



Message Transcript

A Prophetic Calling

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Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise for who you are. And Lord, we pray in this moment that you would have your way with us. Lord, we pray that you would move mightily among us. And Lord, we believe that every time your word is faithfully proclaimed that you have a word to speak directly to us. So, speak Lord for we are ready to hear. Lord, be helpful to me and be helpful to us as we hear that we would become conformed to the image of Christ. And now for all those who have gathered, who desire to hear the word of the Lord, who will believe what the word of the Lord says to you and will by faith put into practice what Jesus shows you. Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, Amen? Amen.

Have you ever been lied to before? And do you remember how that feels? I thought of one specific instance this week as I was preparing this message of a time that I was looking to take a vacation, and was wanting to get down to the Caribbean or The Bahamas or something. And wouldn't you know it that somebody happened to call my house that specific day that had a special deal for me. I was only about 24 years old at the time and thought, "Wow, what a God's providence? What a coincidence this is? These people knew where I wanted to go." The problem was they said I needed to pay right then at that very moment for that trip, which I willingly did by pulling out my credit card and spending a boatload of money on this trip.

As soon as I hung up the phone, I got that pit in my stomach thinking, "I hope that was right." I tried calling the number back a day later, the number didn't exist. And about two weeks later, I got a brochure and a VHS tape in the mail about the trip, but there was actually no trip that was going to take place. You ever have an experience

like that before? Yeah, when people call my house now, if they can't pronounce my last name, I hang up on them. Because once you've been burned and once you've been hurt by somebody who's lied, your guard goes up. You just don't know whether you can really listen to someone anymore. And the tragedy of that is that many people have been lied to about the truth of who God is, and what his word proclaims. And that's why God raises up prophets because the best antidote to air is truth. The best way to counter air is to have somebody proclaim the truth.

And so, God raises up prophets to proclaim the truth so that people never have to wonder about what does God really think? And what is God really saying? And how do I really align my life with him if I want to? And in the heart of this passage that we're looking at in first Timothy chapter four, you're really going to see a job description for a prophet. You're really going to see the heart of what God has established a prophet to become. Because as Paul has been encouraging Timothy in how to live and what he needs to do, he's now going to tell him how he needs to speak. And so, we're going to take a look at that this morning, take a look at five marks of a prophet.

For some of you that may mean that God is going to call you to be a prophet. For all of us, we're called to live and speak the truth. So, there's application for all of us that way. For others of us, it's important that we're under the teaching of a prophet of God, so that we're clearly hearing what God says and we know how to properly respond so that we can be aligned with who he is. Either way, I believe God has a word for us this morning.

So, I invite you to open your Bibles up to 1st Timothy chapter four. We're going to start in verse 11 and finish the chapter. So I'll read that section of scripture to you. And then we'll highlight five marks of a prophet. Here's what he says, "Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the Presbytery. Take pains with these things. Be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things for as you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourselves, and for those who hear you."

So, it was Paul speaking through the power and word of the Holy Spirit begins to instruct Timothy. He's gone from telling him about how to live and what to mark as important to what he needs to speak and really gives him the DNA of a prophet, and five marks of a prophet start like this. The first is that a prophet must preach and teach with authority. A prophet of God must preach and teach with authority. The way we would say it here at BRAVE is proclaiming the authority of God's word without apology. That God's word is authoritative. And that when a prophet stands up to proclaim his word, he needs to proclaim his word with authority. Notice what he says, prescribe and teach these things. This word prescribe as a military term, literally meaning command with authority, teach these things.

When you hear a prophet, a prophet is not apologizing. A prophet is not unclear.

A prophet is saying these words, thus sayeth the Lord. Here's what God says. He tells Timothy, prescribe and teach these things, command these things, make it clear to the people that you're teaching that this is what God says. Don't waiver in. Don't say it might be true, it might not. Tell them the entire council of the Lord. And wouldn't you know that in every generation, God has always raised up prophets. And just so you know, prophets are usually not well liked in their generation. It's usually postmortem that profits are appreciated. It's usually after they die from coming and bringing them the word that people think in future generations, "Maybe that person had something to say that people should have listened to."

I mean, when you think about the prophetic ministry of God, calling people to repentance all throughout the old Testament and how the prophets were treated, they were treated horribly. Many of them were killed. Even Jesus as a prophet when he gets to Jerusalem at the end of his ministry in Matthew chapter 23 laments over everything that he's been trying to do to get the nation of Israel for generation after generation, after generation to turn all up into the last prophet before him, which was his cousin, John the Baptist who was beheaded for proclaiming truth. Notice what he says in Matthew 23 verse 37, Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling.

What was he saying? He says all throughout your history, I have sent you prophets, people to tell you the truth, but you just wouldn't listen. A prophet is a called

man of God who is going to proclaim faithfully the word of God to God's people, whether people listen or not, and you could do a study of the prophets, and you would see that this is always true. Whether it's John the Baptist out in the wilderness calling people to repentance for all their sins and people flocking to them, or whether you read through the Old Testament prophets. I'll give you the call of two of the Old Testament prophets today only because these two prophets spoke volumes to me at a season in my ministry where I was debating, do I stay in ministry or do I go? God, what do you have for me? And God used the calling and the ministry of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to speak directly it to my heart about what God was going to have me do for the rest of my life.

In Jeremiah chapter one, starting in verse four here's what he says, "Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you. I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. Then I said alas Lord, behold, I do not know how to speak because I'm a youth. But the Lord said to me, do not say I am a youth because wherever I send you, you shall go. And all that I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you declares the Lord. Then the Lord stretched out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have pointed you this day over the nations, over the kingdoms to pluck up and break down, to destroy an overthrow, to build and to plan."

What did he say? He said, "Jeremiah, before I formed you in the womb, I had purpose for your life." It's true of all of us. Psalms 1:39 says that you're fearfully and

wonderfully made. And that while you were being made in the womb, God had a destiny and a purpose for your life. That's true of everybody. When was Jeremiah formed to be a prophet? When he was in utero, God had a purpose for him. And what was he going to be? A prophet to the nations. His response back to God is, "I don't even know how to speak. I'm a kid. Nobody's going to listen to me." He's like, "It's not you they're listening to. It's me they listen to you. When you speak my words, they're hearing me. I will put my words in your mouth, and your job is to speak my word wherever you go. It doesn't matter how you feel, and it really doesn't matter how people respond. What matters is that you take my words seriously enough that you faithfully proclaim my word." That was Jeremiah's call.

