

As You Received, So Walk

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[0:00] So a few years ago, I was at a church in Seattle, as you know, and there was a young man,! This kid Josiah was probably 12 or 13, and he had won the sword drill competition pretty consistently.

I said, that's good for you, buddy, but you're not beating me. And he just kind of, oh, really? Old man? It's like the new gunslingers in town.

He wants to take on the old dog. I said, yeah, I'll tell you why you won't beat me, because you put tabs in your Bible? And they'll slow you down. And I didn't think anything else of it.

About two weeks later, we were at their house for his mom's birthday party, and his mom says, hey, Josiah, go show Mr. Hopkins your Bible. He pulls it out. He had cut all the tabs off.

I felt really bad. His mom said, no, it's no big deal. He just wants to beat you. He did not, just for the record. The old dog still has a few new tricks. So we have been setting the stage for each sermon.

[1:00] By talking about being a faster learner. I'm not going to go over it again. We've reinforced it a number of times. I'll only do the last one, just so that that one is cemented in your mind, so we're reviewing.

But we want to be faster learners. It's the idea of setting the stage mentally to be ready to receive what God has for us. And the R in faster is review. We want to go back over what we've learned. And think about it. Hold it up. Like you're looking at something that, you're looking at a diamond, or you're looking at the different facets. Allowing the Spirit to till that soil and make sure it really sinks in.

So review plays an important role. So you might think, oh good, now John is going to stop doing that and we'll just go straight to the sermon. No. No, I found three questions that I want to put in front of you to think about.

We're going to talk about these over the next few weeks. But this is part, again, of preparing your heart, preparing your mind to receive what God has for you.

[2:07] So the three questions are, how can I use this? Why must I use this? And when will I use this? And I want you to make those questions prayers.

So the first one is, how will I use this? You know, it's interesting. You hear people say, frequently, who haven't read the Bible, that the Bible isn't particularly relevant. It was written by how many authors?

I don't remember. A lot. Over several thousand years. And it's archaic. It's written in multiple languages. It spans multiple countries. It just, what does it have to do with 21st century America and artificial intelligence and cars that drive themselves?

How is the Bible relevant? Well, you just need to read it and listen to it. And I want you to pray and ask the Lord, how can I use this?

How is what John is saying from Colossians chapter 2 relevant in my life? And what do I need to do? How can I use this? Because as you ask that question, God is going to say, oh, let me show you.

[3:17] Let me answer that question. God answers those prayers. He wants us to take His Word and live it out. I'm going to tell you where I got this idea for what we're doing leading up to the sermon.

My granddaughter, Sunny, is in a karate class. She's at Master Springer Studio where Brian teaches occasionally. And they start each class where they position themselves called Bansong. And they kneel. They bow their heads and they're quiet. And Master Springer says, I want you to picture yourself having a good practice, proper form.

Your heart's in the right place. You're ready to receive instruction and grow so you can progress in your skills in karate. Well, if it's that important to do that for a 45-minute karate class, is it safe to say it's probably kind of important for us, opening God's Word, to just pause.

And ask the Lord, how do you want me to use this this morning? So I'm going to give us a minute.

[4:28] We're going to sit in that for a second. And then I'll pray and we'll read Colossians.

Colossians. God, as we open your Word this morning, as we see what Paul wrote, guided by your Holy Spirit, help us to see how this is relevant to us.

God, help us to see how you work, how you moved the gospel message from Lord Jesus, you yourself, delivered it to Paul, who delivered it to Epaphras, who delivered it to the Colossian Christians, and Lord, ultimately to us.

And God, I pray that we would be moved to see that we fit in that chain. We are part of your plan to create your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, in Dubuque as it is in heaven.

Open our hearts to that, Lord. Help us to think carefully, how can I use this? And to live it out. In Jesus' name, amen. So turn to Colossians chapter 1. We're going to read verses, the last verse of chapter 1, 129 through 2.8.

And if younger me was doing their job, there should be slides. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. And just a quick, just a quick reminder.

[6:25] When Paul says for this purpose, the purpose that he was serving, the purpose he was trying to accomplish, was to present every man and woman complete in Christ.

That's our mission statement. Striving, it's part of our mission statement. Striving together to become more like Jesus every day. That's God's goal for each one of us to look more like Jesus. And Paul was dedicated to that end. Quick side note that dawned on me this morning while I was doing my devotions. Scientists have discovered that as you do an activity, good or bad, you reinforce pathways in your brain.

You're literally rewiring your brain. That's why reading is so important and reading good things is so important. That's why talking with other believers about the truth of God is so important.

Because you're literally rewiring God's, rewiring your brain. And what dawned on me is when Paul said, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus in Philippians, he's not talking metaphorically.

