

# Conversations

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 October 2025

Preacher: John Hopkins

[ 0 : 00 ] So one of the things that's very cool about humans is that we're adaptable. We can face difficulty and overcome and triumph.

! And this last couple of weeks with the theft of our equipment has been a great example! of that. Watching people step up, watching the different gifts in our body come to the floor.

And I don't think there's this to beat. I'm really proud of us. Because I think that's the way God has designed us to function as the people of God.

Not to be overwhelmed when things don't go well, but to take a hard look and say, you know, I think there's a solution here. And by God's grace, we can figure that out. On that note, notice that I have really large things in my ears.

No, I didn't have a sudden catastrophic loss of hearing. I got yelled at last week because I didn't think to record the message. And there's a certain mother, new mom, who will remain nameless, who busted my chops for not thinking to turn on my phone.

[ 1 : 06 ] So you know who you are. And I better have, you better do your homework after this message. So we'll see if she does. So we're recording to see how this works.

I think it should go fine. So just pray that I don't get electrics in between this device and that device and these things in my ear. Could be catastrophic. So John, you need to be ready to jump up at a moment's notice if that happens.

So, and I just want to, as we head into the service, really commend and thank all the people who are so involved in the church. I mean, I come up here Sunday after Sunday and magically the flowers have changed to reflect the season.

By the way, if you're not so happy about the fall, but you have to take the good with that. But I'm so grateful because these things happen and people step into the gap and make sure they get done.

That's the body of Christ in action. And that is a sign of a healthy body. I'm very encouraged by that. And I hope you will be as well. On that note, there's also opportunity for us to serve one another, to love each other, to demonstrate the love of Christ to one another.

[ 2 : 17 ] This morning, unfortunately, brings sadness as well. We got word Friday morning that Steve Gross, that if you knew he had been battling with cancer for a number of years, passed away.

So pray for Patty Michaels. Pray for just the whole process that goes along with funeral prep and all that type of thing. This is a hard time for her.

So just pray for them and keep them in your prayers. Keep her in your prayers. And pray for all of us here in our congregation dealing with health issues, cancer in particular, that God will be working for strength, for endurance, and for us as a body to surround our members that are sick.

And this is worth it. They encourage them. Right? So let me pray for Patty and then we'll get on with the message. Father, it's important for us to always remind ourselves and remind each other that you are the God of all comfort.

That you are with us in our worst times when life is the hardest. God, I've been reading in Job lately and just reading about Job and his huge, huge tragedies that hit one after the other with your permission.

[ 3 : 31 ] And yet he kept his eyes focused on you. Lord, help us to be good friends, not like those three clowns that showed up in his house. Let us be people who listen, who love well, who are encouraging, and who contribute to people's needs even tangibly.

We would be eager to step in the gap. God, thank you that you've given us to each other as gifts. God, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, we had committed quite a while ago as the pastoral team to give you reports shortly after we meet every month.

And so we met a couple weeks ago, and I kind of got sidetracked last week, so now I'm playing a little bit of catch up. But I want to give you our pastoral report. This week, I'm kind of facing the challenge that missionaries often face when they're doing their monthly prayer letters.

I have been a guy who has harassed missionaries. You need to keep us informed. Good letters equal prayers and dollars. Good letters. So I'm writing a prayer letters.

In fact, the matter is, missionary work is kind of a grind. Somewhere there's not, sometimes there's just not exciting stuff to send. Not all missionary letters read the biography of Letson Taylor.

[ 4 : 51 ] Well, that's kind of what this pastoral report is. We don't have any great news to share some tremendous movement of God that he has suddenly put on our hearts instead.

We want you to know that Pastor John and Pastor Tim and I are seeing steady, encouraging signs and growth in our body. That we're seeing God move.

We're seeing God move in our relationships. I mean, those two guys go back decades to their childhood practice. I've been here six months. And yet we're seeing God work, develop our friendship, our relationships.

That's important. So continue to pray for us. Continue to pray for wisdom for us as leaders. And we're listening to God, learning what he wants for Tri-State Community Church as we go forward. And then he fits things. To obey him and step into whatever his call happens to me. So we'd appreciate your prayers on that. So, now, turn your mind to Mark chapter 12.

[ 5 : 55 ] And while you're doing that, I'm going to open my water bottle and then give you some review. Apologies for the noise.