He had a miserable life. God told him not to marry in that place. God said judgment, destruction's coming. Everybody in that generation was saying, peace, peace. God loves you no matter what you do. It's just going to be peaceful. The world's getting better. And every time I'm Jeremiah opened his mouth he said, "Judgment and destruction is coming your way. Get ready." And Jeremiah got to the place of saying, "Lord, how come it is that nobody else is preaching what I preach? How come it is all these other prophets are saying I had a vision or I had a dream." And God says, "I don't know. I didn't give them a dream, and I didn't give them a vision. They're not speaking my word. You do what I say." And Jeremiah said, "I have a fire in my bones. I am trying to keep it in because every time I open my mouth, it's always judgment and destruction. I hate what God told me to preach." But I've tried to repress it, and every time I try to stuff it down there's a fire in my bones. I'm weary of

holding it. Indeed, I cannot.

So, every time he said, "I'm not going to preach that. I'm not going to preach that." It came out of his mouth. Judgment, destruction is coming because of your sin. And there's nobody else in the nation that was listening to that. They were saying, "Jeremiah, we don't like your message. We like their message. It's telling us good things like gum drops and sugar plums. We like their message." Sometimes I feel like that. A prophet is someone who's under the authority of God to present the fullness of God's word. No matter what, prescribe and teach these things, command these things, don't make apologies for these things.

Ezekiel had a similar calling. You can read about it in Ezekiel chapter two and following. I'll only read a few verses just so you can get the gist. When he called Ezekiel in Ezekiel chapter two starting in verse one he said, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you." As he spoke to me, the spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. Then he said, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against me and they, their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children. And you shall say to them, thus says the Lord.

As for them, whether they listen or not for they are a rebellious house, they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you son of man, neither fear them or fear their words. Though thorns and thistles are with you, and you sit on scorpions, neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence for they are a rebellious

house, but you shall speak my words to them whether they listen or not for they are rebellious." What was he saying? You're a prophet. Don't be afraid. Speak my word no matter what. If they listen or don't listen, that's not of your concern. No matter how they treat you, that's not of your concern. Just do as I say. A prophet of God is called, and part of the job description of a prophet is to proclaim the authority of God's word without apology.

Prophets don't have good longevity. Man, I just got some life insurance, some more life insurance recently. I did not write down my job description was prophet or I would've been denied. Prophets don't live very long because profits are saying things that culture's not saying. Prophets are standing in the gap saying things that nobody else is saying. People are saying to the prophet, "Who are you to judge us? Why are you telling us these things? Who do you think you are?" The answer is, "I'm just like you. I've just been sent by God to tell you the whole council of God and you're not getting it anywhere else." That's what a prophets job description is. It's to proclaim truth. You study any prophet in the Bible worth their salt, and that's exactly what they did. That's exactly what Jesus did who was the prophet of all.

Now, why does God tell us to do this? Why prescribe and teach these things? Why command with authority? Why teach that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and there is no other way. A prophet won't tolerate it when it's wishy washy. When people say, "Well, Jesus is one way, and that's what you say because you're a pastor." But Buddha is another way, and Confucius is another way, and this... No, no,

no. A prophet would say, "No, you're dead wrong." It's Jesus, and you're going to meet him face to face, and if you don't repent and trust him, you will go to hell. That's a prophet. It's clear truth. When a prophet speaks, you never have to turn to your neighbor and say, "What did he mean by that? That wasn't very clear to me."

Prophet makes things clear. May not like it, but it's clear. God raises up prophet so people can hear the whole council about him. And what's the purpose of preaching and teaching with authority. Here's why, so people can hear, so that you can hear God. If there are no prophets preaching, you can't hear the Lord. In Romans chapter 10, we see an interesting verse. It says, "How then will they call on him and whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in him and whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach unless they are sent just as it is written? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news?" What does God still use to bring people to Christ? The foolishness of preaching, the foolishness of prophets that would stand and say, "Jesus is the way the truth and the life, and there is no one that comes to the father except through him. That God made him who had no sin to become sin for us so that in him, Christ, we might become the righteousness of God. That God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life."

That's the gospel. That's the good news. That's what prophets bring. That's what a preacher does. Preacher preaches and teaches with authority. Romans 10:17: So, faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ. When the word of God is faithfully proclaimed people hear God. You say well in the Old Testament, God put

his word in their mouths. Where do we get the word now? Glad you ask, right here in this book. A prophet of God today is not coming up with, "I spent time with the Lord and God wanted me to tell you this." I spent time with the Lord reading his word and here's what God spoke, and here's what God's saying, and it's authoritative. It's not suggestive. It's not, if you want to hear this, that's good for you, and if you don't, that's okay. It's this is the word of the Lord, and he is commanding you to respond to him. This is the word of God. Do you hear him? He's speaking to you.

And it's really interesting because in Luke's gospel, he told his disciples. If they listen to you, they're actually listening to me. But if they reject you, they are rejecting me, and the one who sent me. So you carry a strong mantle of weight if you're going to stand in a pulpit or in the market square and proclaim the word of God because you are bringing God's word to God's people. To the extent you're faithful when people hear it, they're hearing God. To the extent you're faithful and they reject it, they're rejecting God. So, it's imperative that someone who's called to preach the word and be a prophet of God executes it or exegetes it accurately because faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of God.

That's why a prophet can't just make a bunch of noise, and can't just tell a bunch of stories, and just have people leave and say, "Oh, I like him." Or that was a good story, or that was... Maybe stories illustrate the point so I get it. But at the end of the day, are you hearing what God is saying? It needs to be clear. In the book of 1st Corinthians chapter 14 and verse eight talking about a trumpet. It says for if the bugle produces an indistinct sound who will prepare for battle? If you're going to play

(singing) charge, that's different than just a person learning to blow on a trumpet. Just a noise of a trumpet doesn't get people ready for anything. Just somebody bantering about God doesn't get them ready for anything. A distinct sound, a clear message, something that resonates that's from the throne room that's being heralded into your heart and you proclaim the authority of God's word without apology.