[7:33] He's talking literally. The mind of Christ is being formed in us as we listen to, talk about, and practice God's Word.

Isn't that cool? We're literally being transformed into the image of Christ. And Paul was dedicated to that purpose. Verse 1 of chapter 2, For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are in Laodicea, and for all those, listen to this, and for all those who have not personally seen my face.

Paul wasn't just worried about the people that he knew, the people that were right at hand that he was discipling, or that he was preaching the gospel to, that he was leading into a deeper relationship with Christ face-to-face.

He was also engaged with those people who were several spiritual generations down from him.

That's the heart of a man of God who truly understands what it means to love people.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, for those who are in Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ himself.

[8:56] And remember, early in chapter 1, he said that God was revealing the mystery through him, and also through us. God was revealing the mystery. And what was that mystery? Christ in you, the hope of glory.

When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, he literally resides in you. That's the process.

That's the beginning of the process of transformation, to become like Christ.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. In whom, this is verse 3, in whom Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. [10:10] Our focus this morning is going to be primarily on verse 6 of chapter 2. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

Now, you know where I'm going to start. Like every preacher, I think it's obligatory. If you see a therefore, you have to say this cute little phrase. When you see a therefore, you have to figure out what the therefore is there for.

We're going to do that for a second. So what is Paul looking back on? I think there's layers, actually. I think the first thing he's looking at is everything he's written. So back all the way to the beginning of the book. And I think his focus is what I talked about a couple weeks ago, about the beauty of all that we have in Christ.

We talked about the beauty of the saints and the faithful brethren. That as we reflect the image of Jesus, there is beauty. And that beauty draws people.

Therefore, because you, Colossians, are part of this body, this beautiful body that God is creating, that's one reason. Therefore, because this beauty of the people of God, there was the beauty of being filled with the knowledge of the will of God.

[11:21] Remember that? We talked about trimming our sails, which means you shift the sails to the best position to take the strength of the wind and be carried along in the directions the wind is going.

We talked about how we have to learn to trim our sails, which means how do we order our lives in order to receive all these benefits that Paul lists in verses 10, 11, and 12, 13, and 14, I think.

10, 11, and 12. And it goes beyond that. But the beauty of being filled with the knowledge of the will of God. Therefore, Paul's telling them, look back.

The beauty of God's people, the beauty of being filled with the knowledge of His will. And then we talked about the pinnacle, the top of Mount Everest. I have friends that live in Nepal.

I talked to them yesterday. And where they live, they're in a valley, really picturesque lake. It's one of, if not the top tourist destination in Nepal. And I've seen pictures from that lakeshore.

[12:28] You can't see Mount Everest, but you can see some of the other mountains in the Himalayas. And those mountains are so high compared to the valley. You have to crane your neck back to see.

And it's like you're looking up into heaven. This beauty that I'm about to give you now, that's what this is. It's the beauty of Jesus Himself. Do you remember talking about that?

Jesus, who is the exact representation of God, that He is the means that God has used to communicate to us, that this Jesus became a man, this Jesus who created all things.

He holds all things together by His power. And all things were created for Him. All things are held together by Him. And He chose to die on the cross for our sins.

He accepted our sin. Let me give you some context. I have a friend who used to be a caretaker at a camp out in Colorado that Kara and I worked at for years.

[13:38] And a camp nearby, Girl Scout camp, were having septic problems and the repairs required more than one guy. So my friend Sean goes over to the Girl Scout camp to help them figure out what's wrong with their septic system.

Well, in the midst of getting this figured out, he broke loose a pipe and pressure burst and just covered him in unspeakable filth.

Right in the face. Up his nose, in his mouth. I want you to just really picture that scene. That's what Jesus did for you.

Seriously. The only difference is, Sean was surprised. Jesus was not. Jesus chose to become sin on your behalf.

And that's the closest analogy I can think of. Of what it meant. And for a purpose. So that you might have a righteousness of God in him.

[14:46] Not only are you declared righteous, you're justified. But God begins a work in your life. That's what we're going to focus on this morning. God is working in your life to make you like Jesus.

To make you like the most beautiful thing imaginable. The pinnacle, the top of the mountain is Jesus. And we get to be like him.

Therefore, the people of God are beautiful. It is beautiful to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. We have a Savior who is beautiful.

We need to see the beauty of God. Because then we can't help but fall in love with him. And follow him. And then just a step below was the beauty of the gospel.

What we have in Christ. We've been removed from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. We're under his care. We've been redeemed. Bought out of slavery.

[15:47] We've been forgiven. We've been given new life. We've been reconciled to God. We've been reconciled to each other. Jesus himself is going to present us to God.

Wait for it. Ta-da! He's going to say that about you. If you're in Christ. Holy.