So, a theme that we've been following in the Gospel of Mark is this whole idea of authority.

Remember, James and John in particular were wrapped up in power and authority. Jesus dealt with that. Certainly the Pharisees were all about authority. Jesus talked about that the people of the kingdom, leaders of the kingdom, would be servants.

Jesus said, I'm your example. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. That's the model. It's not a new thing.

It's actually the restoration of the way God originally designed humanity to work together. That we learn to submit to one another. And that leaders lead the way in submission.

[ 6 : 54 ] And God is using that to prepare us to be his subjects in the kingdom of God. And it returns in its full glory when the triumphant king is revealed to the world.

That we're ready as his people to submit to his leadership. So, this theme of authority keeps coming up again and again. We see it repeated, repeated, repeated. What we've been talking about as well is what does that mean for us?

What does it look like for us as Christians? How do we exercise authority? If you recall last week, I gave an example about somebody exercising authority that was given to them by God to reach out to somebody, to extend invitation because God had granted that authority.

We need to exercise that authority as we go out into the world. There's a couple of reasons for that. Number one, God has given it to us. We are the children of God. And because of the children of God, we have certain benefits, just like my children have benefits, that no other kids in the world have.

By virtue of being related to me. I love kids. You guys have seen that. And yet, my children, my grandchildren have a special relationship. We have those privileges as children of God.

[ 8 : 14 ] We can come boldly before the throne of grace, it says in Hebrews. We can call him daddy, it says in Roman things. But there's also expectations that come along with this authority that God has given us.

I love this passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Now, all things are from God. Who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

So, we were enemies of God. Romans 5 really develops that. And in Christ, we are brought back into fellowship with God. Jesus reconciled us to God. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And that began the process, brought back into relationship. And then, second half of this verse, he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. So, he's passed it on. That's the Great Commission.

Go into all the world, making disciples. Namely, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. So, Jesus is the means that God is using to bring the world to himself.

[ 9 : 19 ] Not counting their trespasses and sins against them. Here's the cool part. He is committed to us. The word of reconciliation. So, Jesus does the work.

But we're the means. We are the tools in God's hands that's reconciling individual people. Backing with our relationship with God. What a privilege. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ.

As though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ. Be reconciled to God. It's important to note that Paul always has an evangelistic heart.

Even at the end of that passage where he's talking to believers. He has to stick in that extra note. Be reconciled to God. We beg you on behalf of Christ.

And I would say that to you this morning. Don't assume. Examine your heart. But be sure that you have been reconciled to God. That you have put your trust in Christ.

[ 10 : 21 ] For the forgiveness of your sins. But we have been given this ministry. We are ambassadors. We are the representatives of God in the world. And that gives us authority.

We don't have to ask permission. We can step in. And we should. And then we talked about the fact that Jesus in his mission to earth. Part of his mission was to be our model.

To show us what a godly human being looks like. And we're going to focus again on that today. Last week's sermon. This week's sermon. And next week's sermon.

Basically are looking at four different conversations. And while those conversations were certainly important from a theological perspective. They were important for the people who were engaged in those conversations.

They're also important because they show us how we can serve as ambassadors for Christ in the world. Does that make sense? And then of course we talked about three different verses.

[ 11 : 24 ] I'm going to give them to you really quickly. This is how we should conduct ourselves. Daniel 11.32b. The second half of the verse. The people who know their God display strength and take action.

We display strength. We step up. We exercise authority. And then in the New Testament. Paul repeated the same idea in 1 Corinthians 15.58. Well look. I need to slide it.

I forgot the fact. Thank you, Martha. Isn't that great? Everybody's got my back. That's a very important role. I need to be monitored at all times. That's why God gave me a good wife.

So 1 Corinthians 15.58. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

We need to be steadfast, immovable. We know who we believe. Don't be pushed around. Stand firm. Don't be a jerk. But stand firm.

[ 12 : 25 ] Continue to press forward because you are an ambassador for Christ. You have that authority. And then last week we talked about 2 Timothy 1.7. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity.

We're not to be afraid. We're not to be put off. God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but a power and love and discipline. Power, authority, exercise in love.

We'll talk about that next week. Discipline. We're here to be self-controlled. Kind of a side note. Over the last six months, you've seen me get emotional.

