness. And if you think you didn't, then you never came into repentance. I was preaching in a big Baptist church in Atlanta, Georgia one time.

And I said, what did I say? Um, I said, oh, nevermind. I'll tell you this, a lady screamed right there in the church. It shocked her so much.

I basically said what I just said, you know, about we've all come out of darkness. And she had never in her entire life even considered, because she was like so many cultural Christians. She was raised in church.

That's all she'd ever known. She'd never gone into a life of open sin like you and I have. And she just assumed she'd always been the Lord's.

But no, we were all in darkness. But how much more you men and me, right? Now, one of the things that stood out to me as I, you know, was studying this was the difference in the way that Isaiah painted the picture and how Matthew painted it. Just look at the different verbs that are being expressed here.

Isaiah said the people who walk in darkness, those who live in a dark land. Matthew says the people who were sitting in darkness and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death. And just to throw a little more confusion into the picture here, the Apostle John said the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

They're all basically saying the same thing. They're describing life without Christ and what that is like. And whatever metaphor you want to use, walking, sitting, lying, living, whatever.

They're all basically saying the same thing, but they're highlighting different nuances of it. Walking gives the idea of, you know, daily activity. And maybe even more than that is the direction your life is taking you.

And the picture here for people who are walking in darkness is that they are on the broad way headed for what? Destruction, right? Sitting gives a sense of comfort. People are satisfied with their spiritual condition. They're not looking for change.

They're completely content with the way their lives are going. Lying gives a sense of complete passivity. People are sound asleep spiritually and don't want to be awakened.

There's no energy, no resistance, no struggling. The domination of their souls is complete. And living means that darkness defines who you are as a person.

You feel at home in darkness. Now, dear ones, I'm telling you, all of us were there at one time. All of us were there at one time.

Now, I want to bring this home to us here, make it relevant to us. And I'm sure you realize in 33 years of running Pure Life Ministries, I have dealt with thousands of sexual addicts, thousands of men just like you guys. And I come out of that life myself.

And this I can tell you is typical. By far, this is the norm. Okay, by far, this is the norm.

And it was certainly the case for me back in the day. Sex addicts minimize the darkness that they have been in and exaggerate the light that they think they've been in. Minimize the darkness in their minds.

It's not that big of a deal. It's just a little problem. You know, I'm really walking with the Lord.

I'm really living a godly life. But I have this one little struggle on the side and exaggerate what they think they have in God. And you know why that happens is because of head knowledge.

You don't have anything in God that doesn't come through the heart. I can tell you that. And doesn't come through the way you live your life.

What you have learned in your head doesn't really mean that much. It's what comes out in your life. What is residing in your heart.

What your inner world is all made up of. That's the only thing that really matters. Head knowledge doesn't count for anything except one thing.

Being held responsible for what you have been shown and taught. That is all knowledge means. Maybe I should just go off on to seven woes of hell now, Jim.

What do you think? All right. So let's continue through here. Verses three through five are describing the millennial kingdom basically.

And I'm not going to get into that. I don't have time. Let's get to verse six.

This is really where I want to be. What tremendous words this is. You know, I'll just give you a little bit of a backdrop here, Isaiah.

You remember in Isaiah six, he had that tremendous revelation of God. You look at Isaiah one through five. He's one person.

But after six, he's a different guy. And after chapter six, and that tremendous sight that he had of the Lord sitting in his temple. High and lifted up.

After that, immediately chapter seven through 12 is all about the coming Messiah. It's awesome. Seven.

We already heard this one verse that comes out of seven. Emmanuel. His name shall be Emmanuel.

God with us. That comes in seven. And then, you know, it's more of the same in eight.

And here we are in nine. For a child will be born to us. A son will be given.

I mean, I don't know about you, but the first thing I think of is John 3, 16. Here's gospel, Jim. This is the gospel verse, right? For God so loved the world.

What did he do? He gave who? His only begotten son. That everyone who believes on him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life. Such an awesome reality.

And the government will rest on his shoulders. Let me just say it this way. He will govern people.

Jesus Christ came to earth to set up a spiritual kingdom. That's why he came here. And that kingdom was established at Calvary and at Pentecost and since then.

And, you know, the way it's been over the last 2,000 years is that that church is largely invisible. Never mind the outward Christian church. That means really not much.

The real body of Christ is something invisible. But the day is going to come when Jesus Christ is going to govern this earth as its ruler and the usurper is going to be thrown into the pit. Praise the Lord for that.