Blameless. Beyond reproach. Therefore. Because this is true. The people of God are beautiful. To be filled with the knowledge of the will of God is beautiful.

Jesus is incomparably beautiful. The gospel is beautiful. Beautiful. And we have been entrusted with a beautiful holy calling.

To carry the truth out into the world. We get to participate in the work of God. Paul was so captivated by what he got to do.

[16:50] That he was privileged to do. To carry this message into the world. That he said his suffering on the behalf of the church was nothing. He rejoiced in his suffering. Because of the good that would result from it.

Do you remember we read in 2 Corinthians 4. That all the suffering he describes in 2 Corinthians. He called this light momentary affliction. In comparison to what he had.

In Christ. And his joy was to share that with other people. Therefore. That's what we're called to. So that's the first layer.

Is the big picture. This beauty that we have access to. Because of Jesus Christ. In Christ. This is what we have. And then look back at what Paul says specifically about the Colossian church.

So he's getting a little bit more personal. Directly to them. I went through and I made a list. Of 7 different things that he saw. In the Colossian church. They rejoiced in the gospel.

[17:52] No I'm sorry. This is what Paul was doing. In their behalf. Paul rejoiced. In their faith. He suffered in their behalf. He rejoiced in his suffering.

He proclaimed the gospel. He admonished. Which is to correct people. He taught. He struggled. And then he comes back to rejoicing.

Paul is saying to them. Because I do all these things. Because I as the father of your spiritual father. However. You should listen to what I'm saying.

I'm a man who rejoices in your faith. Who suffers for you. Who proclaim the gospel so you could receive it. Who admonished someone who now admonishes you. I taught someone who is now teaching you.

I struggled. Epaphras has struggled. And together we rejoice in what we see in you. Therefore. Heed what I'm saying. Now there's another therefore.

[18:55] The next one is the purpose of the book of Colossians. The book of Colossians was written specifically. To address. A false teaching that was starting to bubble up. That Paul wanted to address early on.

Because it was. It was relatively new at the time. But has become a thorn in the side of the church. Ever since. It's the idea of Gnosticism. That. Remember when I described God as beautiful.

And he's at the top of the mountain. And just. Overwhelming. In some respects. Do you remember when Moses. Said let me see your glory.

God said no one can look on my glory. Unveiled. And survive. We have to be changed.

Fundamentally changed. Before we can go into the presence of God.

But the. The Gnostic heresy. Was saying. Well you know that's true. So you need angelic help. You need to embrace. A lifestyle of asceticism.

[19:57] You have to go through all these hard steps. Most people can't do it. It'll be life threatening. It'll be hard. And eventually there's a couple. You know there's a few gurus. Who have reached the heights.

And I happen to be one of them. So you need me to tell you. How to get to God. You need me to talk to God on your behalf. Because he's too great for you. That is the false teaching of Gnosticism. That there's a special knowledge reserved for a select few. And Paul was writing to say. No that's a load of garbage. That is not true. We all have access.

In Christ. And we're going to see that. We're going to touch on it briefly today. We're going to talk about it in depth next week. The idea that yes God is glorious.

Yes his ways are as high above the earth. As the heavens are above the earth. His ways are as high above us. In our comprehension. As the heavens are above the earth. And yet. He figured out a way.

[20:59] God figured out a way. To communicate to us. Remember we talked about that. Hebrews 1. 1-3. Jesus in the flesh. Was God's way of speaking to us. In words of one syllable.

So we could understand what he was saying. This glorious knowledge is accessible to all. Because if you're in Christ. You have the Holy Spirit. And Paul is addressing that.

So therefore. He'd run him writing. And then lastly. It's just the previous verse.

Verse 5. Paul ends the verse by saying. That he was rejoicing to see their good discipline. And the stability of their faith in Christ. He was happy with what he heard about these people.

About their growth. And wanted to stimulate to keep going. I think. That when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. There's a phrase that's repeated. Accel still more.

[21:58] Keep going. You're doing a great job. Keep climbing. Awesome job. Unlike the Corinthians. Where he said. Yo. You need to straighten up. Or the Galatians. What are you doing?

You're abandoning the gospel. To go back to the law. But for the Colossian church. And the Thessalonian church. He's actually saying. Man I'm proud of you guys. But don't stop.

Keep going. And so he's commending them for their good discipline. And their. The stability of their faith. Quick note on discipline. I heard a.

Just a fragment of a sermon this week. By John Piper. And he said a phrase. That really stuck in my head. And I want you to listen to this. I talk about spiritual discipline a lot.

Paul said in Timothy. Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. Over the course of my life. I have had people say. Man that sounds awfully legalistic to me. You're making a new law. Nope.

