

Every Person Mature in Christ

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[0:00] So as the kids head out, hey, I see a Bronco jersey back there. God brought me to the right church. I just got to say it. Is that a Bronco jersey, not a Bears jersey, right?

! And I said, well, sure.

But if you're going to be up there, why don't you do all the announcements? I knew you were going to ask me that. Thank you for being willing, because I know you do not love microphones. Some of us do, some of us don't, but you did a great job.

That's right. So there's something I want to point out that's really important. This morning in the next five weeks, so six weeks total, we're going to be talking about the mission and vision of the church, the mission and values of the church.

And then you'll understand how vision plays in as we go along. But right now, the focus is going to be on mission and values. I want you to think back just a few minutes.

[1:12] It's not going to be hard. And think about Joe's demeanor when he was giving the announcements. And this isn't critique, but he just didn't look very excited about some of that stuff.

You know, we got to do this and we got to do that. We got to do this other thing. And let me tell you about this garden project. Let me tell you about what God is doing. Let me tell you about how he's already opening doors for us.

You saw that man get animated. That's the power of clarity of vision. It says in Proverbs, where there is no vision, the people perish or they're unrestrained.

One leads to the other. Unrestrained people lead to dead people. We're going to be talking about something that I am deeply passionate about. I probably say that a lot.

But I believe that there is tremendous power in having a clear mission, clear values, and clear vision. Now, you might think, John, we're not a business.

[2:19] We're not a nonprofit in the sense that Compassion International or World Vision or Clarity Clinic is a nonprofit. We're a church. Isn't it pretty obvious what our mission is?

Maybe. But I would argue that any group of human beings needs clarity about what we're about. We need to know where we're going. And I can tell you, as my Facebook page is bombarded with messages from church growth experts, we don't have clarity about what the church is about.

We don't know. And it is imperative for us as a body to know what we're about, to come together and agree about it and understand it. This isn't just some thing we do to flesh out our bylaws.

What I'm praying for you is that if we explore the scripture, as we look at what God has called us to do, that you will recognize that this is God's call to you.

That this is God's plan for Tri-State Community Church and for you as an individual. Mission is critically important. And today, we're going to kick off exploring what our mission statement is.

[3 : 32] And I'm going to challenge you to memorize it. If you want bonus points, and because the Bible is more important than our carefully crafted sentence, I would also challenge you to memorize Ephesians 4, 1 through 16.

Because this is where, that's the central passage from which our mission statement is derived. But what I want to start with is a real quick overview of mission statements.

What they do, which I've covered a little bit, and an error that I was making planning what our mission statement should be and talking with John and Tim about establishing that.

And a change in my thinking specifically as we look at what is a mission statement for the church. Because it's different. And there's an important difference.

So, what do mission statements do for us? They provide direction. We know where we're going. They provide accountability. Because we can see, this is the right direction.

[4 : 30] That is not. And when we get off in this direction, we can look back to our mission and have a clear idea of where we're going. And the values tell us how we're going to get there. One of the things that, I've actually mentioned this author's work a couple of times from the pulpit.

There's a business expert by the name of Jim Collins. And he did a study back in the 90s that became a book called Built to Last about great companies. These companies had been successful for a hundred years or more.

Two of them were Johnson & Johnson and Merck, pharmaceutical companies. And one of the things he warned about is the potential disaster that could result if you lose sight of your mission.

Now, what's really interesting is in the 80s, most of you can recall, there was a Tylenol scare. A couple of people were poisoned out of a bottle of Tylenol. And what did Johnson & Johnson do?

Based on their mission and values, they spent millions upon millions of dollars to recall every single solitary bottle of Tylenol in the United States.

[5 : 44] And all of the shells were cleared of that just to be sure that what they were producing was safe. Not only that, but they invented new ways of packaging Tylenol to ensure that we as consumers could open those packages and realize that we were safe.

That's a missions-driven organization. But you fast forward to today, as we just established, I'm a huge basketball, huge football fan, not basketball, sorry.

Huge football fan. You know, when I was growing up, the primary sponsor for football was beer. You saw all these beer commercials. My oldest son, back in the day when Budweiser had really entertaining commercials, he thought that was the show.

And so he'd come in and watch the Frogs or the Clydesdales, and then he would leave for the football game. And he'd just, tell me when the show comes back on, Dad. It broke my heart.