All right, now here we get into the juicy part. And his name will be called Wonderful. Now, I named this sermon.

You guys didn't ask me the name. Would you like to know the name? Nathan, his name is Wonderful is what I called this. And that comes from a song.

But the song comes from here. I'm half tempted to go into singing that song, but yeah. There's someone who knows my voice.

It's a frightful thing, I tell you. But I would do it. I'm not afraid to do it.

I have actually sang in churches before. Believe it or not, I know what I sound like. But you know what? I love the Lord and I don't care.

It's okay to look foolish because I love him. And it would not bother me a bit to sing that song right now in front of you. It wouldn't bother me.

His name is Wonderful. Now, the King James and the New King James, I think this time got it right. You'll notice if you have a New King James or a King James, there's a comma between Wonderful and Counselor.

Most of the newer versions pack those together as one term. And that's the way I always understood it, Wonderful Counselor. But when I was studying this, I ran across a scholar who said this.

Now, I'm taking his word for it. Whether it's true or not, I don't know. But what he said, if you were going to call someone Wonderful Counselor in the Hebrew, that's not how you would say it, the way that it's expressed here in those terms.

And I started thinking about that. And you know what came to me? What really kind of like, I don't know. The way it came to me is that Jesus Christ is Wonderful.

And that's like an all-encompassing, I don't know if title, but certainly description. He is Wonderful. He is the Wonderful Counselor, yes.

But he's also the Wonderful Mighty God. And he's also the Wonderful Everlasting Father. And he's also the Wonderful Prince of Peace.

That works, doesn't it? Strong's defines this Hebrew term, a marvelous thing. That's their definition of it. And the root word is actually miracle.

And so I just looked through some verses. I mean, this is almost all the verses that this word, wonderful, is used in the Old Testament. I can't remember.

There's maybe a few others. But let me just read these real quick. Because I want this to get in your mind and in your heart.

Exodus 15, who is like you among the gods, O Lord? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? Psalm 77, surely I will remember your wonders of old. You are the God who works wonders. Psalm 78, he wrought wonders before their fathers in the land of Egypt.

Psalm 88, will your wonders be known in the darkness? Psalm 89, the heavens will praise your wonders, O Lord. Isaiah 25, O Lord, you are my God. I will exalt you.

I will give thanks to your name. For you have worked wonders, plans formed long ago with perfect faithfulness. Jesus is a wonder.

He is a wonder. And his whole life was miraculous from beginning to end. His birth was miraculous.

His sin-free life was miraculous. His whole life was defined by the working of the miraculous. His death and resurrection were miraculous.

Amen? There was something different about this man. He wasn't like you and I. Not only miraculous, but also marvelous. The love he had for people was marvelous.

The wisdom he had was marvelous. The way he dealt with people was marvelous. The power to transform sinners into saints is marvelous.

All the psychology, and psychologists, and psychotherapists, and psychiatrists in the world can't set you free. But Jesus Christ can set you free and change you utterly and completely from the inside out. All they can do is tell you some things, pack your head with some little tips and tidbits.

They've got no power to change you. Only one does. Everything about Jesus is wonderful, and marvelous, and miraculous.

You know, the problem we have is that to really, for that to become a living reality inside of you, means you have to come down. You'll have to come down. Because it'll just be nothing but this kind of vague sense in your mind.

Yeah, I know Jesus is wonderful. You know what the problem is? You've been thinking that you're pretty wonderful for years. You need to think about that, guys.

And you know, anything I say to you was true of me. I thought I was wonderful. And when you're in that kind of mind, that kind of thinking, you're not going to think Jesus is all that great.

I mean, you can say the words, you can sing the songs. But how do you treat him? How do you treat him? Evidenced by your life, how have you treated him? Like he's wonderful? Marvelous? God? Emmanuel with us? Have you treated him that way by the way you've lived your life? There's no condemnation coming from me, guys. I love you.

I know what it's like to be bound in sin. Okay, so you know, I can say strong things to you because I've been there. All right, so he's wonderful.

But to really understand that, you're going to have to really start humbling yourself. You're going to have to start humbling yourself. With the Lord.

That's what I had to do. And he keeps humbling me. In fact, I'll break out into song here in a minute if you really want me to seem, get humble.

All right, counselor, wonderful counselor. The Septuagint puts it this way, I like this. It says, his name is called the messenger of great counsel.

