

# Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing - Mark 6:45-56

*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: 04 May 2025

Preacher: John Hopkins

- [ 0 : 00 ] You know, technology is a blessing and a curse. I'm not going to curse, though it might be a little tempting.
- ! There we go. All right. So, we've had a crazy week. We went to Colorado on Thursday morning for a wedding of an old friend of ours.
- I officiated this wedding. Kara was a coordinator. Let me make something really clear. People say, you know, the pastor does this sermon, it's a great wedding, good job, good service.
- Nothing happens without the coordinator. I got to sit down. Kara did not. So, I hear someone who's been a wedding coordinator.
- It's a lot of work. But people were asking me, we're more there, because this was an old family friend, saw a lot of people from our past.
- [ 1 : 01 ] So, tell me about this church you're a part of. And as I was talking about Tri-State and the move that God has done in our life to bring us to Dubuque, I realized I have not done an adequate job of thanking you for all the things that you have done for us.
- So, I made a list. And first of all, let me tell you, I had great intentions of writing thank you cards, but I would have just sent one to everybody. So, I'm going to let this be a thank you for all that we've experienced.
- We had help with our move. A whole mob of you showed up at Green Acres and helped us get all of our junk out of a truck and into a storage unit. And, you know, I love the phrase, but wait, there's more?
- There's going to be an opportunity to help us move it out of there in the near future. So, Lord willing, that will happen sooner rather than later. But we really appreciate that mass of people coming over and showing us love in a very tangible way.
- Helping us get the stuff off the truck, organizing it so it fit in the storage unit. I can tell you now I was deeply afraid that it wouldn't, but it did. So, that was great. Thank you. Just your continued prayers.
- [ 2 : 08 ] I hear people saying all the time that they're praying for Kara and I. We've got some health issues with one of our boys, Luke, who you'll meet here in just a little bit. So, thank you for your ongoing prayers for us.
- And then many of you know, we got here, I had prayed that God would get our car to Dubuque. Sometimes God is very literal. We drove to church and it died. And so, Brian Smith got it over to his house and little did we know, he would use it as a means to start a men's ministry.
- So, multiple guys have been over. I've seen pictures of Brian and I have somebody over and they're working on our car. So, I told Brian he can keep the car as long as he needs to. Because, you know, it's really blessing the men that are there.

And all kidding aside, I think not only are we deeply blessed by the time that Brian is using and the rest of you that are working on it, but that's really the picture of how we should be serving is together.

Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. So, I love seeing all these different people fixing our old dilapidated car. So, thank you for that. Certainly, Kent and Terry Ross Hospitality.

[ 3 : 14 ] We're in their basement and just enjoying that space. We've got a kitchen, a bathroom. It's awesome. We're using their car. They let us take it all the way to Chicago to catch an airplane on Thursday.

So, we're deeply blessed by your hospitality. When we got here, you know, we knew we had a kitchen because Kent and Terry and Kara and I had talked the week we came out for our final interview.

But we opened the cabinets and they were full of food. Libby and Denise had gone out and I'm not sure if there's others that were involved, but made sure that we had plenty to eat. We're not, we're finally going grocery shopping for the first time tomorrow.

So, thank you so much for that because that's been such a blessing for us. Just one less thing to worry about. I'm only halfway through the list.

Kara loves to garden and hasn't been able to for several years because we've been in transition to different places. And so, Jim and Christina plowed this big old plot in their yard that's Kara's.

[ 4 : 15 ] Thank you. That means such a, that makes such a difference for her. Kent and Terry have given her several of their garden boxes to do the same thing. So, now we have a problem of knowing how to get her to those different places to take care of those things.

But not only is that a great blessing to her, it's way cheaper than therapy. Being my wife is a hard job. So, we've had meals with various ones of you.

We anticipate more. That's been so much fun. Just the enthusiastic welcome. We feel like we've come home. And that means a lot. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. To be able to come in. Pastor John mentioned we had our leaders meeting on Tuesday night. And just the welcome that these men, for Pastor Jack, Pastor John, Pastor Tim, welcoming us, welcoming my ideas, the openness, the concerted intentional effort to build friendship, not just to be workers together, has been huge for us.

