

LEADERSHIP Seminar

Mike Connell
Hosting

SHANE WILLARD

Leadership Seminar (hosting Shane Willard)

Mike Connell

Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

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Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah (1 of 6) (Shane Willard) Pictures from Hebrew hieroglyphics are used, like a comic strip, to illuminate the word. Tefillah (Prayer) is to turn the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden. Teshuvah (Repentance) is to change your thinking. Tzedakah is that Faith leads to Righteousness revealed - to be generous. The desire of your heart opens the door to humility.

Being a Peacemaker (2 of 6) (Shane Willard) This story is about Peacemakers & Escalation…Our hero of the faith was a rebellious, spoilt brat, who wanted his own way, in every single way. This was a man that was sleeping with prostitutes on his wedding night, because he got depressed, because his best man stole his wife.

From what started out as a joke no-one understood, a fascinating cycle of violence ensues, based on: because you did this, I now have a right to do that. I merely did to them, what they did to me. This way of living will always bring death.

Demonstrating God's Power (3 of 6) (Shane Willard) Remarkable similarities are found between the Corinthian Gods of Mithra, Adonis, Addis, Horus, and the Gospel story of Jesus Christ. Paul's strategy changed in Corinth, instead of making fine-sounding arguments that Jesus was the Christ, as he did with the Jews, he demonstrated what Jesus' life looked like, by living it out. That gave him the credibility to announce that the kingdom of God was at hand. Cookie-cutter evangelism doesn't work. Demonstrating the Power of God, within the Disposition of Messiah, gives us the Credibility to speak life into any situation.

Being a Good Neighbor (4 of 6) (Shane Willard) Luke 12:13 is the only time that Jesus' actually proclaims: God is going to kill you. It's not any of the sins you would think. It's not adultery, fornication, burning your children in fire, idolatry. Its greed! Jesus is not impressed by what kind of car you drive, house you live in, or anything you possess; but with how much compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding-in-love, character is present in your homes.

Form versus Function (5 of 6) (Shane Willard) Greek people, people with white skin that come from Europe, and they find their origins in a really big, powerful church in Europe, that has big buildings with apostles names named after them - we see form. We always see form. We were trained to see form, we think in form, everything about us is form. Hebrew people see function. To study our Bible more effectively, we should be people who are training ourself to see function, not form.

Worries of this Life, Deceitfulness of Wealth (6 of 6) (Shane Willard) Jesus says: the worries of this life will keep the word of God from taking root in your life. It's something that chokes your life out. The other one is the deceitfulness of wealth, which is a lie that says: if I had this I would be happy. Do you have one day in seven, that is unlike any other? If you do, how is it different? Who are the most important people to you? What are you called to be? Is that getting your attention first?

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Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah (1 of 6)

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Pictures from Hebrew hieroglyphics are used, like a comic strip, to illuminate the word. Tefillah (Prayer) is to turn the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden. Teshuvah (Repentance) is to change your thinking. Tzedakah is that Faith leads to Righteousness revealed - to be generous. The desire of your heart opens the door to humility.

I want to start out tonight by talking about faith. Of all the ethnic groups of people in the world, and all the different types of cultures and races and stuff, I have a rule. I can only make fun of those that I am… So I can make of white people okay - because I'm white.

We have a certain way. If I was to take a survey of people who come from Europe; and we're talking about good-hearted people, on their way to heaven, saved as saved can be. If I was to ask them: why, if you died today, would you go to heaven? Some 90% would give me the same answer: I would go to heaven; because I believe in Jesus.

Now there's a problem with that, isn't there? Is there anybody in hell, who believes in Jesus? Yeah, there are lots of people in hell, who believe in Jesus - particularly demons! I won't say people, because it's not my place to put people there, but yeah, we'll say: demons. There are lots of demons in hell, who believe in Jesus; and they don't just believe in Jesus - they actually are scared to death of Him! They actually have a certain respect for who He is, and yet they still find themselves in hell.

So obviously then, a ‘belief in Jesus’ is not enough to save us eternally. We're talking about salvation here. It's got to be Faith; so I met with my mentor, and we started fleshing this thing out about faith, and I want to show you what faith means.

Now there are three steps to faith, in a Hebrew concept, from a rabbi. The first step is: Tefillah; the second step is: Teshuvah, and the third step is: Tzedakah. So if you asked a First Century Hebrew teacher, what it means to have faith, they

would’ve said: Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah. Doesn’t it have kind of a da-da-da da-da-da da-da-da; has this sort of ring to it.

So when Paul makes statements like: “for by grace you've been saved, through faith and that not of yourself, this is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast”. In his mind, as a First Century rabbi, he'd be thinking: Tefillah; Teshuvah; Tzedakah.

Now the Hebrew language, originally, was pictures (hieroglyphics). So every Hebrew letter is a picture; so a word is like a cartoon strip. It makes sense doesn't it; because where did the nation of Israel come from? Egypt right! They were a group of people that started out as a family, and ends up in a place in Egypt; they grow and grow and grow and grow and grow. So it stands to reason, that as they develop their own way of thinking, that they would have had a language similar to the Egyptians, which was hieroglyphics.

So the Hebrew language originally was pictures, all the way up to Babylon. If you look at the history of the Hebrew people, they were in slavery to Egypt for 430 years; and then a guy named Moses comes in, and he rescues them out of that slavery. Then they were out of slavery for 430 years; and then they get re-enslaved. We're going to talk about that later this week, why they got re-enslaved.

Part of the reason was because this group of people who were slaves, and God freed them from that, eventually started enslaving people again. Solomon had forced labor building the temple of God! So this God, who hates slavery so much that He got this whole group of people out of it - the very group of people that He got out of slavery into freedom, they turned around and enslaved people.

So then they get enslaved into Babylon. From the slavery in Babylon to the time of Jesus was exactly 430 years; so to the Hebrew people, the Hebrew people were waiting on a new Moses, to come and kind of ‘save the day’. So when Jesus comes along the scene, the writers and people are proclaiming things like: “peace on earth, and good will to all men”. In other words, what they were saying was: Caesar is not the answer, this guy is. This guy is. It was all a political thing.

So anyway, back to this group of people in Egypt. They developed this language

in pictures, so every Hebrew letter is a picture. Every Hebrew word then is a comic strip. For example, the Hebrew word for inequity, is the word Avon. Yes, all the old school Pentecostal say Amen? Even the word for make-up is sin - I told you Mildred, I told ya!

Now in Hebrew, the 'o' does not exist; we just put the 'o' in English, so you know how to pronounce it. In Hebrew it's just: A, V and N; or: Alef; Vav; and Noon. Now the picture of A is an eye; the picture of Vav was a hook; and Noon was fish that were multiplying. So it's kind of like one fish becomes two, becomes four, becomes eight - like it looks like that.

By the way, can you imagine being a scribe between Moses and David? Like all the psalms would have been written like this!

So when a Hebrew person read: ‘Inequity’, they would see this word: Eye + Hook + Fish-Multiplying. So when a Hebrew person read ‘Inequity’, what they read was: “whatever your eye hooks-to, multiplies”.

If you've ever done premarital counseling, you know this to be true; because two people come, and they're in love, and their eye is hooked to all the good things. I've had them sit in my office, and I'm saying: “are you sure that you want to do this”? “Yes”. I'm like: “sir, have you seen the way she acts, when she doesn't get her way”? He's like: “oh yeah, but it'll be okay, we're in looove”!

How many of you know, like four months into that, it's like a disaster right; because your eye - it's not because anything's changed. It's just because the focus of your eye has changed to something different. The focus of your eye has changed.

How many of you have ever been guilty of: focusing on everything you don't have; instead of being thankful for what you do? Whatever your eye hooks to, multiplies. Has anybody, besides me, ever been guilty of wanting something really, really bad; to the point where we thought we'd die without it; and then we get it, and it's not what we thought it was? That's what this is. Its inequity.

I'm just using this as an example of their pictures; but this should give us a revelation on grace; and that is, that there's three levels to sin in the Hebrew culture. I always say ‘levels’, but that makes it sound like one's worse than the

other, so we'll say ‘stages’.

Stage one is: Inequity; and that's when your eye hooks to something, and it starts multiplying. So let's say, I want this pen. My eye hooks to this pen; and my need for it on the inside starts to grow. Even if I look over here, my eye's still drawn to this pen. Any guy here ever been on a car lot, and your eye gets drawn to the V8 - even though petrol's $1.85 a litre! Your eye gets drawn to the V8, because you'll be more of a man if you have the V8. Chicks dig the V8; and so the eye gets hooked to it.

Now at some point in that journey of my eye hooking to this, it starts multiplying. It creates something that the Bible calls a lust; and once that lust is in us, and we are enticed by it - that's when the Bible says we sin.

The Bible says: a person sins when he's drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. So my eye hooks to it, it creates a lust, and now I'm having a lust for this pen. I really want it. I need it. I have to have it in my life. I might die without that pen.

Come on, this is about all of us, isn't it? I mean it might not be a pen, but it could be something else; and so that's sin. That's level two - so you've got Inequity; and then you've got Sin.

The third stage is: Transgression, when I actually take the pen. It's when I actually do something. So in the Old Testament, could you prosecute somebody for Inequity? Could you prosecute somebody for having inequity in their heart? Absolutely not! Why? Because you didn't know it was there. How would you know?

Could you prosecute somebody for sin? No, because you don't know it's there. However, you could prosecute somebody for transgression; because if you had two or three witnesses of somebody transgressing the law, that's when you could prosecute them.

So Jesus comes along, and He starts blowing people away. He starts saying things like: you have heard it said: “don't murder”. Now is murder: Inequity; a Sin; or a Transgression? It's a transgression.

He said: “you've heard it said: don't commit murder; but I say to you: don't hate” - so He starts bringing the standard back to Inequity.

You've heard it said: “don't commit adultery”; but I say to you: “don't lust”. Wow! So He starts bringing it back to Inequity, which should give us a revelation of grace, because the Bible says: we all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him the Avon of us all (the inequity of us all).

In other words: Jesus doesn't just forgive you for what you've done; He forgives you all the way back to where your eye hooked to it. That's grace.

So you've got this concept of Faith: Tefillah; Teshuvah; Tzedakah. Tefillah, that's Prayer; and Teshuvah is Repentance. I'm going to define Tzedakah with the word itself, in just a moment.

Can anybody tell me: when was the first mention of the idea of prayer, in the whole Bible? Here is just basic Hebrew from Hermeneutic 101: It's called the Law of Firsts - so what's true the first mention, is true of every other part of it in the Bible. What's true of the firstborn is true of the whole family; what's true of the first fruit, is true of the whole crop; what's true of the first word, is true of the whole book; what's true of the first letter, is true of the whole word, okay?

For instance: Jesus came along by the fig tree, and He didn't see any fruit; He only saw fig leaves. Well, one of the first things you'd do, as a Hebrew Hermeneutic, is you would say: where's the first mention of fig leaves in the Bible? It's of course, all the way back in the Garden of Eden - so you can go look at those kinds of things.

So I started asking questions like: when is the first mention of Prayer in the whole Bible, and its much later than you would think. It's actually in Genesis 4:26; and it says this: “Finally the sons of Enosh called upon the name of the Lord”.

What the rabbi said about that, was that it took that many generations for people to overcome the shame of Adam and Eve, and to begin to address God again. So if you go look up that word 'called', this idea of prayer, this is what you see. You've got three pictures.

You've got three heads; three letters, three heads. First letter is the front of the head; second letter is the back of a head; and the third letter is an ox head, going into a yoke. This was the Hebrew idea of prayer, as found in Genesis 4. That word morphed into the word Tefillah; so you've got front of the head, you've got back of the head, and then you have an ox head going into a yoke. So that tells you a comic strip

What a Hebrew person sees is this (follow the pictures): that prayer is a “turning of the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden”.

Let's say it this way: prayer is being God-conscious. Prayer is being conscious of God, instead of conscious of myself. Prayer is any time I take my focus off of me, and put it onto Him.

In other words, the Hebrew idea of prayer had very little to do with words. As a matter of fact, Jesus was against long babbling prayers. Jesus said: when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the Pentecostals do, for they think they'll be heard because of their many words.

The longest prayer Jesus ever prayed takes like, 25 seconds to read; so it would have taken Him less to say it - yet Jesus could go off and pray for an hour. What was He doing for an hour? How could you pray for an hour, and not say anything? What was He doing? What would you do for an hour?

You would turn your head, in order to face the one, who could bear the burden; and then after that hour, where you were completely conscious of God, only then would you speak out loud, what the spirit of God had put on your heart to do. That takes a very short amount of time. We do it backwards. We speak, until we feel God. They would feel God, and then speak out of that - two totally different things. It's a turning of the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden.

Now Teshuvah/Repentance: it could mean a couple of things. It could mean ‘to change your mind’, or ‘to change your thinking’. It also was an ‘exile’ term. These were a group of people who were used to being enslaved by people; and the prophets would come to them, and they would say things like: Return - Teshuvah, Teshuvah, Teshuvah. In other words, there's a kingdom that's available to you, that has nothing to do with this. You can return to that.

So let's put it in context. Tefillah is: to turn the head, in order to face the one, who can bear the burden. Tefillah is: when I step out of myself, and I begin to become aware of the Mighty One who's with me, the Mighty One who's in me. Tefillah is when I become totally aware of God, and He and only Him, the Mighty One, the creator of the entire universe, every bit of Him is within me. The kingdom is not this way, or that; or up and down; the kingdom of God is the last place we look, which is inside us. That is prayer.

Repentance is: once I'm facing the one who can bear the burden, then I position myself to change my thinking, to how He thinks - which is a bigger shift than we would think.

We all like the 'what would Jesus do' bracelets. We love that! We love the what 'would Jesus do bracelets', until someone slaps us on our right cheek, and then we're supposed to turn the other cheek.

We love the 'what would Jesus do' bracelets, until someone asks us to carry their pack one mile, and we're supposed to carry it two.

We love the 'what would Jesus do' bracelets, until someone insults us. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2 and 3 (I'm very much paraphrasing this): that Jesus was hurled every kind of hurt and insult imaginable, and yet He took it and said nothing, and left it with God. Could you do that? Can I do that?

1) Tefillah; 2) Teshuvah; then the last one is: 3) Tzedakah. This is a compound word: Tzedak - just that part of the word, is the word ‘Righteous’. So you can see how Faith leads to Righteousness.

Tzedak, if you put the pictures on this, there's three letters: Tsadi; Dalet; Gof.

The picture of Tsadi is: a fish hook with bait on it. So when the Hebrew people saw the letter Tsadi, it meant: the desire of your heart, what lures you, what baits you, what draws your attention, what sort of Avon-thing happens? What desire in your heart is that? Tsadi is the picture of a fish hook with bait on it.

Dalet is the picture of an open door, which is easier to understand, because it just means: the ‘pathway into something’’ or: ‘open the door to’.

Gof is the picture of the back of a head.

In other words, the Hebrew idea of righteousness is this: the desire of your heart, opens the door to humility - that's righteousness.

If you put a 'ah', on the end of that - that is an open window, which means: ‘to reveal something’. Remember, windows back then, were made of wood, not glass; so to ‘open a window’ meant ‘to reveal something’; or: ‘to let wind in’; or ‘to let the spirit in’.

So the word Tzedakah means: “righteousness revealed”.

Hebrew people have a way for doing their money, which is really cool, and you ought to check it out if you don't know it; because they have 4% of the population, but they have 40% of the money - which means they might be onto something. And they don't even believe in Jesus, most of them - it's just principle.

I was sitting by a rabbi once on an airplane, and it was one of those great 8-hour flights, that you get stuck on the runway for 2-hours. It's really cool, because there's so much room on an airplane, and so we got talking... So I said: listen, I've discovered this thing about Terumah; and first and second and third tithes - three different tithes; the way they do their money. Can I share that with you?

So I shared it, and he said: oh yeah, you've got it spot on. I said: thanks. He said: do you know what that whole thing's called? We have a word for the whole thing. I said: what? He said “Tzedakah”, which means 'righteousness revealed'.

You see Jesus talking about it in Matthew 6. He says: when you do your acts of righteousness, do not do them before men to be seen, but do them before your heavenly Father, who is in secret. Tzedakah - acts of righteousness.

That word morphed over time to mean ‘Generosity’; so that today, in certain Middle Eastern countries, the beggars sit on the side of the road, and they go: “Tzedakah, Tzedakah, Tzedakah, Tzedakah…” Show me righteousness, show me righteousness. To ‘Reveal Righteousness’ meant: ‘to be generous’.

Jesus said: “your acts of righteousness were…” what? What were the three acts of righteousness? Prayer; fasting; and giving alms to the poor (Tzedakah).

Faith, then, is a mixture of: “turning my head in order to face the one who can

bear the burden”.

As I turn my head, to face the one who can bear the burden, I change my mind to think like Him. As I change my mind to think like Him, He regenerates my heart, and lets me do at some points, even greater things than Him.

Tzedakah - that is faith; and living a life like this.

It's really easy to make grace cheap, because there's a part of grace that's free - but it's not cheap. Are you forgiven of every sin? Jesus said (in red letters): “Every sin a person commits will be forgiven him” - every sin. Every sin a person commits, shall be forgiven him; except for unforgiveness, and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. But does that mean that it's cheap? No, because Paul said it this way: “where sin abounds, grace abounds much more”. So you're going to have a hard time ever out-sinning grace.

Holiness is the best life. God might forgive sins; but people say: because God forgives sins, that means He's not punishing sin.

Let's just assume for a second, let's say: God doesn't punish sin. I'm not saying He doesn't, I'm just saying, let's assume for a second, an axiom that might be true. I don't think it is, but let's just say it is.

Even if God doesn't punish sin, sin has punishment built into it naturally. Sin has this thing called death, that's built into it by nature; so even if God takes His hand off the punishment of sin (even if God's not punishing sin any more), sin punishes you - just the natural consequences of what it is.

So the best life then, comes from a life that is built around: Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah; this is a daily thing. I love this definition of faith, because it's not a definition of faith that says: pray a prayer once, and you're in!

It's a definition of faith that says: “every day I can pick up my cross”. Every day I can turn my head, and face the one who bears the burden. Every day I need to change my mind, and make sure my mind is thinking like He does; and every day, this should be producing acts of righteousness.

It should produce something in life; and one of the things it produces is Trust. I want to talk to you, for the rest of this first session, about Trust.

We're going to talk about Leadership; and God's biggest idea: that one of the responsibilities we have as leaders, is to trust; and one of the trust factors, one of the things that trust is the antidote for, is temptation.

Years ago, this group of psychologists, they were doing a study. It was a longitudinal study, which is very rare, but they do it. What they do is: they take a group of people, and they study them over a long period of time; the same group of people, over a very long period of time. It's called a longitudinal study.

What they did back in 1965 is, they took a group of 6-year-olds, and they were going to study that same group from 6 to 36; so from 1965 to 1995 they were going to track their progress. You'd have to compensate people pretty well to do this, I would imagine, but here's what they did when they were six years old is, they put all of these kids in a room.

This is one of the questions they were asking: how does a kid's ability to delay gratification at age 6, translate to that same kid's ability to delay gratification at 36? So hey put homemade, piping-hot, chocolate-chip cookies in front of them! The kids came in, and sat around the table; and every one of them had a plate, with a piping-hot, still-smoking, freshly-homemade chocolate-chip cookie in front of them.

They were only given one set of instructions, because six year olds can't handle more than one set of instructions. The instruction was this: you cannot eat your cookie. Ooh!

If you eat your cookie, there will be no consequences. We're not going to be mad at you, but you will not get the prize.

If you can wait 10 minutes, and not eat your cookie for 10 minutes, then we're going to take your one cookie away - and we're going to give you three cookies! So if you can just wait 10 minutes, we're going to give you three cookies; but if you can't wait 10 minutes, you can eat your one - but that's all you'll get.

So they left the room, and then they go behind one of those like mirror things and film them. They watch the behavior of these kids sitting around, and you can see that their willpower starts to break down. One kid leans over and starts smelling his cookie. One kid actually took his plate and licked his cookie -

because they didn't say you couldn't lick it; they just said you couldn't eat it!

Finally, there's this moment of break-down. The one kid, the kid that's going to break first, somebody's going to break first. The kid that's going to break first picks up his cookie, and there's this collective: NOOOOO!

It's kind of like in Star Wars III, remember when Anakin becomes Darth Vader? Remember that? He becomes Darth Vader, and he's Luke's father; and Anakin is like Luke. You kind of put it together; so in Star Wars III you're going into the movie theatre, knowing that he's going to become Darth Vader. But you're sitting there, and the whole way you're like: NOOO! If you could only know how this is going to turn out, this is going to be really bad for everybody!

How many of you know decisions like this are really easy to see in other people, but very difficult to see in us? It's very easy to do! So the kid picks up his cookie and eats it; and once one kid ate his cookie, then there was a chain reaction… Other kids started eating their cookie - but some kids held on; and so at exactly the 10 minute mark, the people in charge of the study came in, and they took everybody's plate away. The plate that still had one cookie on it, they replaced it with three cookies; and the plates that had nothing on it - they got nothing.

The next day, they came in again. You would think that the kids who could not wait the first day, when they saw the three cookies come out, you would think the second day that they would wait - because they know three cookies are coming out. They can trust who's in charge, to do, what they say they were going to do; but what they actually found is: over the course of 21 days, that the kids who ate the cookie on day #1, kept eating the cookie every subsequent day.

Every subsequent day, they ate it quicker, to the point that by day #21, the kids who ate the cookie on day #1, actually as soon as the cookie went down, they just ate it. They didn't even give it a go; and the kids who waited on day #1, actually by day #21 found it very easy to not eat their cookie - found it very easy!

What the psychological study found, over 30 years was this: that a 6-year-olds ability to delay gratification was directly correlated to that same 6-year-olds ability to delay gratification at 36.