You know, I don't know how that works with the Hebrew and everything, but that's the way they saw it in the Greek. The Chaldees said, the God of the wonderful counsel. I like that.

And it's just different, you know, I like different translations because it just kind of makes you get out of the rut of the same old, same old where things you're just so accustomed to hearing, phrases and words the way you've always heard them. And it makes you look at the facts that are being expressed. John opened his gospel with this.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He is the reason of God, the thinking of God. And he is the one who was commissioned by the Trinity, by the father really, to

communicate what God is like to mankind.

And he brought, I don't know how to picture it, or I don't even know how to think of it. It's way beyond my comprehension, but I could just, like, he takes the mind of God and he brings it out and he lives it out. And he shows the world, this is what God is like.

I mean, that's really what Jesus did. It's the inside world. I've said this before, if you want to know what God is like, read the gospels because that's God right there, Emmanuel with us, or God with us, living out his daily life.

This is the way God is. So when Jesus spoke, he spoke with tremendous wisdom that people could not get their minds around. They were amazed, it says it over and over in the gospels.

People were amazed when Jesus would speak because he didn't speak like the scribes. What were the scribes speaking like? I'll tell you what. Over the years, they had systematized Judaism until it had become this, what, system, religious system.

And every year, you know, some new rabbi would come and add to the pile after pile, layer after layer of tradition. And by the time Jesus Christ came, Judaism was nothing like it was originally intended to be from the Lord, where people would really know what it means to love the Lord with all your heart and soul and mind. It didn't reflect that at all, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, right? And as we're preparing for the second coming of Christ, and we look around at the condition of the church today, how is that reflecting a love for God with all your heart? Where's the reality of God in our day and age, in our lives? Jesus amazed people because he came in, they have learned these traditions, they grew up with this is the way it is.

This is how we do religion. This is how we interact with the Almighty. We do these things.

That was the way it was, you know, just like us with our Christianity. We have grown up with this. We accept it as fact in our heads.

And Jesus came in and just absolutely upset everything. He overturned all the tables, really. Let me just give you an example.

He gets in a conversation with one of their leaders, Nicodemus. And in the matter of a minute or two, he just expresses a few things, makes a few statements, and turns Nicodemus on his head. He didn't know up from down.

Jesus is speaking with tremendous authority about the reality of God. How could he know? Because he is God, because he came down from heaven. He knows the mind and heart of God.

And he comes down to this man who's an expert in religion, not in relationship with God, not in what the Lord is like. And in minutes, Nicodemus is in over his head, right? And Jesus just asks a simple little question. You know, I picture in my mind, he was so humble and sweet when he said it.

He said, are you the teacher of Israel and you do not understand these things? And, you know, one thing you guys are going to hear from us here, there's some new guys in here, I believe. I promise you, one thing you're going to get overtly or whatever, this is not about religion, it's about relationship. Religion is a dead end.

Religion, whether it's first century Judaism or 21st century Christianity, whatever. All these traditions of man, these systems of doctrine and all this stuff. Let me tell you, there's a good place for systemized doctrine and so on.

But the problem is it goes too far because man's flesh and pride gets in the middle of it. And then it becomes something more than it should have been. Until Christianity is not even what God meant it to be.

Which is a way to open the door for us to have a real living vibrant relationship with almighty God. That's why Jesus came to earth, was to bring us into that, not to bring us back into the bondage of dead religion. But, you know, I see this all the time here.

And, you know, in a sense, I don't blame people because, you know, we've been raised in this culture, this kind of pseudo-Christian culture. And that's all we've ever known. You guys come in here with the life of defeat and you don't know why.

And they're out there telling you in the bookstores and on the radio and stuff, just some superficial pat little answers, you know, snap a rubber band on your wrist or whatever. Are you kidding me? And so you come in here full of tradition and with very little, if any, relationship. And, you know, I asked our staff, it was about a month ago, I think.

I just, I don't know why I did. I have never thought to ask the staff here. I just asked them.

I was standing right here on morning prayer time. And I said, can you remember back on what it was like when you first came in here and how did it come across to you when you heard the way we taught and the things we were expressing here? And, I mean, a number of them were saying, I just knew I was hearing truth. I could feel God in this place.

I knew that there was a reality of the Lord in this place. I had never heard stuff like this before, you know, but I just knew that there was something real here. I could see it in the lives of the staff.