As I've preached, you've seen me get fired up about some topics. I would suggest to me that you have not seen me really preach. Next week, I am passionate about God's command to convince.

To love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And to love each other. And what that actually practically means. And we're going to be talking about that next week.

[ 13 : 33 ] And I am so convinced that this is the essence of what it means to be in Christ. And to execute our calling to be ambassadors for Christ. It's rooted in love. So come next week ready for a challenge.

And for just a really deep dive in what God means by those topics. So a little bit of a commercial for next week. But God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

That's how God wants us to go out into the world. We're going with his authority. Have confidence in that. Now, as we look at these four conversations.

I'm going to tell you about four conversations that I had in my life over the last 20, 25 years. They're funny for the most part. But they really illustrate Jesus' absolute genius in how he deals with the different characters that come across his path.

In these four conversations that we've seen tomorrow. So let me introduce you to this guy. I'm not going to put his picture up there to protect the guilty. But I had a manager named Lucas. Big man. I mean, he was two and a half times man on him.

[ 14 : 37 ] And he was a bully. There's just no other way to put it. And so he would attack me on my faith. He would attack me on my politics.

If there was something that he could throw his weight around, literally and figuratively, he would do it. He was a bully. And I learned a tactic when we were working with kids in the Dominican Republic. That sometimes the best way to deal with somebody is don't reward negative behavior. And you just walk away. That's what Jesus did in the first conversation.

The one we talked about last week. Where last week the disciples or the Pharisees, the leaders of the Jewish family was like, who do you think you are? What right do you have?

Where did you get this authority? And who gave it to you? Jesus didn't answer the question. He answered their question with a question and said, you don't answer mine. I'm not going to answer yours.

[ 15 : 32 ] Speak to them again. That's what we have to do with bullying. Then the next one was this young lady that was in our first youth group. Young lady named Renee.

This is hilarious to me. She comes to our house about five o'clock at the school night. She knew that our front door wasn't locked. So she just came in. We came in and were shocked to find this girl sitting in our living room.

She had a tale of woe. And, you know, she said, John, you think you know my parents? You think you know that they're godly people and they're kind and they're loving?

You don't know my parents. And she told this tale of how Jim and Diane probably were doing animal sacrifices in the basement.

And, you know, were these horrible people. And, oh, my goodness, you just don't know my parents. Oh, wow, that's terrible, Renee. What did they say to you? Oh, my dad.

[ 16 : 28 ] What a clown. This is what you can you believe. This is what he said I need to do to have a life that is pleasing to God.

Well, she didn't care about it that time. And his advice was just done. Can you believe that? Okay. So we had dinner. We played some games and whatever we did. We get to the end of the evening and I brought conversation back around.

And I just gave her her dad's advice. Almost verbatim. And she looked at me. Oh, John, I wish you were my dad.

You're so wise. You're so caring. I thought, oh, my goodness. You are so silly. She's naive.

And Jesus deals with that in the first conversation we're going to deal with today. So I had the bully. I had the one who was naive, who didn't even recognize what I did.

[ 17 : 28 ] Then the third one is an assistant manager whose name I can't remember, who was also always on the attack. I thought he was so smart. And he would just come in and he would actually say to me, man, you're such a smart guy.

How can we be a Christian? And one day I had enough. And his argument was, very arrogantly, I have moral views based on science and facts.

You, however, have to depend on faith. And I just had enough. And I pulled out the sword and beat the tarum.

Disarming him. Left him on the ground. Covered in blood. Not literally. But I completely annihilated his view in very short order.

Because his worldview, which was the whole evolutionary process, and time and chance equals humanity, and morality is relative. And I demonstrated to him conclusively that to arrive at his conclusions required more faith than I did to trust that there's an actual God who loves me and sent his son to die on the cross.

[ 18 : 39 ] And he was laying on the ground looking like a fish out of water. And I said, oh, oh, oh. What hit me? Because I was done. Jesus does that with the Sadducees in the second conversation we're going to look at today.

The third of the four. Sometimes you pull out the sword and you just club somebody with it.

Because they need to be shut up. And then the fourth one was a guy named Scott who was also working at the same store with us.

And he was deeply hurt. His mother had died when he was in high school. And he resented the fact that God took his mom. And I learned over time that while he presented himself as an atheist, what was really going on is he needed answers for the deep hurt.