Now before you panic - I guess there's always Jesus! How many of you realise that a 6-year-old not being able to delay gratification, is one cookie instead of three; but a 36-year-old not being able to delay gratification - that's lost employment; that's buying huge items that you can't afford, with money you don't have, to impress people you don't like. That's huge ramifications! That's broken relationships. That's a spoiled brat, who just, if he can't get his way, runs every time.

How many of you realise that sin/temptation - there's just always more than meets the eye? It's just always bigger than what it looks.

I want to talk to you the rest of the session about Temptation and Trust; because temptation is one of those topics that leaders have to deal with; and it's also one of those topics that, if you're here tonight, and you've been saved for 40 years - you deal with temptation.

If I took a group of people, and I put someone who's been saved 40 years; someone who's been saved 30; someone who's been saved 20; someone who's been saved 10; someone who's been saved 10 minutes; and someone who doesn't even know who God is; if I put them in a study group, and I said: your topic for tonight is temptation - everybody would have a story to tell. It's not something that's limited to just a few people. It brings us all into one boat.

I want to use the temptation of Jesus to bring this together; so in Matthew 3:16-17, then it goes straight into Matthew 4. It says this: “As soon as Jesus was baptised, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him. A voice said from heaven: this is My Son whom I love, with whom I'm well pleased”. So you have this huge fireworks show at Jesus' baptism.

If you're a dad, and you made this big of a deal at your son's baptism, the church people would just go nuts. “What - do you think he's that special?” I mean there's lightning, thunder and birds - all kinds of things happening. “This is My Son whom I love, with whom I'm well pleased”.

Next sentence: Then, then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil - which is kind of an odd sequence of events, isn't it? “This is My Son, I love Him, I'm so proud of Him. Now come on, you’ve got to be

tempted by the devil”.

You can see why, in two chapters, when He's teaching His disciples to pray, He says: and when you pray, part of what you say is: please lead me not into temptation - lead me not into temptation. Why? Because Jesus was led into temptation - and it just is hard work.

After fasting 40 days and 40 nights He was hungry, and the tempter came to Him and said: “If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread”; and Jesus answered: “it is written: man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”.

Then the devil took Him to the holy city, and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. He said: “if You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: He'll command His angels concerning You, and they'll lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against the stone”. And Jesus answered him: “it is also written, don't put the Lord your God to the test”.

And again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world and their splendor. “All this, I'll give to you, if you'll bow down and worship me”. “Away from me Satan! For it is written: worship the Lord your God and serve Him only”. Then the devil left Him, and the angels came and attended Him.

This is such an odd passage of scripture; and the truth is, the first time I ever read this, with the exception of the last temptation, I couldn't figure out why the first two were sin. The last temptation was: worship Satan - that one's obvious okay.

The first two temptations: “turn stones into bread” - what's wrong with that? Who gave Jesus the power to turn stones into bread? God did. Has Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights? Yes. Was He hungry? Yes. Would God want Him to be hungry? No. Would God be okay with Jesus using power He gave Him to meet a legitimate need? You'd think.

The second temptation was: “throw yourself off the mountain, and believe angels to catch you”. Odd yes; but sin? I realised that none of us will be tempted like this - none of us. You will never, within reason, be tempted to turn stones

into bread. You'll just go down to New World, and buy you some bread!

You'll never be tempted to throw yourself off of a mountain. Imagine that: “hey, got an idea - throw yourself off a mountain, and believe God to see if He'll catch you”! Probably won't happen. Most of us won't be tempted to worship Satan - most of us. That kind of, is just too obvious.

So in a way, none of us will be tempted like this; but in another way, every one of us will be tempted like this. Turn stones into bread - every one of us are tempted daily, to meet legitimate needs, in illegitimate ways. It's a huge one: meet legitimate needs - in illegitimate ways. Your needs are legitimate; but you have an illegitimate way for you to meet it.

All of us, particularly people who call themselves ‘faith people’, there's a fine line between faith and stupidity; and so particularly ‘faith people’ were tempted to presume upon God's power. We just presume upon it. Throw yourself off that mountain, and believe God to catch you!

In church work, we do it all the time; like we say: hey, we've got an idea, and it's not well planned. It might be a little immoral, maybe even illegal; but it's an idea - and we don't have the money to even come close to doing it. No common-sense of any kind tells us that we're in a position to try to accomplish this - but we're going to believe God.

That's how we frame it! If that's faith, then it’s holy, but there's another way. If it's flesh, then it easily becomes: we're just going to presume upon God's power.

It sounds like this: I'm going to do what I want to do anyway, then I'll just believe God to fix it up. Jesus is like: God doesn't work that way.

In the South - I'm from the South by the way. In the South, smoking cigarettes is no big deal. In California, it's illegal to smoke inside a building; but In South Carolina, it's like illegal NOT to smoke inside a building; and I've prayed for people all over the South with lung cancer.

They've smoked four packs a day for their whole life, and you ought to see what their lungs would look like, if they were taken out of their body. So I pray for them; and then they go - and they still smoke! And I say: what are you doing?

They say: oh we'll just believe God. We'll just believe God. We do things like that all the time - we presume upon God's power.

The third temptation is to take a short cut. Satan offers Him all the kingdoms of the world - which was Jesus' anyway; it just wasn't Jesus' right then.

Psalm 115:16, says: “the highest heavens belong to God, but the earth He's given to man”. Then eventually, at the end of the story, it all goes back to God's, and God uses us to rule; but right now, the kingdom of this world - it's given to us; and to the Prince of the Power of the Air.

So the Prince of the Power of the Air says: hey, I'll give it to you - now. I'll give you a short cut: if you worship me, you can avoid the cross - you can avoid all that pain - and I'll give you the end of it anyway.

But Jesus realised something very quickly: that a kingdom, is not a kingdom, without people. So to meet a legitimate need, in an illegitimate way, is to take a short cut to God's plan, and to presume upon God's power.

These are the temptations; and I realised there's a couple of keys to beating temptation, that isn't what we think. Let me just tell you what doesn't work: willpower. Your emotions will override your willpower, every single time. Willpower just typically doesn't work.

Has anybody, besides me, ever promised God that you would never do something - ever never, ever never, ever never again? How many of you lied? We all lied, yeah. But two things will help us beat temptation, and number one is this:

If we can simply pause, step back, and realise that there's far more at stake with temptation than meets the eye - there's far more!

One of the biggest lies in the world is: my behavior is between me and God. Listen, if your behavior is between you and God, then do whatever you want to do - God can handle you! Your behavior is never between you and God; your behavior affects everybody around you.

There's always much more at stake, with temptation, than meets the eye. The temptation is: oh, it's just me and God, and this one situation. It's just this one.

One more beer – which, how many of you know, for some people, is never just one more beer. It's broken families; it's anger outbursts. It leads to other things.

It's just one more piece of cake; I'll start my diet tomorrow, it's just between me and God; and this one piece of cake. It's just this one new car purchase I can't afford. I'm going to get into debt for six years, for this one impulse, this one moment. It's just between me and God, and He's okay with it. It's just this one moment. It's just this one outburst of anger. It's just this one bit of rage.

I was with a guy once (he was 52), and we were praying together, a whole bunch of us were praying together. There was a lady who I'd never met before, and there was a group of us. This lady was very prophetic, very much the real deal, and we'd never met her before, but she asked if she could pray for this man, and I said: sure.

So he came forward, and she said: sir, I'm seeing you crouched in the foetal position. It's a yellow house on the outside, with old wood panelling on the wall; and you're crouched in the foetal position by a stove. There's a stove, a wood stove that was used to heat the whole house, and you're crouched in the foetal position. You're roughly nine years old, I'm guessing, and I'm seeing your father walk into the room, and your father walks into the room and he's yelling, and he said this to you, and she quoted something that this man's father had said to him when he was nine.

This man who I knew very well - and he's the real deal, and he is not an emotional freak of nature, or anything like that - this man started heaving and crying. I'm talking about crying, to the point stuff's coming out of his nose; stuff's coming out of his mouth. I knew this guy. This guy was the real deal. He is crying and weeping so hard from that; and she said: that's been the seed-bed of your depression for all of these years.

This man had been hospitalised four different times for depression in his life, and I thought: maybe when his dad did that; because he kept saying: “my dad was a good man. It was just that...”; maybe when his dad did that, he convinced himself: ”oh, it was just one outburst of anger.” It was just one fit of rage. God will forgive me anyway. No, no, no. This affected - this man was 53 years old, so for 44 years he had been dramatically affected by that one moment.

I think sometimes with temptation, if we can just step back and realise, that there's something far more at stake with temptation than meets the eye.

If we could ever just step back and realise: if I buy this car, I'm going to have to make payments for six years. I'm going to end up paying way more than the car's worth; and it's going to go down so fast in value I can't keep up.

And yeah, if I just drink this, if it's just this one more beer, if it's just this one more then whatever. But it's not going to be that. If this one more beer is going to push me over the edge, then I might get a DUI on the way home. I might yell at my wife. This is going to affect everybody.

This one more piece of cake, it could be just one more piece of cake, but if I step back and realise this could be the thing that throws me over the edge to diabetes. This could be the thing that causes heart disease. It's never just one more piece of cake.

The first thing is: there's always more at stake with temptation than meets the eye. The second thing is: overcoming temptation has far more to do with who we trust, than our willpower.

It has far more to do with this: where's our eye on? What are we thinking like?

Beating temptation has far more to do with: do we trust the people to bring three cookies out?

Do we trust that God's way - is three cookies -better than our way?

Where in our life are we settling for one cookie, when God intends for us to have three? Where in our life does God have three cookies waiting for us, if we'll just die to our need to be in control of the one?

It's not so much about willpower, of not eating the one cookie; it has everything to do with: do I trust that the three cookies is a better way.

I've had so many teenage girls in my counseling office, and they say stuff like this: I thought that he would love me more, if I crossed the line morally with him, and so I did, and when I woke up, I was lonelier than ever before.

It wasn't so much that they succumbed to sexual stuff; they do succumb to sexual stuff, but bigger than that. It's more: for a moment, for just a brief moment, I trusted that my way was better than God's way. All it takes is just that moment, and it affects their whole life.

In a room this size, most of us, anybody over a certain age, would have something, some decision, that they did way back in their past, that they thought was just about the moment; that they still, every now and then, think about today.

It's trust. See Jesus died, not to just forgive us from this stuff (because we are forgiven); Jesus died to free us from slavery to it. Jesus died so that we would not have any slave drivers in our life. Jesus died so we would be free from this stuff, so that we could be free to be leaders in God's biggest idea - free from the slave driver of temptation, free from the slave driver to eat the one cookie instead of the three.

It's all about perspective. Remember the Wizard of Oz? Dorothy, and the Tin Man? They were all so frightened of the wizard, just scared to death of the wizard; and they'd get in (the 1937 version is pretty cool) it's this huge curtain, and he's like: who dares call me? But when the wizard finally steps out, he's like a midget that's bald. So he comes out, and this guy that was so scary and spooky, is like five foot two. Remember the response? They were like: you're the wizard!? You're the guy we've been scared of?

In every temptation, there's a guy behind a big screen that makes us so scared, like we have to give into this; but the truth of it is that, if he ever revealed himself, we would realise how weak it really is.

If we could hold on just once, if we could not eat that cookie once, it would give us so much reinforcement when God gives us the three, that the next time it's so much easier, and so much easier, until finally we have beaten that thing; because Jesus didn't just die to forgive us. Jesus died so we could be slave-driver-free.

In other words, sin can't tell you what to do. In the midst of temptation, the tendency is to think that the only thing going on is what's going on right now. Should I eat this dessert? Should I call him back? Should I do this thing, which might be a sin? Should I make this decision? There's so much more.

And Jesus says: temptation - it's not just about breads, and hills, and devils and angels - it's about me and you. So much could have been sabotaged, right there. Imagine if Jesus had rationalised: man, I'm starving. God wouldn't want me to starve. I'm starving; and in the moment, what if He'd have rationalised: I'll meet this legitimate need - in an illegitimate way. It's just between Me and God, and God will forgive Me. What if He would have done that?

It's not just between Him and God. There is far more at stake than meets the eye. He tells a story about God providing bread from heaven. I love this story. I love this part of Jesus. He looks at the devil, and He says: you must have forgotten who you're dealing with. I come from a group of people, who had to believe God in a desert, with no food and no water to meet our needs - and He did every single day. Do you remember where I came from?

I came from a group of people that Moses got out of Egypt towards the Promised Land. I come from a group of people who came up against the Red Sea, and the Red Sea parted. There was a 30 feet high wall of water on each side. Moses is trying to get five million people - you're talking about the whole nation of New Zealand, plus some. He's trying to get them through a 30 foot high wall of water.

Can you imagine the challenges; because not everybody would have been full of faith - somebody would have been complaining about the wind! If you've ever watched an action movie, you know there's some woman that just won't co-operate. She's a good-hearted woman; but she just can't - so she'd be standing there: "I just can't".

And the Pharaohs coming, and all the chariots are coming, and Moses is like: get in the water! Moses is trying to get everybody through the water; and little Johnny's sticking his hand in the water; there's a 30-foot-high wall of water, and little Johnny's trying to catch the mullet. Little Johnny's mum went: "Johnny, don't put your hand in the water! It could crash in"! Little Billy's down playing in the mud, making sand castles.

Moses is trying to get everybody going. Everybody goes, he gets them out of the water, and he looks, and he's fixing to lower the boom on the Pharaoh. He looks down and little Johnny's playing in the mud again.

Moses is like: would somebody get little Johnny out of the water! He gets little

Johnny out, and he closes it down, kills the entire Egyptian army. Now how far, do you think that Moses would have credibility for, from then? Doing this - water does this, you walk through, it closes down on the largest army in the world. For how long do you think he should have credibility for? You'd think for the rest of his life, aye?

But how many of you, who have ever been in leadership, know that's just not true? The very people that you think would be there for you, through thick and thin, are the people who will not. Yeah, people are fickle. Three days later, they wanted to kill Moses; like, they were going to kill him. Moses had to retreat up a mountain, to keep them from killing him. Why? Because they got thirsty!

What, did you bring us out here to die? It's just people - so God says: hit the rock. Hit the rock. Remember flannel graphs in Sunday School? Remember how big that rock was, that Moses hit? It was like this big, and this little spout of water came out of it. You're talking about five million people. There would have been mass chaos. Can you imagine that? Line up, single-file, at the water fountain - can you imagine?

Moses hits the rock, and enough water comes out, to water three to five million people. I don't know how much that is, but that is a lot of water; and all of a sudden everybody's attitude changes again! We're singing in the rain - everybody's attitude's changing. Everybody's jumping in the water. Little Johnny's mum's like: little Johnny, don't go the toilet in the water.

The slave girls are jumping in and coming out. Coca Cola's out there with their video cameras. Slave girls are coming up out of the water, and it says: Coke - refreshing! Entrepreneurial people find plastic containers, and they're dipping in the water, walking around you know: selling their water.

This whole thing changed in an instant; then they had to believe God every day for food and water - and Jesus says: don't you know where I came from? I come from a group of people - we were in a desert with no water, five million of us - and God provided mana every day.

I will die up here, before I'll meet my own need, and not trust God for it; because He knew there are three cookies on the other side. It wasn't worth it. He knew that temptation affects three things. It's not just between you and God.

Temptation at least affects three things. Number one, it affects your future. Temptation affects your future; and if you don't care about that, temptation also affects the future of the people you love.

But more importantly, temptation affects your Faith. The temptation of the enemy for us is always to turn stones into bread. It's always to take something that's our truth, and make it God's truth; take your guilt, turn it into bread.

You're forgiven, completely innocent of any sin, but you just feel guilty the rest of your life. That's good - you need to feel guilty. God will like you better if you feel guilty. It's like He's happy with you or something. That anger - I know that the Bible says: don't even associate with one easily angered. But you get angry - and that's just you; people don't understand what you've been through. Turn stones into bread. Rejection, bitterness - it's easy to see this in others. People say: anger, what about righteous anger? Well, the problem with righteous anger is: you always think you're right. We always think we're right!

So it was really easy for me to see this in your life; and it's easy for you to see it in mine; but can we see it in ourself? A mum that can't quit drinking - this isn't just about a mum who can't quit drinking. This is about a broken home, with kids with emotions who are going to be affected. A dad who has affairs - this is broken homes. A person who can't control their anger - this is broken relationships. All of this affects generations.

See a six year old who cannot control their impulse, is a six year old eating a cookie; a 36 year old who can't control their impulse - we've got a real problem.

Sometimes it's as easy as sitting back and pausing, and saying: wait a minute - this is going to affect my future; the future of the people I love; and more importantly - my faith!

I've found is that: almost nobody believes their way out of Christianity.

I have people all the time coming to me and they say: Shane, I just don't believe this Jesus stuff anymore. If they'll let me get into it with them, almost 100 percent of the time, this is what I find - at some point in their past, they had a moment, that they just thought was between them and God.

They compromised something that was very important, and it started chipping away at their faith. So they ate the one cookie, and it chipped away at their faith; because they met their own need - they didn't need God right then. They met their own need - it was a legitimate need; and they met it in an illegitimate way, so it chips away at their faith; and 10 years down the road, they don't believe anything anymore.

Most people do not believe their way of Christianity; everybody behaves their way out of Christianity.

Do you understand that in Jesus' situation, if He turned stones into bread, it might have started sabotaging His faith enough, that maybe the next day He meets His own need, and maybe the next day, and maybe the next day. So by the time it comes time for the cross, the faith that it took for Him to get on the cross, just isn't there any more.

If His faith is sabotaged, then the cross is sabotaged; and if the cross is sabotaged, then we are sabotaged. It is never just about you, and God, and the moment. It is always about you, and God, and the moment - and your future; and the future of the people you love; and your faith.

But the good thing is, Jesus died so that this couldn't be your master.

So I want us to end this session with a word of faith confession, that will leave you feeling empowered okay? Say this with me:

“Temptation: you're not going to take my future”.

“You're not going to take the future of my loved ones…”

“…and you're not going to take my faith”.

I want you to position yourself for Faith: Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah.

I want you just to: “turn your head and face the one who can bear the burden”.

I want you to have a moment of Repentance, for where you've given in.

I'm not saying we're not good-hearted people when we do it. You want to think

like a kingdom person, to just take that position: I am a kingdom person. I am a person of God's.

Your future, the future of the people you love, and your faith, will be secure; because we will stand against it.

WE WILL TRUST GOD. WE will not compromise for the one cookie. We will trust God for the three.

Just let that empowerment settle up in you. Sin can't tell you what to do, one more day. That anger has no power of you. That rejection doesn't have any power over you.

You can stand against it today, and be a better leader in the kingdom of God.

Temptation can't have our future; it can't have the future of the people we love; and it cannot have our faith.

WE will overcome, for WE will trust God. Amen.

Being a Peacemaker (2 of 6)

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This story is about Peacemakers & Escalation…Our hero of the faith was a rebellious, spoilt brat, who wanted his own way, in every single way. This was a man that was sleeping with prostitutes on his wedding night, because he got depressed, because his best man stole his wife.

From what started out as a joke no-one understood, a fascinating cycle of violence ensues, based on: because you did this, I now have a right to do that. I merely did to them, what they did to me. This way of living will always bring death.

Let me ask you a question, and be careful how quick you answer this inside. This is an internal question: If you could go to heaven without Jesus, is He still worth following? If heaven and hell wasn't the issue, is Jesus still worth following?

You can't go to heaven without Jesus, but I think it's very important for us to play with that thought for a second. If you could go to heaven without Jesus, is He still worth following?

If the answer to that is yes, then I would ask us why? If the answer to that is no, I would ask you, why are you using Him as a fire escape only?

And that would also tell me why our lives are not victorious, and it's because we've become a group of people who are all about getting to go to heaven one day, and we've lost sight of the fact that Jesus is actually worth following, even if there was no such thing as heaven, because His way is the best way for our life.

If, when we died, if we just died - Jesus is still the best way? He's still the best, and that comes down to faith. It comes down to trust. Do we really trust that His way is the best way for our life?

Do we really believe that mercy is better than justice? Really, like do we really believe that? It's easy to believe that with other people, but do we really believe

that for ourself? Do we really believe that mercy triumphs over justice? Do we really believe these things?

I want to spend the rest of the night talking about one area, that takes a lot of faith for us to live, but as leaders in God's biggest idea, we should be living it, and that is this.

Jesus said it this way: Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are people who bring peace to situations, instead of retaliation.

We're all about retaliation, aren't we? It's the way of the world. It's been that way since Adam and Eve.

Adam named his wife Eve. God never named her “Eve” - Adam named her Eve.

The problem with that was it was Adams job to name the animals; so when Adam names Eve 'Eve', essentially he's calling her an animal. He's saying: you animal - look what you've done to us. It's retaliation. It's escalation.

How many of you have lived long enough to know that retaliation and escalation is the way of life? It just is. You married folks, have you ever got into an argument with your spouse about how to cut a tomato? It escalates into insults about the other person's mother. It's called...

[Pastor Mike] You're married aren't you?

[Shane Willard] Yeah. It's called escalation. It's just escalation. It escalates. Things escalate. I mean has anybody besides me ever gotten into a conflict, and when you walk away from the conflict, that's when you think of everything you could have said? Yeah. Do you let it go there, or do you have imaginary conversations? We love imaginary conversations, don't we? We love them.

Why do we love imaginary conversations so much? Because we never lose! If you're here tonight, and you're losing imaginary conversations, get your head checked - it's your imagination. You can win!

We love imaginary conversations, and there's so much teaching I could do around imaginations, but I don't want to go there tonight. I want to talk about being a peace maker - so we rationalise escalation.

We rationalise things that the Bible clearly says not to do - and it could be: yeah, but I had a bad day. Yeah, but I was stressed; yeah, but I had pressure; yeah, but they're weird. They're weird - which essentially all that's saying is: your way is better.

Like how many of you know some weird people? We all know weird people right? Let me let you in on something. They think you're weird. Weird is relative, but we're all ethnocentric.