But now, we get commercial after commercial after commercial about pharmaceuticals. And what the pharmaceutical companies are doing, without even being subtle about it, is they're trying to get us as consumers to tell doctors what to prescribe for us.

[6 : 58] They're trying to make this a market-driven thing instead of a science-driven thing or a values-driven thing. And leading the charge are Johnson & Johnson and Merck because they lost sight of their identity because they lost sight of their mission and values and vision.

This is critically important to protect ourselves and to protect the people around us. So we need to know what we're about. Our mission statement really just defines our goal.

And I'm going to get to that in detail in a minute. Our values just define how we're going to get there. If that makes sense. So today is mission. Then the following five weeks will be the core elements of our values.

And we'll unpack all of those. And then, so we've talked mission. We've talked values.

Vision is the third part of the puzzle. mission and vision are often confused. Mission is a description of our goal in fairly broad terms.

[8 : 09] So our mission here, go ahead and go advance to the next slide, Bethany. Our mission here is, my bad. I thought the next slide was our mission statement.

While they're getting that up, I'll just tell you. A mission statement is more broad. We exist to glorify God by walking closely with Him, striving together to become more like Jesus every day.

Any church in Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa, the United States could have that as their mission statement. And it would be true and biblical. Our vision statement, which we will work on building collectively, is what does that look like in Dubuque?

What does that look like on Derby Grange? How do we take this mission statement, this mission statement, can't see this one, and how do we actively pursue it?

So you've got mission, our goal, our values, how we're going to get there, and then our vision is specifically, what do we do? What have we decided as Tri-State Community Church is the way that we're going to impact each other, the community, and the world, and how we're not going to do it.

[9 : 25] Because whenever you make a decision to do something, you also make a decision not to do other things. Does that make sense? So that's mission and vision. Now here's a mistake that I made, and this is critically important for you to understand.

I have been developing mission and value statements for groups since I was in high school. It's just one of the weird ways my brain is wired. And so my brother and I in high school, we started a youth group at our church in our high school, and we sat down and we decided John 13, 34, and 35 was our core driving force.

Jesus told the disciples to love one another as he loved them. A new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you. All men will know that you're my disciples if you love each other this way.

That was our mission. And we taught that every week. That came up. And that little group of six over the course of one school year ended up impacting every high school in Colorado Springs because we were clear about our mission.

But my brother Joe and I, we cooked that up. Now, it was based on the Bible, but we just kind of came based on our conversation. And then over the years, as I would work with different youth groups, we'd get together and I'd have a whiteboard and a pen and we'd talk about what's important and we would flesh out a mission statement and a vision statement.

[10 : 55] When I was working in camp work, same thing. So, when I came here, one of the commitments that John and Tim had made to us as a congregation, and I took that on because you hired me as a pastor as well, that the pastors had committed to present a mission and values.

And so, I approached that from the same way. We need a whiteboard and some markers and a room and we'll talk and kick it around and discuss it and figure out what that is. But as I was moving forward, I realized that every other organization that I led was fundamentally different from Tri-State Community Church because we're Tri-State Community Church.

The church is a creation of God himself. Jesus said, I will build my church. We didn't have to cook up a mission statement. The mission statement is here.

This phrase is an interpretation of 16 verses in Ephesians because that's a long mission statement. this is a summary but it's driven and rooted in our study of what we really came to believe is God's core mission for the church.

The other thing I'll say before we get into the scriptures is that the mission for the church that we're going to talk about today is not the same as the mission for each one of us.

[12:36] this is our corporate vision and it's valid. It's from God himself but as we unpack our values what you're going to see is that God also has a mission for us as his sons and daughters for those of us who are in Christ and that mission and this mission the mission of the church are mutually supportive.

you can't have one without the other and you cannot confuse them. One of the problems in the contemporary American church is that organized churches are stepping over into the mission that God has given to the saints and in stepping out of their realm organized churches are neglecting the things that they're actually supposed to be doing and we want to avoid that error because when we avoid that error great things happen and I'm going to wrap up with that at the end.

So that's kind of the idea behind mission and values. Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4 and we're going to dig into that we'll read it and I'll pray and then we'll press on.

So one thing I need to tell you as we head into Ephesians 4 is that my pet peeve to put it mildly is when a preacher gets up front says this is my text reads the text and never refers to it again and so what was that for?