Because he felt that God had betrayed him. That God had betrayed his mother in letting her die. And he would ask me, why do you believe in self? Help me to understand why you can have this confidence.

Explain it to me. And he was genuinely inquiring. Scott wanted to know the truth. And so we spent hours talking about how, why I believe what I do and what the Bible says about his pain and the things that were in his life.

[ 19 : 53 ] That's the type of person we're looking for, brothers and sisters. It's people who are open. And I would suggest to you that when Jesus said, go and make disciples, the discipleship process begins before somebody ascended to the decision for Christ.

Scott was seeking. And I was able to speak truth into his life. I was discipling him before he made it. And I don't know. I moved on. I don't know if he ever came to Christ.

But for that year, he had a faithful witness who was willing to love him and listen to him and bring truth to bear in his life. That of all four of the conversations, that I believe is where I was truly serving as an ambassador.

Moving the ball forward in somebody's life to bring. So we're going to look at these four conversations and you're going to see Lucas and Renee and my nameless assistant manager and Scott as we go through.

So now let's read Mark 12 together. We're going to read verses 13 through 27. Then they, stop right there.

[ 21 : 02 ] We're not going to get very far. The they is the combined leadership of the Jews. The people who attacked Jesus earlier in the sermon I did last week.

It's a collection of the different parties that had different political views, different religious views, different understandings. But them together represented the leadership. Those are the ones who went to Jesus and said, who gives you the authority?

And so they got their behind sticks, went fleeing with their tails between their legs. That's verse 12. But then they sent their big guns, their champions, if you will, to confront Jesus again.

So that's the they. Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to him in order to trap him in a statement. Got to stop there. Pharisees and Herodians. Now imagine, this is not a political sermon, but I'm going to use politics.

Imagine if you have, trying to think of good examples. If you had Charlie Kirk, if you're still alive, and AOC, who had a common enemy that they couldn't stand.

[ 22 : 13 ] And so their leadership said, you two hate each other, but you hate that guy more. Go get him. That's the equivalent of what the leadership of the Jews said.

Pharisees and Herodians literally hated each other. The Pharisees were the religious conservatives. They would actually be real comfortable hearing. They believed in the inerrancy of scripture. They believed in the entire Old Testament, just as we do.

They believed in the supernatural. They believed in the resurrection. They believed in angels. We have a lot common with Pharisees. Not all of them. We have that streak, that tendency we have to guard against to be legalistic like they were.

But we would agree with them. They were conservative, biblical-thinking people. And then the Herodians were a group of Jews. They were not pure-bred Jews, if I can put it that way.

And they were strong advocates for the Hasmonean dynasty, which was the Herodians, who were also not pure Jews. And their view was, hey, when in Rome, do what the Romans do.

[ 23 : 21 ] And we're in Rome, because we're part of the empire. We should pay our taxes. We should be regularly involved in cooperating with the Roman authorities. Because, you know, life is easier when you go along to get along.

And they totally disagreed with each other, specifically on the issue of taxation. Because the Pharisees, some believe that a godly Jew should not pay taxes to the Romans.

Because they believed that Caesar was divine, that he was actually the son of God, and he was a high priest. They wanted nothing to do with that. So they argued, no tax, we're not going to pay taxes.

And, of course, the Herodians said, well, you know, you've got to pay taxes to make things good, to continue the empire moving along. So these are the people who come to confront Jesus. They came and said to him, Teacher, we know that you are truthful and defer to no one, for you are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.

Stop there. This is how you want people to talk about you. Whether they agree with you or not. They recognize Jesus' character.

[ 24 : 29 ] They weren't blowing smoke. They weren't ground-nosing. This wasn't a setup. This wasn't a knowledge. You are a man of the truth. Now, we don't agree with your version of the truth, but you are a man who's dedicated and will not give up on what he believes.

And I remind you of maybe Daniel 11.32. The people who know their God, His place, strength, can take action. That was Jesus. And the Herodians and the Pharisees recognize that. Just as a kind of a bonus application, do people recognize that about you?

Are you somebody who knows what they believe and stands firm in them? It is not. Why am I? We'll come back to that in the end as we apply it in the sermon about how to get to that point.

But Jesus was a man of integrity. He was a man of character. And the people around Him recognize that. So they recognize that He was truthful.