[22:53] No. No. No. No. And here's the difference. A law says. I earn God's favor by doing these things. Discipline in its right place says.

Because I have already. All that we've talked about in Christ. I'm going to discipline myself. To get more. To become more of what Jesus wants me to be.

I am doing it because of what I have in Christ. Not in order to gain something from Jesus Christ.

What John Piper said I really liked. Is we need to get away from the adolescent belief.

That discipline is legalism. It's childish. We need to be aware of the fact. That we do need to discipline ourselves. For the purpose of godliness. And we're going to talk about that. We're going to talk about what that means.

So those are the therefore's. The big stuff. The beauty of all that we have in Christ. Therefore because of all the work that Paul was doing. To reach and to celebrate.

[23:52] And to encourage the Colossian church. Therefore because of. The rise of the Gnostic heresy. And because of the people. That the Colossian Christians were.

Therefore. Therefore. As you received. Christ Jesus the Lord. So also walk in him. So.

In 2000. I think it was 11 or 12. No it was sooner than that. 2008 or 9. I was. Pastoring a.

Minute little church in Colorado Springs. Called Refuse of the World Church. We were a church plant. Of a church in Denver. We were in Colorado Springs. Our mother church was called.

Scum of the Earth. And people go. Those are weird church names. If you read. That's okay Eddie. I appreciate the feedback. That's actually straight out of the Bible.

[24:50] Paul said. We became. As scum of the earth. As the refuge. Refuse of the world. In order to reach. People. Part of the problem is.

In a lot of churches. Is. We start telling. Well you got to wear a suit and tie. You got to drive a certain kind of car. You have to have a certain look. We may deny. That. We believe that. But our actions say.

You got to reach a certain standard. To be part of the cool kids. To be part of the in crowd. Godly people have all this. This extra stuff. And what ends up happening. Is it creates a barrier. And what Paul was saying.

Was no no. I became as the scum of the earth. As the refuge of the world. In order to reach those people. That's how the Jews viewed the Gentiles.

And for a Pharisee. Paul. To go to the Gentiles. He was literally. In a Jew's eyes. Becoming the scum of the earth. So. Here I am at this church.

[25:45] And I was preaching through Colossians. Now the difference was. That you were a much more polite. Crowd. Than what I had. At refuge of the world church. I don't think I finished a single

sermon.

In a year. Because. It was. Much smaller crowds. Much more intimate. And people would just throw out questions. Without. Sometimes it was relevant to the sermon. Sometimes it was out of left field. But it was fun. We had a good dynamic. Well I didn't have a lot of time to study. Because I was. I was. I held down a job. I was working as a flooring salesman. And so.

I came up to this passage. Therefore as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord. So walk in him. And I really didn't have my head wrapped around it. And then. In the sermon. The Holy Spirit said. Here. Let me show you. And all of a sudden. My brain exploded. With what I'm going to tell you this morning. And I was. Processing through verbally. In front of our. Congregation.

[26 : 44] Wait. This means. That I received Jesus by faith. Faith. And he solved a problem that I couldn't solve. And I have new life in Christ. That's how I'm supposed to live. Which means I live by faith. And I'm doing the stream of consciousness.

Babbling. And I'm sure the people there thought. Well I guess we're not the only ones who use drugs. So I'm not going to do that to you this morning.

But that day began a discovery in me. That has led me to believe. That I think this is a very critical piece. Of Paul's writing. There's highlights. Paul's.

Paul's a brilliant thinker. He laid out things in a very usable way. But there were certain principles. That he wanted us to get. And I think this is one of them.

You've got to pay attention to this. Therefore. Looking back to everything we've talked about. As you receive Christ Jesus the Lord. So also walk in him. So I got to thinking about that.

[27 : 41] Like I did back in the day. But with more time to really think it through. And I looked at what is the pattern. Typically. For people who come to Christ. And it's actually very common.

It transcends culture. It transcends time. Because God transcends both. The means of us. Coming to the gospel. Is consistent.

And in looking at that process. What I hope you experience. Is what I experienced. Is this sudden flood of understanding. This is what it means.

To walk with Jesus. To be a participant. In his work. In my life. To transform me. And to be a participant. In his work. In reaching the world.

Because. It's the same process. It's the exact same thing. So look. Let's look at this. So. Where does it start? It starts with a need.

[28 : 44] Last week. I watched a three-part documentary. About a band named Love Song. The guys of Love Song.

Really. Are described as the. Soundtrack. Of the Jesus People Movement. The Jesus Revolution. Of the late 60s. Through the 70s.

That they. Their. Heart to follow Jesus. And to use music. As a vehicle. Of the gospel. Laid the foundation. For what we now know. As contemporary Christian music. You listen to the testimony. Of these men. And they all said. Essentially the same thing. I was searching for God. I knew. That my life. Wasn't working. I knew. That what I had been taught.

