



Message Transcript

Keys for Spiritual Growth

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor JEFF SCHWARZENTRAUB:

Father in heaven, we give You all the glory, all the honor and all the praise for who You are. And Lord, we thank you for this church. Lord, we thank You that You're building Your church and that the gates of hell will never prevail against it. God, we praise You because we're a church that preaches the word and we believe that every time Your word is opened up and it is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that You have a word for us. So Lord, be helpful to me and be helpful to us as we hear, that we would clearly hear Your voice in our hearts among us today. And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the word of the Lord this morning, who will believe what it is that Jesus says to you and who will by faith put into practice what He shows you. Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen. Amen.

Today I want to talk about three keys of spiritual growth. I want to talk about three keys of spiritual growth. And there's a lot of things that we could talk about when it comes to this. But I want to talk about three keys, three bedrocks for us, when it comes to spiritual growth. And we all know that keys are important. Whether it's to undo a lock, whether you don't even have the keys anymore and you use a key fob. Or whether you use your phone to get into a room. You realize that a key is what gives access to a place that you otherwise would not be able to get in. Fortunately for me at Christmas, some of the family that loves me so much got me a special keychain that I can put on my key that when I use my phone, I can't find my keys, it will send out a message to me, it will beep. It'll tell me where in my house I need to walk and how

many feet I am away from my keys.

Because I realize without my keys, I can't get in my truck. Without my keys I can't get into our church. Without my keys, there's a lot of things that I don't have access to. Well, the same is true for us spiritually. Without certain spiritual keys it's hard to unlock the fullness of everything that God wants you to be. And the reality is, that God created you and God loves you and God wants to be in a relationship with you. And God has given us His word so that we can know how to experience that relationship to the full. And here in Exodus chapter 23, He's going to highlight three keys that are so important to us, if we're going to continue to grow in Christ. If we're going to continue to be the fullness of all that He wants you to be.

Now, I've enjoyed teaching you the book of Exodus. It's been a phenomenal book. I hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have. But you see, amen, you see that God had a plan for His people. He had a plan for the nation of Israel. And when the Pharaoh said he didn't like the Hebrews, God says, "I'll do one better. I'll send a deliverer and I'll let him grow up in your home." And God had His hand on Moses from the time that he was an infant all the way as he's delivered him. He sent Moses back into Egypt after he had been wandering in the desert for 40 years. At the age of 80, he goes back and he tells Pharaoh, "Let my people go." We see these amazing plagues that God delivers through Moses to the nation of Egypt. And then when they escape, we see all these miracles.

We see the parting of the Red Sea. We see the crushing of the Egyptian army.

We see God provide water. We see God provide food. We see God provide quail. We see God defeat all of their enemies. And where we left off, God was on Mount Sinai and God was giving His commandments to His people. We study the 10 commandments and why they're still applicable and how they work in our lives to show us the holiness of God. To show us our unrighteousness and our need for our Savior. And then last week, for those of you that were here, you probably got to hear a sermon that you'll never ever hear again. As we went through three chapters of case law and how God loves His people so much that even though His people weren't completely living for Him, He was giving a blueprint for how to use His law in specific situations so that everyone knew in that situation that they were loved and honored by God. And that we could see God's righteousness and His justice at work.

And here at the end of chapter 23, as we continue on, God is going to unlock three keys for us that we need if we're going to continually grow in our relationship with the Lord. So I want to invite you this morning, open up your Bible to Exodus chapter 23. We're going to begin in verse 10 and work our way through the chapter today. And we're going to see what these keys for spiritual growth are. Hear what the word of the Lord says starting in verse 10. In these first three verses, he gives us the first one. He says, "You shall sow your land for six years and gather its yield, but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from

your labor so that your ox and your donkey may", and here's the key word, "Rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves."