It's interesting that the greatest sermon that was ever preached was by Jesus, not surprisingly. The sermon on the mountain, Matthew chapter five, six, and seven. At the end of Matthew chapter seven, Jesus talks about two roads and two gates and two trees and two kind of fruits and two foundations. And then he finished by telling people to build their foundation on the rock, which was him. And it says this in Matthew chapter seven verse 28, when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at his teaching for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. Jesus wasn't saying, "This could be a way you could interpret this. This might be a thing you would understand." Teaching with authority.

Paul's telling Timothy teach with authority. He told Titus this very same thing in the next book over Titus chapter two verse 15, these things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. What do we need? We need more prophets. We need more people that will speak up and say, "Thus sayeth the Lord." God's people perish for lack of knowledge, and they perish for lack of knowledge because some of the people that God's called to stand in the gap and say, "This is what God's word says. And here's what he says throughout all of his word aren't doing that because they care more about the response of the people than they do about the

truth of God."

Oh, may it never be? May it never be. May people get to hear the word of God unadulterated in such a way that they have every opportunity to respond to the fullness of Christ in every way. God wants his people to know the truth. God's people can handle the truth. He wants pastors and preachers and proclaimers and prophets to preach the authority of God's word without apology so that his people can hear him. If somebody's teaching the word of God, you will hear God. You will hear God. Sometimes you will hear God and it will be an incredible comfort to you. You will leave knowing God loves me. I just needed to be reminded of that today. He loves me with such an unconditional love, and I was worried this week because this week felt like I was wandering a little bit. And I know I love him, but I haven't lived like I love him and I haven't been spending time with him. But man, it feels so good that I love him.

And other times, if you hear prophets speak, you're going to leave and you're going to return home and you'll be like, "I know I needed to hear that, but I didn't like hearing that. It felt like that pastor was meddling with me. He was messing with something in my heart. How did he know that about me?" The answer is he didn't. God did. And God's Holy Spirit gets all over God's word when it's faithfully proclaimed to convict your heart of sin, righteousness, and judgment. That's who God is. I mean, we hear stories all the time of people at BRAVE Church that were not even teaching on the gospel and how to come to Christ, but they come to Christ because the spirit of God shows them that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and they can't take

it anymore. And they repent and trust Jesus. We love that.

In the last two weeks, I've heard two different stories from two different families. In their marriage, they were under such conviction during our service that they went home and one spouse confessed to another spouse they'd been living in adultery for a period of time and they couldn't take it anymore, and they wanted to come clean. I wasn't even teaching on that. What happened? The spirit of God got on his word and convicted someone of what they needed to hear at that time. Friends, that's why you want to be under the teaching of the word of God with somebody who will faithfully proclaim his word. It's different, and once you've sat under someone who will faithfully proclaim God's word rather than their own ideas and their own ideologies and their own stories, you won't be able to go back and have it the other way. It will fundamentally bother you because you want to hear God not a man. You want to hear the Lord Jesus Christ. So, a prophet must preach and teach with authority so that God's people can hear.

And here's the truth about this book. We get in arguments all the time over who said this, and you can get on Google, and you can figure out who said it. And everybody says something different, but whoever said it, said it good so I'm taking it. You heard it from me. I'm saying it now. The word of God is like a lion. If you let him out of his cage, he can fend for himself. We don't need to apologize for the word of God. We just need to herald the word of God. When the word of God is heralded, God's people can hear and God's people can respond to whatever God says. Amen? A prophet must preach and teach with authority.

Secondly, a prophet must provide an example. A prophet must provide an example. Notice what he says in verse 12, let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love faith, and purity, show yourself an example to those who believe. It means they can't just be a wind bag. They can't just be a spokesman. They need to walk their talk. It means they need to be growing in the things that they're teaching. It means they need to practice what they're preaching. They need to be an example. Being an example is the Greek word [foreign language 00:22:41]. It's like a mold or an image or a likeness. It's how you make a coin. You make a likeness of the coin so that every coin looks the same.

Part of a job description of a prophet, preacher, pastor is that they would be an example to the flock of God. They would be an example to God's people. And how does he say it? Let no one look down on your youthfulness. Age doesn't matter. Your age is not your spiritual maturity. You can be young and spiritually mature, and you can be old and spiritually immature. Don't give people a reason to say that you're immature just because you're young. Don't make your youth be an excuse. Every scholar I've read this week says that Timothy was likely 30 to 35 years old at the time this was written. He's not a kid. Paul was saying to him, "Hey, just because you're talking to guys 60 and 70 years old, don't give them a reason to think that you're young. Don't act spiritually immature. You have every right to act as mature as they do. You're a man. Be a man. You're a Godly man. Be a Godly man."

It means this. Listen to me. If you're in middle school or high school, and you're listening to me, you can walk in the fullness of Christ no matter what your age is. If

you're in your 20s you can walk with the fullness of Christ. If you're in your 30s, you can walk through the fullness of Christ. Don't say these words, "One day I will," as an excuse that you can't do it now. It's okay to yearn to grow in your spiritual maturity. That's fine. But don't use it as an excuse to say where you're at. God wants to grow you, and God wants to use you now. I mean, you see kings in the Bible like Josiah I think became king at age six or eight. I mean, God has plans for you no matter what your age.

You don't need to wait until you get older to serve God. It's one of the biggest lies of the enemy. I used to believe that lie. I used to listen to a pastor like me preach like, "Yeah, one day when I'm old like him maybe I'll give my life to Christ in a more certain way." No, no, no. God wants your whole life, and he wants it now. He wants you to give him your best now. Be an example for him now. You say, "Well, how do I be an example?" Well, glad you asked because he gave us some specifics. How about in your speech or in your conduct? How about in how you talk? What you talk about? What excites you? The Bible says for out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. What overflows your heart? What do you speak about? What's your topic? That if somebody gets on that topic, man, you can talk about it forever. Is it sports? Is it hunting? Is it dance? Is it your hobbies? Is it your vacations? What comes out of you when people talk to you? What are you most excited about?