He deferred to no one. You're not partial to any. He didn't take sides. You teach the way of God and choose. Is it lawful to pay a poll tax to Caesar or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?

[ 25 : 40 ] But He, knowing their hypocrisy, because He knew they were just trying to catch Him, Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at. So they bring up a coin, about a day's worth, a day's wage.

He looks at it. And there's pictures of it. Well, Caesar's. And Jesus says very simply, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

And they were amazed at it. They greatly marveled. These guys are so much like my friend Rene. Did you notice that Jesus didn't answer the question at all?

As a matter of fact, He just paraphrased the question. They brought to Him. He just reframed it. But He didn't say a word. He didn't answer them. And they marveled.

They're just naive. They're not paying attention. Not listening. And they went what? Some Sadducees who say that there is no resurrection came to Jesus and began questioning Him, saying, Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife and leaves no child, his brother should marry the wife and raise up children to his brother.

[ 26 : 51 ] That was a concept of the kinsman redeemer. The kinsman redeemer was set up in the Mosaic Law as a way of protecting young widows, not young widows, but usually young widows, but widows who had no family.

It was to protect the women. It was to protect their inheritance. So the inheritance didn't get lost because that was a very important process. But in the Mosaic Law is keeping track of their land inheritance.

And so the kinsman redeemer is exactly what they quoted him. If somebody, if a man dies without an heir, his brother should come along and do the duty for his brother to raise up an heir for his family, to preserve the family line.

So here's the hypothetical. There were seven brothers, and the first took a wife and died leaving no children. The second one married her and died leaving behind no children. And the third likewise. I have three brothers.

My wife is convinced she picked the best one. And has no interest in the other three. So this keeps going. You can check that with her, by the way.

[ 28 : 02 ] She will be a further. And so all seven left no children. Last of all, the women died also. In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be?

For all seven had married her. A little bit about the Sadducees. They only believed in the first five books of the Old Testament. What's known as the Torah or the Penetra. They didn't accept anything to follow.

And as a consequence, they rejected the supernatural almost entirely. They didn't believe in the resurrection. They believed this is it. They didn't believe in angels. They didn't believe in anything that's the foundation of the question that they're asking of Jesus.

It's a very cynical approach. We don't believe any of this. And what they're trying to do is catch Jesus. So they can either throw up their hands and say, oh, you're just one of those Pharisees. Or they can say, hey, he's partly one of us. It's another text point, too, that they're trying to put Jesus in. Very cynical. Jesus said to them, is this not the reason you were mistaken?

[ 29 : 02 ] Note order. He pulls out his sword and just starts wailing on him. You guys are wrong. You think about the other conversations. Jesus doesn't lead with that. But here he says, you're

mistaken. That you do not understand the scriptures or the power of God.

Boom. Boom. Camera. You don't understand God's word. You don't understand his power. You are totally off base here. No mercy. For when they rise from the dead.

He makes them on one of their favorite points. People do rise from the dead. They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

He smacks another one of their principal volumes. There are angels in heaven, guys. Deal with it. So for when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Just as kind of a side note. You might think, well, I like my spouse. I want to stay married. Why would I want that?

[ 30 : 08 ] And why is the vow until death do us part? Well, if you think about what we have to afford in heaven, or into heaven, if you look at the passages that describe heaven, the end of the book of Revelation, 1 Corinthians 15, we have an intimate relationship with God that supersedes and eclipses everything else.

I love Kara. I love our marriage. But it's hard for me to fathom, but when I'm in the presence of God, he's going to be my end.

And that's the point that Jesus is making. And we want to enjoy our marriages. We want to enter into them. We want to maximize all that we can enjoy with our spouse in this life.

But there's something even better than marriage that we have to look forward to. And like the angels, we're not given in marriage because we are focused on the Lord Jesus himself.

We will be raised. We will be in his presence. And we will have an intimate relationship with him that completely eclipses the intimacy that we have to bridge. It's something that we can look forward to.

[ 31 : 19 ] But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

He is not the God of the dead. I have overthought that passage for years. I finally really focused on it this week and I realized I can't overpower this passage. I'm looking for some deeper meaning.

There is a deeper meaning. It's right on the surface. God didn't use the past tense when he spoke to Moses. He didn't say, I was the God of Abraham. I was the God of Isaac.