People tell me, because I'm American, people tell me: oh you people from America, you think the whole world's like America. Well, that's kind of okay, I'll give you that, yeah. We probably do, but so do you. You think the whole world's like South Africa, you think the whole world's like New Zealand.

We're all ethnocentric. Ethnocentric is just a big word that means: you think that your world is normal; and that everybody else's world is weird. That your world actually creates the normal for everybody else, and becomes the gauge for what normal is for everybody. It's called ethnocentricity, and we're all like that.

Let me tell you about a guy I know named Bubba. Bubba was from Colquitt County, Georgia. He's a redneck, and Bubba's never been out of Coalquitt County, Georgia in his whole life. So he was with his church, and he got the opportunity to go on a mission's trip with his church to Peru. So now Bubba's never been outside - Bubba's never been on a plane. He's never been anywhere. He's just been in Coalquitt County, Georgia; and so he went to his pastor.

He said: now what do I need to do to go on this trip? The pastor said: okay, well you need this much money, you need a passport; and so Bubba went to Walmart to try to get his passport. He had no idea about anything, and they sell those at Walmart? You serious? So this was what he was; so he's never been on a trip in his life, and his first trip ever was from Atlanta International Airport - which is the size of Napier (city) okay - Atlanta International Airport to Peru.

So his first time ever on a plane is like 12 hours. Everything was new to this guy, how to get a passport, it was unbelievable. So he gets on the plane, and he's sitting next to the pastor; and he leans over, he says: pastor, how long's this flight? And the pastor says: I don't know Bubba, 12 hours or so. He says: oh my God, pastor, I'm not going to make it! The pastor says: well, what do you mean

Bubba? He said: well I got real nervous, and I drank me about seven Coca Colas, and I'm about to go all over myself right here. The pastor said: well Bubba, they've got toilets on the plane. He said: toilets on the plane! How'd they do that? When it flushes where's it go? Those poor people down below! That's unbelievable!

So everything was new to him; so they land in Peru, and they land at like 8am; and there's no sleeping, because it makes jetlag worse, so they just go right into it, and they're helping all these kids and stuff like that. So later that afternoon they're having a downloading meeting, like a debriefing meeting, and the pastor's - he says: oh what did God show you today? Everybody's saying roughly the same things.

If you've ever been on these types of trips, the first day everybody says the same thing: oh pastor, I can't believe how much we have, and how little they have, and how happy they are with how little they have, and how - and so everybody's saying this. Everybody's saying this, and so the pastor finally gets to Bubba.

He says: Bubba, what did you learn today? Bubba said: well pastor, I don't know what all these people are talking about. He said I'm going to tell you something right now. These are the smartest kids in the world. The pastor said: well Bubba, like they seem normal kids to me. What are you talking about? He said: normal? These are the smartest children in the whole world. The pastor said: well Bubba, honestly, I'm lost. You're going to have to fill me in. What did they do that was so smart?

He said: pastor, open your eyes man, they ain't but four years old, and can already speak Spanish! That is unbelievable! How smart you gotta be, to be doing stuff like that? See Bubba thought everybody spoke English, because he did.

So we all have all of these rationalisations for what it means to retaliate and escalate and make things worse. We think people are weird. We have a bad day, we have a list of probably 1000 excuses of why we stepped outside of Jesus' way to live. We probably did it today. We probably spouted off at somebody today, and we thought: oh, God will forgive me for that, and He understands.

I had a bad day - and the truth is: God does understand, and He will forgive you

for that; but it's affecting your future, and the future of the people you love. It's affecting your faith. We start rationalising our way.

So I want to talk about being a peace maker. I want to do that by looking at the life of one of the heroes of the faith. I want to look at a story that isn't just a story about Him, it's a story about all of us - in Judges 14 - we'll find our self in this story.

This guy's a hero of the faith. Somehow he made it into that list. As you read his story, you'll realise that he was a rebellious spoilt brat, who wanted his own way, in every single way. How he made it into the heroes of the faith, I don't know. This was a man that was sleeping with prostitutes on his wedding night, because he got depressed, because his best man stole his wife. He made it into the heroes of the faith somehow. This man was something else. I think we'll find our story in this.

It's about a guy with excessive amounts of strength – Samson, in Judges 14. Samson went down to Timnah, and there he saw a young Philistine woman; and when he returned he said to his father and mother: I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah, now get her for me as my wife.

Do you see his tone, this elevated sort of: I want what I want - and I want it right now, kind of thing?

His father and mother replied: isn't there an acceptable woman amongst the relatives from all of those other people, amongst all your people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?

But Samson said to his father: get her for me, she's the right one. And his parents didn't know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.

And Samson went down to Timnah, together with his father and his mother; and as they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. And the spirit of the Lord came upon him in power, so he tore the young lion apart with his bare hands, as he might have done a young goat. But he neither told his father nor his mother of this.

Then he went down and talked to the woman, and he liked her. Sometime later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion's carcass, and in it was a swarm of bees and some honey, which he scooped out with his hands, and he ate it as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave them some, and they ate it too, but he did not tell them where he had taken the honey from the lion's carcass.

So here's a guy that really doesn't have much regard for himself. He doesn't have a regard for the law of God. Was it against the law to scoop food out of a dead thing? Absolutely! So not only does he scoop food out of a dead thing for himself; he spreads the uncleanness around, by giving it to his parents, and not telling them where it came from. So he, in essence, makes his parents unclean, and doesn't tell them: you need to offer a sacrifice. He is playing with God.

It says: and when he rejoined them again, they ate it, he didn't tell him where it came from. Now his father went down to see the woman, and Samson had made a feast there, as was customary for bridegrooms to do. When he appeared, he was given 30 companions. Let me tell you a riddle, Samson said to them, and if you can give me the answer within seven days of the feast, I'll give you 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes. But if you can't tell me the answer, you must give me 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes. Tell us your riddle, they said, let's hear it.

So let's make sure we know where we are in the story. He gets to where he's going, and he says: listen - Samson just loved to be the life of the party. He said: listen, I've got a joke for you, it's a riddle. If you could tell me the answer, I'll give you 30 pieces of clothes and linen garments. These are expensive things, 30 linen garments; and if you can't tell me the answer, you have to give me 30 linen garments, so you've got a 30 to one chance here.

They said: well let's hear it, let's see what's going on. He said: out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet.

Now obviously they didn't understand this riddle, because he just made it up. He just made it up off the top of his head, out of an experience he had, that no one knew he had. For three days, they could not get the answer.

Now let's stop and make a mark in our self, as we examine this for our own life.

This whole situation started out as a joke that no one understood. This is where this started, was a relatively innocent joke.

Actually it started out as a complete dismissal of God's way of life, and he scoops food out of a dead thing. He then makes a joke out of it, and he makes a joke out of an experience that only he had. He had it alone. He didn't tell anybody about it - so obviously they won't get the joke.

This thing starts out as a fairly benign situation - a joke no one understands, but watch how it escalates, and it escalates very quickly. It's the basic way of the world, is to escalate.

For three days they could not explain the answer, so on the fourth day they said to Samson's wife: coax your husband into explaining the riddle for us, or we will burn you and your father's household to death.

Now this thing escalates fairly quickly. This thing starts out as a joke no one understands; and within four days you've got the threat of burning an entire family alive. Now watch what happens:

Did you invite him here to rob us? Then Samson's wife threw herself on him sobbing: you hate me! You don't really love me! You've given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer; and Samson said: I haven't even explained it to my father and mother, so why would I tell you? And she cried the whole seven days of the feast.

Do you see Samson's dilemma? I mean Samson's heart attitude: why would I tell you? Um, I should tell you, because they're going to burn you, if I don't. It never even crosses his mind!

You're talking about a joke that no one understands, escalating into the threat of burning; then her husband says: why would I tell you? What reason - as if burning her isn't enough reason! I haven't even explained to my father and mother, so why should I explain it to you?

She cried the whole seven days of the feast, so on the seventh day, he finally told her, because she continued to nag him; and she in turn explained the riddle to her people.

Before sunset on the seventh day, the men of the town said to him: what is sweeter than honey, what is stronger than a lion; and Samson said to them: if you had not ploughed with my cow, you would not have solved the riddle.

So this thing starts out as a joke no one understands; it escalates into threats of burning; she finds out the answer, they tell him the answer - and now he's calling his wife a cow. This thing has escalated very, very quickly.

Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power, and he went down to Ashkelon, and he struck down 30 of their men, stripped them of their belongings, and gave their clothes to those who explained the riddle. Why did he do that? Because that was the bet, remember? The bet was: if you tell me the riddle, I give you 30 pieces of clothes. If I tell you the riddle, then you have to give me 30 pieces of clothes. They tell him the riddle, even though they cheated; and so what he does is, he goes down, he says: you know what? I owe you 30 pieces of clothes, fair enough. So what I'm going to do, I'm going to kill 30 of your friends, strip them naked, and I'll give you their clothes.

This thing started out as a joke no one understands, and it escalates into now 30 people have lost their lives, and it keeps going. Watch how revenge works.

Burning with anger, he went up to his father's house, and Samson's wife was given to his friends, who had attended him at the wedding.

So his best man at the wedding - the guy gave Samson's wife to him. So this thing starts out as a joke no one understands, and now there's all of this tension.

Has anyone ever had a moment like this, where everything starts out light, and then somebody says something stupid in the room and everything escalates, and you just want to go hide? That's this.

It starts out as a joke no one understands, escalates into a threat of burning, they figure out the riddle, he murders 30 people, strips them of their clothes to pay the debt from the riddle. As a result of that, her father gives her to his best man, instead of to him. Gee - and it just keeps going.

Later on at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat and went to visit his wife; and he said: I'm going to my wife's room; but her father would not

let him go in.

I was so sure you thoroughly hated her that I gave her to your friend. Isn't her younger sister more attractive?

I don't know what Samson was looking at him like, for him to say that, because that makes no sense - that I gave her to your friend. Isn't her younger sister more attractive?

In other words, Samson's look on his face must have been unbelievable. Take her instead; and Samson said to them - now if you're a note taker, you want to note this, because this is the basic way of the world.

Samson said to them: this time, I have a right to get even with the Philistines, so I will really harm them. In other words, this is what the basic way of the world, this is the anti-peace maker: since you have acted this way; now I have a right to step outside of Jesus, to unwrap my tassels, and to deal with you harshly. Now if you missed the tassels thing you need to get that, but we do this all the time.

If Jesus was: why did you act that way? Don't you know the way of Jesus? Don't you know that that's not in the way of Jesus?

Yeah, but Jesus, did you know what they did? They acted this way, so that gave me a right to act that way. And it's an escalation pattern, that goes nowhere good fast, and you're going to see this pattern in the rest of the story.

So he went out and he caught 300 foxes, and he tied them tail to tail in pairs, and then he fashioned a torch to every pair of tails, and he lit the torches, and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines, and he burned up all the shocks and the standing grain, together with the vineyards and the olive groves.

When the Philistines asked: who did this, they were told: Samson, the Timnite son-in-law, because his wife was given to his friend.

Remember now this thing starts out as a fairly innocent joke no one understands, and it escalates into a threat of burning; they figure out the joke; he kills 30 men to pay the debt of the joke; his father-in-law gives his wife away; then Samson says: because you've done this to me, now I'm going to really harm you.

And in an agricultural community, he burns down all their grain, which meant he ruined their economy for the whole year. This thing has escalated from a joke no one understands, to 30 people have died, his wife has been taken from him, the economy of an entire nation is ruined, and 300 foxes have lost their lives.

Hmm, so now he takes 300 foxes and he ties them - now you've got to give him points for creativity on this. Come on now, you've got to give him some points! So it goes, because his wife was given to his friends; so the Philistines went up - now watch how it escalates - because he did that, the Philistines went up and burned her to death.

So now, now they said: why did Samson burn our grain down? Oh, he burned the grain down because his father-in-law gave his wife to his best man; so the Philistines said: oh, they're the cause of it, so they go and they burn the father and the daughter to death. This thing is escalating out of control!

So they went and burned her and her father to death; and Samson said to them: since - now watch, here it is again - Samson said to them: since you have acted this way, now I won't stop until I get my revenge on you. Since you did this, now I have a right to do this.

That is not leadership in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is: blessed are the peace makers. The fact that God is working in your life, does not mean that the way you're acting is right; because God was working in Samson's life obviously, but it didn't mean that what he was doing was right.

Since you have acted this way, I won't stop until I get my revenge on you; and he attacked them viciously, and slaughtered many of them. Now how many that is, I don't know, a lot. Then he went down and stayed in a cave at the rock of Etam, and the Philistines went up and encamped in Judah, spreading out near Lehi.

The men of Judah asked: why have you come here to fight us? We have come to take Samson prisoner they answered, to do to him, just as he has done to us. Since he acted this way, now I'm going to act this way.

Then 3000 men from Judah went down to the cave at the rock of Etam, and said to Samson: don't you realise that the Philistines are rulers over us? Why have you done this to us?

And this was Samson's answer: and he answered: I merely did to them, what they did to me.

Is it almost like God is in charge of a bunch of six year olds? Why did you act that way? I only - since they acted that way, now I act this way. Well why did you do that? Oh, because he did this, now we can do that. Oh but why did you do that? Oh, since I merely did to them, what they did to me. It's the way of the world.

And they said to him: we've come to tie you up, and hand you over to the Philistines; and Samson said: swear to me, that you won't kill me yourselves. Agreed, they answered - we will only tie you up, and hand you over to them - we will not kill you.

So they bound him with two new ropes, and led him from the rock, and as they approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. The ropes of his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands.

Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it, and struck down 1000 men that day. Then Samson said: with a donkey's jawbone, I have made donkeys of them.

Wow. This thing started out as a joke no one understands, and it escalated into 30 men losing their lives, to a whole family being burned, to the entire economy of a nation being gone, to 1000 men dying, to many be slaughtered, all the whole time, every side saying this is their defense: I'm only doing what he did. I have a right to get even.

So if you finish the story, they take him, and they end up, they start sending prostitutes to him, and he has a particular weakness for this, so they start sending prostitutes to him. There was one prostitute named Delilah, and she got to him in a very personal way.

They get him, and they put his eyeballs out, and they say to him: you thought you made donkeys out of us, we're going to make a donkey out of you. They give him the job of a donkey - winding a millstone.

Hmm, and in the middle of all that, no one no one learns anything. They keep one-upping each other, until finally the Philistines are throwing a party, and everybody's in the temple of Dagon, and they bring Samson out to make fun of him, because enough just can't be enough.

He asks God for strength one more time, and God gives it to him, and he pulls down the whole temple on their heads, and everybody dies.

This thing started out as a joke no one understood, and God used the basic human condition to judge the whole Philistine nation. Now the fact that God used the basic human condition to judge it, does not mean we have a right to act that way. It's an example of how not to live - that this way of living, will always bring death.

How many of you - and don't answer this out loud, I'm just asking a question. How many of you are still dealing with revenge thoughts about something that happened a long time ago? How many of you know someone who is?

How many of you know someone who actually, their lives have been wrapped up in revenge so much, that they don't know where it stops and where it starts?

How many of you know that there's no end to this pattern, that you'll never, ever, do enough to make it alright.

Is this anything new, two different groups of people in the Middle East, arguing over land start one upping each other to no end? Is this really that new? It's still going on now - one group of people straps bombs to their chest, and they walk into a public place and blow themselves up. The other group of people says: since you've blown yourself up, and blown us up with you, we're going to shoot missiles over the top; and I go with the whole missile crowd, but nonetheless - yeah, it's a smarter way to go. You just think, one day they're going to run out of those suicide guys, you know? Like eventually you just run out of guys that are crazy enough to do that, don't you?

But it's just all back and forth, and back and forth, and it's a basic pattern in the world; that if we can really trust God, if we can really trust that Jesus' way is the best way for our life, we can get out of that, and we can be leaders; because the leaders are the ones who are acting different. The leaders are the ones who can

step up and say: no, no, no, that's not the way to live; this is a better way to live.

Here's the basic pattern. Here's what we see. This story isn't just about Samson. This is a story about me, and about you, and about husbands, and about wives, and about co-workers. This is about every time in our life that our home turned into an Everybody Loves Raymond episode gone very wrong. This is a story - this is how it goes.

Here's how it goes: there's a basic pattern of revenge, in the way of the world. The first thing that happens is offence. So you have an offence; somebody does something wrong.

The second thing that happens is, somebody gets vilified, so each party vilifies the other. Surely your heart was bad, surely you meant to do that, and we judge everybody's heart, we judge the motivation of their heart, like: you surely couldn't have just made a mistake. Surely you meant to really harm me, so we vilify the adversary.

And then we make an excuse. We fail to accept any responsibility for our self; and the way we do that is we say: since they did it, now I'll do it.

So we have an offence; and then we vilify the adversary; then we make excuses to unwrap the tassels. We make excuses to unwrap the tassels, and our excuse is always about somebody else. It's blaming, it's: since you did that, now I'll do this; and then you have escalation, so it goes from offence to vilification, to excuses, to escalation; and in escalation, that's where you go from a joke that no one understands, to killing 1000 men in one day, to eventually killing everybody.

This thing escalates, and then you hold the pattern over the other person's head: it's all your fault. Since you did this, that's the reason this whole thing happened, and they go: no, no, no, you started it with this right, and you do this whole thing. It's like God is dealing with a bunch of six year olds; and then we make the excuse of: this is just how the world is. That's the basic way of the world.

Of course Jesus died on the cross to make a public spectacle of the basic way of the world, and the worst thing is that we don't learn anything, so we repeat the pattern.

We don't learn anything, and this is built in to even our cartoons. Did you watch Tom and Jerry as a kid? Did anybody ever wonder: when will Tom ever learn not to stick his head in the hole? He's always after Jerry so much, that he loses sight that every time he sticks his head in the hole, Jerry hits it with a hammer, or blows his head up or whatever. That's Tom and Jerry.

How about Roadrunner and Coyote? You watch Roadrunner and Coyote, and you're like: don't strap the rocket to your back. It's going to send you over a mountain; or you know when he paints the picture? Yeah, like he cuts the road off, and then he paints the picture, and then Roadrunner runs right through it. Then he steps up, and a truck comes from the other way and hits him. It's like what are you doing? Like, just be a peace maker. To make peace between the two of you would be a lot less painful!

Or how about Popeye, Popeye ran for what, 17 years? Seventeen years, once a week, Popeye, and it's always the same story. Popeye loves Olive Oyl; Bluto loves Olive Oyl. Bluto kidnaps Olive Oyl, Popeye goes to get Olive Oyl out of Bluto's house. Popeye goes over there, Bluto beats up Popeye. A magical can of spinach appears. Popeye eats his spinach, Popeye gets strong, Popeye beats up Bluto. Popeye gets the girl every week, exactly the same, exactly the same every week. Every week! Did anybody besides me ever watch Popeye, and go: Popeye, eat your spinach FIRST!

We just don't learn anything. We just don't learn anything. There's so much about this. Jesus had to deal with this, and He dealt with this for me, and He dealt with this for you.

Look at Matthew 26:47-54. While He was still speaking, Judas, one of the 12 arrived with a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and elders to the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them. The one I kiss, arrest Him; and going at once to Jesus, Judas said: greetings rabbi and kissed Him.

And Jesus said: friend, do you've come for. Then the men stepped forward and seized Jesus and arrested Him, and with that one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

And Jesus said to him: put your sword back in its place, for all who live by the sword, will die by the sword. Do you think that I cannot call upon My Father, to at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions of angels? How then would the scriptures be fulfilled?

A legion was a Roman platoon. He's saying: they've come with one platoon, I've got 12. If you want to go sword for sword doc, we can go right now, and I will win, but that would destroy my way of life.

Jesus had said all along: blessed are the peace makers; if someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek. If someone wants you to go one mile, go two; and His disciples who'd been with Him for three and a half years, they didn't get it.

They'd come to arrest Jesus with swords and clubs, and instantly they went back to the basic way of the world; you're going to kill Him, we're going to kill you - and Peter misses and cuts off his ear, which was instant death penalty by the way. And Jesus saves his life; He's like: you are coming to take my life, but I'm going to put your ear back on - that is the way of the kingdom of God.

You're coming to hurt me, but I'm still going to heal you. See the basic way of the world is: since you've come to do this to me, now live without your ear. That's the basic way of the world, but the basic way of the kingdom of God is: you've come to hurt me, but I've come to bless you. And Jesus dealt with that. He dealt with that. He was teaching a different way to live, called the kingdom of God.

Jesus could have gone sword for sword and won, but He wanted to teach a different way. He wanted to teach a way to publicly defeat the way of the world. He wanted to teach a way of peace.

It says at that time, Jesus said to the crowd: am I leading a rebellion - that you come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sit in the temple courts teaching, you didn't arrest me there.

But this is all taken place, so that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled; then all the disciples deserted Him and fled. When the pressure was on, they deserted that way of life.

You guys know the rest of the Passion of the Christ, all the beatings, all the harassing, the pulling His beard out, spitting. At every phase, He was still a peace maker.

At the end of it, everybody who did all of that to Him, He still forgave them. He was still blessing people, up to the very end of His life. He was still letting thieves into heaven. That is the way of our rabbi, that is the way.

Why did Jesus die on the cross? Why? Is it just to forgive you of sins? I hope not. Is it just to forgive me of sins? I hope not. You know why Jesus died on the cross?

Part of the reason Jesus died on the cross, was so that here, now, in Hastings, New Zealand, we could talk about something like this, and everybody here who's been hurt and traumatised, can walk out of here tonight knowing: it's still possible to be a peace maker.

Jesus died on the cross, so that the basic way of the world doesn't have a rule on your life any more, so you don't have to escalate. You don't have to one-up people who hurt you.

Jesus died on the cross so that anybody here who was violated at a young age, they can forgive. They can deal with that pain, and they can go on. Jesus died so that every woman here, who was hurt by your father, and you're married now - He died, so that you won't make your husband pay for the sins of your father. He died for that.