What? What? Well it's an expository sermon because I read a Bible verse at the beginning and then I gave you my other stuff Now the way this sermon is constructed this morning you might think I'm making that very mistake Ephesians 4 11 through 16 forms a framework for our mission statement and I want to bring it before you this morning to start it percolating through your mind but then as we go forward what I'm going to be developing is on a broader context in scripture how each piece of that mission statement is addressed in the scope of scripture but all of it is in this passage in Ephesians 4 does that make sense?

[14:58] So have no fear I'm not using this as a just to check a box you have to read a Bible verse at the beginning of the sermon and then move on this is the framework this is the central pillar of what we came to believe as Tim and John and I looked at this this is a central pillar of God's mission for the church alright so Ephesians 4 starting at verse 11 but I want you to memorize 1 through 16 just to be clear and he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ couple of things there the context before verse 11 verse 9 specifically talks about the fact that when Jesus finished the work on the cross was raised again like a conquering king he distributed gifts all of us have been given gifts that we use to grow for our own growth and for the growth of the body every one of us is an essential piece of God's mission for the church this list of gifts here in Romans

Ephesians 4 11 is a representative sample but all of our gifts are important and we share them with each other for this work of building up the church and growing it so again verse 12 for the equipping the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ verse 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the son of God now this is the core right here to a mature man what does that mean to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ that's the mission of the church right there that each of us would be growing and continue to grow until we we are mature and we look like Jesus when the church was planted in Antioch Barnabas and Saul went up there then he took on Saul became Paul it was in Antioch that the term

Christians was first used little Christs that's our goal the church in Antioch was so good at fulfilling God's mission for the church that the people of the city could look and say oh those are little Jesus's that's what we want to be is little Christ's until we all attain to the unity of faith into the knowledge of the son of God to a mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ as a result we are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men by craftiness and deceitful scheming but speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head even Christ again there's that same theme again we're being brought up to be like Jesus that's the goal from whom this is Jesus from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part see this isn't my job or Tim's job or John's job to make you mature not at all we do this together this is a group exercise which

I can tell you is a great relief because there's things that I'm really not very good at but there's things that you're really good at that make up for that and that's how God has designed it to work according to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love that building up of itself is in two dimensions it's in width when we really get focused on that mission of becoming like Christ more people are going to come to Tri-State Community Church we will see people coming here because they want to know what's going on in this body of people we'll see people come to Christ we'll see believers who are looking for more coming here praise God so we'll grow in width but we'll also grow in depth each of us will become more like Jesus we will become more and more mature we'll become more influential in carrying our faith out into the marketplace our neighborhoods the places we go some of us will go into full-time mission full-time ministry or become missionaries or some other such thing most of us will fulfill our calling right in the midst of where God has planted us because we're growing to be like Christ so more people because we're becoming more like Jesus make sense let's pray together

God it's stunning to me to think that we get to participate in the growth of your church God multiple times over the course of my life I've said that you really wanted a challenge so you created the church church bodies can be messy they can be hurtful they can be spiteful because we're all we're all sinful finite people but God when we walk with you and that's what we want to do is we want to walk with you you is like any other parent are delighted when we get in step with you and you encourage us and bring us along and that's what we want to see as we talk about our mission for Tri-State Community Church God I pray that we would take a hold of that each person here would take a hold of this mission statement as their own and recognize the role that they play in seeing it fleshed out we pray in

[20 : 59] Jesus name amen so we're just going to go through this phrase by phrase so it starts out we exist we exist who's we well this is Tri-State Community Church's mission statement so we the church and I already mentioned that in Matthew 5 no excuse me look at my own notes Matthew 16 we're not going to turn there Matthew 16 Jesus said I am going to build my church we are vitally and critically and centrally involved in the work of Jesus to build his church I mentioned this earlier I get Facebook advertisements all the time from experts telling me how to build my church it's not my church it's not John's church it's not Tim's church this is God's church we need to follow his direction and allow him to work the we is us collectively but the we is also us individually and we exist