By my parents. Wasn't working. And I rebelled against that. But I wanted to find answers. And so I used drugs. We would scrutinize.

[29 : 40] The lyrics of Beatles songs. Because they were meeting with gurus. To see if we could get spiritual truth. That would help us to fill this hole in our hearts. That would help us to see.

The answer to the need. That we felt deep in our souls. Life didn't work for them. Without exception. That's what they said. And I think that's true of every one of us.

As you've heard me say before. When I haven't been in ministry. As a vocation. I've been in sales. If you want a sale. That connects.

And closes. And you get paid. And the thing you sold doesn't get returned. You want to sell to people. Who actually need what you want. What you're selling. And so when I sold mattresses. I identified the people's needs. And I connected the mattress. To solving all of their problems. Okay not all their problems. But that's true of us as human beings. Is my point.

[30 : 43] We have needs. And we're always looking for the solution. But deep down there's an ultimate need. I think it was Augustine. Not positive.

But I think it was Augustine. Who said that we have a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts. There's a hole. That only God can fill. And we know that instinctively. Those men. From the band Love Song.

Knew. That things weren't working. The drugs didn't work. The Beatles were not. Really good spiritual guides. They just. They had no answers. That's where it begins. With hopelessness. Despair. I can't do this. Remember that. That's the beginning point. Then the next step in our journey to faith. Is someone comes along and shows us the way. Somebody. Gives us the gospel. They share the good news. And something about what they deliver.

[31:41] Strikes a chord deep in our souls. You know it's interesting. It really doesn't matter. How skilled. The person that shares the gospel. It doesn't matter.

If they're Billy Graham. Or if they're some stumbling. Bumbling guy. Who. Who can barely remember. You can't find verses in the Bible. He just knows.

Like the man said in John 9. I was blind. But now I see. It appears that you're blind. Let me show you how you can see too. And so for each one of you. For me.

The message was delivered to us in a way that we could understand. In the case of the Colossian church. It was a man named Epaphras. Epaphras had been living in Ephesus.

Paul arrived in Ephesus. And there was a great revival. It was like the Jesus Revolution. People were coming to Christ. There was just a clear movement of God in Ephesus.

[32:41] And part of that movement. Says in Acts 19. Just a short sentence. And from Ephesus the gospel spread throughout Asia. That's a huge area.

That's modern day Turkey. Armenia. Iran. Iraq. That whole area. The gospel spread. Because of what God was doing in Ephesus. And one of the people.

Who answered the call. Was a Colossian man. Epaphras. Who carried the gospel. And brought it to the Colossians. He delivered the gospel in a way that was understandable. We see that in chapter 1.

Now it's not enough just to hear. You have to respond. You have to accept what is offered. And that's the next step. We accepted the invitation.

For me. I had heard the gospel very poorly. From my parents. Who had just gotten saved weeks before I did. And then I read a booklet. That actually.

[33:53] Described how to share the gospel with somebody else. And I saw that applied to me. And I said. Lord I believe this. And here's a crucial piece.

This is what it means to accept Jesus as Savior. It's a recognition of a hopeless place. I have no hope. I cannot fix this problem myself.

I've exhausted my resources. It's recognizing that there is an answer. Contained in Jesus. And then there's repentance.

John the Baptist and Jesus both preached. Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. That's essentially what we're continuing to say all the way to this day. Repent. Repent. My way doesn't work.

Jesus I believe that your way does. And I'm going to follow you. We see that pattern in the disciples. They're fishing. Jesus comes to them.

[34:50] Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. It says in Matthew chapter 4. What did they do? They immediately left their nets. And followed Jesus. Now in their case it was literal.

That's not the case for all of us. I was 14. I didn't change anything significant in my life. I didn't leave my parents and go on the mission field. But I left my old way of thinking.

And I received what was offered to me in the gospel. And the Holy Spirit came to dwell in me. You see that in the Colossians.

They received it. They responded. They believed what they heard in the message from Epaphras. And then the work of transformation begins to happen.

We're changed. And before we get into the next part of the passage. I want to ask you a very important question. Is that true of you? You need to look in the mirror and be honest.

[35:56] Is there a point in my life? For some people it's a moment in time. For me it was 7 o'clock on a Sunday evening. I can distinctly remember the room I was in.

The book I was reading. The circumstances. All of it. That's not true for everybody. Kara got saved as a very young child. And it was more of a process of growing into an understanding of what it meant to be in Christ.

I used to pray with a gentleman that at the time seemed really old. But was actually only 62. And he said, John, I can't tell you when I got saved.