Those are the kinds of things that were expressed. But I got to tell you, Doak took the cake. Remember what you said, Doak? You don't want to remember, do you? Now, let me tell you, Doak came from a very traditional, I guess, my guess is, had been raised in a Baptist church his whole life, right? That is all he had ever known.

And he ended up in terrible sin. And he gets here, his whole life has been thrown in turmoil. The rug has been pulled out from under him completely.

His life was devastated when he came here. How many years ago was that? 11 years ago, wow. And so I asked, you know, everyone, and I said, Doak, what did you think when you came here? What did you think of what you were hearing? He said, man, I thought it was weird.

And I said, well, why did you stay? And he said, all I knew was the way I was doing it wasn't working. And so he stuck it out. And he is a transformed man from the guy who came in here 11 years ago.

I promise you that. He is a different man. You know, and you guys hear some things that have really shaken some of the beliefs that you have held to over the years.

And it's as if you're, you know, you want to say, how can these things be? This doesn't line up with the religious traditions I have held to all my life. Well, all I can say is, does it seem like it's from the Lord? Is it

in the word of God? Never mind the traditions. Never mind what you've been taught.

Look at the word of God. And I welcome you to judge what we teach from this pulpit by the word. Not by some radio preacher or some book you read, but by the word of God.

And do you sense truth in what we teach you? Those are the two things that you should be thinking about. But anyway, we're talking about Jesus Christ, the wonderful counselor, the one who is the wisdom of God. You know, it's personified in the book of Proverbs.

I didn't have time to get into that. I would love, would have loved to. Where I believe it's Jesus who is actually speaking there.

Shouting from the street corners, right? But anyway, we'll have to leave that alone. Let me read what MacArthur said. Men today search for wisdom.

They search for the meaning of life. They search for solutions to their problems. They go to psychologists, psychiatrists, analysts, and self-help books.

They try everything, even going to fortune tellers. None of it offers any real help. The word of God says, are you looking for a wonderful counselor? I offer you Jesus Christ, the son of God.

The perfect counselor. He knows all about you. He knows all the needs of your heart.

He knows what's best for you. He knows how to solve your problems. He gives you wise counsel.

And he went on to say, you know, I think one of the most amazing things in pastoral counseling is that people come to you and they say, here's my problem, John. And they go on and on about their problem. That's wonderful, I say.

Now let me tell you the solution. Then they go out and never do it. That's, yeah, I'd say that's pretty typical of what we experience here.

People who love to talk about themselves, love to talk about their problems. You tell them what to do, and it just goes in one ear and out the other. You know, guys, you see how we live our lives, I think.

I think you get a good enough sense that we live what we preach here. That we are sincere and earnest believers in Jesus Christ. I hope that comes across to you.

I hope it does. But, you know, there are some here right now. And I know this because Pastor Ed told me.

There are some of you here right now. You came here to get help. You see the way we live our lives.

You sense the presence of God in this place. But when your counselor starts talking to you about the things that you need to do, or gives you assignments, you pick everything apart. You argue, you debate, you resist.

Why would you want to be here in that spirit? All of you should say, thank you, Pastor Ed, that you are in charge of the live-in program and not Pastor Steve. And I'm not kidding either. Because back in the day, when I ran into that kind of attitude, that guy was packing his bags.

And it's not because I'm hard. I love people. I'm doing this because I love people.

But I am just extremely concerned at all times about the atmosphere in those dorms and in those rooms over there. And what kind of an atmosphere is this person bringing in here? Is he hungry for the Lord? Is he desperate for change? Did he come here determined to make a new life for himself in Jesus Christ? That's what I want to know. I wouldn't even let guys in the program until they convinced me that that was their heart.

Of course, we only had three guys in the program. And so they had to move me out of that position. Thank God for Pastor Ed.

Who wants to give you every opportunity to find the Lord. It is our heart, man. If I sound combative, don't take it too serious.

You know, Jesus went on to tell Nicodemus in that tremendous conversation that day. Wow, thank God that is there for us. I really got to get moving.

I'm running late here. But he said, you know, God sent me here to set people free of their sins. But people love darkness.

And you know, when it really comes down to it, when I see a debating spirit like that, the first thing that comes to my mind is this guy loves his sin. He doesn't want to give it up. And that's why he's fighting the counsel he's receiving here.

He's not serious. He doesn't want help. Now, to Pastor Ed's credit, I will tell you this.

I have seen guys in the last couple of years who if it would have been up to me, they would have left. And Pastor Ed was patient with them. And they had a breakthrough.