God is in the created us is in the process of creating us of making us into who we should be both as a church and as individual members of it we exist and in our existence we have a purpose we exist to glorify God you know that's a sum total of your purpose in life I talk to people of all ages what am I here for to glorify God so is God some egomaniac does he have a low self-esteem that he needs to be glorified well if I told you that I needed to be glorified yes that's a problem I need some sort of counseling or a thump upside the head but God is not me God is God it is it is right that he wants his own glory because he's glorious he's altogether perfect he is holy it says in

Isaiah 6 that the angels called him holy holy holy they say it three times to drill it into our heads God is utterly beyond us he is worthy of glory and so it's only right that we exist to lift him up what does it mean to glory in something it's to point out how magnificent that thing is how great it is one thing that's beautiful about God think about looking at him through a telescope and it brings him close and you can see like if you look at the moon through a telescope you see the details or we look at God through a microscope if you look at me through a microscope you just see flaws you look at Jesus through a microscope you look at God through a microscope and you just see more glory he's perfect it is right and proper that our existence is focused upon the glory of God and that glory this is mind-blowing to me that glory reverts back to us as we glorify God he glorifies us it's kind of hard to wrap your brain around but God's glory is central in our existence we want to focus on that

Jesus said this in the Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:14 to 16 you are the light of the world we are you are the light of the world a city on a hill cannot be hidden nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand and it gives light to all that are in the house in the same way let your light so shine before others listen to this let your light this is Christ in you let your light so shine before others that they see your good works and what glorify your father who's in heaven people will look at you and say or they'll look at me and go I know that guy's not capable of whatever I see there must be a God that's really what happens people begin to recognize that the change of character in us could only be a miracle wrought by a good and loving God and they glorify him so we exist to glorify

God by walking closely with him this is really important walking by the way if you're ever in a spot where you're teaching a series of devotions I did this one time at camp the theme of walking in the book of Ephesians is a really good devotional or if you're with a group of people there's seven different times that Paul uses the word walk in the book of Ephesians we used to walk in sin it says in chapter two verse two verse ten of chapter two says God has ordained good works for us to walk in he's planned for those for us we are commanded in chapter four verse one to walk worthy of our calling Jesus died on the cross for us he rose again that's our calling is to submit to him allow him to live his life through us we want to be worthy of that calling we walk worthy of the calling in verse 17 of chapter four it says we are commanded to walk differently from the

[26:40] Gentiles the people who are outside of the faith we are called to walk differently we're not all worried about politics or who's in the oval office or who's not in the oval office or the overreach of the government or the government's not doing enough we don't worry about that stuff because we have our sights set on something that's greater God himself we walk differently we're to walk in love he says in chapter five verse two we are to walk in light years ago when I was a camp director at lakeside bible camp I would do a walk around the cabins to make sure all the kids were where they were supposed to be and it was safe and quiet it's about 11 o'clock at night and from the cabin area to our house was about a quarter of a mile completely covered in trees and creepy now I walked that road dozens of times every day and didn't even think about it but 11 o'clock at night

I was 29 years old I'm walking I hear a branch fall I hear an owl I hear things in the I'm walking slowly thinking I am 29 years old I am not going to get scared of what's going around in this woods I walk these woods every day but it was dark I couldn't see but as I walked my pace picked up I'm not going to run I'm not going to run I came really close to running but I didn't feel like that in the day because I'm walking in the light light of the truth of God and we don't have to be afraid and then finally in chapter 5 verse 15 he says walk in wisdom wisdom and where does wisdom begin in the fear of the Lord it said in Proverbs reverence and obedience and following God is the beginning of wisdom so we exist to glorify

God by walking closely with him we're going to look at John 14 verses 15 and 17 this is really cool so I'm going to read it and unpack it a little bit John 14 if you love me Jesus is speaking this is called the upper room discourse this is right in the middle if you love me you will keep my commandments if you stop there that's a really depressing verse it's really hard can be overwhelming but wait there's more if you love me you will keep my commandments and I will ask the father and he will give you another helper the king James calls it a comforter you see different translations in different different versions of the bible we're going come back to that word and I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with!

forever even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you he is so important to us that Jesus said it's to my benefit not to my benefit Jesus said the disciples it's to your benefit that I leave because you think you have an intimate relationship with me now apostles you ain't seen nothing yet the Holy Spirit is actually going to dwell within you now here's a cool thing that word in Greek I don't do this very often because usually the word in Greek is what it says in English you don't really need to unpack it you don't need some course in a seminary to figure out what the Bible teaches come on give me a little help here not a pair of cleats it's a paraclete that word literally means one who walks alongside that's what the