I was the God of Jacob. I am your God. He said, present tense, in all three men, I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac.

I am the God of David. Those men are alive. Because he's not the God of the dead. And I'm like, oh, why did I see that before?

[ 32 : 22 ] Sometimes we overthink things. But that's our hope. We will live. We will live. Death is temporary. And on the other side, glory.

Several years ago, a lot of years ago, I really thought that God was callous about death. Insensitive. So I realized something. From this side, it does look like it.

Does God really care? But then I realized that God knows that on the other side of death is him.

We will behold him with unveiled faces. What are we afraid of?

We are headed for something so much better. He's declining. Body will be healthy again. And more. And we will see God. That's what Jesus was holding up to the Sadducees.

[ 33 : 25 ] What a bunch of sad gods with no hope. Because they didn't believe in the resurrection. And then he ends the conversation with them as, you are greatly mistaken.

So like with that assistant manager I talked about, Jesus just took up the task. Beat the tar on him, left him on the ground, gasped me, and said, you are wrong. Get it through your heads.

sometimes we have to do that. Sometimes we have to talk to people in that way. So where do we go from here? As we look at this passage, what does this mean for us?

Now you might be thinking, John, you forgot to open with prayer. Actually, I wanted to go through the passage and pray at this point as we transition into what does this passage say to us?

What's the opportunity to do? So let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you that you are our role model. Thank you that you show us how to be the ministers of reconciliation.

[ 34 : 27 ] You show us what it looks like to be an ambassador. You've given us different approaches and different tools and different ways that we can approach people in order to bring the truth into the lives of the people that we cross paths with every day.

And I pray that as we now talk about what you are modeling, that we as a congregation will be receptive to what your spirit has to say, that we will be convicted and moved to action.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So the question is, how are we supposed to conduct ourselves in the world?

How are we supposed to carry the word forward? How are we to be in absence of a Christian? What does that look like? So first of all, it starts with, remember who you are.

You know, we've been talking about authority. Remember who you are. And remember whose you are. You belong to God. You are a child of the living God.

[ 35 : 29 ] You are his son and daughter. Which means you have authority because you're his child. Jesus' first statement in the Great Commission is, all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth.

That meant he had the right to send out the disciples. He had the right to delegate his authority to the disciples. And they had a responsibility to go forward in that authority, to carry it into the world.

And that has been passed on to us, who are also believers. So remember who you are. You are a child of God. You have been sent. You are little a, but you are an apostle.

That Greek word means sent one. You have been sent. You have been sent to your neighborhood, to your family, to your workplace, to Hy-Vee, to wherever you'd like to go to dinner.

You're sent. And you should be watching because God likes to set you up. God likes to set up divine appointments. Watch it.

[ 36 : 38 ] You have to remember you are a child of God. With all the rights and responsibilities that go along with your identity in Christ. Remember when I read to you out of 2 Corinthians 5.

You are an ambassador for Christ. And then how are we supposed to conduct ourselves? You've heard me mention it before. You will hear me mention it again. I love this verse. 2 Peter 3.15.

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. What does that mean? That means you have decided to follow Jesus. That is not an optional extra credit assignment from God after we come to Christ.

That is coming to Christ. You accept Jesus as Lord. You accept Him as Lord. And you acknowledge that God raised Him from the dead.

And then you are saved. You submit your life to Him. You give Him the rule. You accept the fact that He's smarter than you are. That He knows what's best. And by the way, this has been an accident that I've been drawing me for the last couple of years.

[ 37 : 48 ] The belief that we can simply pray a prayer and come into God's presence and that discipleship, the decision to follow Jesus with our life is extracurricular. It's extra credit.

I'll tell you another reason why that's a false doctrine. And I use that word essentially. A false doctrine. Most of what you gain in Christ, the promises that the New Testament makes, and they are extravagant, are conditional.

They're conditional upon our obedience. So if you want to experience all that's available to you in Christ, you have to follow Him. You don't just get it because you can't be trusted with what God wants to give you if you're not following His instructions.

Understand that. This isn't an onerous burden that He's given to you. given to you. This is an opportunity to experience more of life and his plan for you. It's no different.

When I was getting my driver's license, I had to do hours of driving with an adult practice and verify my parents and put them through near-death experiences on a daily basis. But what did I do?