And they became different men. Praise God. So I leave it up to him.

I leave it in his hands. You know, and he knows how to handle things. All right.

Jesus is the wonderful, mighty God. And, you know, I've really got to hurry. I'm running late.

Let me just blow through some verses. This, I'll just say this alone, and especially with Isaiah 7, Emmanuel, God is with us. This is absolute irrefutable proof that Jesus Christ was God, is God.

He was God incarnate in our midst. But let me just read a couple other verses. John 20, 28.

Thomas answered and said to him, my Lord and my God. And Jesus did not correct him, which he certainly would have done if it wasn't true. Romans 9, 5. Whose are the fathers and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all God, blessed forever.

1 John 5, 20. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true.

In his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God in eternal life. And Hebrews 1, 8. Quoting the Old Testament.

But of the Son, he says, your throne, O God, is forever and ever. But I do want to say this about this title here. Not only does Jesus Christ have the wisdom and the truth to show you the way to freedom, to show you how to live a victorious Christian life, but he also has the power to set you free and keep you free.

All right, the next one, Eternal Father. Maybe your translation says Everlasting Father. This has created confusion.

You know, is this talking about God the Father? No, it's not. This is not a confusion of members of the Trinity. Literally, in the Hebrew, it's Father of Eternity.

That's what it literally says. And one guy said, I like this. Father of the ages to come.

You know, Jesus presides over time and the future of eternity for those people who belong to him. Let me read MacArthur again. He is a child of time and the father of timelessness.

Jesus Christ fathers eternal life for all who believe. And that's the main import of what Isaiah is saying. He is to those who love him and receive him the source of everlasting life.

Whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He holds eternity in his hand from everlasting to everlasting. That's what is really meant here by that term.

All right, Prince of Peace. Now I'm gonna have to take a few minutes with this. Hey, it's Christmas Eve.

What do you got to do anyway, right? The Hebrew here is Sarshal, Sarshal. That's Prince of Peace. Shal meaning like Shalom, Sarshal.

Sar is used 368 times in the Old Testament. Now, if you look at that word and how it's translated by the various versions of the Bible, at the most you will find that is only translated as Prince less than 100 times or around 90 sometimes. Most of the time, no matter what.

I mean, there's one translation that only translates it as Prince three times. But usually the way that word Sar is translated is commander or leader or official or captain. That's usually how the word is translated.

So it really wouldn't be wrong to call him the commander of peace or the captain of peace or the ruler of peace. And scripture tells us one day he will rule the nations with a rod of iron. All right, now I'm getting to a very important thing here for you guys, all right? So hang with me for a minute.

Jesus offers the peace that surpasses all comprehension. He offers that to you. All the years of misery and confusion and darkness and despair.

He offers you peace beyond all understanding. But it only comes one way. And that is through submission.

And I really want to take a few minutes to explain this. And I'm going to do it by talking about dogs. Aren't you grateful Pastor Steve knows how to preach? Some of you know that Kathy and I love bull mastiffs.

We've had a couple of them. I lost my baby boy, Gus, if any of you ever saw him. He died of cancer.

We had to put him down about a month ago. Absolutely broke our hearts. He was the mighty Gustav.

He was 180 pounds. He was just a very special, powerful dog. But anyway, our first bull mastiff we got, that was about 11, 12 years ago.

Yeah, 11 years ago, 12 years ago. His name was Bruno. And when we got Bruno, we thought, man, a dog this size, these things are beasts, man.

We better know what we're talking about. I think someone gave us a season on DVD of Dog Whisperer. How many of you ever have watched Dog Whisperer? Raise your hands if you have watched it.

I want to know who's watched it here. The rest of you, I pity you. When you get out of here, the first thing you're allowed to do is go find that show.

Tremendous wisdom in that show. And we still watch some of his videos on YouTube, Cesar Millan. He's really amazing.

Actually, there's something to be said about his methods with biblical counseling, but that's another matter there. Anyway, one of the first things we learned from Cesar Millan is that dogs don't think like humans think. And it may seem elementary, but you'd be surprised at how out of it humans are with their dogs.

And the thing that amazes me with this guy is, I don't care how screwed up a dog is, Cesar Millan goes in there, and usually within minutes, he's got that dog straightened out. His problem isn't with the dogs. He says this, I have to train the people.

They're the ones with the problems. Because people don't know how to deal with dogs. And so dogs get out of control.