Jesus died on the cross, so that every one of us who've had friends desert us and flee, in our moment of need - they deserted and fled; He died on the cross for all of us who've had that happen, so that we could know that it was possible to cook breakfast on the beach for the very people who've hurt us the worst.

Jesus died on the cross, so that we could be peace makers, and not be a slave to the way of the world, which says: since you've treated me this way, now I get to treat you that way.

He died on the cross so we could be leaders in His biggest idea, and leaders in God's biggest idea are committed to being peace makers. The cross here was not

passive. You realise being a peace maker is not passive? It's not some kind of just passive thing that just happens.

Being a peace maker is an active decision, a pursuit of a way of life, called the kingdom of God. Jesus was hardly passive when they were beating Him. Jesus was actively choosing: I will not call 10,000 angels to end this. He was actively choosing: I will be a peace maker at all cost, because that way is the best way for life, and I will die for that way, before I'll let it be sabotaged by one moment with a sword.

So where are we with that? Where are we? How freeing does that make us, to know that we can go home tonight, and if an argument breaks out, somebody can be a peace maker.

Of course we say: which one needs to be the peace maker? The one who's most mature! The one who's the most mature will act first, so everybody go home and have a competition on who can be the most mature!

It means that tomorrow at work with that guy - you know that guy? That guy! The one you wish God would just go ahead and take to heaven, that guy. Yeah, it means that you can bless him, if he shows up to hurt you.

Do you know disempowering it is? Somebody says something bad about you; you realise that all these pastors who get talked about bad, you realise how disempowering it is, if those same pastors - if somebody said something bad about me, the best thing I can do is get up on that stage and bless them from the stage, because then everybody's thinking: what's wrong with you? He's blessing you.

Jesus' way was: you always gain authority through generosity. You always gain authority through being a peace maker; but the question is this: do we have the faith to believe for that, or do we settle for one cookie instead of three, and take our own way and escalate? Then all we'll get is what we can bring, which is more escalation.

Jesus died so that you and I could go out of here tonight, and for the rest of our life be peace makers, for blessed are the peace makers.

Lord, you're the best, and we just give You our leadership, we give You our hearts, we give You our minds, we just commit our self again to You, and say openly: Jesus, Your way is the best way for my life.

If you're willing to just make that word of faith confession tonight, just out loud after me, with some gusto, say it this way: Jesus, [Jesus,] Your way [Your way] is the best way [is the best way] for my life [for my life.]

And Lord, we proclaim that regardless of heaven and hell, we would still follow You, even if we could go to heaven without You, for Your way is the best way for my life.

Maybe right now before you leave, because we've got a few minutes, I just want you to do some business there with God. Maybe I just feel inside to do this. Maybe you're here tonight with your spouse, and now with head bowed and eyes closed, maybe you've been guilty of some of this escalation, and maybe you just need to reach over and take your wife, or take your husband by the hand, and just give it a quick squeeze and say: hey, it's going to be okay. It's kind of your way of saying: it's going to be okay, we're going to stop this now.

Maybe you're here tonight and you have children, and things have escalated with them, and you just need to agree together that it's going to be okay. Maybe as a community of people, maybe just individually right where you are, you need to make a conscious decision to stand against the wiles of the devil that says: it's the best life to escalate. It's never the best life to escalate. It's always the best life to be a peace maker. Maybe that's what we need to do.

God bless you tonight to know that you serve Jesus, and Jesus believes in you more than you believe in Him. God bless you tonight to know that you're leaders in God's biggest idea. He's got this huge plan for us, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Pastor Mike takes up an offering for Shane]

Great to have you here. Great river of life. We're going to just take up an offering right now, and just honor God in giving. One of the things I noticed: Noah believed the word of God. He had a word from God in his generation, and he believed it. It's really amazing how, as a man of God, he took hold of what God said in His day, acted on what God said, and then became a pioneer of faith in

his generation.

The Bible tells us that straight after the earth had been destroyed, and the ark came to rest, that he offered a sacrifice. Interesting, you'd think that the last thing you would do, when all the animals and everything has been wiped out, and there's only just an ark full of animals left in the whole world. You'd think the last thing a person would consider doing, is to take them, and to start to offer some to the Lord. Quite extraordinary really, isn't it?

But this just shows you, just in Noah's heart, just a heart of gratitude for the word that God had given to him, for the grace that God had given to him, to be able to walk in what he'd been shown; and he expressed it by building an altar, and making an offering to the Lord.

That was a very, very expensive offering; and I believe that one of the things that is an evidence of being right before the Lord, is that we have a heart of generosity to God, a heart of generosity for how He gives to us. We take up an offering, just a free will offering, just out of our heart, out of a heart that's generous and thankful, and says:

Lord, thank You for what you've given to me. May you give me also grace to walk in it; and our offering is a tangible way, it's an act of righteousness, a tangible response just to what God has been speaking to our hearts.

Shane lives by faith. That means he has no income from anywhere. The only income he has is what people who receive his ministry give to him, and so it's always right that we sow, and we sow generously, so we want to do that, want to give generously. Okay, come on, let's give Shane a great welcome as he comes back up again.

Demonstrating God's Power (3 of 6)

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Remarkable similarities are found between the Corinthian Gods of Mithra, Adonis, Addis, Horus, and the Gospel story of Jesus Christ. Paul's strategy changed in Corinth, instead of making fine-sounding arguments that Jesus was the Christ, as he did with the Jews, he demonstrated what Jesus' life looked like, by living it out. That gave him the credibility to announce that the kingdom of God was at hand. Cookie-cutter evangelism doesn't work. Demonstrating the Power of God, within the Disposition of Messiah, gives us the Credibility to speak life into any situation.

Last night we talked a lot about Tefillah, Teshuvah, Tzedakah; and how those three things create Trust, and create a way of life, a way of living, that requires trust. We talked about Temptation, things like that. Tonight I want to talk about a different type of thing, that requires the same amount of trust.

In English, when we make a point of something, like let's say our thesis is: “Shane's shirt is blue”. Let's say it takes us three sentences to build the case that: Shane's shirt is blue - it shouldn't, but let's say it did. Once we make our case, and state our point - we just stop; the Hebrew people do not do that. The Hebrew people talk in what's called "reverse concentric symmetry".

Reverse concentric symmetry is this: let's say that our main point is called Statement D - this is where we're trying to get people to. Leading up to Statement D, we have to make Statement A, B and C, in order to prove that Statement D is true. Now in English, that's where we stop; but in Hebrew, that is where they start again.

So if you have to make three statements; A, B and C, in order to get to D; then you have to back out of it, in parallel statements. In other words, you have to make a parallel statement to C, a parallel statement to B, and a parallel statement to A.

So you've got A, B, C and then D's your main point; then you've got C1, B1, A1, which are parallel statements to these statements. In other words, A corresponds

to A1, B corresponds to B1, C corresponds to C1, and D is the centre point. Now what does that look like? A Menorah (7-branched lamp-stand; widely used as a Jewish symbol) - which is just one big giant reverse concentric symmetry.

The theology of the menorah comes from Isaiah 11, where it talks about the Spirits of the Lord. It says: “the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him”. So you've got one spirit - the Spirit of the Lord, will rest on Him; and then it divides this one spirit into six different characteristics, like: the Spirit of Wisdom; Understanding; Council, Might, Knowledge, and Fear of the Lord.

So you've got these six anointings in here - and it makes sense: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The centre candle is called the Servant. In other words, whatever anointing you have as a leader - in the Church of Jesus Christ, whatever anointing you might have - if you're not a servant, it doesn't matter.

If you're not a servant, none of the other candles light up. The Hebrew people called it "Disposition of Messiah". The theology of the ‘Disposition of Messiah’ comes from Exodus 34:6-7, and it says this - and you ought to memorise this, say it 10 or 20 times a day to yourself, until it builds down inside of you.

It says: The Lord, He is the compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiveness God. That is the disposition of messiah.

Later David says it - they quote it all the time - Psalm 103: “Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! And forget not His benefits. Who forgives all of our sins, and heals all of our diseases. He does not treat us as our inequities deserve, for he is the compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiveness God”.

Everything we do, as leadership in God's biggest idea, has to be done in the Disposition of Messiah. In the first Century, specifically around the gift of prophecy, prophets were tested. So if somebody gave a word of prophecy, the first thing that would be done is they would test it; and they have this bench of three.

They had these three guys sitting in holy-man chairs, they sat up above people, and they would test the prophecy. They would have all these questions about the

prophecy, and the first question of prophecy was not: is it true? It was NOT: is it true? The first question of prophecy was: was it delivered in a manner that was consistent with the Disposition of Messiah?

In other words, did the person delivering the prophecy, deliver it in a “compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding-in-love” way? If somebody delivered a prophecy, it could be 100-percent spot-on true; but it would be considered false prophecy, if it was delivered in a tone that was not: “compassionate, gracious, slow to anger…”

In other words, you can be right, but be wrong, at the top of your voice. That when you minister - whether your ministry is singing; playing the drums; greeting people at the front door; parking cars and saying ‘hello’ out there; dressing up like Barney, and waving at children and handing them lollies; preaching, teaching like in these meetings…

I want to be very gracious, but at the same time, sometimes we need to be challenged to a better life. The test of what I'm saying is - did I deliver it in a manner that was: compassionate; gracious; slow-to-anger; abounding-in-love-and-forgiveness? Or did I deliver it in a prideful, puffed-up manner that made me look better than anybody else? We have to be that - the disposition of messiah.

For the rest of tonight, I want to talk to you about demonstration - about demonstrating God's power. I can't talk to you about demonstrating God's power without understanding that, no matter what we have, what power gift we have, or what we do with what we have - if we do not use our gifts inside the Disposition of Messiah then we miss the point.

1 Corinthians 2 - one of the New Years resolutions that me and my group made in Charleston made, is that we never want to be a punch-line in one of Jesus' parables. We do not want to live in such a way, where we're a punch-line in one of Jesus' parables.

So we have this police man (I'm being euphemistic there); she has become the ‘policeman’ for the whole group for that; and her name is Joanne. What Joanne does… like we were all sitting around, and one of the people in the group was complaining, like really whinging pretty bad. Joanne had had enough of it, so she said:

There's this lady, and she was blessed by God, and she'd be in the richest one per cent of the whole world, because she owns two cars and a house. She came in, and was complaining about her day, while in the same day, people were being raped and murdered and pillaged in Sudan, just because of their faith in Jesus Christ; yet she was complaining because she had to wait in traffic. Surely that woman's life will be required of her tonight? And everybody's like: okay, yeah, we'll quit complaining!

It's very easy to have Jesus Christ as a Doctrine, and there's nothing wrong with that - nothing wrong with believing the right things about Jesus, nothing wrong with it. But what we need to be challenged to, as leaders, is to take it one step further, and: have we moved to Yoke?

Have we moved from Doctrine to Yoke - to a way of life, to where we're binding people to a certain way of life, and we're loosing people to live a certain way? Are we doing that? Now with that in mind, in 1 Corinthians 2, here's what's going on.

This was a letter written to a group of first Century Christians, in a city called Corinth; and he leaves, and sends the letter back, because of reports of some problems,.

He goes into an area where there are seven or eight different gods. One of the gods in the region received worship through sexual acts. So one of the ways they worshipped that god was, you'd go to church (on whatever day you went to church), and they had temple prostitutes there. You would just pick up your prostitute, and you'd come in here and you worship the god - through intimacy.

So there was all kinds of really odd sort of things going on there; and Paul goes in there, and he gets a bunch of people saved; then he leaves; and he leaves them there to form a church.

Now how many of you know, that there is going to be problems with that? There are hairs on that! There's stuff that needs to be corrected, and some historians say that 1 and 2 Corinthians, which is what we have in our Bible, was actually like 4 and 5 Corinthians - that there was several letters before this, so he was trying to help sort them out.

So in 1 Corinthians 2:1, he says: “So it is with me, when I came to you, that I did not come with eloquence of speech; but I came determined to only know Christ, and him crucified”.

Now this is Paul, the great orator, the great debater - this is the guy who it said: hey, he proved from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (he was talking about Jews who already had a working knowledge of Torah). So this guy is walking into a gentile nation, a gentile city, and he reminds them.

He says: Remember when I came to you, I didn't come to you, to sit down and argue about who was right and who was wrong. I didn't come and sit down, and base out my doctrine in 19 bullet points, and intelligently argue with you - I didn't come like that.

I came only to know, and to demonstrate, a way of life that's found in the cross. That's it; and it goes on, and I think in Verse 5, it says something like this. He repeats himself, which is so Hebrew. He's like - he's repeating himself. He starts here, and then at the end he says the same thing; and he says this.

“I did not come with persuasive words. Rather, I came with a demonstration of God's power”. So he says: when I came to you, I didn't come with these persuasive words, and 19 bullet points and all of this stuff. I came with a demonstration of God's power - which was not really his mode of operandi. Paul's mode of operation, normally, was to sit down in a group of people, and prove that he was smarter than everybody else in the room; and he would prove vigorously from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Normally, that's how Paul did things.

Why did he do things that way? Because he was dealing with Jews, who had memorised the whole Torah, who should know that Jesus was the messiah - and he's trying to convince them of that, because they have similar belief systems - very similar belief systems.

But Paul changes his mode of operation, as a leader, when he walks into a situation where this is not going to work. In other words, let me just say this simply: cookie-cutter evangelism doesn't work. Sometimes you've got to change what we're doing, to reach a different group of people.

Now why would he have to do that? Well let's think about this. In the late 50-60AD, it was the Romans who were ruling the region of the world that Corinth was in? The Roman Empire was ruling the whole world; and they tried to put that religious part into it, saying that Julius Caesar was god; and then Augustus Caesar was god; then Caesar Tiberius was god. The problem with all that was - all these guys died; so there was just this mental mindset of: yeah, we've kind of got to go along with these guys saying they're god - but they're really not god.

There was a whole plethora of other gods in this region. Let me just tell you about a few of them, so when Paul writes this, here were the people ruling the religious side…

The main god of that region was a god named Mithra; and this religion around Mithra was the central religion of the entire Roman Empire. So 600 years before Christ, this religion comes forward, and it's ruled by a god named Mithra.

Now here's what the followers of Mithra believed: that their god was born in a cave to a virgin; was worshiped by shepherds; and had 12 followers, by which he then spread his message of life over death to the whole world. That was Mithra, 600BC; so this religion from 600BC had now grown, and it was the main religion in the city of Corinth - and it was a god who was born of a virgin, worshiped by shepherds, had 12 followers to whom he disseminated his information to, his way of life. They spread that way of life to the whole world, that death can be conquered by life, if you believe in Mithra. That was Mithra.

There was another god named Addis. His followers believed that he was born of a virgin in 200BC; that he was hung on a tree, was killed, and then rose from the dead, to bring life to his followers. That is the god Addis.

There was another god of the region named Adonis. Now Adonis is the god that every man thinks he is, when he's looking in the mirror. You ever notice that a woman can be like three pounds overweight, and she's like: I am faaaat! A man can be 50 pounds overweight, and still bring Adonis out, man! It's because that's what we are. We're men.

Another god was Adonis. Now Adonis, the religion around Adonis originated in 200BC as well, and his followers believed: that he was born of a virgin; he was referred to as ‘the son of god’; and his followers believed that he died and rose

again, in order to save human kind. That was Adonis.

The longest-standing god of the region was a god named Horus (what a horrible name for a god). Horus is the red-neck god of deer-hunting! Actually it is his name, Horus - and the religion that worshiped Horus originated in 1500BC; so 1500 years before Christ, this religion started.

Horus was born of a virgin named Isis, so the virgin goddess Isis gave birth to Horus - so he's the son of this virgin goddess. When he was a child, foreign kings came and brought him gifts as acts of worship. Horus eventually dies, and rose from the dead, in order to conquer death and bring life to his followers. That is Horus.

Then of course you had Julius Caesar, who died in 17BC - and 12 witnesses saw a strange star in the sky, which they said was him “ascending to the right hand of the bigger gods”.

So Paul comes into Corinth, and he calls a town meeting, saying: come, I have something to tell you about my faith. Paul comes into Corinth, and he breaks out a 19-page doctrinal statement; and he says:

Hey listen, I serve a man. His name is Jesus, and He was actually God in the flesh, and here's how I know He was God in the flesh: He was born of a virgin, He was worshiped by shepherds; there was a strange star in the sky, which substantiated His birth. He actually was killed by being hung on a cross - but don't worry about that, He rose from the dead, and that conquered death, and gave life to all His followers - His name's Jesus.

The people in Corinth in first Century would be like: that is so cool - us too! Hey, we serve Mithra - that happened to him too. We serve Addis - that sounds like him too. We served Horus - that happened to him as well.

So your God was born of a virgin, your God put flesh on, and was born of a virgin; there was a strange star in the sky that substantiated it; foreign kings bringing gifts. He was hung on a tree; and He died, and rose from the dead, in order to bring life instead of death for everyone who follows Him. You're kidding me - us too!

So Paul says that “his strategy changed in Corinth”, and instead of making fine-sounding arguments that Jesus was the Christ - he didn't do that at all. Actually, what he did was, he demonstrated what Jesus' life looked like, by living it out; and then that gave him the credibility to announce that the kingdom of God was at hand.

The same thing is true with us! Now this strategy was familiar to Jesus as well. Look at Luke 10. To demonstrate the power of God, within the disposition of messiah, gives us the credibility to speak life into whatever situation we want to speak into.

We have moved away from that, as a culture, and as a church. Most churches do not: demonstrate, then announce; we announce, and then hope demonstration comes.

Luke 10:6, Jesus is talking, so this is red letters; and Jesus is a Hebrew rabbi, talking to major followers of Him. He's talking to key leadership in His movement.

Now follow me here, because there's stuff here we have to wrestle with; and before I even read it, I'm going to tell you: I don't know the answer to some of it - and that's okay. I'm so glad that I serve a God that I can't figure out all the answers about Him, because if I served a God that I knew all the answers about Him, I'd be scared that I had chosen the wrong one.

Luke 10:6-8 says: “after this, the Lord appointed 72 others to go ahead of Him” - to pave the way. He gave them some instructions, and this is what He says: “When you come into a town and are welcomed, eat whatever is placed before you, heal the sick there, and then announce that this is the kingdom of God”.

Can you believe that? Jesus Christ, the Hebrew rabbi Jesus Christ, is telling His followers: when you go to spread this message of the kingdom of God, this is how you do it: go into a place, eat - listen to this instruction: eat whatever is placed before you. Now how revolutionary is that? He's telling a bunch of Jews, that when you go into a Gentiles house, you are free to eat whatever is placed before you.

In other words, this kingdom movement is bigger than your personal propriety.

In other words, be the more mature, swallow your pride, and if they throw some bacon down - how about it!

So Jesus appears to be giving instructions that would go directly against what the Torah said; which kind of goes against this whole notion of: God would never tell you to do something apart from the Bible. That sounds good, and it's probably pretty good personal boundaries, but it just doesn't work all the time.

Last session we talked about Samson - was it God's will, to continually escalate something into violence? No, but God used the basic human condition to judge the Philistines.

The Bible says: “do not marry Gentiles”, and “stone prostitutes”; but the word of the Lord came to Hosea, saying: “marry that Gentile prostitute”.

The Bible says (the Torah says): do not - this is so good, you ready for this? This is so good. This is revolutionary - do not touch your own poop. It's a really good plan right? Yeah. Like when you're living, don't play with your own poop right? Don't go and do that - bad plan. And how many of you would have any problem with that?

No one's raising their hand, going: wait a minute Shane, you're putting us back under the law. We should be able to play with our own poop if we want!

Leviticus says: do not handle your own body excrement. But the word of the Lord that came to Ezekiel saying: I want you to cook food, and use your own poop as fuel! Can you imagine that?

Can you imagine me coming in here tonight saying: hey everybody, I got a project for us to do: on your way out the door, the ushers have a little Tupperware container for you, and we've got to all take a little visit to the bathroom. Then we're going to bring it back in here, we're going to cook ourselves a meal. We're going to see how well this works. God has told me to do that!

Most people would say: “God would never say that”! Well, be careful. If you want to say: hey, I'm not with you there - I don't think God's saying that - that's one thing. But to say: God would never?

God told the same guy: I want you to lay naked on your front lawn for 140 days - 70 days on one side, 70 days on the other.

Imagine driving by my house and... Shane, what are you doing! God told me to. People say: “God wouldn't tell you to do that”! He did to somebody.

Remember in the first Century, Peter shows up, and he almost starts a riot. What did he do? He shows up at a first Century leadership meeting, and he's chewing on some pork rinds. They said: what are you doing? He said: oh, Jesus showed up to me in a dream, and He told me: all foods are clean. Can you imagine?

Can you imagine, if like the Pentecostal Church World Council was there, and somebody shows up and says: oh yeah, I know it clearly says in the Bible don't eat pork. It clearly says that - don't eat pork; but Jesus showed up to me in a dream, and He told me I could.

We would have branded him as a false prophet; but we look back and we say: yeah, Peter did it, I can do it. We make doctrine out of it; but then we're hypocritical, because we say: “oh, God would never tell you to do something apart from the Bible”.

God told people to do stuff all the time that makes no sense. We've got to be springs, and not bricks. We've got to seek God. You say: Shane, how do you handle all that? I don't know - I just know it's there, and I know in this passage in Luke, Jesus Himself is telling 72 people:

I'm sending you out to pave the way, and when you get into these cities, eat whatever is put in front of you. Surely the religious leaders would have had a problem with that. Hey, that goes directly against the Bible!

He says: do a couple of things; eat whatever's put in front of you - which is bigger than just eating whatever's put in front of you. We read that command, and we go: oh goody, I get to eat. To them He was saying: grow up, suck it up, be mature - and if what they put in front of you offends - you suck it up, and be bigger than that. He says: eat whatever's put in front of you; in other words – fellowship!