Really in these first three verses, he gives us the first key for spiritual growth and the first key for spiritual growth is this. Rest in the Lord. Rest in the Lord. God calls us to rest in Him. Now He gives us the way to do that and this is specifically given to Israel and He tells them this, "For six years you're to work and work really hard." You'll find nowhere in the Bible does God bless slothfulness or laziness. Just a quick read through the Proverbs, you'll see that God hates the lazy. He hates the slothful. But what you will see in the Bible is, even for those who work hard, God says, "I have a way for you to work and I have a way for you to do it in such a way that your life and your pattern of life can sustain itself.

So here's what I want you to do. I want you to work for six years, but on the seventh year, let your field lie fallow. Don't till it. Don't plow it. Don't do it with your vineyards. Don't do it with your olive garden. Don't do it with anything. Just let it sit. That way, those that don't have enough food can make their way through your property. They can gather what they need. And what's left over, then your animals that you're taking care of, they can gather and take what they need." And God promises that if you'll do it this way, He'll make sure that you're blessed. He's showing how to be diligent for six years and to rest on the seventh. And then he makes the same statement that he's made in the 10 Commandments where he said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Because Exodus 20 verse 11 said, "For in six days God created the heavens and the Earth."

That's the universe. "And he rested on the seventh day." Why did God rest? He wasn't tired, He wasn't stressed, He wasn't exhausted, He wasn't worn out. He was providing an example to all of us for how to live our lives. And to this day, if you go to Israel, from Friday night at sundown until Saturday night at sundown, it's called the Sabbath or Shabbat and nobody works. If you're staying in a hotel, in all likelihood, the elevator won't work. It'll open at every single floor and close at every single floor. And as an American it will drive you absolutely crazy, right? Because they don't want you to have to push the button because pushing the button is considered work. So on the Sabbath, the elevator goes automatically. And this was God's design for Israel. Now why would God say that they need to rest in Him?

Because when you rest, you get replenished. Let me just ask by show of hands, just this week, even if it was for five minutes or less, how many of you experienced just a little bit of anxiety or stress of any kind this week? Okay. That's why God gave us the Sabbath. That's why God gave us the Sabbath. Now for Israel, God had them set aside from Friday night till Saturday night. There are some people today that say, "It doesn't even count as a Sabbath unless you do that." But we know as believers in Christ that that is not the case, because God in the book of Romans, through the apostle Paul, who was inspired by the Spirit tells us this. In Romans chapter 14 in verse five, he's talking about food and he's talking about dates. And when he talks about dates he says this, Romans 14:5, "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind."

What we know to be true is that after Jesus rose from the dead and He rose on

a Sunday, the early church began to meet on Sunday. So they didn't keep the Sabbath the way that the Jews met the sabbath. Why? Because Jesus Christ was the fulfillment or the end of the law. So here's what he tells us about Sabbath. He tells us that we're in the Sabbath rest when we're in Christ. So God doesn't specifically tell us that there's one specific day that we must set aside, but the principle of it remains. The principle of it remains. The fact that so many of you raised your hands and talked about stress or anxiety. And the ones who didn't, it was because you were too stressed and anxious to raise your hand, shows that we need time set aside in our life to refresh in the Lord.

Now, refreshing in the Lord, it does not mean just escaping to the mountains and sleeping. Most of us rest when we're so stressed and burnt out that we're like, "I got to relax. I got to get unstressed." And that's what we call rest. That's not rest. Rest is when you purposely decide before it even happens at the beginning of the week, you're going to set aside a time to set aside to refresh. And the way that you refresh, is you refresh in the Lord. Did you hear what the text said? Did you hear what the text talked about? He said this back in Exodus chapter 23, Exodus 23, verse 12. He says, "Even so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger may refresh themselves." Refresh. When you'll take the time intentionally to refresh yourself in the Lord, your whole world changes.