Holy Spirit is we exist to glorify God by walking closely with him we have the Holy Spirit that word paraclete encompasses comforter in times that we mourn encourager when we need to be lifted up and carried forward exhort her when we need to swat on the butt to help us fly straight he's a helper if you love me you will keep my commandments but she said I'm sending a helper who's going to coach you probably the best English word for paraclete is coach I'm fascinated by coaching you watch coaches sometimes they're nose to nose with some guy barking in his face another time you see a coach and he's encouraging saying you're doing a good job keep it up that's what the Holy Spirit does in our life he corrects form back to my football analogy because it's football

[31 : 43] Sunday he corrects footwork he corrects mechanics he corrects vision all of that is encompassed in the Holy Spirit working with us and he walks with us we're never alone this life that God has called us to would be impossible if it wasn't for the fact that the Holy Spirit walks with us and we're striving together this is a collective activity we're striving together we're united we're working at it we recognize that it's hard I used to do a talk when we were in the Dominican Republic it was my infamous failure talk this is important sit down with our volunteers every week and we talk about the fact that everybody fails let's just get that let's address the elephant Let's acknowledge the fact everybody fails and as soon as we if can own that we can extend grace to other people when it's their turn to fail and carry them along and when we fail we can be humble enough to realize oh it's just my turn and

I need help that's part of striving together it's running the race and encouraging one another in the chronicles of Narnia the last battle all the characters are in heaven and they're they're!

they're running toward the reward and as they're running their cry to each other is further up and further in that's what we call to each other!

we're encouraging each other to strive together for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus that's Philippians 2 we work together and each person here has a role we all are an integral part of this body to achieve what God has for us so we exist to glorify God walking closely with him striving together to become more like Jesus every day now we have a problem actually we have four problems I want you to listen very carefully to these I would encourage you to listen to this sermon just to address these four problems and keep them in front of you number one problem we don't know who Jesus is wait what we just finished a year and a half long sermon series on Mark we know who Jesus is no we just scratched the surface and a lot of our understanding of who

Jesus is understanding you can see it in the culture well Jesus loved everybody so we should love everybody and accept whatever they do no Jesus actually didn't do that Jesus loved the woman caught in adultery and what did he say to her hey I don't condemn you either but don't sin anymore that behavior is bad in contemporary culture that's not love we need to understand who Jesus is we need to understand who he was as a man how he lived you remember I said it over and over again in the series in Mark Jesus didn't have a cheat code he's showing us how to live but we have to come to know who he is as a man but we can never forget that he is glorious before he became a man he was God in the beginning John wrote was the word and the word was with

[35 : 42] God and the word was God and then in verse 14 John says the word became flesh and dwelt among us it says in Hebrews chapter 1 that in years past God communicated with us in a variety of ways but in these days he is communicating with us through his son who is the exact representation of God so somehow in these feeble little brains and I think it's going to take all of eternity we have to come to know who Jesus is and we have to operate with the assumption that we don't have it all figured out yet we have got to continually pursue Jesus and seek to know him starting here I'm going to put a challenge out in front of!

I asked you to memorize Ephesians I'm going to challenge you everybody here start tomorrow I want us as a body to read the gospels from Matthew 1 to John 21 chapter a day there's it's 89 chapters one a day takes you three months even get a day off and then start over and start over and do that for the rest of your life but I want to ask a critical question who is this guy remember we talked about the pharisees the church the jewish leaders and the disciples we're all asking that question you need to ask that question who is this guy and how would he do how would he live if he was in my shoes read the gospels get to know Jesus we've got to know him we have the Holy Spirit walking with us instructing!

we have the word reading the gospels we need to pray God open my eyes so I can see help me to understand we need to talk to each other and share our understanding of who Jesus is and challenge our thinking that upward call further up and further in help running together to be closer to who Jesus is and just think use your brain I said a minute ago that our brains!

actually they're remarkable God has given us a tool use it don't assume that because I say something from up here or Tim does or John does or somebody else up here says something that is true dig into God's words and check it don't assume that younger you had it all figured out because we learn I hope so use your mind dig into God's word and learn so that was the first problem we do not understand who Jesus is second of all we do not understand what in Jesus we're supposed to be emulating when it says to mature into the likeness of Jesus what does that mean I'll give you an example there are churches probably some here in town I don't know but well I'm going to emulate miracles Jesus laid hands on people and people were healed and God's plan for Christians is to be miracle workers