I don't have any idea. All I know is Jesus saved me. That he died on the cross for my sins. He clearly had a testimony of God's work in his life. But there wasn't a moment in time. For each of you. You need to look in the mirror. The mirror being God's word. And assess, have I put my trust in Christ? Have I recognized the vanity, the emptiness of what I'm trying to do. [36 : 55] To fill that hole in my heart. To satisfy the needs that I have. And turning, however imperfectly, to follow Christ. When I was 14, I didn't know what I was getting into.

For years after that, as I did mature and understand what the gospel meant. I used to tell God all the time. I used to teach this in my youth groups. God's not above doing bait and switch. He said, hey John, do you want to go to hell?

I said, no. He said, great. Believe in me and you won't go to hell. He said, oh, but you didn't read the fine print, did you? It's God speaking. There's a lot more involved. But it's all good.

Trust me. That's the process. We come to Christ. We turn to Jesus and we follow His way. And we learn.

It's a progressive thing. But I tell you, the Holy Spirit comes upon you when you're saved. And things begin to change. Back to my story, just briefly. So I got saved.

[37 : 53] Didn't tell anybody. The book that led me to Christ gave some basics about what it means to follow Jesus. You read your Bible. You pray. You share your faith. That's all I knew.

I didn't grow up in a Christian home. That's all I knew. But the next day, I was sharing the gospel with my friends. Over the next two or three weeks, there was a fundamental shift in my relationship with my brother, Mike.

Mike and I fought at every opportunity. It was mostly his fault. I'm the oldest brother. I'm wiser. I have a better view of the world. Five years makes a big difference when you're 14.

He was only nine. And so we fought. Please understand, I'm joking. At nine, he needed my correction because also my parents weren't doing their jobs. So I had to step in.

So we fought all the time. And that stopped. And finally, about a month in, my mom grabbed me.

[38 : 55] She said, what's going on? You're different. Did you get saved? Yes, I did. I lived through that story.

And then for the 40 plus years since, I've looked back on it to reverse engineer it, to better understand how I can lead people to Christ, how I can disciple them, how I can help them see fruit in their lives.

The most important piece of my examination assessment of that moment in time, in January 1980, was that God did a work in my life.

It wasn't me changing because I all of a sudden knew I needed to change. It was God working to create, to begin the process of making me new in Christ.

That's what we're looking for, is that sort of movement. As I listened to the testimony of the guys from Love Song in that documentary, they started writing music that was dedicated to Jesus immediately.

[40 : 19] God took a skill that they already had and redeemed it. They were involved in helping lead worship at Calvary Chapel within a month or six weeks of having come to Christ.

And they were leading people to Christ through that music. Why? Because they were such good musicians? No. Because God was at work in their hearts.

The Holy Spirit had arrived. That's what we need to look at in our lives, brothers and sisters. Are you in Christ? Because the rest of what I'm going to talk about this morning won't make sense if you haven't received Christ Jesus the Lord.

Because Paul's basis is, therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so also walk in Him. So we have to start with that basis. That we have, in fact, gone through this process I just described. You saw a need. Someone shared the gospel. You accepted it. You decided to repent and follow Jesus. And the Holy Spirit came to live in you and work in and through you. If that's true in your life, get ready because what comes next is really cool.

[41 : 31] It might feel a little overwhelming, to be fair. But if you're not there, you need to get your life right with Jesus first. That's where it starts. One other point before we get to the second half of the verse.

I've shared this with a number of people face-to-face. I can't remember if I've shared it from up here. I'm a driven man. I'm a driven man. I'm driven to see God glorified.

I am driven to help people understand what we have in Christ. I overstep at times. I'm too harsh at times.

I'm too intense. I had a kid in a youth ministry I ran at a camp that came back. And so I was talking to her after she graduated from high school.

She came back and she said, You are the weirdest, most intense person I've ever met. But then I understood why you were that way. Because she saw Jesus. So forgive me if I tend to be too strong or harsh.

[42:48] It's not my intent. What I want you to see is Jesus. Jesus. He does amazing things in our lives.

In each individual person, He's at work. And following Jesus isn't the legalistic drudgery of following a bunch of rules to please an unpleasable God.

It's the means to step into the most wonderful, most amazing life we could possibly imagine. It's to become everything that you were designed to be. Deep in your heart of hearts, you know what you were made to be.

You know what humanity is supposed to be, what a human being, a human man or woman is supposed to be, having been created in the image of God. You long for it. Desperately you long for it.

And even as Christians, we try to solve that longing in the wrong ways. But as we turn to Jesus, we learn how. And where I'm driven is to show you that.

[44:05] My prayer is that I get out of the way and that you see Jesus. You with me? As you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so also walk in Him.