I was telling people back in Colorado that there's been a couple of major ministry stops in our life that two weeks in, I thought, oh, no. What have I gotten myself into?

[ 5 : 34 ] Whereas here, my response is, oh, boy, this is going to be great. And that's, I mean, all of you play a part in that. But certainly, Pastor Jack and Pastor Tim and Pastor John have done such a great job with that.

And a number of you, Kathy, I know you've been great about getting together with Kara and Denise. And Kathy, Kathy, Kathy, John, John. I mean, we've got to get subversity. As new kids are born, Asher, Uriah, good job.

No Johns. No Kathys. Yes. We're getting confused. But thank you for taking the time to get together with Kara as well. We're a package deal.

And you're going to find out that the better part of the package is sitting right there. So all that to say, we feel welcomed.

We feel seen. We are excited about what God is going to do here. We truly believe that God has great things in our future, our collectively, as we grow as a family.

[ 6 : 33 ] So praise God for that. So let me see if I can do this thing right. I'm saying no signal.

Do I need to change something up here? Oh, look. It's still not working up here, so we'll have to just wing it. So I'm going to turn this off. So that is our number two son, Luke, and his wife, Monica.

They have been married for a number of years. I can't remember how many. I think it's six or eight. Kara says eight. Oh, I just cut out. There we go. Kara says eight years.

Monica, you couldn't ask for a better daughter-in-law. Luke went through a pretty rough patch. She was engaged, and that fell apart. Praise God. And Luke had decided, Lord, I'm not going to get married.

This was too painful. And he prayed about it some more. And he felt like, okay, maybe someday. He said, okay, Lord, if you're going to have me marry a girl, she's got to write a song about me that mentions my favorite color.

[ 7 : 40 ] Talk about a specific fleece. I don't recommend that, but, you know, Luke felt led. One day Monica came up to him. They were friends, and she said, this is a little weird, but I wrote you a song.

And Luke said, uh-oh. But she is awesome. So they do not have babies you can hold in your arms, but they do have a baby.

I'll have to advance this. There we go. This is their, oh, I went too far. There we go.

That's their baby. Luke is our storyteller. Always has been. One of the things that's interesting about authors, a disproportionate number of authors have dyslexia. Luke has always hated to read.

He's just struggled with reading, struggled with writing. I think that book has 800 pages in it. And he published it a year ago. His goal is to get over 1,000 copies sold.

[ 8 : 46 ] But it's a first effort. The truth of the matter is, though, it says Luke P. Hopkins on there. Monica's name should be there. There would not be a book if it wasn't for Monica.

giving him space, giving him criticism and constructive feedback. They're just doing great. And the last thing I want to say about Luke and Monica that makes me very proud is that of our four kids, the one most likely to follow us in the ministry is probably Luke and Monica.

Their home is open every Friday night. They do karaoke, which sounds horrible to me, but they love it. They've got all these young adults that come over. They've had opportunity for spiritual conversations again and again and again.

And Sunday nights now they have some coming over for a Bible study. The group of the wedding on Friday night came to Christ largely because of his friendship with Luke.

And we're just seeing that pattern in our son's life, that he is a man that loves to share. He loves the Lord, and he and Monica are committed to sharing the Word of God. I think someday they will be church planters.

[ 9 : 54 ] Not going to lie, I have suggested Dubuque. It's a great place to do that. So, we'll see how that goes. So, that's Luke and Monica. So, now you know two of our kids. In the weeks to come, you'll meet Josiah and Becca, our oldest son and his wife, and Kayla and Manny.

And that's our youngest and her husband. So, turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 6. Mark chapter 6. So, I've titled this sermon, Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing.

Hang on. I'll get there. I've already learned this thing is awesome when it works. Because I can see what I'm doing without turning around. So, keeping the main thing the main thing.

And I want you to think about Mark chapter 6 and all the stuff that you've learned. Actually, we'll come back to that. I want to read the passage first. Let's read our passage for this morning.

And then we'll come back to looking at Mark chapter 6 and surveying it. So, turn to your Bibles. Mark 6. We're going to start at verse 45. Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, to Bethsaida.

[ 11 : 14 ] While he himself was sending the crowd away. And bidding them farewell, he left for the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land.

Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them walking on the sea, and he intended to pass by them.

But when they saw him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost and cried out. For they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke with them and said to them, Take courage, it is I.

Do not be afraid. Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped. And they were utterly astonished. For they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. When they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Jesus and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick to the place they heard he was.

[ 12 : 21 ] Wherever he entered villages or cities or countryside, they were laying the sick in the marketplaces and imploring him that they might just touch the fringe of his cloak, and as many as touched it were being cured.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, I just think about that, the transition that happened from the beginning of Mark to the end.

You being offensive to your old neighbors to becoming famous in just the span of a chapter. What a transition that you were going through as a man, as a rabbi, to see all this change.

And Lord, I pray that as we look at how you handle that change, where your priorities were, what mattered as people became more and more jealous of your attention, more eager to be in your presence, that you still had clear priorities that you followed.

Lord Jesus, I pray that our takeaway this morning would be to set priorities just like you did, to know what matters most, and to make that what we keep our focus on.

[ 13 : 32 ] I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Martha, could you just go ahead and turn that off? Because it's a distraction for me making sure we're on the right slide. Thank you. So we're going to have to do it old school.

You're actually going to have to read your Bible. So I want to talk about a tool that I use when I teach the Bible, or when I study the Bible, that I'm hoping that you'll use.

And it's not something that's really obvious. I call it sanctified imagination. Let me give you an example of what I mean. I heard a story this week about two boys, Asher and Uriah.

They were sword fighting because they're boys. Well, Asher takes his sword, and instead of stabbing his brother, which I may have done to my brothers a time or two, he slashed across at the front of his shirt.

And he said, I'm David, and you're Saul. I could have killed you, but I just cut off the corner of your robe. Because that's a story.

[ 14 : 36 ] When you remember the story, Saul was asleep in the cave, was asleep, or no, he was in the cave, taking care of business. David was in the back and cut off the corner of his robe, which had huge significance that we're not going to go into because this isn't a sermon on David and Saul.

But the point is that you've got two boys who are using their imagination to project themselves into what the Bible is teaching. That's an important skill, to stop and think, what was Jesus feeling?

He had feelings. Hebrews says he was a man just like us. So he had feelings. What was he feeling in this circumstance? Could he be angry and not sin?

I've often asked middle school students, would Jesus do practical jokes? You can think about that as homework. But to put yourself into things, what were the disciples feeling? Why were they feeling what they were feeling?

And put yourself into that spot. Why were the crowds reacting the way that they were? And as you do those things, I can tell you from experience, whole new nuance comes out of the passage.

[ 15 : 45 ] You get a greater understanding of what was going on in the scene and how it applies. Now there's one very important caveat. And this is very important. Your imagination is not primary.

God's word is primary. Your imagination is rooted in the study of God's word, of thinking about what does the Bible say. We don't have license to just run with whatever our feelings are.

You see that in contemporary culture. Love means love. Well, not according to the New Testament, it doesn't. Love actually speaks truth.

But we learn to allow our imagination to be shaped by the narrative. And in being shaped, we come to a better understanding of what God wants us to understand.

And it can be earth-shattering. I'll give you one example, then we'll move on. I was teaching a class for Christmas with a group of middle school students who were looking at the nativity. Now, at that point, I was probably in my 30s, I'd seen a nativity 30 times.

[ 16 : 50 ] I know what this is about. It's a cute baby in a manger with a young couple. I know what this is all about. But I stepped back and I thought, let's think about what was going on. Do you realize that every contemporary problem facing a young couple is encapsulated in the nativity scene?

Unwed mother? Unidentified father? Poverty? Homelessness? It's all there. It's right there.

But I had to step back and use my imagination to step into what the Bible taught. So I want to encourage you, when you're reading your Bible, don't read it like another fictional book. This is not fiction. This is your guide for life.

Let your imagination, guided by the Holy Spirit, take a fuller understanding of what the Bible says. And that's what we're going to do this morning. You're Ryan. Actually, thanks for letting me use you as an example this morning.

That was fun. So, let's talk about Mark chapter 6 real fast. Talk about highs and lows and lows and highs. It starts, Jesus goes to Nazareth. It's actually his second visit to Nazareth.