Here's what he was telling Timothy. What should come out of your mouth is your love for the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. Your speech should be seasoned with

salt and grace. And yes, you're a truth teller, but you're also gentle and you're gracious because you want to see all people come to Christ. Let your speech and when people hear you talk, hear wisdom in your life because you're living for the Lord in such a way that they're not. Let your speech represent them. How about your conduct? It means walk your talk in your conduct. It means how you live, and how you spend your money, and where you go, and where you eat, and what you do that when people see you as an example, they would say, "When I see a person speak like that and act like that, I know there's a God." That's what he was telling him.

Now, in case you're sitting here today and saying, "Well, that's for a prophet and a pastor. Thank goodness I'm not called to that." No, no, no. It's for all of us. We're all called to be examples of the Lord Jesus Christ that when people see us, and we claim that we know Christ in the way that we talk, and in the way act, people would say, "Yep, I know that they're telling the truth." There's integrity there. And then he goes on and adds three others to that list. He says, "Here's how you should also grow. You should grow in your love and your faith and your purity." What's your love? You should be growing in your love for God and your love for other people. If you love God, you will love other people. You can't love God and hate your brother. If you do that, you're a liar.

Well, I say to all those people out there in that category, I hate that political party, that whole group of people. I hate that group of people and their sexual identity. I hate that group of people over there that think like that. I hate... You can't love God and hate groups of people. You can't love God and hate people because Jesus Christ

died for that people, that person, he loves them. If you grow in your love for God, your love for people will grow. Your love for people is evident that you're growing in your love for God. So if you love God, you will love people. Even people that think differently, which means that they're wrong, and you'll love them anyway. Some of you are about ready to meet up with some of them this Thursday at a meal, right? It's keeping it real, Thanksgiving week.

Love people, love people. Love God and let it translate in your love for people. And how about faith? Faith is not just my faith in Christ. Faith is continuing to grow in Christ. We say around here, the hardest step of faith that you'll ever have to take in your life is the next one. You got to keep taking steps of faith. One of the hardest steps of faith you'll ever take as a nonbeliever is to trust Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life. And then once you're a believer, then God will take you down a journey, and it's the next step, and the next step. And then it will be how you become generous with your money. And then it will be how you forgive somebody that's wronged you. And then it will be how you use your career as an opportunity to serve the Lord. And then it will be how are you good in your single life? Or how are you good as a spouse? Or how are you good with your kids? Or how are you good with your parents? Or how do you use school as an opportunity to witness to the Lord? All these different things, and how do you continue to take that next step of faith? It means we should always be growing with Christ. That's what it means.

Our love is growing. Our faith is growing, and what does he say? Our purity should be growing. Now, we read the word as Americans and think, "Well, just don't be

sexually immoral," and that's part of it. But just because you're not sexually immoral doesn't mean that you're pure. Pure means there's nothing in you. There's no distractions. Your heart is pure before the Lord. And Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God." Is there anything in your heart that's bubbling to the surface of impurity that God wants to remove? Let him get that out of there so that your heart can be pure before the Lord and can be pure before other people. So, there's no shame in your life. There's no guilt in your life. You know that you've been completely washed and completely forgiven and you're living in that, and that's how you provide an example.

Now, most of us want our spiritual leaders to provide an example. We just don't want to be the example for other people. So, it's good if our pastor does it. It's good if our small group leader does it, but I don't really need to do it. I'm not really there yet. No, God wants you to be that. Jesus said, "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men." Jesus command of discipleship is follow me, become like me. Do what I do. When I command you to do something, go do it. What does Paul then say? He says, "Follow me as I follow Christ, 1st Corinthians 11:01. And then in Philipians four and verse nine, I'm paraphrasing. He says, "What you have seen in me, what you have heard from me, what you have watched in me, what you have listened to from me, put this into practice and the peace of God will be with you."

What were the disciples of Jesus saying? Follow Christ. And here's how you're going to grow. If you follow me and the way you see me going after Christ, I promise you, you'll grow. That's an example. An example means if you walk the way I'm walking

and you talk the way I'm talking and you go the way I'm going, you will grow in Christ.

And who does God want to act like that? Every single person that's called on his name. That's the message.

It's a job description for the prophet that you would not only preach and teach with authority, but you provide an example that there'd be integrity in your life. We can look throughout the Bible. There's all sorts of great examples of men with integrity. Noah faithfully proclaimed the Bible, God's word for 120 years. Daniel faithfully stood up in Babylon and proclaimed the word and prayed out loud. Job was faithful through all of his trials. Joseph was faithful and his purity, even when tempted with sexual immorality. Do you have integrity in your life? Do you have integrity with your finances and how you spend and how you're generous with your money? Do you have integrity with your family and your friends? Do you have integrity when you go through trials?

See, the world is looking for people that not only preach with authority so they can hear it, but they're looking for people that can provide an example so that they can believe them. They're seeing somebody that's actually walking this out. Okay, it's believable. Fill in the blank for me. You know this, we've done this before. People that will say, "I don't want to be a Christian." Christians are just a bunch of... You heard that, huh? Because there's not enough examples of people walking it out. It doesn't mean we're perfect because none of us are perfect. We'll all admit to that. But what does it mean? It means when I do something wrong to the extent that it's been seen I confess and forsake it. It means I'm walking away from it. It means if I hurt your

feelings, I'm telling you that I'm sorry. It means if I need to ask for forgiveness, I'm asking for forgiveness. I'm being a testimony to what God is doing in my heart so people see living examples of what it means to actually believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. Amen?. And he wants all of us to walk our talk and be an example. Not only so people hear, but so that people can believe.

And then 30 gives this. He says, "Prioritize the word and the spirit." Prioritize the word and the spirit. Now, if you've been listening to these messages, I talked about priority being one thing the other day. You said, "Well, Pastor Jeff, you said it was one thing. You said prioritize your family when it comes to doing that. Now you're talking about prioritize, but you're using two things." No, I'm not. The word and the spirit are interlinked. They are interwoven. Why? Because the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity pinned the word. Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. The word of God was written by the Holy Spirit. Even while he chose men to be agents of his written word, the Holy Spirit wrote the word.