[ 38 : 57 ] I learned. I learned the rules of the road and I earned the right to be a driver and go out into the world as a driver with the freedoms that went along with that.

The same with our life in Christ. You can't be trusted with the car and the Christian life if you haven't gone, if you're not in the process of obeying the rules.

Does that make sense? So sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts because people will notice.

Remember what I said about Jesus in Mark 12? They came to Him and said to Him, Teacher, we know that you are truthful and defer to no one.

You're not partial to any but teach the way of God in truth. They recognize something about Jesus.

They will recognize something about you. If Jesus is the Lord of your life and you're following Him, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asked you.

You're going to be asked. How do I know? I've been asked multiple times. Those sore people that I use as an example of these different conversations all asked me some version of the question, why are you the way you are?

[ 40 : 06 ] Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you yet with gentleness and reverence. Be respectful. Even in the case of the woman you beat the tar out of, I wasn't disrespectful to that assistant manager.

I didn't call him Nate. But I was respectful. I just disarmed him and then beat him to a pulp. But he left, gasping, but he didn't feel demeaned.

Didn't call him names. We need to keep that balance. So we need to remember who we are and live it. Now we also need to cultivate the tools and skills that God gives us to engage people with the gospel and the discernment to know what to use under any set of circumstances.

So I'm not a golfer. As a matter of fact, all that I know about golf is it looks like the most boring that could be ever invented any of it. And I know those people who love it.

Tim Doughing is probably listening to his sermon and rethinking his decision to the job. Sorry, Jim. Lovely. But please don't have him go golfing. Well, one thing I know about golf is you got this bag with all these clubs.

[ 41 : 28 ] And good golfers know that in this situation you need this club or in this situation you need that club. Even I know you don't use a driver to putt. Or vice versa.

Though I did rock at a golf ball over houses across the street when I was a kid into the street behind. So I don't know. Maybe I'm the prodigy and didn't know him. But there's tools that we need to know when to use them.

We have to have the discernment to know where they're looking. And we need to have the discernment to know where. We need to know which of those four conversations we're in. Are we talking to a bully that we need to dismiss?

Are we talking to someone who's naive that needs to be left in their questions? Are we talking to somebody who is arrogant that needs to be just put in their place to force them to think?

Or are we talking to somebody who's truly searching? We need the discernment to recognize that. So what are the tools? Very briefly this should be reviewed.

[ 42 : 28 ] Tool level one is revival. The people who know their God display strength and take action. The primary means God has ordained to know him is the Bible.

Once upon a time I had a conversation with a pastor at a church out in Seattle that very sincerely said, you know, my wife is a Bible woman. She prays all the time but she's just not a reader. She doesn't read the Bible. She doesn't feel the need. My head exploded. I kept it under wraps and went home and here we are 30 years later and he still sermon illustration.

That is pastoral while practice. Brothers and sisters, you have got to be in the top word. If you are dependent upon this time to get your diet of the Bible, you're going to starve to death.

And to make the point, the pastors and I have talked about implementing this, I'm just going to suggest it to you. You're only allowed to eat on the days you take in your Bible. See how you do.

[ 43 : 31 ] You need to be in the Bible as much as you eat. Seriously, because that's how we get our health. That's how we know what it means to say goodbye Christ with Lord in our hearts is we need to be in the Bible.

We need to be thinking about not to be the winners of Bible Jeopardy. That's not the point. Never the point. The point is so we can handle the word of God in such a way that we are ready to make a defense for the hope that's in us.

So we need to know our Bible. We need to read our Bible. We need to think about our Bible which leads to the second tool. Your brain. Never step on a sacred cow.

This body would love studying the Bible. That's awesome. But I notice oftentimes we're using a book and there's a place to work. But we've got some guy or gal has written a book that's got questions and we answer them when we go through and we think that's enough.

No. That can be part of your diet but if that's all your diet you're still going to be malnourished. You have got to be thinking about the Bible. Use your brain. Read other sources.

[ 44 : 47 ] Now don't make the naive assumption that if it's in print it must be true I can trust a publisher. That's dangerous. But read with discernment. Listen to other people. Listen to podcasts.

Find brothers and sisters who you can talk to and say you know what I'm really struggling with where I think the Bible is leading my understanding of theology. Do you think I'm crazy? Mike Leiland had that conversation this week.