[ 17 : 54 ] The first time, they tried to throw him off of a cliff. The second time, he goes in, thinking, okay, these are my neighbors. I maybe came in hot the first time because he declared to them that he was the fulfillment of a messianic psalm, or messianic verse out of Isaiah.

He just came in and taught in the synagogue, and they were offended. Jesus was astonished by their offense. The people who knew him best said, who is this clown?

I remember when he was this big. So, that's a low. But then he sends out the disciples. I have had the opportunity to develop people and send them out. That is so much fun.

Those of you who are parents, especially as you've watched them transition from 17, 18, where they don't know anything, to their early 30s, and they're starting to get traction and see their lives become full.

That's a joy. Jesus sent out his followers two by two. They do so well that Herod hears about it, thinks that John has been raised from the dead.

[ 18 : 57 ] And then you continue forward. The disciples come back. They try to do a retreat, get some rest, let the disciples debrief. And they get harassed by the crowds.

They can't get away. They try to go across the Sea of Galilee. And the crowds follow them around. There's no rest for the weary. I would say that's a down. These guys are tired.

Jesus is tired. Because he was ministering while the disciples were. They're worn out. And yet the crowds just won't leave him alone. And then, of course, there's the feeding of the 5,000 that Pastor Tim talked about last week.

I loved what he brought up about that go look. Go look. God has given us resources to use. He's telling us to just go be aware of what he's given us. And Jesus prays.

He walks on the water. And they go to Gennesaret. And they're invaded again. They can't get away from all these people. So is this what success looks like?

[ 19 : 58 ] That's one of the things I want to start with as a takeaway. You look at chapter 6. And Jesus goes from obscurity. And offending his closest friends might be a stretch.

But the people who think they know him the best. Or rejection there all the way to the point where they can't get alone. Because all these people are flocking. Would Jesus say he was being successful?

I would say no. Because there's another thread that weaves its way through Mark chapter 6. The disciples are sent out. They do well. So well that the word gets all the way to Herod.

But by the end of chapter 6. They freak out when they see Jesus walking on the water. They didn't understand the point that a guy who can feed 5,000 people with some bread and some fish.

Can probably walk on water too. That's not that big of a deal. And they just didn't get it. Even though they'd started further down that path of apprenticeship. They still weren't tracking.

[ 21 : 05 ] And I think for Jesus that was a little bit of a. This is frustrating. I think you're going to see as we go through the gospel. Success when you have your priorities straight.

Is a little bit different than just drawing large crowds of people. That make sense? And that's why we're talking about keeping the main thing the main thing. Because that's what Jesus did. Is he kept the main thing the main thing.

Let's pause. And let's look back at the disciples and their faltering faith. Turn to verse 48. When it was evening the boat.

Or verse 47. When it was evening the boat was in the middle of the sea. And he was alone in the land. Seeing them straining at the oars. For the wind was against them. At about the fourth watch of the night. He came to them.

Walking on the sea. And he intended to pass them by. So let me tell you a little bit about that scene. And a cool experience I had this week. I had great plans of doing it visually.

[ 22 : 04 ] But did not have the time. So I've got this map that you'll see in the coming weeks of Jesus Travels. It's a line drawing. So I thought okay that's moderately helpful.

But I want to get to know the distances. So I jumped on Google Maps. Sea of Galilee. And actually measured out. What all these distances were. So for instance. When Jesus gets in the boat with the disciples.

When they're trying to get on their retreat. And he goes across. That's only about five miles. It's a fairly narrow part of the Sea of Galilee. And for the people who are wanting to see Jesus. It's about a ten mile walk.

And you can see out under the water. So they're probably walking. Okay we're with him. We're with him. We're with him. And they caught him again. Once they got around the lake.

And got down on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee. So I thought. Okay this passage says that Jesus. After he fed the 5,000.

[ 23 : 03 ] He gave instructions to the disciples. Go up to Bethsaida. And he went up to the mountains to pray. And I looked at this map on Google Maps. I thought where would it make the most sense. For Jesus to probably have fed the 5,000.