The written word reveals the living word, Jesus Christ. When the living word is proclaimed and Jesus Christ is exalted and glorified, the Holy Spirit also uses that to bring conviction to your heart and show you what steps to take. It's the word and the spirit in conjunction. Now, why are both equally important? Some churches don't prioritize either. Some churches don't ever open a Bible. I mean, what do you do if you go to a church that doesn't open the Bible? You leave. It's just easy. But some churches don't open the Bible and some churches don't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe in both. I believe in both equally.

But what happens a lot of times, especially in our culture, some churches tend to swing the pendulum one way or another, and some churches are really strong word churches, and they open the Bible, and they proclaim the word, and they're faithful in the word, and God bless them that they are. But anything that involves the spirit of God doing something supernatural, they're scared of. They're a little unsure about. And they tend to say, "Well, we're about the word and the Spirit's in us," which is true. It's true. But we don't want to see all that crazy stuff. And their version of the spirit is people swinging from these chandeliers and acting crazy. We want none of that. And I don't want any of that, but there's other churches where you sense the spirit of God's at work and they believe the word, and they know the spirit of God's true. And you sense that God is with us when things are being talked about, but they're not anchored enough to the word. And they say, "Yeah, when people are into the word, they have to think too much, and it squelches the spirit."

No, no, no. The word of God and the spirit of God work in tandem together. And oftentimes word of God churches like ours are afraid of Spirit of God churches. And so, instead of shepherding what may not be right, they tend to want to shut it down. I don't want to shut anything down that the Spirit of God wants to do. Do you want to shut anything down that the Spirit of God wants to do? I don't. I want the fullness of everything that the Spirit has. I mean, 1st Corinthians chapter 14, all throughout that chapter he says to pursue spiritual gifts. Eagerly desiring that you may prophesy. And at the end, he says, "You should be encouraged to want to see prophecy in your church, and don't forbid the speaking of tongues." He just tells us everything's got to be

done in order because if it's not done in order, and it's craziness in the church people will say, "They're out of their mind."

You been to some of those meetings? I've been in some of those meetings where I'm looking around and supposedly the Spirit's doing something, but it's not representative of who I see Jesus being in the Bible and it's wrong, and it's out of order, and it's not in place. And even though these people would say, "Oh, but I was so moved." It's not right. But then there's other places where the Spirit of God doesn't move to the full because we don't let him. We talk about that he can. He might heal people today. He might be able to allow people to worship. He might be able to allow people to speak in tongues. He might have prophecy, but I'm not so sure so I'm just going to hunker down in the word. I think both are wrong. How about the fullness of the word and the fullness of the Spirit, and we let God's word be the judge on what's happening in the church. Amen?

This is what Paul was telling Timothy. The spirit of God and the word of God are of equal importance. Notice what he says. Until I come give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, and teaching. Well, what's the public reading of scripture? It means that you'll open your Bible in the church and read it and explain it. It means that the thoughts coming from the preacher, the prophet, whoever is standing forward, the thoughts need to be the thoughts that are coming from this book not their own thoughts. Not, I spent time with the Lord this week and I was really moved. And so, I wanted to tell you about this, and by the way, there's one or two scriptures that will support this. No, no, no. This is what God wants to say, and I'm proclaiming him to

you. So, make sure you read the word. Don't be embarrassed by the word. The word of God is what brings life to God's people.

How do you know Jesus died on the cross? The word of God tells us. How do you know he rose from the dead? The word of God tells us. How do you that the Holy Spirit was active in the early church? Because the word of God tells us. How would you know anything if the word of God didn't tell us anything? It would be our guess. We'd be speculating. So, read the word of God, and then to do what? Give exhortation and teaching. Well, what's that mean? What's exhortation? Exhortation is simply this. It can take the form of a warning or rebuke, encouragement, an admonition, a challenge, counsel, comfort, some sort of application that helps you take the next step in your faith journey if you're willing to hear. That's what exhortation is. And teaching means you're going to systematically teach through the whole Council of God. It means there's no part in this book that we would say, "Well, I can't teach that part. People won't like that part."

Now, any and all are wide open to whatever God wants to say at any time. And through that, his Holy Spirit will bring a word individually. That's why you can hear this word and you can hear the message today, and he's doing something over there in that man's life right there, and he's doing something in this girl's life right here, and he's doing and something over in that boy's life back up there. And it's all different because it's the word of God and the Spirit of God doing a work. Amen? So, where should you go? You should go to a place that heralds the word of God where the word of God is taught, where the word of God is exhorted. Where it's not just, "Hey, this is what the

Bible says. This is what you should do with what the Bible says." As a result of hearing this, what are you going to do now? Because if you don't do anything with what you hear it's as if you didn't hear it all.

God's not up here just to hear you say, "I heard you today, God." What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? Nobody can make you do anything about it. God loves you enough that he'll even allow you to make your own decision about what you want to do. But what should be happening to church is that the word of God is faithfully proclaimed. And why is that important? Because when the word of God's faithfully proclaimed, you can grow. The word of God is food. If you don't eat, you can't grow. If you don't have the word, you can't grow, it's impossible to grow.

God has us preach with authority so people can hear, provide an example so they can believe, prioritize the word so that you can grow. But not only the word of God, also the Spirit of God because what is he saying in verse 14? Do not neglect the spiritual gift. Within who? You. Friends, at the time that you gave your life to Christ. If you've repented and trusted in Jesus at the moment that you did the Holy Spirit came to and dwell you forever. And Romans eight verse nine says, if you do not have the Spirit of Christ, you are not of Christ. You say, "Well, I don't if the Holy Spirit came into me. If you repented and trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, the Holy Spirit indwells you, he's there. 1st Corinthians 12:13 says he baptizes you into the family of God, which means you've been brought into his family.