I've been really thinking about the school discipleship thing and what is its role in our lives as Christians and I sat down with Mike and I'm saying what do you think? Well, no. We all know we're

nuts. But when this is concerned I agree with you.

Actually Mike didn't say that because he's too nice. I would say that to somebody else. But we need to be students of the Bible. We need to be thinking about it. And the next part of our tools is our community.

We are given to each other. We actually think with each other's brains. It's really interesting what neuroscience is starting to develop an understanding of how we interact with each other.

[ 45 : 49 ] It's fascinating. And one of the things that we do this is why Christian community is so important is we actually use each other's brains to think as we interact character and I almost every morning.

I don't go at the same time we're not reading the same thing and we have a conversation about what she's reading and what I'm reading. Or she hears this sermon like eight times over the course of the week in different phases because I'm using her brain to think.

you've subraised the people around you. Aren't you? Yeah. I said it. Aren't you? I think you're wrong. No, I think you're wrong.

Well, let's let's not attack each other. Let's look at this thing that we're confused about and let's figure it out because God's given us brains. So we've got the Bible itself, our own brains, the brains of the people around us.

And last, but certainly not least, most important of all, we have the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, it's good for you that I'm leaving because I'm sending my Holy Spirit. He will reveal all truth to you.

[ 46 : 56 ] It's your advantage I go because as intimate as the disciples thought they had it with Jesus, they actually got and we have a more intimate relationship with God than they did walking the hills of Israel back in the first century.

You have the Holy Spirit. You need to be praying. Praying about what you're learning, what you're seeing, interpreting what you see in the news. We need to be thinking about what we're seeing top of the news.

If you're only watching CNN, if you're only watching Fox News and you're not engaging your brain, you're a fool. Frankly.

because everybody's bringing the bias to the table and we need to be careful. We need to be prayerfully listening and allowing the Holy Spirit to filter what's coming into our brains.

It's certainly where the Bible is concerned. So those are the tools. The skills are just having the ability to skillfully enter into a conversation with somebody about spiritual things, engaging them and drawing that out.

[ 48 : 07 ] I heard a story about Pastor John and Jim Huseman having a conversation with a guy that was at Perkins. Got this guy's story.

John shared the gospel with him. Jim met with him. Helped him with some problems in his life. The president insisted that that's the body of Christ at work. That's the way it should be but you have to practice those skills.

John didn't get that just bam when he got saved. suddenly you've got this great skill. Now he's got a gifted evangelist but you have to develop your skill. Practice. Practice with each other.

Practice with people in your neighborhood. God's in control. He won't tell somebody something wrong and they go to hell. It's okay. Practice. Practice in community.

Practice together. Get out there and do it. On the job training is God's method for teaching us. Talk to people. Ask them questions.

[ 49 : 07 ] How's your day going? And then follow up. Thank them for things. I found out that I'm something of a celebrity at Charlotte's coffee shop.

I'm the pain in the butt customer who really wants dark roast coffee that they're phasing out. All the staff knows that I like dark roast coffee and if I go in there and somebody hears my voice I've had three different times in the last two weeks where some people say oh wait wait we know you love it. We found another bag. Now that sounds like mundane but what it indicates to me is that in the course of conversation we've built a bridge which led to me having a conversation with one of them about her career dreams and what she wants to do in the future which Lord willing will open the door for a spiritual conversation.

We need to step into those things and learn the skills. It's on the job training and then evaluate what we did. Evaluate and practice makes perfect. So again a good closure I'm going to pick on John and Jim again would have been ask them to say you know what how do you think that went?

Well I think I should have done this instead of that I should have brought up this verse and not that verse or I shouldn't have talked about Jesus at all at this moment in time but let's schedule but they evaluate what you did.

[ 50 : 25 ] Ask yourself the questions and then step into it. So to wrap up Jesus is modeling for us how we engage with people when we need to have a discernment to step into those conversations and know the right thing to do and what tools we bring to the earth and we have the authority to do it.

Go and do that. You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your fathers in heaven.

In other words be the type of person that people will recognize just like they recognized you. Let's pray. Father thank you that we don't have to do this alone that we have you to guide us and to instruct us and to show us what we need to do.

Lord give us boldness to share our face with the people we meet. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.  
Be Christ.