So one is hiding under a bed, shivering out of fear. Another one's attacking everything around. Another is just completely out of control, bouncing off the walls, jumping on people.

Those are always signs that the owners don't know how to train a dog, always. And I believe that's true. Dogs operate on the pack mentality.

So one of the key things you learn is how to be alpha with that dog. And most dogs that are out of control, it's because the owner is allowing the dog to be alpha. That's what the problem is.

Dogs operate best, most smoothly, and most happily, and most contented when they are put in their proper place. That's what Cesar Millan will tell you if you watch him. And it's true.

God set up the animal kingdom, you know, at least most animals, with this mindset or this instinct inside them, this pack instinct, that somehow they work it out who's alpha. And once they understand who's alpha, they're fine. But until they understand who's alpha, they're going to try to be alpha until the big bad dude puts them in their place, and then they're okay.

They don't have pride like you and me. So they just, oh, okay, so he's the baddest dude, so I guess I'm number seven, you know, or whatever. And then they go happily along the rest of their lives.

If you watch, you know, a National Geographic about wolves or whatever, it's always that way. God designed the animal kingdom to operate in peace. That's why there's peace in animal groups, because they understand the pack mentality.

Now, here's one of the biggest problems you guys have had, is you have not allowed Jesus Christ to be alpha in your life. You've tried to be alpha, and because He gives you a free will, He allows you to be alpha in your life if that's what you want. And I'm telling you, one of the keys, main, main, main keys that you will learn in this place is how to allow Jesus Christ to take His rightful position in your life.

You are going to hear the word submission at least 5,000 times during your stay here. I promise you that. And it's because that's what you need to learn.

That is the key, is learning how to come under the Lord and let Him be the Lord of your life. Let Him be in control. Let Him be the ruler.

You know, some of you guys, those of you who are married and have kids, you kind of like have demanded of your wife and kids to let you be alpha in the home. And you wonder why they don't respect you and respect your leadership. It's because you have not taken your proper place in the pecking order.

You are out of whack. It's not them, it's you that has created this functional situation in the home. When you get yourself in the proper place, then the way is paved and wide open for your wife and children to fall right in line.

But not until, not until. And I'm going to read this quote from Pope Commentary. Divine limitations are felt to be irksome to us when our will is in conflict with God's will.

All right, meaning limitations, meaning boundaries that God puts on your life, rules, expectations, you know, that's what he's talking about. Men live in frequent conflict with our heavenly Father's will. We find the wills, the walls to be hard because we fling ourselves upon them.

Our chain galls us because we chafe and fret ourselves against it. The wandering sheep is torn by the hedge, while the quiet, obedient sheep knows nothing of the briars. When we rebel against God, we murmur at his restraints.

All right, now I'm wrapping it up here because I really want to get to something here, guys. I want you to really open your heart to the Lord now. Will you open your heart to the Lord now? Whoever you are that's been fighting against your counselor and resisting and, and, you know, being like one of those, whatever, just not willing to humble yourself.

Would you be willing to humble yourself now before the Lord and hear what Pastor Steve has to say? I've been doing this. How many people are 33 or under in here? I've been doing this longer than you've been alive. You think I might know something about this? Not to mention the years of sin that I lived in and came out of and fought my way out of before that.

Guys, listen. No one here is trying to hurt you. We're not trying to lead you into some cult or something.

We're not trying to, I don't know what you think. Those of you who fight the Lord in this place constantly. I don't know what you think of us.

No one's getting rich here. This is a hard ministry. And forgive me for a second while I vent a little bit of frustration when I see Pastor Ed and the counselors come dragging into our half day of prayer, beat up and worn out by guys who just fight them tooth and nail.

And I think you know who you are. I don't know who you are. But I think you do.

This man is only trying to help you know the Lord. Why would you want to fight him or your counselor? What is at the bottom of that? You better ask yourself some hard questions. All right, let's turn to Matthew 4. I'm going to wrap up here.

Earlier, Pastor Ed read this verse in Matthew 121 when the angel was speaking to Joseph and said that Mary will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. In the half day of prayer on Thursday we had this time. I just have been super busy and I just didn't have time to get a Bible study together like I usually do.

So we put on a John MacArthur message out of Isaiah 53. And the title of the message is Jehovah's Astonishing Servant. And he just was giving a backdrop of the book of Isaiah.