We see that pattern in the disciples. We talked about it a little bit already. Matthew chapter 4. As you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so also walk in Him.

Sorry, I'm on that track. It's stuck in my head. Jesus said, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. They said, okay, deal. They dropped everything and followed Him because they instinctively saw the value.

Matthew. That's the example. Matthew did it. The scene I just described was Peter and Andrew. James and John were probably right near there.

They responded, and so it goes. Some didn't respond. The rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[45:00] And Jesus said, sell everything that you've got, which we unfortunately get fixated on. Jesus may call some of us to that, but the more important piece was, and follow me.

And the rich young ruler, because he was rich, was blinded by his wealth and went away. The Pharisees heard the gospel. They didn't respond. Not everybody does. But we need to follow the disciples' example.

You look at the Thessalonian church in Acts 17. Paul was in Ephesus for two years. He was in Thessalonica for three Saturdays.

He preached at the synagogue for three Saturdays and got booted out of town. But some people came to Christ. A few of the Jews, a bunch of Gentiles, and the leading women. It says this in Acts 17. And then what's really interesting is you read further in Luke's account in Acts, Paul goes from Thessalonica to Berea, Paul preaches, and the Bereans, it says, were more noble than the Thessalonians because they listened to Paul, opened their Bibles to make sure that what Paul said was true.

And many believe there. Here's what's interesting to me. If you read the books of Thessalonians, first and second Thessalonians, which I would encourage you to do because I don't have time to cover it and this isn't a sermon on Thessalonians, the Thessalonian church were people that Paul was really proud of.

[46:26] They may not have been Bible scholars like the Bereans, but they were people who took the truth, took it in their lives, repented, and followed Jesus. The theme of the letters to the Thessalonians is excel still more.

Paul loved them because they followed Jesus. That's the example we want to follow is to walk in Him. And then of course the Colossian church. And one thing I want to point out really quick is the Colossian church did not last long.

That wasn't because the church failed. You know, the Lord Jesus said to the Ephesian church in Revelation 2, if you don't straighten up, I'm going to remove your lampstand. I'm done if you don't

get things fixed.

Colossae, that church, a better way to put it, dispersed, because of a flood and an economic downturn because other cities in the region were making more money, they were more directly on the trade routes.

The city of Colossae actually collapsed and the church disappeared. But I don't want you to make the mistake of thinking, well, we never hear anything more about the Colossian church. So was it, but did God really work there? Yes, He did.

[47:41] Yes, He did. And we know that for this. Let me, I'm going to cover this really fast. Look at how Paul describes the Colossian believers.

They were faithful. This is going from chapter 1 all the way to where we are in chapter 2. They were faithful. They had put their trust in Jesus. They were loving to the saints. They were fruitful.

They followed the example of Epaphras. So they took what they had learned and they shared it.

They were people of good discipline. They were, so they were growing. They had stable faith.

In James, James tells us that we should pray for wisdom if we lack wisdom. And then he talks about the person who doesn't have wisdom is double-minded and unstable in all their ways. Paul, in Ephesians 4, which is the heart of our mission statement, Paul talks about the immature person is unstable in their ways.

They're tossed to and fro by every wind and doctrine. That's not the Colossian church. They had listened to what Epaphras said and they took it to heart and they lived it. They had stable faith.

[48:47] Hard times didn't rock them. They were firmly rooted in Jesus Christ. Remember the parable that Jesus gave of the two houses, one built on sand, one built on the rock.

The Colossian church, the Colossian people, the believers, were built on the solid rock which is the word of Christ. They were firmly rooted in Jesus Christ. They were being built up, which means that they were progressing.

They were growing. They didn't get saved and sit back and cross their arms and say that was enough. They were growing. They were becoming more like Jesus every day.

They were sharing their faith and carrying the gospel forward. They were established in their faith.

They knew what they believed. They were following the good teaching of Epaphras and they were overflowing with gratitude.

They knew what they had received and were grateful. Our gratitude for what we have in Christ, just that in and of itself, is a testimony to God's work in our lives.

[49:49] And as you're out and you're talking to people, you don't have to worry about coming up with the whole gospel presentation. If you can just present to somebody and say, you know what? I have got so much in Jesus. I am so thankful.

And it could be anything. It could be forgiveness of sins. It could be new life in Christ. It could be a really good chocolate chip cookie that God in His grace has given to you to be thankful in what we have in Christ.

This is the character of the Colossian people. So what does all this have to do with us? Bring it home. We want to be like the Colossian church.

We want to learn to walk. Let's get back to the verse. As you receive Christ Jesus as the Lord, so also walk in Him. You remember, I've said this a number of times and we continue to say it, there's two themes that work their way into almost every message.