Your whole world changes. I've been convicted by this over the course of the last year and I've shared some of this with you. But now, as a routine in my life and I try to stay pretty good at it. From about Thursday night dinnertime till about Friday night at

dinnertime, I shut off. I spend time trying to refresh myself in the Lord. Sometimes that's by reading the Word or just praying or just meditating on Him. Sometimes it's by just journaling. Other times it's by spending time with my family. Sometimes it's by watching a movie that may be refreshing or a sporting event that energizes me. Sometimes it may be studying a topic that I just haven't had time to study and I want to do this or creating a new hobby or developing something that refreshes me. And what I find is, when I spend an entire 24 hours doing that, everything else in my week has a heck of a lot more perspective.

For those of you that are here today saying, "There's absolutely no way I could set aside an entire day a week." You're just too busy. According to the Word of God. You're just too busy. And the reason that you're experiencing stress and anxiety is that you're too busy. Let me ask you this. I never have this instrument with me up here, this tool, how many of you could turn this off for 24 hours? Just shut it down, put it on airplane mode, put it on do not disturb. Because it has a way that when it buzzes or beeps that we're like, "What was that? Oh, it was an email? That was an important one. What was that? Oh, that was so-and-so I haven't talked to... What was that?" I mean, do you set aside time? Because what I'm discovering is God wants our best, first and foremost. And the way that we refresh in the Lord is to do that.

Now, I want to read to you a psalm. You'll know this psalm, many of you that grew up in the church. Psalm chapter 46 in verse 10, what does it say? "Cease striving." You know what cease means? Stop. Slow down. "Stop striving and know that I am God." And then he goes on to say, "I will be exalted among the nations, I will be

exalted in the earth." You know what God was telling Israel? They had a responsibility to be a light to all the nations, and here's what he told them. "You need to stop trying to be that. Let Me be that through you." "Cease striving and know that I'm God, I'll be exalted among the nations, I'll be exalted in the earth." It was God's way of saying, "Stop striving. I got this. I don't need you. I don't need you." God doesn't need any of us.

Now, God chooses to use us in the propagation of the gospel and in the spread of who Jesus Christ is. But if any of us dies, it doesn't hinder God's work on the planet. He is not dependent upon any of us. And when we rest and refresh ourselves in the Lord, we're reminded about all those things that we deem so important that are really not that big of a deal. Here's what stop really means. Stop what? Stop striving, stop grinding, stop driving, stop stressing, stop working. Just stop. Stop. Just stop. Some of you, your brains work overtime. I know mine does. I have to physically make myself stop thinking about things. Very, very difficult for me. Some of you are wired like that, where to set work aside. Or moms and dads not thinking about your kids, to set that aside. I mean, "How do I do that?" Well, when you put it back on the Lord, like 1st Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxieties upon Him because He cares for you."

You spend a day casting all your anxieties on Jesus and you tell Him, "Here's what's going on in my life. And here's what I've been stressed about this week and this is anxious for me. And this is what's going on at school. Or this is what's going on at work. Or this is what's going on in our marriage. Or here's what's happening with my kids." Or kids, "Here's what's happened to my family, with my mom and dad. And I just

can't figure this stuff out, but I don't even want to think about it today. I just want to tell You, You carry the load." That's where we get refreshed in the Lord. Do you spend time resting in the Lord? Rest is not taking extra time to sleep and rest is not just getting away from the hustle and bustle of culture. Rest is intentionally spending time with Jesus.

It's resting in Him. It's resting in the Lord. It's reminding you of the fact that there is one God. His name is Jesus. He's ruling and reigning over the whole world and He cares about you. And when you cease striving and you know or you're reminded of the fact that you believe that He is God. He will be exalted among the nations, He will be exalted in the earth. And all the things that you are striving for and grinding after and you just can't get through. God's like, "I got this. I got this." For some of you that day will be Sunday. It's the best day for you. It's the day to kind of take time away. It's to come to church with your family. It's to worship His name. It's to celebrate who He is. It's to be refreshed in the Word. It's to go home and journal.