Then He says: then heal the sick; and after you've fellowshipped and healed the

sick - THEN announce that the kingdom of God is here. So Jesus' way of growing the church was this: Fellowship; then Demonstrate what the life's all about; and then Announce.

Later on He says: …and if you're welcome, fine; and if you're not welcome, don't sit around and argue with people. Don't sit around and give your 19 bullet points on why you're right and they're wrong. How many of you know that never works?

He says: simply shake the dust off your feet, and respectfully leave. Yeah, people ask me all the time, they say: oh, I've got his neighbour, and they're into something, some kind of denomination or something. What do you think about that?

I'm going: I don't have anything to think about that. Well what should I do to help them? What should I do to save them from that? I'm going: last time I checked, there's not a vacancy in the trinity for you!

Last time I checked, it's not your responsibility to save anybody - especially not with sound argumentation; it's your responsibility to demonstrate what the life of Christ looks like, lived out - and leave the rest to God.

Actually to do it the other way is counter-productive; and we get ourselves a reputation for being belligerent people, who think that we're the only one who is in, and everybody else is out. Jesus is very hard on that.

Luke 13:23-30, Jesus goes into this village in Galilee, and these people in Galilee say: "Lord, are only a few going to be saved"? Jesus goes nuts on them - why? The reason is that, in that village in Galilee, it was filled with a group of people, who thought that they had the only way to salvation. Since they had the only way to salvation, they were the only ones in, and everybody else was out - so they're trying to get Jesus to agree with them. They're trying to get Jesus to agree that they're the ones, the only ones that are going to be in, and this is what Jesus says: Just the nature of your question tells me you're not.

He says: "at my marriage table, many will come from the north, the east, the south and the west, but you who actually think you're in will be shut out, because you think you're better than other people".

Are we hitting home here? Is this just a story about a group of people in the first Century; or are we finding ourselves in these stories? Jesus' way for us, to be leaders in His biggest idea, is to: eat whatever's put in front of us; heal the sick; and then announce.

Fellowship - in other words, be friendly; then demonstrate what the life looks like; and then announce.

Fellowship, and then be respectful to your husband in front of them, and then announce what the peace in your marriage is all about.

Fellowship, and be loving to your wife in front of them, exhibiting peace in your home, and then announce: this is what the kingdom of God does for you.

Fellowship, and then watch emotional wholeness come to somebody's life, and then, then announce the kingdom of God is at hand.

In Luke 7:8 they ask Him a question: “are ou the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else”? In other words, they're trying to figure out if Jesus is the new Moses; because remember, the Jews were enslaved for 430 years, then Moses shows up. They get out of slavery for 430 years, and then they're put back into slavery - and so there's 430 years exactly from Babylon into Jesus, so it all fits together.

Everybody was looking for this new Moses. Are You the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else? Then there's a bit of dialogue there, then He says: at that time, Jesus cured many sick, demonised, and blind; and He said: go back and tell John what you have seen.

In other words, Jesus' way of spreading the word about Himself, was not sound argumentation, it wasn't: hey, here's all the prophecies from the Old Testament; and let Me show you how I fulfil every one of them. He never did that.

Jesus simply healed the sick, and cast devils out of people - and that is hard to argue with. He says: don't go back and tell them all the prophecies, and all the sound argumentation, and all this. Just simply go back and tell Him what you saw. Fellowship; then demonstration; and then announcement.

John 9, there was this guy that was born blind, and His disciples say: Jesus - who

sinned, that this man should be born blind - him, or his mother and his father?

Jesus says: oh look, none of them have sinned. Like, nobody's sinned! He is here so that God may be glorified now; and so Jesus spits in his eyes, with some dirt. He takes some dirt, and He spits - which is another thing that, if we started doing, people would call me a false prophet (just like they did Him) - and He spits in the dirt; makes some mud; and He puts it on his eyes - and the guy has to wash in the pool of Siloam, and he gets healed.

Now this creates an interesting dilemma for the religious people, because many people (I'm paraphrasing this) saw and asked if he was the blind beggar - you're the guy that's been there since birth? Are you that guy?

The Pharisees asked him how he received his sight on the Sabbath, which is interesting, isn't it? They come up to a guy born blind, and instead of rejoicing with him, that he can see; they say: how did that happen on the Sabbath? Why? Why was that a problem for them?

Because their way said that stuff like that didn't happen on the Sabbath; and here's a living-testimony witness that it actually did.

They became bricks instead of springs. They started putting God in a box. They started saying things like: God would never heal people on the Sabbath, because He rests on the Sabbath. They start putting human logic into God. They start trying to relate to a 1000-dimensional God, from a 4-dimensional world, and were proud enough to think they had it figured out.

The Pharisees asked him how he received his sight on the Sabbath. In other words, this is what they were saying: Jesus can't be of God, and break the Sabbath; yet he can see, so you've got a real problem.

Is Jesus of God, or isn't He of God? The blind man's going: umm, I can see; and the Pharisees logic was: Jesus can't be of God, because He broke the Sabbath; but if He's not of God, then how can we explain that this guy can see? Which is a real dilemma isn't it?

So the religious people are divided, and they accuse Jesus of being a sinner; and this whole weird story takes place, and they say: well maybe that's not the guy;

so they ask him: are you the guy that was blind your whole life, a beggar on the street, and now you can see? Yes, I am.

Well, we're not sure, so they go get his parents, and they say: mum, dad, is that him? They say: yeah, that's him. He was born blind, he's a beggar, now he can see. So they are in this huge dilemma, so finally the Pharisees come back to the blind man, and they say: you received your sight today by somebody - and the blind man's like: I was blind, not deaf, hello!

And now you can see? Yes. They say: we have a question for you - was the man who prayed for you - and you received your sight - was he a sinner? So they leave this judgement to this guy, who was a beggar, just hours before.

They say: “was he a sinner”? I love the blind man's answer. He goes: whether He's a sinner or not, I do not know; but one thing I do know - I was blind and now I see.

Demonstration in life, is far better than announcement. To announce, without demonstrating, loses credibility; but demonstration covers any deficit in announcement. If things are happening, and people are getting set free, and made whole, and healed and walking out; people who were once mean are now nice, and people who were once angry are now peaceful - you can't argue with that stuff.

I think Jesus wants to free the leaders in His biggest idea, because there's a lot of pressure, sometimes, on us. We go out, and there's unsaved people, and they have all these questions, and we feel the pressure for having to have all the answers.

Listen to me: Jesus wants to save you from having to have all the answers. Jesus wants you to be able to go: I don't know! All I do know is, once I had no peace, and now I have peace, and I don't know; once I was blind, and now I see, I don't know.

I have a friend who struggled with eating disorders, and now she doesn't, because the power of Jesus - well what's that about? How did He do that? I don't know, I just know she did, and now she doesn't. I don't know!

Isn't that freeing, to be able to say: I don't know - I don't have to have all the answers? In other words, Jesus wants to relieve you from the pressure of having to defend your story; that your story is your story.

Notice in that passage, the religious people are the ones with the problem. They're the ones that want answers to explain everything. It has to be theology and doctrine - they have to have all the answers.

The blind man doesn't have the answer, and he's the ultimate frustration to them. In other words, you don't have to defend your story of what God's done for you. If anything, Jesus spoke against those who claimed to have the answers, and He speaks for people who are journeying with the right heart.

The rabbis said that if we spend two hours here tonight (which we will) - if 95 per cent of everything we said here tonight is wrong, that God is still pleased that a group of people are talking about Him - that we can be freed up from that.

There are 613 commands in the Torah, 613, so a common question that people would ask their rabbis is this: can you summarise this up in a sentence? Can you like just give us some kind of summary statement? 613 commands, hard to remember them all, so can you give us a way to keep the whole thing in just one shot?

It was a very common question - and Jesus' way of answering that was what? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love your neighbour as yourself - in that you fulfil the whole Torah. So instead of doctrinal answers, can I just move us to real life demonstration?

Let's ask ourselves some questions:

Do you have a love for God today, which is greater than it was yesterday? If that's the case, then you are free to say: I don't know, I just know I love Him more today than yesterday - and that life speaks loud.

Does your heart break for the things that break God's heart? Do you get angry at the things that would anger God? Let me give you a litmus test for that - if it's angering you, it's probably not angering God. God got angry at things like: injustice, oppression, slavery, hunger, things like that. He didn't get mad when

somebody cut Him off in traffic with their donkey.

Do you have a greater love for people today, than you used to? Are you patient? Are you more patient today, than you used to be?

Do you have awareness that the things that bother you really badly might actually be God working things out in you - instead of demanding others to change? That when something gets under your skin really bad, it might actually be God trying to kill you - and God is trying to kill you.

Do you honour kindness? Do you put other people first?

If these kinds of demonstrations are in your life, people can say whatever they want, but at the end of the day, you've demonstrated the life. It's where we don't demonstrate it, that we lose credibility with the whole world.

In Acts 19:37 the same guy, Paul - he's in Ephesus, and the main god, the main god in this region was a goddess named Artemis.

Actually the temple to the goddess Artemis is one of the like big wonders of the world - it's still there. It was huge, and the entire economy of Ephesus is built around capitalism regarding the goddess Artemis. So you can imagine if a guy comes in talking about another god, that's going to threaten the economy of the whole region, people might not take too kindly to that?

So they go to throw him in jail. They go to throw Paul in jail for preaching about Jesus, but watch what the clerk of court says (in Acts 19:37) about the situation: “For you have brought me these men, who are neither robbers of our temple, nor have they blasphemed our goddess”.

So Paul goes into a town where the main god is the goddess Artemis, and he doesn't say one bad thing about her. He simply lives the life Jesus called him to: a life of compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love God. He demonstrates the power of God, and he says: you make your choice - the kingdom of God is at hand.

They arrest him to put him in jail, and the clerk of court says: you don't have a case - he has not blasphemed our god, not even once. Where have we been guilty of that? Let's just be real. Where have we been guilty, that in trying to make

Christianity look better to other people, we've downed other people's beliefs?

We spend more time talking about why other people are wrong, instead of demonstrating the power of God in our lives; and all the time people are looking at our lives going: yeah, but you're mean to your husband; yeah, you withdraw from your wife; at work you have no integrity - you leave early and charge your employer full time; you have an anger problem.

We spend all this time talking about why everybody else is wrong; and in the meantime, people are looking at our life, and they see no power.

Paul said nothing against their goddess; he demonstrated the power of God. He did not speak against anybody else; He simply showed what Jesus looked like, lived out.

We love to announce with no demonstration, we love: JESUS IS THE WAY! Turn or burn! You'll go to hell if you don't get this right. My doctrine is right, yours is wrong! No man comes to the Father except by Him! We're in, you're out!

We always announce, and then demonstrate; but Jesus did it the other way - He demonstrated, and then He announced. There's one exception where He did it backwards, one exception, and it almost caused a riot, and so He fixed it very quickly. Remember the guy who was paralysed, and his friends picked him up on his mat and lowered him in, so they lowered him down. Jesus announced before He demonstrated (it might have been a slip-up).

He said: “oh, your sins are forgiven” - so He announces, before He demonstrates. So here's a paralysed guy there, and Jesus is calling him clean; and the whole room erupts, remember? YOU CAN'T CALL HIM CLEAN! He's paralysed! Look at that! You can't do that!

Jesus goes: oh yeah, I forgot - we should demonstrate first. What's easier to do: to say your sins are forgiven; or to say get up and walk? Obviously it's easier to announce, than to demonstrate, because who really knows? He says: so that you may know, that I am who I say I am - get up and walk - and then in the demonstration, no one could say anything.

As leaders in God's biggest idea, I can tell you this: that the most effective way for you to minister, is to demonstrate, and then announce.

What would the life of our church be like, if we demonstrated and then announced? Let me give you some illustrations of what it would be like if we helped the poor first, then we announced that we're about the kingdom of God?

What would happen if we healed the sick, and then we announced? What would happen if we showed loving kindness, and then announced? What would happen if, as a group of people, we got a reputation in this whole city, for being the most loving group of people that's ever come into this place, and then we announced?

What if we became patient and less stressed, and then we announced? What if we demonstrated peace in our hearts, and then announced? What if we demonstrated loving families, and then announced? What if we demonstrated genuine care for others, and then announced?

What's your story? What's your demonstration?

In Deuteronomy 26 it says (it's giving instructions on how to give a first-fruits offering) - every year when you give a first fruits offering, you're to put it in a basket, raise it high, put it in the hands of your priest, and then you are to proclaim in a loud voice: “my father is a wandering Aramean” - which just is Hebrew for: “my father was a homeless refugee, a slave”.

In other words, God built it into their culture to remember where they came from; because if we don't remember where we came from, we stand the risk of being proud, and looking down on people who haven't got through what we've already gotten through.

“My father was a wandering Aramean”.

How many of us need to remember: I used to have an anger problem, and God healed me from that, so I have no right to look down on somebody else, who's just going through the same thing I did? My father is a wandering Aramean.

In a room this size, I'm sure that there are some teenage pregnancies in here somewhere. Maybe you're 40 years old, and you have a 24 year old daughter. That's not hard math to do, and you're sitting here, and somewhere you've

wanted to conceal it; but the truth is, you have a story to tell, of God's grace, and how He got you through that, and now you're a living servant of God. You can demonstrate, and then announce your story. It's very important. My father was a wandering Aramean.

Anybody ever went to bed at night, not knowing how they're going to pay their bills that were due the next day - and somehow God came through at the last minute; and now you've got more money than you know what to do with, but deep down in your heart of hearts, you remember when you needed to depend for your next breath on God. Now He's come through, and you need to remember your father was a wandering Aramean.

Where were you blind, and now you see? Where were you angry, and now you're peaceful? Where were you stressed, and now you're calm? Where were you sick, and now you're healed? Where were you insecure, and now secure? Where were you depressed, and now full of joy? Where were you emotionally unstable, and now stable? Where were you lazy, and now proactive? Where were you selfish, and now willing to put other people's needs first?

This is the most powerful witness imaginable, for healing and wholeness: to demonstrate, and then announce.

I challenge you tonight, as we talk about leadership in God's biggest idea, to understand that your most powerful witness is not in announcing - it's in demonstrating.

To show peaceful families, to show calmness of heart, to show no stress, to show peace in our hearts, to show financial security, to show generosity - that when we demonstrate, it gives us the credibility to announce.

That the greatest credibility is not in walking through the streets of the mall in Napier going: let me give you this tract, you're going to turn, or you're going to burn. Do you know where you'd spend eternity?

Listen, I'm not against all that. I'm just simply saying: we can have far greater impact, and far greater credibility, if we demonstrate; and then announce - that that was Jesus' way; Paul's way; and Peter's way.

Paul went into a city where another god was the mainstay, and he never said one bad thing about the other god. He simply demonstrated what Jesus was like, and he said: that's it. They had no standing in court.

[Closing Prayer]

Lord, You're the best, and we proclaim You king of the universe, and realise that we are not, that we're not.

Lord, we just take a second tonight, and repent for where we announced before we demonstrated.

We realise now, that the reason there's such a ruckus against Christianity, is because of us; it's not because of anybody else. It's because we announced without demonstrating.

We said that we had something other people don't have - which makes us sound elitist - and then we didn't demonstrate anything.

Forgive us for that. Lord, may we be demonstrators of Your life, demonstrators of Your life. Would You empower us to do that, in Jesus' name. Amen

Being a Good Neighbor (4 of 6)

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Luke 12:13 is the only time that Jesus' actually proclaims: God is going to kill you. It's not any of the sins you would think. It's not adultery, fornication, burning your children in fire, idolatry. Its greed! Jesus is not impressed by what kind of car you drive, house you live in, or anything you possess; but with how much compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding-in-love, character is present in your homes.

We've been talking about demonstrating, and then announcing. Luke 12:13 - this is the only time in Jesus' whole ministry, that somebody does something so heinous, that God kills him; that Jesus' actually proclaims: God is going to kill you.

It's not any of the sins you would think - it's not adultery; fornication, burning your children in fire, or idolatry - its greed! I want us to examine this, because we're going to be a group of people who want to bring heaven to earth, and not just go to heaven one day.

Luke 12:13 - “One of the company said to him: Master, Rabbi, speak to my brother, to divide the inheritance with me; and he said to him: who made me judge, or divider over you?” So this guy comes to Jesus, and he says: “Tell my brother to do things my way”.

In those days, it was a rabbi's responsibility to create a yoke of a way of life; it was a rabbi's responsibility to teach the scriptures; it was a rabbi's responsibility to make sure we were living the right way. But in these matters, it was not a rabbi's jurisdiction to make legal decisions like this.

He says: who made me judge (or a divider) over you? He says: I can't make a legal decision here, but I can make a yoke.

Here's his yoke; then he said to them: “watch and keep yourselves from covetousness, for a man's life is not in the abundance of the things which he possesses”.

So in Jesus' yoke, Jesus is not impressed by: what kind of car you drive; what kind of house you live in; or what kind of anything you possess.

Jesus is impressed with how much “compassionate, gracious, slow-to-anger, abounding-in-love” character is present in your homes - and He spoke a parable to them about this, saying: “there was a certain rich man”.

Now any time Jesus starts a parable "there's a certain rich man", it is not going to end up good! “There's a certain rich man, who brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself…” This is a very anti-Hebrew statement; a very white-person statement. It's a statement that the Hebrew people would look at us, and go: “oh, that's foolish”.

We use statements all the time like: “I just have to go work this out, with myself”; “I just have to work this out, in myself”; “I need to go think to myself for a while”.

Hebrew people would never do that, never. Hebrew people thought in communities. As a matter of fact, we even talk about studying the Bible, saying: “did you have your quiet time today”?

Now is that a bad thing to do? No, I'm just simply saying, that the Hebrew people were not even allowed to study the Bible alone - they weren't allowed to do that. The reason is: something as reverent, and something as holy, as God's word - they didn't want to open up people to error, by opening it up to them individually.

So you studied the Bible all the time, but you did it in groups, and you did it in the presence of a rabbi, who, if you got off-base, would say things like this. If somebody got off-base in the discussion, they would say: “you have abolished the Torah”. In other words, you've gotten off-base from the Torah. If somebody was on-base with what the Torah was saying, the rabbi would say: “you have fulfilled the Torah”.

So when Jesus comes, and He says: “I have not come to you to abolish the Torah, but to fulfil it” - that was a common rabbinical phrase, that just meant: I'm not coming to go off-base from the law. You think I'm threatening the law? I'm not coming to go off base from the Torah, I'm coming to show you what it

looks like, lived out. That's what I've come to do.

So for a man to say "I thought to myself" - it tells you a lot, in Hebrew culture, about his attitude. He thought he was better than other people. He thought he could work it out on his own. This was not a common thought in those days;

"…and he said to himself, saying: what should I do, because I have no room in which to store all of my food? And he said: I'll do this - I'll pull down my barns, and build bigger ones, and I'll store all my fruits and goods in there; and I will say to my soul: soul, you have many goods laid up through many years. Take ease, eat, drink and be merry."

Remember that the Romans were ruling the world at this time, and collecting 80% taxes! People were losing family land, which had been in their family since the Book of Judges - they were taxing everything. Herod was coming in, and taxing things on top of things, on top of things, on top of things.

There were people struggling to even eat, and this one guy has more food than he knows what to do with, and he thinks to himself: "what should I do with all of my extra"? Everybody around him is starving, and he's going: I've got so much - I don't know what to do with it.

We look at that go: you idiot! What are you talking about? You don't know what to do with it? There is so much need around you! See, it's very easy for us to read over this, and as soon as we say "there's a certain rich man" we dismiss ourself, because we don't think we're rich; but the truth is, we're very rich.

If you drove here tonight, you're in the richest 8% of the whole world - even if you only own one car. If you own two cars, you're in the richest 2% of the whole world. If you own two cars, and you drive home to a house with a roof on it, you're in the richest 0.5% per cent of the whole world. We are the rich man!

This is a story about me, and you; and about a group of people, who are surrounded in the world by enormous need. The cry of the hungry is everywhere, and we have more money in our bank accounts than we know what to do with. We have plenty of food to eat, and instead of feeding other people, we build bigger barns, to horde things for ourselves; simply so that our soul can be at ease, and we know we're taken care of.

This is a story about us, and about our heart attitude - to think we're actually better than what we are; and it's a heart attitude that hordes, instead of gives. It's a heart attitude that says: all the needs of the hungry - that's not my problem, someone else will deal with that.

The truth of it is, to be leaders in God's biggest idea, we have to take the heart attitude that says: it IS my problem - that WE can bring heaven to earth by making it our problem.

Watch Jesus' response to him: “But God said to him: you fool!” The word ‘fool’ there is the word ‘offen’. It's the word we get the word 'diaphragm' from; where we get breath.

He's saying: you breathless one, you person with no effectiveness. You're living all to yourself - offen. To call someone "offen" meant: you have lost all of your effectiveness. It's not the same word for ‘idiot’ - it's offen. It means: your ability to convert oxygen to carbon dioxide has ceased. It's almost like you're dead already.

“You fool, this night your soul will be required of you. Then who shall all these things be, which you have prepared? So it is for he, who lays a treasure for himself, but is not rich towards God”.

So let's get real challenging tonight? This challenges all of us, because I'm rich, and you're rich. Can we just admit: we're all rich? We're just rich. Did you drive here tonight? Yes, you're rich, very rich. How many of you know homeless people here? So we're all going home to homes tonight, you're very rich, we're in the top 1% of the whole world.

Have you laid up treasure for yourself, without being rich towards God?

In this passage, being ‘rich towards God’ means: taking into account other people's needs first. Where have we written a cheque, to make one more investment, so that our soul can be at ease; where that cheque could have easily gone to feed the orphans?

Is God against investments? No. Is God against wealth? Absolutely not. God wants us all to be wealthy stewards, but the key there, is the word 'stewards'. He

wants us to be wealthy stewards; not people who sit around and think to ourself: I don't need to meet the needs of the hungry; I'll keep building bigger barns for myself, so that my soul can be at ease, at the expense of somebody else.