I think God is willing to do miracles through us as we pray but that's way down on his list of priorities we need to be aware of what about Jesus we're supposed to be emulating or we practice the right thing but we do it in the wrong way back to my illustration about love oh God is love Jesus said to love as I have loved you oh love means I accept everybody we misunderstand when he says judge not lest you be judged and we think well I can't have an opinion on anybody else's life that's actually not what that word means it says do not condemn so if I look at somebody and say oh you're worthless you're scum I don't want to associate!

[39 : 50] with you because of your a person especially someone in this body isn't doing what they need to do the loving thing to do is to come alongside and say you know what this behavior is hurtful to you you should stop it that's what Jesus did with the woman caught in adultery I'm not going to condemn you but I'm going to tell you because he had right judgment stop sinning break off this relationship we often do the right thing in the wrong way and that's part of growing to understand who Jesus is how does this apply how do we get there same thing the Holy Spirit is working in us we've got the Bible we need to be students prayer our community practice God will refine us as we pursue him the work will go in the direction it needs to go we need to trust that he's working in us so first problem is we do not understand who

Jesus is second problem is we do not understand what in Jesus we should be emulating third we don't understand the process of growth first of all we deep down may not even understand that we're supposed to grow it's it's this odd disconnect!

my grandson Jesse he's just starting to speak and the way he says okay when I tell him to do something sounds really sarcastic it's just his inflection okay Jesse don't go up the stairs okay stop pulling the dirty dishes back out of the dishwasher okay so he sounds like a teenager it's adorable at 18 months old if Jonah did that at five there might be a swat involved because we expect him to grow that doesn't stop here's some rough news folks psychologists have determined in looking at large groups of American people that we stop learning at 40 uh-oh because we live until we're 70 80 90 so what do we do with those 30 40 50 intervening years well if you want to obey

God buck the trend we have got to continue growing I firmly believe Ephesians 2 7 says that God is going spend all of eternity showing us his kindness in Christ Jesus implicit in that is we're going to grow forever because God is infinite we have got to determine as we age to continue to grow and not just grow in intellectual so we're the champion of Bible trivia but actually taking God's word and continuing to examine ourselves and not falling into the trap of thinking well 40 year old me had it all figured out and now I'm just skating until I get through the pearly!

gates you're not going to have a pleasant conversation with the Lord if that's a pattern of your life now do the things change that we do as we age absolutely as John and Tim like to point out I am now in my fourth quarter and there's a things change but that doesn't mean I stop growing it actually means I have to grow to learn how do I adjust and accommodate the changes information all these things we need to be growing God assumes we grow growth is measured in fruit we should be bearing fruit internally the fruit of the spirit and externally people being saved people being discipled for all of our lives until we're dead now again what you do may change but you're never off the hook so if you're younger than that 40 year old threshold start planning now for what you're going to do as you get older and if you're past it re-examine what you're doing think about that am

[44:24] I growing if not why not turn your eyes back on Jesus regardless of your age and ask him to show you where you need to grow and remember it's the same answer you've got the Holy Spirit walking with you you have his word you have prayer you have our community you have practice and God will show you where you're supposed to grow the other thing we get wrong about growth is it's hard it's hard now there's a there's a paradox in scripture this is a verse that people really like to quote when things are tough come unto me all you are heavy burden and I will give and then you follow Jesus and often times life doesn't appear to get easier it actually appears to get harder what's up with that how is that possible I'll tell you the answer Jesus wasn't lying or misleading us when he said that his burden is easy and his yoke is light but that doesn't mean that our life becomes rainbows and butterflies after we come to

Christ because we all know that's not the case his yoke is easy and his burden is light compared to the alternative as we face the normal difficulties of life and the extreme circumstances if we're in Christ we have hope and it's not like my hope that the Broncos beat the Patriots today which is fairly slim because our starting quarterback broke his ankle last weekend no this is the confident expectation of the righteous we have hope that's centered in Christ and even as things get hard and they always get hard we can turn to the Lord and find comfort and help in time of need people outside Christ don't have that but we do we take advantage of that we also have to take responsibility for our growth this doesn't we don't hear passive