That's a great day for you. But can you pick a time? There's no mandate in the Bible that says you have to pick a 24-hour period as a New Testament believer or you're breaking God's law. But it sure seems to me that if that was the principle in the Old Testament, how much more should that be a principle in my life today? Am I taking time to refresh myself in the Lord? How are you doing with that? Do you do it weekly? I mean, I kind of like the idea of every six years, taking that seventh year off, that sounds kind of good to me, right? And what was God saying? "If you're diligent in those six years, I'll provide you enough for the seventh. And oh, by the way, as you

recharge, that will be good for you."

And we understand this in every other area of our life, don't we? I mean, we know that when we get ready to take off in an airplane that they've done all sorts of pre-flight checks. And they've checked the gas and made sure that the wings still attached. And make sure there's enough food and making sure the pilot's there on time and he's gone through all that. Making sure there's brakes, making sure the landing gear functions, and even while you can sit there impatiently saying, "What's taking so long?"

Aren't you glad you're not on a flight where the pilot comes on and says, "Bad news. The wing's loose and we have no landing gear, because we didn't take the time to rest and refresh ourselves." Or how about your car? I mean, a car needs maintenance. I've learned this over the years and I'm pretty good about putting oil and gas in my car on a regular basis. However, I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer when it comes to mechanical things. And for a period of time, my truck had been making this noise every time I was stopping. And I was pulling my son into school a couple of weeks ago and the guy who was directing traffic stopped me. He's like, "Hey, you got a problem with your brakes. Do you hear that?" And I'm like, "That's what it is." So I called my friend immediately and he's like, "Well, yeah, you need to get that truck to me immediately."

And he goes, "By the way, don't drive it anymore. Just, you shouldn't be driving that vehicle." I'm like, "Can I get to your house?" He goes, "Probably, but don't drive it

anywhere else." So I didn't drive it for 24 hours, took it to his house. He called me after he started looking at it, he had shown pictures to all his friends. I was getting blown up by my friends who were laughing at me. Apparently my left tire had no brake pad on it whatsoever. And all the others were so worn down. And he's like, "Haven't you ever checked these?" I'm like, "I didn't even know I had them on my truck. How would I know?" I mean, the point is, if we don't take time to refresh, that's what happens to us. We would've understood if we grew up in an agricultural society where we didn't have vehicles and we rode horses, we would know that our horses need to stop. And they need to eat. And they need to rest. And they need to drink water. And they need... How much more do we need to do that?

Especially if God puts in his Word for his people, rest. As a culture, we stink at this. We're horrible at it. We say, "I don't have enough time to rest." And then we champion people who don't rest. We celebrate people who don't rest. We celebrate people who don't sleep. We celebrate people who don't refresh in the Lord. We celebrate people who just work, work, work, work, work, work, work. That's not worthy of celebration. You're not being your best for the Lord. You can never be your best for the Lord. Jesus spent a whole passage in the sermon of the Mount in Matthew chapter six, verse 24 and following says, "Do not worry about your life. Don't worry about what you're going to eat. Don't worry about what you're going to wear." And he sums up the whole passage saying, "Each day will have enough worries of its own."

So even if you solve every single problem today that's on your plate and you go to sleep and you wake up tomorrow, you're going to have more problems. In this world

you will have tribulation. Promise you, you cannot solve the world's problems. Only God can. God gives us a day of rest so that we will understand who He is and who we are. And if you spend one day a week and you spend intentional time with Him. And you come up with ways to do that, you will grow in Christ. It's one of the keys to unlock the door in your relationship with Christ. You might say, "I can't do that. I don't have 24 hours in a row. I can't do it." Then start taking steps towards it. Maybe it's three or four different days that you are able to pull aside for three or four or five hours. And you just kind of refresh that way a few different times a week.