And to have landed the boat. I found this beach. I can't pronounce it. I don't speak Hebrew. But it's only a mile from the beach. Up to the Golan Heights. Which is a significant climb.

And Jesus could see down below. But there's also winds that come. So Jesus had given instructions to the guys. I'm going to go up to the mountains to pray. You go to Bethsaida. Now if you picture the Sea of Galilee.

They're down here in the west. It's a straight shot paralleling the shore. To go to Bethsaida. It's only a couple miles. Jesus probably could walk it as fast as they could sail it. But a wind came in.

The Sea of Galilee is very windy. And so the disciples decide we're going to go to Capernaum. Which is further east. Or further west. Excuse me. Yes, west.

[ 24 : 00 ] They're going to go further west. And go up to Bethsaida. Because the winds were fighting with them. Which would have added further distance for Jesus to walk. More like 10 or 15 miles. But then the wind kept blowing.

And pushed them all the way to Knesseret. Which was straight back across the lake. And it would have meant closer to a 20 mile walk. For Jesus. So you've got all these distances fixed in your mind.

And so now. Let's change the image. The fishing boat that they were in. Was probably. If you've seen The Chosen. They've got it very well represented. It's a low middle of the boat.

Because they have to do their nets. And then it's a high. I don't know the names of the boat. But the front and back are high. And so. Only a few guys can row. Probably Peter.

James. John. And Andrew. Because they're the experienced fishermen. But they've got this wind. It's getting harder and harder and harder. They're getting tired. They're worn out. And Jesus sees them. When he comes off of the mountain.

[ 24 : 55 ] He sees them. Straining at the oars. So I looked up that word. It actually means torture. That's another use for it. In this. In the passive voice.

It means to. To strain. Or to. To really. They are working hard. This is a. They're going into a headwind. Because at first I thought. It's only five miles.

Of course. I've never rode five miles. Maybe it's harder than I realize. But it's only five miles. But it's only four guys at a time. That can row. Because of the shape of the boat. And so they're straining at the oars.

They're straining. It's torture. Every time. The experts get out of the. Out of the. Get away from the oars. What happens? Can you imagine. Matthew the tax collector. Simon the zealot.

Judas Iscariot. And any one of the other guys. Let's say. The other. James. They're trying to row. They're probably whacking their oars against each other. They're missing the water.

[ 25 : 55 ] They're going too deep. So the boat starts doing this. Because they can't get to where. Because they're. They're not experts. So they're struggling. And that's what Jesus sees. So.

Jesus. Watches them. He's watching them struggle. He decides. Okay. I'm not going to go around. It's too far. I walk. I'm going to cut across. And they see him. And as you know.

They panic. We're seeing a ghost. We're going to die. Because often. You know. Sailors are superstitious. They're thinking. Who are we seeing? We're going to come back to this. But it's interesting question.

Why was Jesus going to pass them by? Why was that? This is an important lesson for us. I think Jesus was going to pass them by.

Because they still hadn't figured out. That they needed him. They reverted. In a moment of stress. Back to what they knew.

[ 26 : 54 ] Certainly. Peter. James. John. And Andrew. They know their way around a boat. It was probably their boat. So they knew what they were doing. And not making much progress.

And Jesus said. Okay. I'll see you guys on the other side. And he was going to let them. Let them wallow in it. Folks. There's an important lesson there.

That I don't want you to miss. One of the things. That's a theme in the Bible. You see this over and over and over again. We have to wait for things. We have to wait.

And the waiting isn't easy. Think about the death of Lazarus. From a human perspective. Jesus was callous and uncaring.

Think about it. Messengers come to Jesus and say. Your good friend Lazarus is dying. Now if one of you heard that. My close friend. Their life is coming to an end. What would you do?

[ 27 : 50 ] You jump in your car. And you go see him. Or you jump on an airplane. You go see him. Jesus sits back. And does nothing for two days. And it's a four day walk.

To get there. He made them wait. He let Lazarus die. Think about that. Jesus let the disciples struggle.

Rowing. Flailing. Trying to get across this water. Because they needed to learn the lesson. Let me tell you what the lesson was. I found an article. Written by this crazy lady.

Who loves her rowboat. She rowed. I think that's the right term. From Ketchikan, Alaska. All the way down the Canadian coast. To Bellingham, Washington.