Life is unbelievably hard. Lord. And the gospel is fantastically great. You've got to own that. As you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, you had a need, you couldn't overcome.

[51:07] Someone told you the answer. You received it. You followed Jesus. Resolution. The problem ceased to be a problem.

There's how to live the life of a Christ follower. Because guess what? You're going to face problems you cannot overcome. You can't figure it out. You can't solve it. It might be your marriage. It might be your health.

It might be your kids. It might be your parents. It might be job. It might be fill in the blank. You know. None of this is a mystery to you.

You know that life is hard. But just as you receive Christ in the midst of feeling totally helpless, you're dead in trespasses and sins.

New life. That's the same pattern for the things that we face in life. The exact same pattern. Receive what God is offering to you. Pray to Him. Ask Him, Lord, I need help.

[52:03] Show me the way. You will. He's promised He will. Receive Him. Receive what He's offering. That's at the core.

But the other piece of it is that we have been called. And this is what I'm going to end with. We have been called into a life, into a mission that God has to reach the world.

The next slide here should be 2 Timothy 1 and 2. See if I'm right. And I'll turn there real quick too.

2 Timothy 2. You therefore, this could be written to us, Paul's talking to Timothy, you therefore, my son, be strong in the graces in Christ Jesus.

So you be centered in all this. Starting point. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men and women who will be able to teach others also.

[53:07] That's the spread of the gospel in a nutshell. That's what we saw, excuse me, happening with the Colossian church. Jesus knocked Paul off of a donkey, gave him the gospel message.

He got saved immediately. That's also, Paul immediately took off, started sharing the gospel. He met Epaphras, led Epaphras to Christ.

Epaphras went to Colossae, led them to Christ. And only the Lord knows, but I'm sure that they spread the gospel. You have been called and commissioned and empowered to share your faith. faith. We in the American church have lost that fire. I'm going to say something that if it offends you, I'm sorry, but not really.

We've lost that fire here. I hear Jack. I hear Jim Loney. I talked to Tim and John. There was a passion.

[54:09] An urgency to share the gospel. A fearlessness. Because these men and women knew the truth. And people were saved. That's your heritage.

But they didn't do it because they were such cool guys. They did it because they were captivated by Jesus and the gospel. And they wanted to invite other people to come along with them.

I've been doing a lot of thinking this week about revival. Not that I expect revival. Don't misunderstand. God could do it. But revival is purely a sovereign act of God in mass movements across areas.

Whether it's the Jesus Revolution, the church I was associated with in Seattle is part of a movement that started in the Philippines. They went from a church of 168 new converts to a 50,000 plus church church in Manila because of a movement of God.

God does that sometimes. But what I'm talking about is a movement in individual hearts because sometimes He doesn't. But He doesn't do those mass movements. But He does movements in our hearts. And we have been called to go out.

[55:26] But you know what characterizes those revivals? The Jesus Revolution? The movement of God across the Philippines in the 60s, 70s, and 80s? Because people were taught in the Philippines they were taught when you come to Jesus you need two things.

And this is what I want to close with. You need two things. You need your Bible. You need a passport. Passport.

Yeah, because God's going to take you somewhere and use you to share the gospel. You've been called to this. This is the purpose of your life. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

We are the means that God has ordained. Not me. Not Tim. Not John. Not Jack. Us. We are the means that God has chosen to carry the gospel forward.

The people that were saved during the Jesus Revolution were told you need to do two things. Put a hand up to God and a hand out to a friend and invite them in. That's what happens when we follow Jesus.

[56:34] Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord so also walk in Him. What's our mission statement? It starts with we exist to glorify God. That's the foundation.

We exist to glorify God. Walking closely with Him. That's the internal work of God. God. Striving together as a body to become more like Jesus every day.

And when that happens the mechanism is to follow Jesus. It's to cultivate a love for God. It's to cultivate a love for people.

It's to make disciples. To be united in our work. And when we do that we may not see a mass movement of God in Dubuque. I don't care.

Our responsibility is to reach the people that are right at the end of our fingertips and share our faith with them and show them Jesus. And I tell you I promise you when you do that you will discover meaning for your life.

[57 : 37] You'll discover oh this is what I'm here for. And you'll get hooked. Let's pray. Father thank you that we have such riches in Christ.

We have such life. We have the Spirit living in us and working in us. God I pray that you would filter what I've said this morning to touch each person's heart.

Lord if there's someone here who has not received you as Savior I pray that they would respond to you today. They would just simply ask you Lord to forgive their sins and to do your work to make them into a person like Jesus.

Lord for the rest of us I pray that we would be like the Colossian church living out our faith to address the hard hard things of our lives in the midst of those hard things to share the love of Jesus with the people we meet.

I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.