You figure out what it looks like for you. This is not a law, it's not a mandate. It's not, you better or else or God's mad at you. It's, if you really want to be your best in Christ, if you really want to unlock who God wants you to be, rest. Do it for Him. Because when you stop doing that, then you can start doing the things that God wants you to do. You can start pursuing Him. You can start relaxing. You can start detoxing. You can start decompressing. You can start focusing. You can start laughing again. I mean, when's the last time you just laughed for the sake of laughing, because something was funny. I mean for some of us, we don't have time to laugh. We don't have time to enjoy life. We don't have time to eat a meal with our family.

We don't have time for anything. Because we go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go. And you're going to blink and your life's going to be over and you're going to wonder what in the world happened? God gave you everything for enjoyment. So take time to rest in Him. Rest in the Lord. And the key word for that is cessation. Cessation. Cease. Stop. Just put on the brakes. Where can you put on the brakes? And I promise

you, with whatever you choose, those will be times that people try to interfere with. Unknowingly, many times. If you set aside this amount of time to "Hey, it's just going to be for me today for a few hours. I'm just going to get away with the Lord." Promise you in that time, that's when crisis will hit. But if you can become more and more disciplined at seeking the face of the Lord and pursuing Him and resting in Him and thanking Him for all He's done, you'll change.

I mean, think about this. What has God done for you? What has God done for you? I mean, if God loved you so much that He sent his only-begotten son to die for all your sins. And He's given you life in His name. And that His Holy Spirit is deposited forever and ever. And that you were facing a life of hell, and now you have a life of eternity with Christ. And you were going to be punished, and now you got bliss forever and ever. And everything you do, Jesus goes before you and He's with you in all things. Like, what do you not have time for? Because if you don't remind yourself of that, you will get so earthly focused. And some of you would say, "I'm just too busy." You're ticked off, you're angry, you're frustrated, you're all these things because you're so into the world. Because you've never taken time to just rest in the Lord.

When I rest in the Lord, I still see all the same things in the world. Sometimes I see they're a lot worse than I thought they were, but I'm not as bothered by them because I know my Lord has it. Rest. Rest. Rest in the Lord. That's key number one. Key number two is this, worship the Lord. Worship the Lord. Notice what He starts by saying in verse 13. "Now concerning everything which I have said to you." He said a lot, hasn't He? "Now concerning everything I said to you, be on guard; and do not mention

the name of other gods, nor let them be heard from your mouth." The first commandment is to, worship the Lord your God and to serve Him only. Now He's saying, "Don't even talk about other gods." Do you know why God doesn't want us to talk about other gods?

Because there are no other gods. The only other gods there are, are made up idols in your life. There is the Father, Son and Spirit. There are no other gods. So stop talking about them as if they exist. That's His heart. That's His heart. He wants to be worshiped. He's never changed. That's why in the New Testament, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. I'm it. You either have a relationship with the Father through Me, or you do not have a relationship with the Father. You don't know God." That's what He was telling everybody. And God says, "Don't even mention it." The only time we really see God giving affirmation to mention other gods is when a prophet of God is denouncing them. And saying, "That's not a God. Confucius is not a God."

Allah is not a god. The Hinduism's and they're 3000, they're not gods. They're all made up idols through which demons hide behind them all. Then we can talk about them. As long as we understand that the Godhead is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son and the Spirit, the Son is not the Spirit and the Father. And the Spirit is not the Father and the Son, but they're one essence. And how that all works out. Here's what I would say, "Glory to God that we don't know." That's who He is. He's so incredible we can't even describe Him. That's who our God is. But worship the

Lord. Now here's what He's going to tell Israel to do. He's going to tell them about three different feasts that they're going to observe. Notice verse 14, "Three times a year, you shall observe a feast to Me.

You shall observe the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed." So the first feast that they're going to celebrate, it's called the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. As we talked about earlier, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread follows Passover. It's where they eat unleavened bread for an entire week. Why? Because they're remembering two different things. They're remembering number one, that God is the One who delivered them from everything they had had. It's a feast that reminded them, "I used to be this and now I'm that." It was also a feast of unleavened bread because they weren't able to cook it quick enough. But leaven represents sin. So it is a reminder for seven days how God delivered you from your sin.