This man had starving people right outside his front door, and he was building bigger barns, so that his soul could be at ease. Do we find any of ourselves in that story? Has anybody, besides me (we've all done it I think), ever seen a legitimate need… Legitimate - I'm not talking about laziness. The Bible clearly says: don't help a lazy person, lest you enable that laziness okay! I'm talking about HIV aids orphans. I'm talking about Sudanese refugees, who can do nothing to help themselves.

Has anybody, besides me, seen an opportunity to help those people; and we turned the channel, or we turn our head from it - just so we can keep that one little bit of $50 extra in our bank accounts, so our soul can be ease, when we've got plenty of money to meet that need?

Are we demonstrating, and then announcing - or are we standing at the roof tops announcing, with no demonstration? Being rich towards God, is about meeting the needs of others first (in this passage); and in doing that, it actually saves our soul as well.

It looks like poor people need our help, but in actuality, we need their help. The poor people need us to feed their belly; but we need the poor people to keep our hearts humble - remembering that the Lord our God brought us out of Egypt, without us deserving it - and that is why He commands to meet their needs first. We are called to be a group of people who make it our problem

Luke 10. This is another story Jesus tells, which is kind of disturbing.

Before we start this I need to teach you something Hebraically; that in Hebrew culture, when they read parables, they do not read parables for content. We read parables for content; but they read parables for identification. They're always asking themselves: who am I in a story?

That's why, when I read a story, I'd say: are you finding yourself in there anywhere? They read the parables for identification, so normally a parable starts out with a question. Somebody is asking a question, so person A is asking rabbi

B a question.

Rabbi B answers person A by saying: let me tell you a parable to answer your question; and the answer to the person's question comes in: who does the person identify with in the story. So with that in mind, let's look at the parable of what we call the Good Samaritan..

Luke 10:25, it says: “and behold, a certain expert in the law stood up and tempted Jesus”. It doesn't really necessarily mean a bad thing, it just meant he was asking Him a question.

He was testing Him, saying: “Rabbi, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” This was a very common question in those days, about the rabbis.

The words 'Eternal Life' doesn't mean: I get to go to heaven one day. It was the word Olam Habah, which meant: Eternal Peace with God; or Harmony with God.

So what do I need to do, to inherit eternal life? And he said to him: “what is written in the law?” How do you read it; which is another very common thing. Jesus is trying to figure out whose yoke he's under – who is your Rabbi?

So he says: "what have you heard? How do you read that? Of course, this was an expert Pharisee - he probably was his own Rabbi. How do you read it? What does your yoke say?

In answering, he said that: “you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and then to love your neighbour as yourself”. Jesus said to him: “you've answered right, do this and you'll live”. In other words - we agree, our yokes are the same.

And it says: “but he, willing to justify himself, said to Jesus: well who's my neighbor”, which is an awesome question, isn't it? He says: okay, we've got to do two things to inherit eternal life: #1, we need to love the Lord you God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and #2, we have to love our neighbours as ourself.

Since we have to love our neighbour as ourself, then in order to inherit eternal life, there is a group of people on this planet that we actually need to learn to

love, like we love ourself. So we need to define who those people are.

So the Pharisee, the expert in law says: okay Jesus, here's our box. Tell me, who's in there - that we have to love, like we love ourself? Obviously I'm in there, because I can love me like I love myself; but who else is in there? My wife; my children; some church people - who's in this box - who's my neighbor? If I have to love my neighbour, like I love myself, then who is my neighbour?

So Jesus tells him a parable. He's going to tell him a parable to answer the question: who is my neighbour? The answer to the question is going to be found in whoever the Pharisee identifies with in the story. You see how their culture works? So Jesus is going to tell a story, and whoever the Pharisee identifies with in the story - that's who his neighbour is.

Answering him, Jesus said: “a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among some robbers, who stripped him of his clothes, and wounded him, and left him half-dead”.

Let's remind ourselves: who is asking the question? The Pharisee. Who is answering the question? Jesus, with a parable. So the Pharisee is looking for who he identifies with in the story.

So there's this guy, he gets beaten and left for dead - would the Pharisee have identified with that guy? No, alright, so we can go on.

“…and by coincidence a certain priest” - now there's going to be three characters. There's always three characters in a Hebrew parable like this - three characters are going to come by.

“By coincidence, a certain priest came down that way, and seeing him, he passed by on the opposite side”. So there's a priest, and he comes by this guy that has been beaten and left half-dead, and He passes by on the other side of the road.

Would the Pharisee have identified with the priest? No. Why? Because the priest were Sadducees. All priests were Sadducees - they were Torah-only. The Pharisees were Torah and the prophets; so as soon as Jesus said: “there's a priest”, the Pharisee would have tuned-out.

Our tendency is, when we read the story, is to think: bad priest, you're supposed

to help the person - bad priest! That's not necessarily the case. The Torah said that it is against the law to touch someone who's bleeding out. It also says: it's against the law to leave somebody for dead - so no matter what this man did; he's going to be breaking the law; so he's not necessarily a bad priest.

So how do you determine which way to go, if either way, you're going to be sinning - how do you determine which sin to do? Would you want to have that responsibility? If you leave him for dead, you're sinning; if you touch a person bleeding out, you're sinning - so who made those decisions? The Rabbis.

The Rabbis did something called ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’. In situations like that, they bound their followers to certain behaviours; and they loosed them to certain behaviours. The principle was called [kow-ve-khol-mer]; or in English: “light and heavy”.

So the rabbis, in their yokes, had to determine what was the light sin, and what was the heavy sin - and you wanted to do the light one, not the heavy one.

So this guys rabbi would have had a yoke, and in that rabbi's yoke, he would have determined: is it the lighter thing to touch someone who's bleeding out; or is it the lighter thing to leave somebody half dead? The priest would have done whatever the lighter thing was, so maybe in this priest's life, his rabbi said that the heavier sin is becoming Tumah by touching blood.

Maybe he was just obeying the yoke of his rabbi, by binding and loosing. Maybe that's all that was happening, so the priest steps over him; and the Pharisees going: okay, that's not me.

The next guy comes by, and he's a Levite, and he passes by on the other side of the road too.

Would the Pharisee have identified with the Levite? No. Why? Same reason - they were Sadducees. Levites and Priests came from the same place, they were Sadducees. So the first guy's a Sadducee, and the second guy's a Sadducee, and once again: is it bad Levite, bad Levite, or was he maybe just following the yoke of his rabbi? Maybe the yoke of his rabbi said: I can't touch someone bleeding out, it's best that they leave them for dead.

In a Hebrew parable there's three characters, and if you're not the first, and you're not the second, then you have to be the Third. So this Pharisee would be going: oh, oh, oh, who am I? Who am I? And Jesus said: oh, there's a third character, and he's a Samaritan.

“And a certain Samaritan came upon him, and seeing him, was filled with pity. And coming near, he bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine, and set him on his animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Going on to the next day, he took out two denarii, and gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him: take care of him, and whatever more you spend, when I come back, I'll repay you”.

Then Jesus lowers the boom: which of these do you think was a neighbour?

So what is Jesus saying? Who is asking the question initially? The Pharisee. Does the Pharisee identify with the priest? No. Does the Pharisee identify with the Levite? No. Does the Pharisee have to identify with the Samaritan then? Yes.

So what was the question the Pharisee was asking? Who is my neighbour; in other words, who do I have to love like I love myself; and Jesus says: the Samaritans.

In other words, according to the yoke of Jesus Christ, the people that we need to love like we love as ourselves are: the people we hate the most.

Look at his reaction: “Then which of these three do you think was a neighbour, to those who fell upon the robbers”? In Verse 37, and he said: “the one who had mercy”; and Jesus said: “go and do likewise”.

The guy couldn't even say "the Samaritan". He couldn't even say his name! The Samaritans were untouchables. They were horrible. They were hated amongst the Jews; and Jesus says: if you want to inherit eternal life, you have to learn to love the people that you hate the most, just like you love yourself

By the way, the people that you hate the most, often times, is you. You're just projecting your stuff onto them, that's all.

Oh, and by the way, what is Jesus revealing about His yoke here? According to the yoke of Jesus Christ, which one is the lighter sin: to show mercy; or to leave

somebody half dead? Jesus wants us to show mercy, because He says: “go and do likewise”.

In other words: in my yoke, the lighter sin is to touch someone who's bleeding out; the heavier sin is to leave somebody for dead. Someone who acts like a neighbour does that.

So his first axiom is: who is my neighbour? The person who he hates the most! What is the yoke of Jesus Christ concerning it? Go and do likewise, show mercy.

Then He tells the guy: you're asking the wrong question. You're asking: “who is my neighbor”, because you want to get a way around it; but I tell you, the real question is: “how can you be a neighbor?”

You should never ask yourself the question: “who is my neighbor”; because the question gives you too many outs. The question is: “have I acted neighbourly today”?

So, my brothers and sisters: who today, did we act like a neighbour to; and who today, did we not? If we had to stand in front of Jesus today, and based on this passage, ask Him: do I get eternal life; would He look at us and say: yes, you acted like a neighbour; or would He say: wait a minute, what have you done?

Who in our life right now, do we actually believe we're better than them?

So let me just ask a couple of questions to close this night out…

1) Where, in our life right now, are we too independently-minded? Where are we not aware of the cries of the hungry? Where are we only aware of ourself?

2) How are my actions affecting other people? When you choose not to sow into the kingdom of God, how far is that effect going? When you choose to turn your back to the cry of the hungry, how far is that going?

3) Where do I need to share in my good things now? Where do I need to make it my problem? Where do I have an extra $300? I can either save that $300, or I can bless somebody else with it. Where have I chosen to bless, instead of to horde? It's a good thing to save too - they were commanded to save 10% of their income.

4) Hard question: Who do I hate the most? Normally it's people who are different than me. Who do we hate the most? Is it the people over there with towels on their heads, who blow people up? Jesus said: if you want to inherit eternal life, you have to learn to love them, just like you'd love yourself. Who do we hate the most?

5) How can I be a neighbour to someone today? Maybe you can write a cheque that feeds some orphans. Maybe you can sow into some ministry you believe in, to help them. Maybe you can give a phone call tonight, before you go to bed, to someone who needs your encouragement. There's 100 different ways you can be a neighbour. How can you be a neighbour today?

The last question is this: There's no answer to this, this is just something we need to ponder.

6) How can making a decision to "be a neighbour" actually save our own soul? Maybe the decision to love someone, you previously hated, humbles your heart to the point that it brings you closer to God, and it actually brings wholeness to your own self - maybe. How could your decision tonight to be a neighbour, actually save your own soul?

I bless you tonight to know that you serve a God who believes in you, more than you believe in Him. He's so humble to make us leaders in his biggest idea, He trusts us, He believes in us, to take His message, the cross of Jesus Christ, that life - to demonstrate, and then announce.

May we be a group of people who always have our hands wrapped in the tassels; never anything more, never anything less; for when we serve the tassels, we are serving wholeness; but when we unwrap the tassels, we unravel wholeness.

May we be a group of people who serve the compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding-in-love God, by being neighbours to everyone, including those we hate.

Form versus Function (5 of 6)

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Greek people, people with white skin that come from Europe, and they find their origins in a really big, powerful church in Europe, that has big buildings with apostles names named after them - we see form. We always see form. We were trained to see form, we think in form, everything about us is form. Hebrew people see function. To study our Bible more effectively, we should be people who are training ourself to see function, not form.

If I only had one session, if somebody said: listen, you've got an hour, and I want you to talk about the most important Hermeneutical principle you can talk about, this would be it: Form and Function.

Greek people, people with white skin that come from Europe - they find their origins in a really big, powerful church in Europe, which has big buildings with apostles names named after them - we see form.

We always see form. We were trained to see form; we think in form; everything about us is form. Hebrew people see function. Hebrew people always see function.

Let me give you the most obvious example I can think of. It says this: “God hid Moses in the crevasse of the rock with His hand.” All of us are form-thinkers; so all of us would have images in our head. We'd have a big cave, you have Moses in there; and then primarily the focus of that particular sentence in scripture is the Hand of God; so you have: Moses, a big cave, and God's hand.

Everybody pictures a big giant hand. It’s really big, right; like it's the hand of God, man. But the question is: does God have a hand? The answer is: no, God's a spirit. God doesn't have a hand like we have. Wait a minute, what about: the mighty hand of God; the strong arm of the Lord?

Again, Greek people think form; Hebrew people think function. When a Hebrew person writes something like 'the hand of God', or 'the strong arm of the Lord', they're thinking: what does a hand do?

The image is a form; but they're thinking: what is the function of a hand? A hand holds, a hand comforts, a hand hides, a hand does all of these things; so when a Hebrew person reads 'and God hid Moses in the crevasse of the rock with His hand', they're thinking: what's God doing to Moses in that cave? He's hiding him; comforting him; touching him. The focus is not on the form; the focus is on the function.

Later it says: “and Moses saw the back-side of God”. Form doesn't really work there, does it; because if God's hand is big... God's back-side would be huge! Can you imagine? Whoa, man! What happened? I saw the back-side of God man!

That doesn't work for us! Our 'form' kind of starts messing up; so we have to learn to see function. Moses saw the back side of God; so if we're going to look at that Hebraically, we have to understand: what is the function, of the back-side of God?

What's the function of God's back-side; because that's what Moses saw? You've got to extrapolate that back, and ask yourself questions like: what substance - is there any substance that God is described as, as observable and tangible?

You could say: God is love, God is mercy? God is all these things; but you can't really observe those things. Those are behaviors or verbs; you can't really observe those things. The only tangible substance that I can think of, that God is described as, is light - something you can see.

As a matter of fact it says: “for God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all”. There at least two substances on earth, that have no weight, and yet have force - which is pretty cool.

Physics says that Force equals Mass times Acceleration; so in order to have force, you have to have weight; but there are two things on earth that have no weight, yet they have force. The first one is light; and the second one is words.

Your words carry no weight, but yet they have force; light has no weight, yet it has force. If you focus light down, focussed enough, you can burn through steel. God is described as both those things - that God is Light; and God is the Word.

So God is described as a being, with no definable weight or matter; yet He has infinite force. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

Now here's what we know from science. We know that the universe is constantly expanding at the speed of light. We also know from the Bible, that Jesus (or God), is holding the whole universe together; so doesn't it stand to reason, that science would prove, that the universe is expanding at the very speed, of the substance, of the one who's holding it together?

Doesn't it stand to reason, that if God is Light; and God is holding the universe together; therefore the universe is expanding at the speed of light?

We also know that the function of light, primarily, is to hold pictures; so if the lights were off in here, you couldn't see. Your eyes don't see anything - your brain sees everything. Your eyes simply take high speed camera photos; and transmit the images to the back of your brain; and then your brain tells you what that is: green shirt. Light allows that image to be stuck.

So we know from science that light is constantly moving forward, at 186,282 miles a second. There's a guy that speaks, Chuck Missler, and he's brilliant. I can listen to him for like seven minutes, and then I'm done, because he's done passed me. He talks about this thing they did with this big telescope. They could see pictures of different phases of creation, because they were looking way, way out there.

So if Moses sees the “back side of light”, what does he see? He sees where light had been, which would be the past; so he sees these images of the past, which is how the rabbi said he wrote Genesis, without living it.

Imagine him standing there, seeing the back side of God, writing it down: Oh, in the beginning God created the heavens, and the earth was without form, and darkness... and the spirit of God was... he saw the past.

You see how seeing function, kind of helps things? Like there's this one place in Psalms it says: “Blessed is the man who walks into the presence of the most high, for he is dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty”.

Now that begs a couple of questions... If God is light, and in Him is no darkness

at all, then how can one who is pure light ever cast a shadow? By definition, in order to cast a shadow, you have to be darker than something. But is there anything in the world brighter than God?

You have a hard time convincing people of that; so if there's nothing in the world brighter than God, then how can God cast a shadow? It's odd. It's kind of a strange statement: “blessed is the man who walks in the presence of the most high, for he's dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty”. So how do you work that out?

The key to that phrase is: “blessed is the man” - blessed is the man, when he walks into the presence of the most high. He is then dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty.

If a man walks into the presence of God, then whose shadow is actually cast? The man! So when you're in the presence of God, the shadow of the Almighty is actually you!

Can anybody think of a scripture where that comes into play? In the New Testament, Peter's walking along, and his shadow raises someone from the dead. Why? Because he was in the presence of God, so it wasn't his shadow anymore. The presence of God filled every part of him - including his shadow. The shadow of the Almighty was actually him - form and function.

We're such form-thinkers. This is the ultimate Pentecostal form, and since we're all Pentecostals here, we ought to be able to make fun of ourselves right?

The ultimate Pentecostal form is laying hands on somebody. We love that form because, since we're form-thinkers, to lay hands on somebody, what does it mean?

To lay hands on somebody, we actually take our hand and we lay hands on them. Laying on of hands has nothing to do with touching people.

Would rabbis ever have laid hands on sick people? Of course they did, they laid hands on sick people all the time - but did they ever touch them? No - but did they lay hands on them? Yes - but did they touch them? No. See our minds are blown already. Do they, or don't they Shane? Would you just spit it out? Why do

you speak to us in parables?

Rabbis laid hands on the sick all the time. As a matter of fact, they commanded other people to lay hands on the sick. Jesus said: Lay hands on sick people, and they will recover. Laying on of hands was an important part of their culture, but would rabbis have ever touched a sick person? No, but did they lay hands on them? Yes. Why wouldn't they touch them? Because they'd become unclean - but did they lay hands on them? Yes. That's because laying hands on somebody, had nothing to do with touching them. It's function, not form.

The idea of laying hands on somebody actually came from Yom Kippur; and it came from: when they offered the sacrifice on Yom Kippur that would take away the sins of Israel, there was two lambs; and one lamb is going to have a really bad day, and the other lamb's going to be set free. So they take the lamb that's going to have the really bad day, and they set him on the altar, tie him down.

Function: why would you tie a lamb to an altar, that you could easily just hold there? The idea was: going to go on the lamb, was the sins of the whole nation; and when sin goes onto a lamb, you leave it there. You leave it at the altar; so they tied the lamb down, then the priest would press the sins of Israel into the lamb. He did things twice, because you had to have two witnesses.

He would press it into the lamb. So he would take the sins of Israel - and all this was obviously in the spirit (or in his imagination) - he'd build the awareness of it, and put it on the lamb. He would lay on top of the lamb, reach around, and press it into the lamb - and the lamb would be going [baaa!] - it would be a bad thing. So he'd be pressing the sins of Israel into the lamb, that would take away their sins.

When Jesus was in Gethsemane - because Jesus obviously is the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world - He said: “Father, I am pressed”. Gethsemane means 'the place of the press'; so He's the lamb, and He's being pressed with the sins of Israel; and it says that He sweat blood from the pressure from it.

Then after that, the priest would lay hands on the lamb - not touch the lamb, lay hands on the lamb, and it was Malar - the word meant ‘to impart something’ - that you have the authority to impart onto somebody else. So it meant to take

something (that you have the authority to give), and give it to somebody else; or give it to something.

Remember when Peter said: “silver and gold I don't have, but what I have, I give to you”. That's the idea of Laying on of hands - to take something out of yourself, and place it on something else (and it's within your authority to give it).

So the priest would take all the sins of Israel, and he would malar, he would lay hands on the lamb. He would take it, and place it on the lamb. Tradition says that the pressure of the sins of Israel going onto the lamb would cause the priest to have to turn his head - so the priest would turn his head.

Remember when Jesus was on the cross, and the Father put all the sins of the world onto Him? It says that God, the Father, had to turn His head, because of the pressure.

You want to hear the rest of that? It has nothing to do with Laying on of hands, but it's pretty cool. At exactly the ninth hour, the Priest would proclaim: “it is finished”; and he'd pull the lambs head back, and he would cut the lambs throat; then he would catch the lambs blood in this cone shaped cylinder - and he would shake it, because the blood had to be living.

If the blood congealed, it would be not fit for sacrifice, and then he'd go into the Holy of Holies, and he would die! So he would shake the blood to keep it moving - to keep the blood active and living - and he would run into the Holy of Holies; and he would shout the whole way: don't touch me, don't touch me, for I have not yet offered the blood of the sacrifice.

Remember when Jesus rose from the dead, and the two women meet Him in the garden, and He doesn't even say hello. He's like: don't touch me, don't touch me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father. Why?

Because He had not yet gone to heaven, and offered His blood in the real Holy of Holies in heaven - not the one made by man, but the real one in heaven. There was no blood there, that's why there was no forgiveness of sins there - so He had to go ascend to His Father, and offer His blood.

So the priest would go in, and he would offer his blood. Do you realise, if would

have been touched right then, the offering would have been negated - He'd have had to go through it all again. Not good! Do you see now why He was like: “no, no, don't touch me man!”

So He goes up to heaven (you don't know about it, because no one was there to write it down), and He sprinkles His blood on the Holy of Holies; and the next thing you know, He's showing up in the upper room going: okay, I can be touched - which meant the blood was accepted forever.

So the priest would go in, and he would sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat, on the horns of the altar; and if it was not accepted, he would be killed, and they would drag him out. If it was accepted, then he would come out, and wash his hands -then he could be touched again.

Then he would walk out, and take the other lamb and say: “Behold Israel - your sin”; and he'd march the lamb between them. Then he'd let the lamb go, and when they couldn't see the lamb anymore, he would say: “Behold Israel, your sin has been removed from you, as far as the east is from the west”.

So the idea of Laying on of Hands has nothing to do with form; everything to do with function; and we've made a form out of this, big time. We've made a form out of everything - I'm talking about good people, who love God with all their heart.