But Ephesians five and verse 18 tells us that we need to keep on being filled with the spirit. What does that mean? It means this, the Holy Spirit is a person. It's the third person of the Trinity. When you accept the Holy Spirit, all of the third person of the Trinity comes to live in you. Not part of him, all of him. So if you're a Christian, you have all the Holy Spirit. Here's the problem for many Christians, the Holy Spirit doesn't have all of them. You have all of him. Does he have all of you? See, at the moment that you're saved, you are delivered from the penalty of sin. You never ever have to worry about it, but God takes us on this journey of sanctification, and he helps us, he allows us to partner with the Spirit so that we can be delivered from the power of sin, which means what you God wants to do in your life is to give you power over the sin that you once had.

We sang a song earlier in our service called Egypt. And I think about the story of Egypt. God got the Israelites out of Egypt, but it took them a little while to get Egypt out the Israelites, didn't it? When God saves you, God immediately takes you out of the place that you once were, out of the darkness, and delivers you into the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, and the forgiveness of sins. You're his, but then God spends the rest of your life wanting you to partner in a journey with him so that he can get all the junk out of you that was in you before you got saved, right? God is trying to cleanse you and purify you, which means once you're saved, you're not done. That's just the beginning. God wants to grow you in a process. And every day he wants you to wake up and say, "Lord, I'm yours today. I'll walk in your Spirit today. I'll do what you want. I'll go where you want me to go. I'll be who you want me to be."

And as you begin to partner with the Spirit doing that, God grows you and sanctifies you so that as you look over your shoulder, days, weeks, and months, or years later, you will realize I'm not the same person I was when I first got saved. God's been doing a work in my life. And guess when that work ends? When you meet Jesus face to face. And until that time God's wanting to grow you. And another thing God did in your life, not only did he save you and make a deposit of the gift of the Holy Spirit, but he gifted you with service to his church. Every single one of you is gifted. Did you know that? Most of us don't believe that we are. Most of us have been lied to for so long we feel like we're worthless, we're lousy, we're no good, we have nothing to offer God. I'm not a pastor. I'm not a worship leader. Who am I? I don't have anything. No, no, no. You are special. You are chosen. You belong to him. You are set apart for service and God gifted you in a unique way for you to serve him.

Now, in a nutshell, let me tell you how spiritual gifts work because this is not a sermon on spiritual of gifts. All of you have certain talents that you had before you got saved that came with you after you got saved. If you were a good communicator before you got saved, you'll be a good communicator after you got saved. If you stunk at organization before you got saved, I'll testify you'll stink at organization after you get saved. If you were a good at math before you got saved, you'll be good at math after you got saved. There's certain talents you're going to bring with you and certain weaknesses you're going to bring with you.

Spiritual gifts aren't like that. Spiritual gifts are supercharged gifts by the Holy Spirit for you to perform an operation in Christ's church to be a benefit to someone

else that you may work at, but is really easy for you and comes supernatural to you. You say, "Well, how do I discover what my spiritual gift is?" Well, you can take a spiritual gifts inventory and it will help you find those things. And that's a way to do it. I think the best way to do it is do this. Get in a small group, get in community. Other people will tell you what your gift is. If you're the person that's coming to the small group and you have everything's stacked in nice little neat containers and all the papers are nice and neat, and there's paper clip just right you have the gift of administration and everybody will see that in you.

If you're the person that has the gift of encouragement, you're the one that everyone gravitates towards when things get difficult because that person's going to have a word for you that night that's going to make you feel better when you leave. If you have the gift of prophecy, people will thank you for your gift, but not want you to be part of their group for very long. I mean, all your gifts are going to be recognized within the body. Certain people do certain things well and others of us are weak in those areas or they take more work for us, and other people don't even realize it's a gift because they just do it all the time.

If you have the gift of encouragement and somebody told you, you had the gift of encouragement, you would say, "Well, that's so sweet. I didn't even know I had that. You are so nice to tell me that. What a great person you are." That's an encourager. If you have the gift of hospitality. When you have people over your house and people will tell you have the gift of hospitality like, "I didn't even know I had that, but I guess we do

because every night this week we've had people over, and we're so energized by it." And if you don't have the gift of hospitality, you have people over for one night and you're like, "That's about enough. Maybe next year we'll do that again."

I mean, different people have different gifts that bring them different levels of energy and other people can help you discover that when you're in community and all gifts are welcomed in the body of Christ. That's why we need the spirit and the word. We need the spirit and the word. We need the proclamation of God's word, and then we need to turn people loose in the spirit to accomplish everything that God has. And every single one of us is wired different and God's arranged all the parts of the body just the way he wanted so that his church can flourish, and we could advance this kingdom in the world. Amen? You've been gifted. You're super gifted. You're supernaturally gifted by God. And when you're using your gift in community, people will recognize it and say, "You should do that more often. You should take steps in that way more often. That's what God wants you to do." Prioritize the word and the Spirit so that we can grow, that we can be filled with Christ. Amen?

Let me give you a fourth way. A prophet must also progress through diligent practice. Progress through diligent practice. And notice how he finishes verse 14. He tells him, not to neglect the spiritual gift within you. Notice how he says it came, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the Presbytery or the elders. Now, there's a lot of debate. Did Paul as an authoritative apostle pray over him and the gift went from Paul to him or did Paul just affirm the gift that he saw in him? We don't know. I can debate it both ways. We know that a gift

was transferred, that the Holy Spirit is the one that brings gifts. That Paul was affirming a gift in Timothy.

I'm telling you the older I get, the more I appreciate the people that prophesied into my life when they saw things in me, and prophecy is simply this. It's a word of encouragement, exhortation, or comfort that somebody prays over you that resonates with your spirit. You have the ability, unlike the word of God to reject or receive the prophecy. Prophecies are not inherent. Somebody may prophesize something over you. Like I don't receive that. That ain't true. I'm not welcoming that in my life. That's okay. But for somebody that speaks the word of the Lord over you and brings comfort into your heart in a way that you know God has been speaking to you, it accelerates things in your life.

Paul was praying over Timothy. Paul laid hands on Timothy. Paul said, "Don't be timid in your gift." But guys, God gave you a gift of power and love and self discipline. Stand firm, Timothy. You're going to do great things for the Lord. Timothy received that into his life. We need to be encouragers to other people in the body of Christ that God can use anybody anywhere at any time, any way he wants for his glory. Because everyone has been supernaturally gifted by our king for service in his kingdom. Amen? And then we're going to progress in that. I mean just because we're gifted doesn't mean we've arrived. Notice what he says in verse 15, take pains with these things. Be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all. Take pains in them, labor with them. If you have a gift in some area, use your gift, grow in your gifting.