That ain't five miles. That's more like 500 miles. Or further. It's in a rowboat. Well, early in the trip. She got caught in swirling gale force winds.

[ 28 : 54 ] And she panicked. She thought, this is it. I'm going to die. But here's what's interesting. The article was what to do in that situation. This woman's not a believer.

But it's going to sound awfully familiar. Calm yourself. You need to relax. Relax. Don't grip the paddle so hard. Look around.

The waves aren't as strong as you think they are. Pay attention to how you row. Because if you do it right, you can steer into the water. And you can make headway and keep yourself safe.

If you start to flail, you lift your arms because you're digging deeper. Which is exhausting. You run out of energy if you panic. But if you stay calm, be aware of your circumstances, you'll get through it.

Isn't that what the Bible teaches us? The only thing she left out was turn your eyes on Jesus. Look, I love this hymn. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face.



- [ 29 : 57 ] And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. But we have to look. We have to do what that article recommended.
- And relax. Release tension. Trust God. Do our part. Still got to row. Kind of like Philippians 4 maybe.
- These verses 1 through 10. How to deal with anxiety. We have to pray. With thanksgiving, we look to the Lord. We take stock of our situation. That's what the disciples were not doing.
- They lost track of that. So you're going to face those types of things. I heard somebody say that you're either in a problem, you're getting out of a problem, or you're in the very short gap before the next one.
- The discipline I want you to put in your mind is to relax. To turn to the Lord. Don't be so quick to rely upon your expertise. Let God guide you.
- [ 30 : 59 ] You will still have a part to play. But God will work through you and through His presence to get you to the other side. Does that make sense?
- It's very important that we make it our determined habit to look to Jesus when we face those storms of life.
- Because I guarantee it, it's coming. That's part of keeping the main thing the main thing. So now let's talk about Jesus. Verse 46.
- After bidding them farewell, the crowd and the disciples, He left for the mountain to pray. Jesus prayed a lot. I found a whole slew of verses about Jesus' habits of prayer.
- Sometimes He went off by Himself. Way off by Himself. Like this. Nobody's around Him. Sometimes He would be praying and just right there would be the disciples.
- [ 31 : 58 ] It's an interesting sentence construction because one of the accounts I read was, Jesus was by Himself and turned to the disciples. So they're close by. Jesus included them in prayer.
- He taught on prayer. Luke really liked that. He mentions it several times, quoting Jesus. Be on the alert. Be in prayer. You see that recur in a couple spots in the book of Luke.
- But for Jesus, prayer was a priority. He certainly faced the storms. But He didn't grip the oar. He didn't panic row. He went to His Father.
- He asked the Lord, help me get direction here. One example that I thought a lot about as Kara and I were going through the process of discerning whether or not God was leading us here to Dubuque.
- Jesus, the night before He picked the disciples, spent the entire night in prayer. Raise your hand if you're like me. If I know somebody's got a need, I just pray for their need.
- [ 33 : 01 ] And it's a pretty short prayer. I've prayed for a number of you different times, and it's just a quick, Lord, lay your healing hand on this person or give them guidance. And we're done. It's five minutes, maybe ten.
- Jesus spent the entire night in prayer. And I think it was a lot more than just a list of names of all the potential disciples. I think Jesus went through the list in His mind.
- He's thinking about these men before the Lord. He's thinking, what about James? Or what about Judas? Or what about, and He's thinking strengths and weaknesses and how they go together.
- And planning with the Father, what is the optimal number of guys? Which of them?
- We know He had at least 72 other people that were close to Him because He sends them out after He sends out the 12. Why those guys? Because over a night of talking to God back and forth, they thought it through.

[ 34 : 01 ] By the way, that's another use of sanctified imagination. Is thinking through, what are the circumstances we're going to face? What's the best way to address this? God, what do you think? Help me understand.

Help me walk through that. That's what Jesus did. I think that's what He was doing here. Because it says He dismissed the crowd and the disciples probably around dinnertime, early evening. But He passed them in the fourth watch.

That's between three and six in the morning. So there was a big gap that Jesus was praying. And He only walked a mile to where He stopped to pray. So He spent a lot of focused time in prayer.