The first time I ever got to pray for somebody, I was on staff at a Presbyterian Church – yeah, they're not really into all that - but I was on staff, and there was this lady who had MS. Her name was Kim, and they came to me, and they said: we heard that you're Pentecostal; and I didn't know if I wanted to admit that or not, because Pentecostals in Charleston are a bit embarrassing, and I said: aah, who told you that?

They said: listen, you believe in healing, don't you? I said: yes. They said: well you're the only one here who does; so we want you to pray for this MS to go. She was in a wheelchair and what-not. I said: oh sure. I mean, what am I going to say? I was 19 years old at the time, and I said: give me a week to prepare myself, because it takes a week to get the anointing and stuff back then - and this is what I thought. Kind of embarrassed about that now, but I was 19, and giving it my best.

So a week's time, with three days left to go, I fasted for three days. My heart was right - I fasted for three days, I did everything, all the forms, all of them - like I did everything I could think of. Man, I had oil out, I was dousing the whole place with oil, I was fasting, I was praying in tongues, I was praying in English, I was praying laying down, I was praying standing up. I even did that whole like crying thing, where you're like breathing in and crying at the same time, the thing that Pentecostals do, you know that thing, that (gasp/inhales) like that, I was doing that!

I was doing everything I could think of to get the anointing to come. I was throwing all the devils out the place, and I mean - oh man, I was doing everything. Then of course the day came, and I was so excited, and I'm like full of faith, because I had pressed in, I'd broken through, I'd done all these things that we do. So she comes in, and of course we start to pray. Then we pray, and we pray, and we pray, and we do this don't we, we just do this. We do all our forms.

So this man comes and says: okay, I'm sick; and so what do we do? We have all the forms to get him healed right, so we lay our hands on him, so we put our hand on him, and we pray something like: Lord, you know, heal him; and then we step back and we say: do you feel better? And he says: no.

Then we go: oh, what do we do? Jesus said: lay hands on the sick and they'll recover; and so I just did - and he didn't get any better. I must be missing something. What am I missing? Oil, we need oil - so we get oil, we douse his head with oil, and then we pray over him, and we say: do you feel better? He says: no; and we're like: okay, what am I missing? What am I missing?

Agreement! We need agreement, right? So we're praying, we didn't even switch the person we're praying for. We're praying and we're like: okay, you need to agree, and so we're all agreeing, we're all agreeing, and we step back and say: do you feel better? He says: no.

What are we missing? Volume - maybe God's deaf, right? So we do this stuff, and we get louder, and we get louder, and we get louder, and we get louder, and we step back. We say: do you feel better? He says: no - which at this point, if he was smart, he would have just said: yes - so we'd leave him alone.

What are we missing? What form are we missing? Tongues! We haven't done the tongues thing yet, so we're like: hey [Prays in tongues] right, we're doing this stuff, and we've got our hands on him, we've got agreement, we've got volume, we've got oil, we got tongues baby, we got it going on! We step back and we say: do you feel better; and he says: no.

What are we missing? Demons, maybe he's got a demon. He's got a demon, so we get the demon off of him, we're doing all this stuff, and we step back and say: do you feel better? He says: no; and we think: ooh, what are we missing? Man, what are we missing here?

Then we run out of form. We run out of everything, we run out of form, and he still doesn't feel better; so then we turn it on him, and we say: “maybe you just don't have faith”. Yeah - and so the same word - oh I forgot, oh yeah, we stand on the word right, yeah, like God forgot what He wrote, remember, so we're doing this whole thing, and we turn it around on Him, and we did.

I'm praying for Kim. I'm doing all the forms, every form I can think of, and then I was so full of faith. I was 19, I'd fasted all week, I was skinny - and wanted to go eat at Outback afterwards; and I had oil - I mean this poor girl, her head drenched in oil. I mean, demons were outside the door, shivering from fear, like they were so scared of me, you know?

I was so full of faith, and I said: Kim, get up out of that wheelchair and walk - which is a disaster, if you've missed it. I was just - my heart was so good I'm telling you, I was - she said: okay, and she stood up, and fell flat on her face. Oh no! I wanted to die! I wanted to crawl under the carpet, and just disappear from the face of the earth. Just this odd feeling; and I was such a form thinker. I was even a form thinker with demons - which will get you beat up.

My first encounter with a demon, I was 19 years old, and it was at the Presbyterian Church, and I was the only one in the room that they thought knew what to do. I didn't know what to do. I just knew what I thought I knew - which is really bad; when you don't know what you don't know - it's really scary. This lady was about, I don't know, 130 pounds or so, not a very petite lady - and she beat four grown men.

I mean she beat us. I mean she had this one big guy picked up - 6'5", 250lbs,

played full scholarship basketball for Oklahoma. She had him off the ground; and he's like: Shane - get her off of me man! And so I did this full gainer; and so you know, we didn't know what we were doing.

They said: Shane, what do we do? I said: I don't know! I said: wait a minute, I've seen this on TV! I said: look at me! She's on the ground (growling sounds). I'm like: look at me! (growling sounds) and then I thought: wait a minute, what am I missing? I'm missing something. There's some form - oh, in Jesus' name - look at me in Jesus' name! She went: grrr; and then I didn't know what to do.

I just knew what I had read about what Jesus did, so I said: you loose her in Jesus' name; and this is what - she's laying there. She goes (in a growling voice): NO! And I went: okey-dokey, I don't know what to do!

I just said: “in Jesus' name” - and you're staying - that's my ace of spades - I have no idea where to go from here! You're not supposed to be able to say “no” to Jesus' name - what are you talking about, you know? Then I found myself arguing with this devil. It was weird. It was the weirdest, most ethereal, 19 year old experience; like other kids my age were out drinking and partying. I'm out throwing out devils, and whoa! And I needed a towel for my pants you know…

Then this thing came over me, like this confidence came over me, and I thought this: I was walking away from the lady. I'm like: I don't know what to do with that, and then this thing came over me, and this thought: “demons can lie”!

So I just said: “yes, you will”. It had to be supernatural power of God stuff, because I did not know anything, about anything, about anything, and that thing left! Wow! Now where it went, I have no idea, but it went! I was like: phew, let's go home before something else happens here.

I got lucky once - even a blind squirrel finds a nut every now and then. I realised I was missing something, because I had to deal with scriptures that said: “lay hands on sick people, and they will recover”. Jesus said that. He predicted His own death and resurrection, and then pulled it off; and yet I was laying hands on people, and nothing was happening. So was He lying, or was I missing something?

The truth is: I was missing something. I was making a form out of everything.

We make a form out of everything. We make a form of "in Jesus' name". I mean, we've all been guilty of this at times, but how many times do we use in Jesus' name as a "10-4 over-and-out" sort of thing? We do it all the time. We do it at the end of prayers without thinking, don't we? Yeah, it's kind of like a "10-4 over and out", but if you look at the New Testament, most of them did not end their prayers "in Jesus' name". They didn't.

What they did was, they stayed in Jesus' name - so everything they said was in Jesus' name. Peter was in Jesus' name so much, that his shadow was raising people from the dead.

“In Jesus' name” is not a form, it's a function - it's a way of life. To lay hands on people means: to take something, that's in your authority to give, and place it over the top of somebody.

The rabbis called it hovering. I can take anything in my authority to give Doug - and I can hover it over him. I cannot put it in him - that is his faith; but I can put it over him - and it will saturate him from head to toe. You see Jesus doing this all the time: “peace be on you”, or “go with peace on you”.

So you might say: what's in my authority to give? You have the authority to give anything that's in the name of God; because you're heirs according to that covenant. You have the authority to give, because you are Abraham's child, and heirs according to that covenant.

God first revealed His name as “El Shaddai” - God Almighty. Some 450-odd years later, He appears to Moses in a burning bush, and He says: my name is “Jehovah” - I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses' response? He's like: na-ah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is El Shaddai - which that's all he would have known. God appears to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai, and they pass it on to their kids and to their kids and to their kids. Who are we in covenant with dad? El Shaddai. Who are we in covenant with dad? El Shaddai. El Shaddai, El Shaddai, El Shaddai. 430 years of slavery, in covenant with a God named God Almighty, and he wasn't doing anything, hmm.

So God finally appears to Moses, and Moses says: what's your name? Who are

you? I am Jehovah - oh, I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and Moses is like: no, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is “El Shaddai”. You just said your name was Jehovah. And He said: My name is Jehovah, I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai, but by My name Jehovah - they didn't know Me.

So God, over time, revealed himself in different names, and with different character traits: God Almighty (the God that has all might); Jehovah - Jehovah who? Just Jehovah; then later: Jehovah Rapha; Jehovah Jireh; Jehovah Tsidkenu; Jehovah M'Kaddesh; Jehovah Nissi; Jehovah Rophe.

These revelations of the name of God came in spurts, and every time God revealed a different part of His name, it expanded who He was; until Jesus came, and then He was given a name that is above every other name. Whether that name be written in heaven or on earth or under the earth, that Jesus is the name that encapsulates all other names of the revelation of God Himself.

We are in Jesus. We are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to that covenant; which means that in every one of us, we have the authority to reach into our spirit, and give to someone else - anything that's in the name of God.

Let me say it this way: you have the authority to give to someone else, anything that's in the tassels, anything. So if Doug needs healing, what name of God is that? Jehovah Rophe. Who has the authority to give that to him? Me - I can simply reach into God.

I can do one of two things: I can pray an intelligent prayer over him, which will do nothing for him; or I can reach into God, and I can grab everything that's in me in the kingdom of God - in Jehovah Rophe - and I can place it over the top of him, and it'll saturate him. That's laying hands on somebody!

If he needs provision, what name is that in? Jehovah Jireh. If he needs inner-healing what name is that in? Jehovah M'Kaddesh. Yeah, it's in us. The kingdom of God is not up and down, or this way and that. The kingdom of God is within us. It's ‘Laying on of Hands’, form and function. We have to learn to be function thinkers.

Last week I talked about Romans 12:1-2 – “I beseech you therefore brother and

the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice” - and what it meant to be a living sacrifice. It's the function of living sacrifices, which are holy and acceptable unto God.

Paul was a Jewish rabbi. His connotation of sacrifices came from Leviticus. In Leviticus 1- 3, it says: “for these are the sacrifices which are holy and acceptable unto God. They have to have their head cut off, their legs cut off and their inner parts clean”.

So functionally-speaking, if you take somebody's head off, what are you taking off? You're taking their authority; so he's saying: an acceptable sacrifice gives up his authority for Jesus' authority. We all, as one body, grow up into Him, who is the head - our legs have to be cut off.

We give up our authority for His authority, our way for His way, and then in that process, He cleans our inner parts up, and that's what makes us holy and acceptable. This is all ‘function’ stuff.

Now with that, as the backdrop of form and function, I want you to look at this. I want you to look at this alphabet I just gave you, called Paleo-Hebrew. This is the Hebrew that was around before Babylon, this is how they wrote. The Hebrew language has morphed, and there's all kinds of different ways to write the letters, but the ones I want to talk to you about today, is the one that says: literal meaning; and then symbolic meaning.

So in the literal meaning category, those are the pictures of how they wrote each letter. So every Hebrew letter is a picture, and every Hebrew word is a comic strip. If you have the pictures, you can put the letters on it, and go from there.

The way they write ‘Aleph’ was an ox or a bull; and since we're learning to be function thinkers, the function of an ox or bull is ‘strength’, or ‘authority’, or ‘a leader’, or something that can ‘bear a burden. That's an ox or a bull.

Bet is a tent, or a house. It can mean ‘in’, or ‘into’, or ‘household’.

Gimel is the third letter, and it's a camel, or a camel hump. It means ‘pride’, to ‘lift up’, to be ‘puffed up’. There's one interesting misnomer with that one. Gimel is a camel. If you just take the 'l' and the 'e' and switch them - its rope.

Remember when Jesus said: it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to get into heaven? This doesn't change the meaning at all, but we've made up all kinds of stuff about what that means…

“Oh, there's this place in Jerusalem and the camel has to duck down...” What? The point is, it's impossible; but what likely happened was: instead of gimel, it was gimla (which would have been rope); so Jesus would have been saying: “it's easier for a rope to make its way through the eye of a needle, than a rich man to get into heaven” - so it doesn't change the meaning, but you can kind of see where the things can get mixed up a bit.

Dalet is door. The way they wrote a dalet was a door; which meant ‘pathway’, or ‘the way into’ something.

Ha was a window, or a fence, and meant to reveal something. It meant to: reveal something; or in some spiritual circles: to let wind in - so it's the spiritual sort of thing.

Vav is a nail or a hook, and it means: to ‘fasten to’, or to ‘hook to’ something. By itself, vav just means ‘and’.

Zayin is a weapon, or it could be a harvester, harvesting supply; and it means to ‘cut’, or ‘cut off’.

Chet, which has a 'ch' sound, is: a fence, a hedge or a chamber, and it meant: ‘private’, or ‘to separate’.

Tet is a snake, which ultimately, we always conotate that with evil - but it didn't mean that in this day. The snake, or the ‘twist’, meant: to ‘surround’ something.

Yud is a closed hand; or it is this image: to lift your hands up to God. It's the first letter of the word praise (yuda), so this kind of image.

Chaf is an arm, or a wing, or an open hand over a head. That's where we get the word ‘cover’ from. The word Kippur (atonement), the first letter of that word is ‘cover’.

Lamed is a cattle goad, or a staff. It means to ‘prod something along’.

Mem is water - moving water, and it means ‘massive’ or ‘powerful’; or it can mean ‘on occasions to be from something’ - from something.

Nun was fish-moving; or fish-multiplied.

Samech was a prop, like a cane, to support something, or to turn something.

Ayin is an eye, which obviously means to see.

Pe or Fe - they get used interchangeably. Pe (or Fe) is an ‘open mouth’, which means ‘to speak’.

Tzadi is a fish hook with bait on it, and it means: the desire of one's heart. It has to do with ‘what lures you’.

Kof is the back of the head, which means behind, or humble, or the least.

Resh is a giant head, and it just means: the head honcho, the highest person, the person in charge.

Shin is teeth, but over time it started to mean this (Spock’s hand-gesture from Star Trek). Spock was a devout Jew. When the writers of Star Trek asked Leonard Nimoy: what do you want the sign of Vulcan to be he said: this.

If you trace that out, it looks like the Hebrew letter ‘Shin’, which means (by itself): name. So when the priests would bless the people at the end of a service, at the end of the priestly blessing it says: (in Numbers 6) “and he will put my name on them”.

So what he would do is, he'd stand before the people, and he'd do this, and he'd say: let the name of God rest on you now, hovering, hovering. Now don't walk around Hastings doing this to each other, they'll think you're a cult. Or you can - it doesn't matter what they think, just do it!

Tau is the last one. Tau was a cross, and it meant covenant.

So what does this have to do with me? Well, when you study your Bible, if you just have a Strong's Concordance, or if you just have Crosswalk.com, or a Bible software, e-Sword, something like that, when you put your cursor over the word

in e-Sword, it'll give you the Hebrew spelling.

So you can come to the Hebrew word, and you can look up the spelling, which means you can see the pictures, which means you'll see the comic strip, okay? Every non-serious Bible study student just yawned, but for those of us who like that kind of stuff, let me show you what this can do to the Bible okay.

The word iniquity for instance: Avon, and it was three letters. ‘Ayin’, ‘Vav’, and ‘Nun’. Using the chart, you can look up: Ayin=Eye; Vav=Fish-hook; and Nun=Fish-multiplying. Iniquity is: “whatever your eye hooks-to multiplies”

How about the word ‘atonement’, which is Kippur? Chaf, Pe, Pe, Resh (plus the vowels that are inserted for pronunciation). Chaf=Open hand over the head. Pe=Open-mouth; but if they write it twice, that means: yelling/shouting. Resh=A head (a giant head). So Atonement is read: “Covering, is being spoken loudly, out of the mouth of the head-honcho”

Who proclaimed atonement in the Old Testament? The high priest - he's the head honcho - the highest person. Who proclaims atonement in the New Testament? Jesus - He's our High Priest. So Kippur: covering is still being proclaimed, loudly, from the mouth of the highest person.

How about this Hebrew tongue twister from John 1:14? “and the word became flesh, and dwelt among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father”.

John 1 is just a commentary on Genesis 1, which says: “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”. John 1 says: “in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God”.

So John 1 is a commentary on Genesis 1, it's about the same thing, and John says things like: “in Him was light, and the light was the life of men”. Genesis 1: “and God said 'let there be light', and there was light”. In Him was light, and the light was the life of men; John is expounding on Genesis 1.

Then he says this in Verse 14: “we have seen His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father” - which in the Hebrew language is a tongue twister.

The word dwelt (from the word ‘became flesh and dwelt’), is the word Shaken.

It looks like the word 'shaken', but it's pronounced [shi-caan]. Shin+Chaf+Nun. Now the way Hebrew words are formed, you normally have a three letter root-word, and then it's formed about that.

Shin=Teeth, or Name. Name is more common, so name. Chaf=the covering over the head (same as in Kippur). Nun=Fish-multiplying.

So in Hebrew, the comic strip says: “and the word became flesh, so that the covering of His name would multiply”.

Now it says: “the word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen His glory”. The Hebrew word for glory is Shekinah, it’s very similar. Taking the vowels out, its: Shin, Chaf, Nun, Ha - same three letters, with a 'ha' on it.

So the Hebrew idea of Glory was: “the covering of His name, multiplied, revealed”.

In other words, what would we look like, if we were covered in God? Jesus showed that, He revealed that that the glory of God is what we would look like, completely covered.

Interesting, it says: we have seen His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Where did they see the glory of God in the Old Testament? By the way, this is still Old Testament; because when Jesus was walking, the New Testament hadn't been established yet. It just happens to be written in the New Testament, but it was still ‘Old’ - Jesus hadn't established the new covenant yet. That happens at like the end of the book.

Where did they see the Glory of God? In the tabernacle! The word for tabernacle is: Mishcon - same word. Mishcon has: Shin, Chaf, Nun with an [m] prefixed to it. ‘M’ means ‘Water’, or it could mean ‘From’.

Mishcon (the word ‘tabernacle’), could mean one of two things. It could mean: “the power, of the covering, of His name, multiplying”; or it could mean: “from the covering, His name multiplying”. So the tabernacle was a place from where the covering of His name multiplies.

But do you see the tongue twister? These are the same words; shaken, shekinah, mishcon - same root word and everything; so in other words, he's like: the

shekinah of the mishcon is now shaken. Hmm, it's pretty cool.

How about the word ‘Tsedek’? That's the Hebrew word ‘righteous’. Tsedek = Tzadi + Dalet + Kof. Tzadi is a fish hook with bait on it; Dalet is an open door; and Kof is the back of a head. The comic strip is: “The desire of one's heart, opens the door to humility” - that's righteousness.

If you then put a 'ah' on it, tzedakah, it means 'righteousness revealed'; which means, in a word: Generosity. “The desire of one's heart opens the door to humility – revealed”. The ultimate act of humility, is to meet someone else's need first.

How about the word praise? The word ‘praise’, there's seven of them, and I'm just naming one: Judah [pronounced yehuda] We'd say Judah - it's: Yud + Dalet + He.

Yud is: the upraised-hand thing. Dalet is” an open door. He is: a window to reveal something. So in other words, this is how they taught Judah. They said: “as I raise my hands to God, He opens the windows and the doors of heaven for me”. Or you could think of it this way: “as I raise my hands to God (as I submit my life to God), the pathway to revelation is made known”.

How about God's name? When God says His name first, it's Yahweh: Yud + He + Vav + He, which is a Hebrew anomaly - its four letters that don't phonetically go together. So Moses is asking Him His name, and God in essence looks at Moses and goes [gibberish]. In essence, He says: I'm not playing this game with you. You want to know My name? My name is: [Koshperovenavonshaven] [Robinhavenshavenoven]

He just made something up: yud, he, vav, he; but if you put the pictures on it, what does it do? Yud is the upraised hands; He is revelation; Vav is a hook; and then He is revelation. So God's name, at its essence means this: “As we worship Him, revelation gets connected to revelation”. It's glory-to-glory, never-ending, perpetual glory-to-glory.

How about the name Rapha, Jehovah Rapha? What letters do you hear there? Rapha? You've got: Resh + Fe + He. Resh is the giant head; Fe is a mouth; and He is ‘to reveal something’. So the word ‘Jehovah, My Healer’ means: “the

highest person is speaking revelation”.

Jireh, the word provision, or provider, it's: Yud - up raised hand; Resh - giant head; He - revelation. In other words: “as I put God in His proper place, the highest person reveals Himself to me”. That's provision.

How about Shalom, the word peace, Shalom? Shin + Lamek + Mem. Shin is: teeth (or name); Lamek is: a cattle goad, or a prod; and Mem is: ‘powerful water’, or ‘from something’. So the word ‘shalom’ means this: “the name is prodding me to power”. In other words, the most powerful state you can be in, is the state of peace inside. That's where you can harness all your power.

Kanaf: Kof + Nun + Fe. “Covering is multiplied out of somebody's mouth”. That was the corner of their garments. That's where the tassels were.

The initial word for Prayer, in Genesis 4, is Tefilla. It had three letters: the front of the head, the back of the head, and then the ox head going into a yoke. So prayer, to a Hebrew person is: “Turning of the head, in order to face the One who can bear the burden”.

It's all about being God conscious, not sin conscious. That is prayer, so what would our prayer-life look like? My brothers and sisters, leaders of God's biggest idea, what would our prayer life look like, if we spent more time becoming aware of God, becoming aware of everything that's inside of us; and knowing that we could take it out of ourselves, and place it onto somebody else? What kind of power would that bring?

If I could have shared anything with you (for an hour), in terms of how to study your Bible more effectively, it would have been on that: that we should be people who are training ourself to see function, not form. And then you can use the letters for every single word in the whole Bible that's written in Hebrew.

Worries of this Life, Deceitfulness of Wealth (6 of 6)

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Jesus says: the worries of this life will keep the word of God from taking root in your life. It's something that chokes your life out. The other one is the deceitfulness of wealth, which is a lie that says: if I had this I would be happy. Do you have one day in seven, that is unlike any other? If you do, how is it different? Who are the most important people to you? What are you called to be? Is that getting your attention first?