Don't just rest your laurels. Some of you know that some of the best athletes in

the world, we're talking about professional athletes, Olympic athletes, it's not that they get to their team or that they get to the Olympic training or they make the Olympic team, and then they're done training. That's when they really go into training. That's when they realize, "I'm on the team, but in order to form at the highest level, now I've really got to train." So, professional athletes and Olympic athletes, they train all day long. They eat certain ways. They discipline certain ways. They train certain ways that they wouldn't have otherwise trained in. Why? Because they've been specially gifted and they need to give it even more attention.

Now, why do I say that? Because I'm a pastor. Most people think I work a half a day a week. That my week's coming to an end here in just a short period of time, and then I'm done for the week. No, no, no. The Bible says, "Whatever your gift is, take pains with that, be absorbed in it, labor in it." If you have a gift of encouragement, speak to more people and write more notes. The church needs it. If you're administratively gifted, find a place that will use your gift and grow in your ability to bring administration to something that you're doing, right? Whatever your gift is, grow in that gifting. Long before I ever stood up here, do you know how I used to preach to? My couch because I didn't have an audience and I didn't have a congregation and we only had four youth in our youth ministry. So, I would preach at home to my couch. I think all my furniture was saved at least three times. Chose not to baptize them because I didn't want to sit on them wet, but I would walk around my living room, and I'd walk around my house, and I'd hold the Bible, and I would do what I'm doing now, and I would preach as if there were people actually listening to me.

Then there were times when I knew our pastor was gone. There were only two of us on staff. I walked into the chapel or the church itself and I knew nobody was in the building and I'd stand up front with nobody in pews and I would preach and nobody heard me except for God. Praise the Lord for that probably. I was working on it. You say, "Well, how do you do it now?" Well, I'm in the word every day, and I pray every day, and I'm worshipping every day, and I'm growing every day. I'm trying to listen to the Lord so I can hear him more clearly every day so that when I get up here, I have something worth saying.

I mean, God wants us to practice what we preach. God wants us to walk our talk. Not just every now and again. He wants us to be absorbed in them. Why? Because I promise you this church, just listen to me. When you get to heaven, you'll never apologize for the amount of time you serve the Lord. It's the greatest return on investment. There will be nobody that gave the Lord their best that will stand in the line and say, "Pastor Jeff, man, I could have watched more Marvel movies and sports, but you made me do this. What a waste." Never going to happen. You give your best to the Lord. There's the greatest return on investment for giving your best to the Lord. What does it look like for you to give God your best? Take pains with them, grow in them. None of us has arrived. I mean, it'll be arrogant of us to say, or to hear someone say, I know I'm a great preacher and nobody will ever be as good as me, so I'm done studying. I'll just show up next week.

So, I had a coach in college, he would say this, "You're either green and growing

or you're ripe and rotting." Spiritually, I think that's completely true. If you are not moving with Christ and walking with him, you are actually moving away from him. How are you growing? How are you taking pains with these things? How are you absorbed in them? I don't feel like reading my Bible every day. Get it. I don't feel like praying every day. I get it. I don't feel like learning to tithe. I used to get it. I mean, I understand every spiritual discipline. I don't feel like sharing my faith. I get it. I understand. That's why you take pains with them. That's why you're absorbed in them. That's why you're talking to God about them while you do them, and you're telling the Lord what you want us see him do.

It's not just this rote habit. It's not religion. To this very day, when the Lord asked me to do something, I know when it's the Lord. And sometimes I'm still trying to help him out understand, I don't think you quite understand, God. Here's some other things that you may not be aware of. And here's why I probably can't do that right now, but thanks for sharing. You have those experiences? I'm still talking with the Lord, even when I know he's right and I'm wrong because I'm growing with him and I'm processing with him. It's not so much just that I do what he says, but I want to understand why he's asking it of me, and I want to know how he works, and I want to grow in that. So do you.

A prophet must progress through diligent practice and why? Notice what he says, "So that your progress will be evident to all." So that other people will see that you're growing in Christ. Now, why is that important? Because I think we live in an age of distrust and disgust when it comes to leaders. Would you agree with me? I mean, we

see leaders out there. Like how can I trust them? I don't know that I can trust any of those guys. I don't know if I can trust any of those girls. I'm kind of disgusted with the way they've acted. And oh, how I wish I could tell you that's out there. That's politicians. Those are educators. Those are your community leaders. Those are people that work in the business world, but not us. We're pastors. You can totally trust us. But there's a slew of us that have dropped the ball.

I know when I stand up here that in many of your minds, like how can I trust that guy when all the people I know in church I've never been able to trust? I get that and it pains my heart. So, what does God ask us to do? You better be growing in the things of the Lord so people can see your progress, so that the people can trust you. I've lived long enough that I've seen friends of mine fall in the ministry. And as painful as it is to watch somebody that loves the Lord do something incredibly stupid that's not the biggest pain. Do you know what the biggest pain is? It's the negative impact they have on their church. And it's the negative impact they have in the world.

For mature Christians, when they see somebody fall, here's what mature Christians do say, "Man, that was bad. I'm going to another church, and I'm still going to grow." But can I tell you what everybody else does? People that are growing in their faith are bewildered, and they're like, "Do I even believe this stuff anymore? What church can I go to? And if it wasn't true for him and he was saying all those things, then how can it be true for me? I don't know. I may go to church. I may not. I don't know." And then there's those that are spiritually immature that will say, "I'm done with church. And just so you know, the reason I don't go to church is because of the story of that

guy." Do you think I'm aware of that?

I would rather be hit by a bus and killed today on my way home than not finish well. And just so you know, I don't want to be hit by a bus on my way home today, but at least I know that if it happened now people would lament because I'm dying with integrity. I'm not going to tithe my wife or my kids or anybody else. I'm going to live with integrity. And the best prayer you can pray for me is that I finish well. I'm 50 years old. I'm heading into my glory years now. I don't know how long I get. I don't know if I get five, 10, 30. I don't know what I get. But as long as I get, I want to honor the Lord, and I want to know that I finished well when I crossed the line. I want to say like Paul, "I fought the good fight. I finished the race. I've kept the faith."