God grow me no it doesn't work like that it's a team effort it's a joint effort between you and the Holy Spirit where he's working Paul said in 1st Timothy 4 train yourself for godliness work out it's a physical metaphor for while bodily training is of some value godliness is of value in every way not just in eternity but for the problems you're facing today godliness is of value in every way as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come this thing is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance for to this end we toil and strive because we toil and strive it ain't easy because we have our hope set on the living god who is a savior of all people especially of those who believe god's grace extends to all but he particularly focuses on us think of it this way i love kids you've seen me wrestle with the kids but my kids have a special place that's how god views us how he views you so we have a personal responsibility for growth and we have to recognize that life is hard so we don't clearly understand who jesus is we don't know what part of jesus we're supposed to emulate we really don't understand how this growth process works by the way we will be working on that as we go through the values and then lastly we really don't value what what

Jesus is offering to us i want you stop and think about that because that's a harsh statement you don't value highly enough what god is offering to you some of it is inside of us some of it is the way in our contemporary culture that the gospel is presented now it's not a bad thing when we hear the gospel if you trust in christ when you die you'll go to!

that's the message that led me to christ in 1980 but not only is that not the whole story that's actually just the cherry on the top god is at work in our lives throughout our lives for those of us who are in christ he is working to make us more like jesus because that is the absolute best thing we could have we know god loves us the cross proves it we know that god is good you're not sure think about it when we're having our potluck downstairs in a little bit that delicious soup god could have made it all taste like sawdust!

[49 : 46] but he didn't he gave various people skill to to cook and to make delicious food that's nutritious god is good and his highest goal for you is to be like jesus if you're loving and good god says this is the absolute best thing you could have maybe you should follow that turn in your bibles to colossians chapter one we're going to end with this normally i feel bad for going along today i'm not even going to apologize this is important this is our mission we exist to glorify god by walking closely with him striving together i just forgot the last phrase i said so many times just talking earlier with somebody learning forgetting what you were going to say striving together to become more like jesus every day this is god's will for us oh now you put it up there no that was on me striving together to become more like jesus every day this is the will of god for you for us colossians 1 starting at verse 9 this was paul's prayer for the colossian church for this reason also since the day we heard of it we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask he only asked for one thing just one and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding that's a request that we would be driven like a like a sailboat before the wind that we would be filled with the knowledge of god's will just as that sail is filled with the wind and driving it forward and here's a result and i want you to think about these things because it'll help you value what god is offering to us why this mission matters verse 10 so that you will walk worthy in a manner worthy of the lord as you're filled with the knowledge of the will of god you will walk worthy to please him in all respects we hear that all the time we want to hear god say well done good and faithful servant well if we're filled and driven by the will of god that's a given this is an outcome you follow the will of god you will be pleasing to him bearing fruit in every good work we'll see fruit we will become more like jesus and we will influence others to join our family because of him bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of god we're actually going to get to know god better and this isn't bible trivia this is intimate knowledge of the creator of the universe we will know him as a friend strengthened with all power which we'll need as we face the hardship of life according to his glorious might you're going to find yourself doing things that you could not do on your own because as you're filled with the will of god he is filling you with his power for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience lord knows we need that joyously giving thanks to the father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light this is what we have to look forward to as we follow this mission we exist to glorify god by walking closely with him striving together to become more like jesus every day and i tell you from experience a body of believers that takes this to heart and lives it grows you will grow this body will grow we are going to have a space problem that's conditional upon us owning this mission statement we will see god answer prayer in ways that you've never imagined not because we're pursuing miracles but because we're pursuing jesus and because we're pursuing jesus we're praying his will we're praying according to what he wants done we will see this because it's god's will and the challenge for us is to step into it every day next week we're going to talk about what it means to follow jesus there's great stuff coming not because i'm preaching it but because it's what the lord has for us to follow him let's pray heavenly father the truth of the gospel is truly staggering of what you're offering to us our hope in christ the life that you have planned for us in this life and the one to come that we can know you that we can experience life in your son what a gift god help us to value it as it should be valued to value you as you should be valued and because we see that value god put it on our hearts to pursue you with all of our heart soul mind and strength god we pray this in jesus name amen free audio post production by alphonic.com