Would it be worth spending seven days a year and being reminded of all the sin that God's delivered us from? Because sometimes what happens to us as Christians, is we know what God's done in the past, and "I used to be that and I used to be that." But we don't think about it anymore, because we've lived five years or 10 years or 20 years or 30 years. But think about now, if 30 years hence you were still living like you were 30 years ago. You would start praising God that He delivered you from your sin. So that's one of the feasts. He says, "This is one of the feasts. I want you to celebrate it." How often? Every single year for a week. And many of us would say, "I don't have

that kind of time." You don't hear anybody in Israel saying, "I don't have that kind of time." Because Israel and the covenant community knows, "That's my God. I'll make time for what God wants."

God wants to be remembered for His deliverance power and He wants to be remembered for what He has delivered them from. Second, He says in verse 16, "You shall also observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field." The Feast of the Harvest in the New Testament is often referred to as the Feast of Weeks. And this Feast of Weeks beginning with the wheat harvest when the first fruits were brought in. In the New Testament, this is also called Pentecost. So when the harvest began and first fruits were coming in, what did God expect of His people? "Bring Me your first fruits." What are your first fruits? "The choice best of what you have, bring to Me." So in an agricultural society when people had grain and fruit, their first 10th of what they brought in, their best, they gave to God.

Have you ever been to the grocery store when you're going through the produce section and you're looking at a banana and you're like, "I don't want that one. It's already turning brown." Or "Hey, I don't want that apple. It's bruised." Or, "That orange is discolored. It just doesn't feel right." And you put it back. That's how God feels when we don't bring Him our best. When we bring Him our scraps. "That's not what I was asking. I was asking for your best." So God not only wanted their 10th, God wanted when they harvested, God wanted them to bring Him the best. Why? God didn't eat the produce. God didn't eat the grain. God doesn't need your money. And the church doesn't need your money. What does God need? Your heart. "For where your treasure

is, there will your heart be also." When you bring God your best first.

And for those in Israel when they were bringing grain and fruit, it wasn't just bringing grain and fruit. They were bringing that which they could have sold for profit. And they were saying, "God, You get my best. If I have to sell my second best or third best, that's fine. But I want You to know God, You have my best and I'm trusting You to take care of the rest." That's why tithing, although not mandated in the New Testament, is still a spiritual principle for the people of God. I mean, if all throughout the Old Testament you start with 10% and Jesus only increases everything that happens in the New Testament. And God owns a 100% of everything you have, why don't you bring God the best 10th of what you have with your resources, every single time that you're paid.

Whether it's weekly or after a babysitting job or twice a month or every quarter or once a month or however you get paid, "God, You get the first and best out of everything I have. Because I want You to know that You have my life. And I want You to know I trust You with everything. And I want You to know, no matter where all my other money goes, You get my first and my best."

That's what tithing is. It's a spiritual discipline. And it causes you to depend more upon the Lord. So He was telling them, "That's a feast that I want you to celebrate too, this Feast of the Harvest." And then He gave a third feast too. He said, "The Feast of the Ingathering." This is the middle of verse 16. "At the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field." So at the end of the year, this

ingathering, which in the New Testament is called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. It was at the end of the year where He's asking to do the same. I mean, God was always wanting to know when you earned something or when you worked for something, "It's not you that did the work, it was Me that did the work through you. So honor Me with everything you have."

And that's how God wanted to be honored. So these three festivals are ones that God specifically highlighted. There were seven of them, but He's highlighting these three. And notice why. Verse 17. Pay attention. It says, "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God." So three times a year, who's to appear before the Lord God? [inaudible 00:27:52]. Let me read it again. It says, "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God." Who's to appear before the Lord God? The men. Why does he call the men to appear before him? In other words, if you've been to Israel, you realize Jerusalem is fairly centrally located. But if you lived in other places, there wasn't Uber, helicopters, cars, streets. You had to walk. So you're walking 60 miles or 30 miles or 75 miles or 15 miles, to come and worship for weeks at a time.