Because Jesus knew that was more important. My relationship with the Father, this is Jesus talking, is more important than getting together with all these people and scheduling meetings and making sure my calendar's filled and building a ministry and all this stuff.

Most important is my time in prayer with God. So that I know that I'm where I need to be when I need to be there. I'm making those divine appointments. And I'll tell you something else.

[ 35 : 07 ] Think about the circumstances in Mark 6. Jesus said, go to Bethsaida. Bethsaida. The disciples changed the plan and moved to Capernaum. And then the wind said, no, no, you're going to Gennesaret.

I think because Jesus was praying through it all, that He could handle that change of plans. That's another thing that life does. It never goes according to plan.

I've heard, I think it's the seals that say that a plan works right until you get punched in the face. And life likes to punch us in the face, doesn't it? The unexpected comes along.

So Jesus made it a priority to prayer, to pray. Now think about the different ways He prays. The disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray. And He gave them the Lord's Prayer. It's a look at who God is.

Our Father in Heaven, so it's a reminder of who God is and His place of rule. It's a look at His rule on earth, your kingdom come.

[ 36 : 10 ] It's also an expression of the prayer's identity, that we are children of God if we have a relationship with Jesus. So Jesus gave them a very prescribed, not that we pray the Lord's Prayer like it's a script that we follow.

It's more of an outline that informs our prayers. And then we get to very practical stuff, the nuts and bolts of give us this day our daily bread. Help us to forgive others as you have forgiven us.

Relational health. Jesus covered all of life because that's what prayer does. I'll tell you another lesson from the disciples. This is true of all of us.

We have an imaginary line in our life. Let's say my arm is my line. Everything below that line, that's the stuff I can handle. I got this.

I know what I'm doing. Everything that's above the line is what I know I need God's help on. But the fact of the matter is, we don't put the line here. We put the line way up here.

[ 37 : 16 ] Meaning, we pretty much do it ourselves. Our knee-jerk reaction is to do it ourselves. You know where the line belongs? On the floor. We should be praying about everything.

Give us this day our daily bread. We need to be asking God for everything. So there's a Lord's Prayer. He gives us a pattern. Then you look at the high priestly prayer of John 17. I recently heard a sermon where the guy called it, The Greatest Prayer Following the Greatest Sermon.

Because John 13, 14, and 15, and 16, the Upper Room Discourse, is the greatest sermon ever given. It's the most complete, even more than the Sermon on the Mount, where we see all of Jesus' thoughts in one spot.

But this high priestly prayer really reads like a debriefing. When I've led teams of people, when they come back together, we debrief. What went well? What didn't go so well? What do you need the next time this goes on?

And if you read John 17, homework assignment, if you read John 17, that's really what it reads like. Jesus says, hey, this is what I did. This is what I see.

[ 38 : 19 ] Could you do this for the disciples? And by the way, Jesus prays for you too in there. But it's a debrief. Have you ever thought about debriefing with God?

Maybe you have an argument with your spouse. Or you have a great date with your spouse. Debrief with God. What did I do right? What did I do wrong? What could I do better?

Or with kids. Or in the relationships. Or even, I'm sure my car is probably driving Brian to prayer. He's on his knees next to that car. What else is going to go wrong?

But as we pray, even over stuff that we just say, it's just a car. And I'm a mechanic. I know what I'm doing. But as we bring these things in our areas of expertise, I'm not picking on you, Brian.

As we bring the things that we think we know to God and say, you know what? I'm stymied. Help me, Lord. And He does. He informs you what to do next.

[ 39 : 19 ] What button to press. What to lay off of. How to move. The high priestly prayer of Jesus really fits that. And then you look at the prayers in the epistles. I'm not going to turn to any of these.

But you can write these down. Ephesians 3, 14 through 21. Great prayer. I prayed that for all of you. That we would understand the love of God for us. Colossians 1, 9 through 12.

That we would be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. I was certainly praying that for us, all of us, the first quarter of this year as we were discerning God's direction. 2 Thessalonians 1, 11 and 12.

Paul prayed for the Thessalonian church. And he asked God to consider them worthy of their calling. To fulfill the good desires of their heart.