It means this. What are you doing to be intentional? Because it's the things that you do that nobody else sees that makes you able to stand in the tough day. I can tell you whatever I want. It's what does God see behind the scenes? Am I really studying the word or am I just telling you that? Am I really praying or am I just telling you that? Do I really tie and give above my tithe or am I just telling you that? Do I really serve or am I just telling you that? God knows. I'm telling you that.

I'm telling you in truth that I do, but God knows, and it makes more difference what God thinks. It means we got to practice. It means we got to progress. Why? Because all it takes is somebody looking at you saying, "Yep, just a bunch of hypocrites. That's why I didn't trust Jesus." You know what Gandhi said in his life? I would've been a Christian if it weren't for all the Christians. He read the word, he loved

Jesus, he loved what he saw. He just never saw it lived out by any of his followers. How tragic is that? That's what we're talking about. Amen? Not that we're perfect. We're progressing and when we're not right we confess.

Let me give you a final one. A prophet must also pay attention to both life and ministry, pay attention to both life and ministry. The reason a prophet must progress in his practice is so people can trust him, but he must pay attention to both life and ministry so people can have hope. Notice what he says, pay close attention. That means really focus on this to yourself and your teaching. Persevere in these things for as you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and those who hear you. What do you pay attention to? Your life and what you're doing both are equally important. If you're not paying attention into your life, but you have a great ministry, but in doing your ministry, you tithe your kids and your wife to the devil that's not a successful ministry.

I know pastors that are a little bit older than me whose kids won't go back to church because of the way their dad treated the church, and the way people treated their dad when he was in the church. And the church to them was that which stole their dad. And they want nothing to do with church. That's a tragedy. That's pathetic. I know men that have had successful ministry whose wives wouldn't say it publicly, but inwardly, they can't stand being married to the man. That's a tragedy. He says, "You better pay close attention to your life." You better be living this thing out,. Who you are when nobody's looking, and who you are with people that are closest to you, that's really important. And you better pay careful attention to your ministry. What you're

saying and how you're living.

Now, how do you do that? One way is to take inventory and be aware. But can I give you a second way? Be willing to take feedback from people who love you. Be willing to take feedback from people who love you. Who do you have? I've told you I have seven people in my life that can speak to me about anything they want. And I can tell you this. Sometimes when people have spoken to me about things they think I need to hear, they haven't always said it in a way that's palatable to me. I think there's ways they could have said it different. But I also know if they're saying something to me, they mean it. And there's something in what they're saying that's true, and I better be listening because I know they love me, and I know they love this ministry, and I know they love my family, and I know they want me to finish well.

So, I listen. What's the nugget there that I need to hear? Because if they're saying it, there's something there. There's trouble on the horizon. Now, you can't do that with everybody because everybody's got their own opinion. You can't listen to 3,000 people saying, "Here's what I think you need to do." You go schizophrenic trying to figure all that stuff out. But who are the people that you know in your life that genuinely love you? And if you're single, they genuinely love your purity being single. And if you're married, they genuinely love your marriage. And if you have kids, they genuinely love your kids. And if you're doing... They genuinely love you that you will let speak into your life about your life and your ministry. Who are they? Because I can tell you on authority, the people I know that have fallen into ministry, they didn't have that.

Now, there's people around them that were speaking those things to them, but

you know what they were doing? They were doing this. They weren't listening. Will you listen? Nobody can make you listen. You have to open up your heart and feedback's not fun. Just so you know. Good feedback's the breakfast of champions, but it's tough to eat. It's not very palatable sometimes. When people tell you about who you are as a husband and you're not doing a great job or how you are as a father and you're not doing great job or how you handled a certain meeting in ministry and didn't do a great job. That's tough to hear because we all want to save face, and we all want to say, "Yeah, but you didn't know." But if you have people that you trust that you can speak it and say, "I need to think about that. Let's talk about what'd you really mean, what'd you say?"

If you got people like that, it's a safety net for you. I wish I could teach every seminarian this coming out of seminary. You better pay close attention to your life and you better pay close attention to your doctrine. Why? Because people's lives are hanging in the balance. Now we know God does all the saving. I don't save anybody. You don't save anybody. Only God can save. But here's what happens, when you pay attention to your life in ministry, you provide hope for people because when you're growing in personal holiness and doctrinal orthodoxy, there's controvertible evidence that Jesus Christ is Lord.

People see it. They believe it. They feel it. You ensure salvation for yourself. You're modeling that you're on the road to be saved, and other people say, "If he can save that guy, I know he can save me." There's hope, there's joy. We're moving in that

direction, and God cares about his church. And when a prophet follows his job description, people hear the Lord, they believe the Lord, they grow in the Lord, they trust in the Lord, and their hope is fixed in the Lord. Can we praise God for his prophets that are doing his work?

We need that. God's doing a work doing that. Open your heart up to what he has for you. God is blessing his church through men of God that are faithfully proclaiming his word. Sometimes you'll leave encouraged. Sometimes you'll leave convicted. Sometimes you'll leave thinking, "What do I need to do different? I'm not quite sure." That's okay. Just keep getting fed the word of God, study the word of God, and let the word of God be your guide, and let the Spirit of God do what he wants, and he will lead you where he wants you to go. Amen? Amen. Would you stand with me.

Lord Jesus, we give you praise, glory, and honor for who you are. And Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you for your spirit that has convicted us. And if you're here today and you've never trusted Christ and you know you don't have a relationship with him, then this is how you may pray. Lord Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner. I believe that I'm separated from you, but I believe that you're the Lord who died on a cross for all my sins and who rose from the dead in victory. Right now I repent my sins, and I trust you as my personal Lord and savior. Come into my life and take over.

And Lord, for those of us who know you, we just pray that we would release more and more of ourselves to you and that you would take over more and more of our lives so that we could walk in your ways all the days of our lives. And for what you're

going to do we give you all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise as we worship you, and your great name, the name of Jesus. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise this morning for who he is?