In Matthew 13, Jesus tells this parable. He talks about four different kinds of soil, and I don't have time to do the other three types; but the third type of soil, Jesus says about it: the seed gets sown, and it takes root, and it starts to grow; then the thorns choke it out.

These people are good people - they're great people. They just can't seem to get the truth of God's word to stick. The reason is not because they're stony; and it’s not because they don't understand.

These are people who understand that: Jesus' way is the best way for their life. They know what to do -they just don't do it; or they do it for a time - and then it gets choked out. The life of it just gets choked out.

Where do you find yourself in that story? Sometimes, people have tried to preach that, and say: these kinds of people are ‘bad people’; and these kinds of people are ‘good people’; but that's not the point at all.

Jesus, when He explained the parable, said: the hard ground, are the people who don't understand the ways of God, in that area. Have we ever been there? Of course!

Has anybody ever preached something to you, and you went: I've never thought about that before? That means, before that day, you didn't know - you didn't have the revelation of it; so we've all been there.

Has anybody ever been stony? I mean has anybody besides me, ever had a point

in your life where you hear something, you get all excited about it, you make all these promises to God - but it has no root, so then it dies off? We've all been there!

Good-hearted people are there; and in a thorny ground, it actually takes root, starts to blossom - everything's going good, and then the thorns choke it out. Just choke it out. Then of course, the good ground - we've all been there! But I want to talk to you tonight about the thorns, and about: in leadership - are we choking?

Jesus, interestingly enough in this story, He doesn't give them bullet points, or solutions. He just says: “Let him who has ears, let him hear”.

If you're willing to do the work in this area, there's an overcoming that's available to you. The kingdom of God demands that we wrestle with things.

His disciples get frustrated in this story, and they say: “why do you speak to us in parables”? Just tell us what the deal is!

So in Matthew 13:22, He explains the thorns, and saying: “the seed ‘falling among the thorns’ refers to people who: hear the word; but the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, choke the word out of them, making it unfruitful”.

So Jesus says: two things cause good hearted people (where the word of God starts to take root in their life) from the thing taking root. It chokes it out; and that is: the worries of this life; and the deceitfulness of wealth.

The worries of this life: the word ‘worry’, in the Greek language, is something that causes us ‘to split’. In other words: I'm here; but I'm actually there. I'm here with you preaching; but my mind is thousands of miles away on a problem I have - the worries of this life.

I don't have young kids, but how many of you have ever been playing with toys with your kids, but your head was on: how are you going to pay the bills? Split. It's the worries of this life.

Have you ever been out on a date with your spouse, and to have quality time, with just you and them - and you spend your whole time talking about the

worries with your kids? The worries of this life…

It's: I'm here; but I'm actually there, and there, and there, and there, and there, and there, and there. The word ‘anxiety’ or ‘worry’ means: anything that causes you to split; or anything that keeps you from being ‘fully present’. It's the failure to be here.

Perhaps you're sitting here tonight, receiving fresh teaching in the word of God; but your mind is somewhere else? It’s a failure to be here.

Jesus says: the worries of this life will keep the word of God from taking root in your life. It's something that chokes your life out. The other one is the deceitfulness of wealth, the deceitfulness of wealth.

The ‘worries of this life’ is: I'm worshipping; but my mind's on my money. I'm here, but I'm actually in four different other places - I'm split apart.

The deceitfulness of wealth is a lie that's future-oriented. It says this: if I could just get to some place, then I would be really living. It's pushing for something that never quite shows up.

Has anybody besides me, when you get pay raises, you think: phew, I've arrived; but then it doesn't take long, and you haven't?

I remember my first ministry job: I was making $500 a month. I was like: yeah, I could afford a new car! I was living real cheap; but then my first full time ministry job out of college, they paid me $23,000 a year (maybe $400 a week or something?), and I was like: man, I have arrived!

Then of course, after that, it's like: man, I need to make $40,000. It wasn't until like 2004 that I ever made $40,000 in a year; and then when I got that pay raise I was like: whoa! Oh man!

Then you enjoy that for a while, and then you think: what could I do with $60,000? Then you make $60,000 and then it's: what could I do with $80,000. Then you make $80,000 and then: what could I do with $100,000? Then you - what could I do with $200,000, and what could I do with a quarter million? Oh, what if I made $500,000 and then oh…

The deceitfulness of wealth: you have people in this world who are worth $60 billion dollars, and they still go to work every day to make more!

The deceitfulness of wealth: it's a lie that says: if I had this, I would be happy. Has anybody besides me ever been convinced that you ‘had to have’ something; and then you bought it, and six months later you saw it hanging in your closet, and you wondered why you bought it? Maybe the tag was still on it?

Hmm, there are people in this world with nothing to wear, and we have clothes in our closets with tags still on them - the deceitfulness of wealth.

It's deceitfulness - and essentially, the ‘worries of this life’ is: a failure to be here. The ‘deceitfulness of wealth’ is: a failure to be now. It's a failure to be content. It's always pushing for something else, that doesn't happen.

If you've ever made $40,000 and pushed for $60,000; then you find that $60,000 didn't do what you thought it would do. If you've ever made $60,000 and pushed for $100,000, you found it didn't do what you thought it would do. If you ever had $100,000, and pushed for $200,000, and you made it - it didn't do what you thought it would do.

Now let me say this: “money can't buy happiness”. But in a sense, people who really believe that - don't know where to shop! Let me explain what I mean by that. If you're going to struggle – with money, or without money - go with the ‘with money’ side of it, okay.

But what Jesus is saying is: there's contentment. Jesus wants to make us wealthy stewards - He does! He wants us to be wealthy stewards; not rich men, but wealthy stewards - two totally different things.

The Rich Man and Lazarus is the only time in Jesus' whole ministry that he used the word Hades, in terms of somebody going there, and we need to deal with that.

So Jesus wants to make us wealthy stewards. He's not against that, but this is about the heart attitude, which always has to have more. It's a failure to just sit back and say: look at what God's blessed me with. I'm so content NOW!

The ‘worries of this life’ is a failure to be here. Can anybody remember the last

time you could not be fully-present in a situation, you were thinking about something else, because of the worries of this life?

Does it stand to reason then, that is why the word of God cannot take root in our hearts: because of the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth? Is Jesus nailing it, or what? Jesus gave this message 2000 years ago, and it's still true today. The worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, keep us from God's best.

Have you ever popped off in anger, and when you were confronted on your behaviour, you said: yeah, but I was just stressed out? The worries of this life kept you from God's best.

Have you ever made a rash decision that had horrible consequences to it, and when you were confronted on that, you said: yeah, but you don't understand the pressure I was under? The worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth.

We could give example after example after example, but what's the answer? There are a lot of answers. I just want to give you one, and this is in no way a complete answer, this is just one answer that helps. That answer is Sabbath.

Jesus said this: “Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath”. Let me just tell you some things about Sabbath….

To argue about which day of the week it is, misses the point. To make it a day of ‘no fun’, misses the point. To make it a day of ‘rules to keep’, misses the point. To make it a day that puts guilt or condemnation on somebody, misses the point. “Let no one judge you by days, or moons, or festivals”.

But the principle of Sabbath is absolutely necessary to save our life. It will save our life. Will God love you more; or love you less? Absolutely not; it’s nothing to do with condemnation or guilt. It has to do with basic rhythms, that God built into creation.

There is a six-and-one rhythm built into creation. God did, and the animals do too. There's a recent zoological study, using animals in zoos; they put them out for six days, and then hid them for one day, letting them rest. The other group, they just put them out every day. The group they put out every day, actually got

sick. There's a six and one rhythm to creation. God built it into that.

The truth is that we're addicted to accomplishment, achievement, and action. We're addicted to it. It releases something in our brain. You realise we can be addicted to anything? We can be addicted to stress. We love being stressed out; and even though we say we hate it, we actually couldn't do without it, because it releases something in our brain, that we like the feeling of it. Let me prove it to you?

Take a Sabbath; and then by two o'clock in the afternoon, pay attention to how you feel. You feel horrible, and you say: oh, this thing doesn't work. No, it does work; but your body is detoxing from the chemical being released in your brain, that's used to being stressed out.

We can be addicted to anything. I knew a guy once, he'd sleep 10 to 12 hours a day, and when you'd ask him how he was doing, he'd still say: he was tired. Why? He was addicted to that feeling, he liked it.

There's something happens. Something about action, accomplishment; stress - we love it; and we feel like we're a failure if we're not a part of it.

So if you take a Sabbath - just to do it; we'll be depressed, because we miss the rush. When we take a Sabbath for the reason God wants us to - it saves our lives.

Let me just give you a couple of definitions, Hebraically, of the Sabbath - the principle of Sabbath.

1) The Sabbath was a day for you to get the energy you need, for the other six days. That's what it was meant for. It activates the six and one rhythm that God built into creation.

2) The Sabbath was a day for God to mend, and put us back together, that which was broken.

God instituted a time (one day in seven) that was just for Him and His bride. Remember the whole thing was about a wedding? God's way of keeping His marriage together was: one day in seven; it's just you and your spouse, you and your bridegroom. Seven times a year; and one day in seven - those were the festivals. That was how God kept His bride strong.

It was one day in seven that you could come to God, and say: God, the last six days produced this much brokenness in my life. Fix me, so that I don't go into the next six days, and get more and more broken.

It was a day of complete honesty with God - openness, no hiding anything; because you can't get healed if you're hiding something. So it was the day that you could come and say: God, in the last six days, I took this many bumps.

This person said this to me, and it angered me; my father, he's struggling with this, and it makes me angry. My co-worker said this to me, and it hurt me. My child did this - listen, this is broken. These are my broken pieces. I give them to You. Please put me back together. It was a day of complete honesty with God.

I love this definition, the Hebrew boys would say this: Dad, why is this day ‘unlike any other’? So Sabbath was a day ‘unlike any other’. Do you have one day in seven, which is unlike the other seven days? If you do, how is it different?

Let's get right down to the nitty-gritty. What day of the week, do you ‘not check your email’? What day of the week, do you ‘put your list away’? What day of the week, can I not ‘get in touch’ with you? What day of the week, do chores ‘not matter’ for that day?

Sabbath was a day that you reminded yourself: He is God, and you are not. It was a day where you pretended like your work was done, even if it isn't.

Sabbath was a day where you were freed from the slave driver of ‘things to do’.

If you’ve never tried it, I won't like you any more or any less; neither will God. I'm just saying: it'll save your life.

If you ever try it, you would not believe how addicted we are to our lists of things to do; to the internet; to feeling like we're needed.

There's something so healthy about one day in seven, that reminds us that: He is God, and we are not, and the world will still keep going around, even if my little list doesn't get done.

There's so much pressure on us, when we don't see it that way; because the only other way to see it, is: if my list doesn't get done, then this won't, and this

won't… Then we get into the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth - which chokes the word out of our life.

Sabbath is a way to live differently, to live differently for one day - just one day - to remind yourself that God's in charge, and you're not; and this whole thing's going to be okay, because He's God, and we're not. To live differently, to live a different way, is counter-productive.

Ecclesiastes 3 says: “To everything there's a season, there's a time; there's time to be born, a time to die”, a time to preach, a time to watch Rambo. There's a time to pray, and a time to play golf. There's a time to counsel, and a time to fish - if that's your thing.

Tell me about the rhythms in your life; because, if you get stuck in one rhythm, then you're boring. You're boring!

If you get thrown into a tizzy with one interruption, you often miss God's best. We get so focused on our list (our things to do), that one little interruption causes us to be stressed out.

So we call, we say: how are you going? Oh, I'm stressed out. Why? Well, I had my day going, and then such and so interrupted me, and then… Yeah, but what did God show you in that? Oh, I don't know, I'm just so stressed out.

You know, some of the best miracles of God, came in an interruption? The tassels - remember the lady with the issue of blood? Was she in Jesus' plan that day? No. Where was He going? Jairus' daughter.

The lady with the issue of blood interrupted Him, and actually because of her interruption - the girl died before Jesus got there - and it was still okay. Some of the greatest miracles in Jesus' life came in interruptions.

If an interruption ruins us, we miss the reclamation of a new rhythm, that God is calling us to. But sometimes Sabbath, what it does is: it backs us up, and it reminds us that God is in charge; and if He brings something new into my life, well - blessed be the name of the Lord.

So let me just apply this in some very simple ways:

1) Who are the most important people to you? If you just take a second, and just write out some names, there should be only four or five names - unless you have eight kids. If you have eight kids, please write all their names. I'd hate for one kid to see another's on there, and I didn't make the list! Then they come and see me, and they're stressed because of it. Yeah, they're all worried, yeah.

Who are the most important people to you? Either write it down, or make mental ascent to who they are. Who are the most important people to you? Take time and think about that, the most important people. If you're married - yeah, it should be that person. If you're writing your kid's names down before your husband, you have a problem.

Who are the most important people to you? There's no reason not to be honest, it's just you and God - are they getting your attention first?

What percentage of your energy are they getting? Or are you caught in your list, and the very people who most need your attention - because they're the most important - actually get the least energy. Then everything goes to custard, and we wonder why. It's not that anybody's a bad person, it's just the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth.

2) What is the most important thing to you? Put another way: what are you called to be? Is that getting your attention first?

Have you ever talked to somebody, and you say: what would you like to do? Would you like to snow ski at Queenstown? Oh I'd love to go snow skiing at Queenstown! I just haven't had time in the last three years. It's like: what? I mean they've got money, they're gainfully employed - they could afford to do it - they just can't find the time in three years. Are you kidding? The ‘worries of this life’, and the ‘deceitfulness of wealth’!

Do what is the most important! Let me ask you it this way: if you were to move tomorrow, what would you keep? If you had to box your whole house up tomorrow, what would you keep? What would you sell? What would you give away? What would you throw away? If you were to move tomorrow and do these things, why haven't we done it today? What are we holding on to? The ‘worries of this life’; and the ‘deceitfulness of wealth’.

Everything we keep in our house, that doesn't belong there, takes energy; so what are we giving energy to today, that is taking energy away from the most important things?

If I looked at your list - at the most important people in your life, and the thing you're called to do; if you take that list, and only you can do this - take that list, and then look at your calendar. Look at your diary. Look at your schedule.

Does your schedule reflect that list? If it doesn't - you're choking. The worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, have got you; and it's choking the word of God out of a good-hearted person's life.

Can I give you just like one exercise to do? This is so cool, and if you were in my office, it would cost you $120 an hour; but this is free.

Everybody's got their piece of paper? This is part of our altar call - if you're really spiritual, and you need to think of it as an ‘altar call’, then think of it that way, okay? The altar call is starting - let me just get holy okay - altar call's starting. Here's form and function...

I want you to take your piece of paper. This is so therapeutic, this is going to help you so much, and I just want to deal with the worries of this life. The deceitfulness of wealth is something that takes some time to develop, but the worries of this life...

I want you to take five minutes; and I want you to list out everything you're worried about right now.

Don't think too hard! Man, some of you are writing fast, good Lord! I'm only kidding...

The worries of this life - what are you worried about right now? Money? Bills? Marriage? Whether your dad likes you or not? Whether Cooder Montgomery (at work) thinks you're doing a good job? What are you worried about right now?

Where do the worries of this life have a hold? Please don't think of this as ‘admitting you're wrong’, or something like that. This is just getting in touch with an emotion that you might not have touched - the ‘worries of this life’.

It's such an important emotion. It's the first thing Jesus mentions, of what keeps the word of God out of our life. Where are you worried? Maybe a way to identify it is: when you're here; but you're actually there - what is ‘there’?

You know for pastors sometimes, sometimes I'm in one place, and I'm already thinking about what God needs to do in the next. That's worry. God can handle that. He's like really big, and I'm really small. I'm a really small shot, and a big shot lives in me.

Below that list, I want you to write two columns. The first column is: things I can do something about; and the other list is: things I can't do anything about. Now look through your list and categorise it.

Category #1 is: things I can do something about - for instance, if you're worried about finances, and you don't have a job, then getting a job would be something you could do something about.

Things you could do something about, and things you can't. For those things you could do something about, let me just go Joyce Meyer on you for a second okay.

Joyce Meyer impersonation: “Shut up, quit complaining, get off your behind and do something about it! Make a plan of action, put that plan of action into place, and go and do likewise; and if you can't make a plan of action, go sit with someone who can help you make a plan of action. Put that plan of action into place, and go and do likewise”.

Or I could go Joel Osteen on you: “You're a champion! God loves you! You don't let that list get in your head, and get you all negative. You tell that list to go on back to hell, where it came from. Me and Victoria, we was talking the other day about what daddy used to say about y'all, and he wouldn't tell you to worry about your list. He'd tell you to do something about it! Think positive, and be a champion!”

If the ‘worries of this life’ fall under the category of ‘something you can do about it’ - then do something about it. Don't sit around. Don't let me come back next year, and you have the same list of the stuff you can do something about. Man, do something about it! If you don't know what to do, then go sit with somebody who does. I promise you, there's somebody - and do something about

it.

On the other side, are things that you cannot do anything about. This would include any worry you have, that involves the actions, behaviours and emotions of another person. They're responsible for them. This involves any worry you have about: approval from somebody else. This involves any worry you have about: a need that you have, that only somebody else can meet. This involves any of those things.

With the things that you can't do anything about - oil prices; the price of milk going so high, that you can drink Bourbon cheaper than you can drink milk, hmm. I mean just for financial reasons, mothers could be giving their kids whiskey - it's cheaper than milk! This would include all of those things.

Everything that you cannot do anything about - here's what I want us to do; and we've had a light hearted moment, and I'm glad because God wants us to be light-hearted. But I can tell you this, that for most of us - some of us, we might have worked this out, and that's great - but for most of us, we need to have a holy moment with God, and we need to repent; for the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth - choking God's best out of us.

I mean, does anybody besides me need a moment with God with that? We need to take a stand in faith against the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, and just say: you can't have my life one more day. You're choking God's best out of my life, and I am taking a stand, right now.

Maybe we need to take the other side of that list, and we need to have a holy moment with God, and have a Sabbath, and just say: you know what? I'm taking a Sabbath from worrying about these things; and I'm taking a permanent vacation from worrying about the other, because I'm going to do something about it.

But for this side of the list: Lord, You are God, and I am not, and I'm tired of choking. I don't want to choke one more day. I want Your best. I want Your word to take root, and I want Your best to come through my life. It is so freeing, and the pressure's off from me, to let You know that You're God, and You're going to have to handle this.

I'm not talking about some cliché - just leave it with Jesus. I'm talking about the feelings and the emotions that you would feel, if all of that anxiety was off of you now.

Mr Soundman, if there's like a Terry MacAlmon CD or something back there - I gave you no warning on this, and if there's not don't worry about it; but like, I don't want you to put on any rock 'n roll or anything. That'll come later, you know. “Back In Black” is not appropriate right now.

But here's what I want you to do. I want us to take from now, to the end of the night, whenever God's done; and I want us to have a holy moment with God, where we stand in faith, and say: “the word of God will take root in my life, because I am going to stand against the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth”. We need to repent for it.

Maybe some of you need a moment around the tassels. We need to remind ourself, that God's way is the best way for my life. That my life is covered in the word of God, the name of God, the ways of God, the grace of God, and the nature of God.

I don't wear these tassels, but sometimes they mean so much to me, like it normally is in my closet. There's been times where I was so worried about something, and I went into my closet to get dressed, and I was trying to decide what shirt to wear, and I looked up and the tassels were pointed out, and it just reminded me: God is God, and I am not.

There have been times where I thought I was going to have a stroke, from the anxiety that had come over me, over something. My head was rushing, my face was flushed, I was all flustered, I didn't know what to do, and I walked in my closet, and this was hanging out. I reminded myself: God is God, and I am not. May the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, never rob me of God's best.

Lord, we repent for allowing the things that choke our life: the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth. Lord, I repent for letting those things be Lord. I repent for letting those things dominate my thoughts.

Forgive me Lord, for every time I've been here, but actually there. Forgive me

Lord for the deceitfulness of wealth, for constantly pushing for something that doesn't come. Lord, we repent for that.

We change our thinking; and Lord, we look at our list, and we tell You: this is stuff we can't do anything about - and we leave it with You. Truly, in our emotions, we leave it with You. Lord, we repent for the feeling of worry, and what it does to our faith. We own it. We repent for it.

We stand against it together. We stand against any spirit that comes against our mind that tells us: worry is the best way for life. No, we stand against it. We stand against the deceitfulness of wealth.

Maybe we need to commit to taking a Sabbath, to the principle of Sabbath; reminding ourself that He is God, and we are not. I want you to have a holy moment with God. The tassels are here for you.

If you're paying attention, you can really sense a strong presence of God in here. He's dealing with those emotions that come from the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, things that choke our life out. He's just dealing with those things. He's setting people free. They can leave free to have the word of God take root in their life, and we leave tonight with that mind.

So let that presence keep flowing thicker and thicker and thicker, that feeling of the presence of God. Let it just rush through this place now, through every person from the top of their head to the soles of their feet. I reach into that now, and I ask that You'd flood this place with Your presence.

We just love the sweetness and the gentleness of the Holy Spirit, and how His presence takes painful things like these sometimes, and He just deals with them and sets us free.

In a position of faith Lord, we stand now with You. We stand against these things, and we proclaim ourself kingdom people. We live Your way. Let the word of God take root in good soil in our heart.

May the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, die off of our ground. Just weed it out, Lord. Pick the thorns out. Lord, I say to You: please do that in my life. I submit my heart to You, tell You I love You with everything I

am; and I want Your best for me. Let this take hold.

Lord, I pray that You bless us tonight, that You would mark us - let us mark this in the spirit tonight - as a moment where we know that we're empowered over the worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth. Free us Lord, for the principle of Sabbath - to know that You are God and we are not. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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