And the work of faith with power. He was asking God to work in this very effective church in Thessalonica. For God's glory and for theirs. We should be praying those things for each other.

[ 40 : 23 ] They're great models. Use Paul's prayers for each other as you're thinking of each other. I mean, some of us are going through really hard things. To be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in the midst of a cancer battle.

Or health. Or struggling with kids. Whatever. That's a good one. Someday I'll give you a... There's a great sermon in Colossians 1. But use those things for prayer.

Now let's bring it home. One of the things I learned in early days as we were first looking at the possibility of coming to Tri-State.

Talking on the phone. And just understanding. One of the things that became pretty clear. is that Tri-State is a church that prays. That's good.

That's critically important. But we need to pray more. And I've got three suggestions as to how we can pray more.

[ 41 : 25 ] And pray more effectively. The first one is a habit that Kara and I came up with. We were in Seattle. As a leader, I like little pithy sayings that cement principles in your mind.

Remember this one. Stop, drop, and pray. And this is what that means. We've all done this. You talk to somebody. They've got a rough week coming. You know, their annual review or something.

Oh, I'll pray for you, brother. I'll pray for you, sister. And you walk out the door and it's gone. It's nothing. I mean, it's just life.

We have the best of intentions, but we don't follow through. I've been guilty of it more times than I can count. So we started stop, drop, and pray. What's to stop us to say, well, let's pray right now? And I think it's a good practice.

We see this biblically. Lay hands on each other. Not like Uriah and Asher lay hands on each other. You know, whack. But brothers, being what they are.

[ 42 : 23 ] But lay hands and pray with them. Pray together. So stop, drop, and pray. The second one is to develop a habit of prayer. You see in Nehemiah, Nehemiah prayed this big prayer when he found out about the problems in Jerusalem.

And then he prayed spot prayers all the way through the book. God, give me favor with the king. God, protect us. Just somebody, I heard somebody call them arrow prayers. Those work together.

Make it a habit to pray. And this is going to seem counterintuitive. But pray when you feel most confident in yourself. Ask God to show you what you're missing.

But make a habit of prayer. So stop, drop, and pray. Make it a habit to make prayer part of your regular life. And then we need to pray in community. We need to be praying together.

God has designed us as human beings that we function better together. Unity is actually the strongest evidence of the presence of God in a church body. We need to be praying together.

[ 43 : 29 ] For each other. For people across town. For people in our community. But we need to be praying as a community. And as we pray, back to sanctified imagination.

Think about. We've got several families with young kids. What is that like? I remember. It is total chaos. So pray for these young families.

Pray for the moms and dads. Pray for moms to have time to go to the bathroom in peace. Or to read their Bibles. Pray for the needs.

As God uses that sanctified imagination for you to enter in. But we need to pray in community. I'm going to read you a quote. And then we're going to close in prayer. I have this in my Bible.

Hidden so I can't find it when I need it. Here we go. How many of you ever heard of Brother Andrew? He was a Bible smuggler back after World War II.

[ 44 : 33 ] He wrote a book on prayer with a man that we used to go to church with in Colorado. This is the moral obligation we have before we dare ask how anybody is doing.

This is the moral obligation we have before we dare ask anybody, ask how anybody is doing. We must be willing to listen and pray.

And here's a kicker. And help. We must be willing to listen. Really listen. Ask good questions. Follow up questions.

So you know how to pray. And pray, certainly. And help. Oftentimes God's going to direct you to be the answer to the prayer that you're praying. Step into that. Trust me, people will welcome that response.

Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would help us to keep the main thing the main thing. That our relationship with you would be central in our lives. As we just go through life.

[ 45 : 35 ] As we go to work. As we're in our families. As we just do stuff in the community. God, we want to be people who are focused on our relationship with you first.

Because that is what gives life to everything else that we do. Without exception. God, let us be people of prayer. Let that be a priority for us. Not prayer because we're superstitious.

But prayer because it is involving you in our lives. And God, thank you that you love us so much that you do get involved in our lives. You welcome us every time we come into your presence.

God, we don't want you to be surprised when we show up. So let us be people who pray regularly. And are in your presence. God, I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.