And you know a lot of this stuff I knew already, but I'll just mention it. The first half of the book, half, first 39 chapters is about sin and the judgment of sin. And then in chapter 40 it's like the book becomes a different book.

And the last half of the book, 40 through 66, is about salvation. And he brought out, now this I didn't know, those 27 chapters are broken into three groups of nine. Hang with me here because there's something I'm going to share with you.

Chapters 40 to 48 talks about salvation from their enemies, the Jewish people, salvation from their enemies. 49 to 57 talks about salvation from sin. And 58 to 66 talks about salvation from suffering.

And he made the point that the Jewish people saw the coming Messiah as he who would rescue them, save them from their enemies, and save them from suffering. But what they could not tolerate was the idea that he came to save them from their sins. And I came up to the front and I said to the staff here, I said, he just hit the nail on the head.

This is one of the biggest struggles that we face in dealing with the men in this program. You know, in their minds, in a vague sort of general way, they'll acknowledge they're sinners. Oh, yeah, I have, you know, I'm depraved nature and all that.

But when it comes right down to it, an unwillingness to really take ownership over one's sinful, fallen, unworthy condition. And I'm going to tell you guys something, please hear me. You are not going to get anywhere until you come to grips with what Paul had to come to grips with, that there is nothing righteous inside me, nothing good inside me.

And those of you who fight the message that you are a wretched sinner, you're doing it to your own destruction. Because as long as you think you're good, you can say, I need a savior. You can say it in your head.

You can say it with your mouth, but you don't really believe it because you don't need to be saved from your sins because you think you're good in yourself. That's what you're holding on to. If you want a savior, you better see your need for a savior.

And you're not going to see your need as long as you're holding on to this idea that there's something good in you that's worthwhile and worthy. Now, I'm not a Calvinist. I'm not, you know, full bore over on the side of depravity of man or whatever.

But that is biblical truth. But people don't want to acknowledge that. And I've said this before.

I can't remember when or if I wrote it or what. But I said, you know, it's an amazing thing to me that here we are trying to help people. That's all we're trying to do is trying to help people.

And they're fine with all your teachings and all that stuff until you start to move in on them on this point. And when you say, bring up even like the thought, the possibility, never mind the years of sin and rebellion, wickedness, never mind that. Could you just consider the possibility? I know you've had some experiences with the Lord.

I know that you've been in church. Could you just consider, just please just consider, maybe you were never really converted. Man, it's like you called their mother the worst of names.

I don't understand that. I mean, I knew what a wretch I was. And there was only one thing I knew was I needed a savior.

But I had a gun to my head, instance or seconds away from hell. Maybe that's the difference. I don't know.

But I knew when I got to my life, got to that point, that there was nothing I could do to save myself or rescue myself. So I've never had a problem acknowledging what a filthy, vile person I am inside. And those of you who are trying to hold on to your goodness, you're in trouble.

You're getting it straight from Pastor Steve on Christmas Eve. Not seven woes of hell, close. Close.

Because, listen, my life, I'm not here to preach some nicey little nativity sermon. I'm here to see men get saved. That's why I'm doing this ministry.

It's why I left my career in law enforcement. So that guys like you could have a way out, those who want it. Now, if you want your sin, if you love your darkness, you love yourself, you love the idea that you're good in yourself, you know, I don't mean to be offensive.

I really don't. I say this with love. But it'd be better for you just to go.

And really, it would be a lot easier on Pastor Ed and the counselors. It'd be just better for everyone. Better for you, certainly, because you're just heaping up judgment against yourself.

How can you be in a place where God resides like this and do nothing but fight him? Man, if you're not willing to humble yourself to the Lord, then it would just really, trust me, it would be better for you to go. I know those are hard words, and I don't like saying them. Believe me, I don't.

The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light. And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned. And let me tell you, the first thing that light is going to show is all the filth inside of a human being.

And that's why the Jewish people hated him and crucified him. And that's why, to this day, they will not accept Jesus Christ, because they will not acknowledge their need for a Savior from sin. How about you? And I don't think it's by chance that verse 17 follows verse 16.

From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Millions upon millions of Christian men are being enslaved by sexual lust. But in 1986, God raised up Pure Life Ministries to offer a way of escape to those taken captive by pornography and sexual addiction.

Everything this ministry teaches, preaches, writes, and counsels is built upon the unwavering truth of the Word of God. This is why we exist. To lead people into the truth that will set them free.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Qzak0iOCRFA.mp4>
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