So it could take you two or three days to get there and two or three days to get home, plus the week that you're there. And yet you have nobody in Israel complaining like, "Oh man, there's no way I can make it. I got a lot of work to do." Why? Because God calls the men of Israel to stand before Him. Women are welcome, by the way. You can see in Luke 2:41 or 2:42, I forget where, but Joseph and Mary went up. Jesus Christ picked His own dad and He picked His own mom. And the reason He

picked them is because both of them were righteous. Because Joseph was doing the very things he was required to do in the law. So that's where you see Jesus when He gets left in Jerusalem and they came back. He's like, "Did you not know I need to be in my father's house?"

Because they were up there for that week, doing what God commanded. Now, back to the men. Why does God call the men in the Old Testament? Because men, you are the spiritual leaders of your home. And nothing changes in the New Testament. Men are still called to be leaders in the church and in the home. And so go the men, so goes the church, and so goes the church, so goes the world. So if you want to know why we live in a messed up world, all you got to do is look no further than the Christian men who don't do what God has called them to do. Period.

So why does God want them? He says, "Men, you come worship me." Now here's what we know statistically. Statistically, we know that if you're a woman raising your family and you're doing the best that you can and you're dragging your kids to church and you're doing all these things. We as a church and we as men will do our best to surround you and show you godly examples of what a man should be like. Because we know that in a family where a woman is leading the family to church, the kids are less likely to come to Christ. In a family where you have men leading to church and in a family where those men are actually authentic and they're leading during the week. And I'm not talking about perfectly. I'm talking about increasingly. You have a 90 plus percent chance of seeing your kids adopt the same faith that you have. Because kids want to know, what's daddy think.

And if daddy ain't coming and if daddy ain't living for Jesus, it's that much harder to propagate the love of Jesus in the next generation. Because God wants men to stand up. That's why at Brave, we are for both men and for women. For both boys and for girls. And we will champion you to be the greatest fulfillment of anything that Jesus Christ calls you to. But we are making a correction in our culture by saying, "Men, where the heck are you?"

Men, you lead. Men. And it doesn't mean you're the boss and you're the authority and you make all the decision. That's not what leadership is in the church. Leadership is serving. Leadership is becoming a slave so that others can be better, and that's what we're called to be. Okay? So when Jesus was calling the men three times a year for three different festivals plus travel, he was saying, "You can't Zoom in on this one. You can't call in on this. I want to see your face. I want to see your body. I want to see it present."

Just so you know, before I get too amped up here. That's why you need to be in church, men. That's why you need to be leading your families to church. That's why if you're a single guy, you need to be going to church. I mean, I've been all over the world and I'll tell you, there are certain places in the world... I've been to India where people will get on the back of a donkey or a cart or a boat or hike for three days to come and hear what I have to say for one day. You're not going to score any points because you're driving 35 to 60 miles to get to Brave church. You won't be in heaven bragging, "I drove 60 miles, I spent a whole hour in the car."

This guy's going to be like, "I spent three days swimming to get to the thing." All right. Come to church. "Well, I don't need to go to church. I just need to be the church." You can't be the church if you don't go to church. How are you going to get fed? How are you giving your worship when what are you doing? Make God the priority of your life.

And I'm not trying to beat you men up. I'm trying to encourage you. Because for me growing up, and for many of you growing up, I was never challenged to do that. I was challenged in sports. I was challenged in the business world. I was challenged in education. Nobody challenged me in the church. I'm going to tell you, there's greater return of an uninvestment for anything you do for Jesus Christ in His church than any other thing that you could set your mind to. Make Jesus primary, men. Amen. All right.

We can go on another hour on that, but I think I'll pause right there. Here's what He says too, note as he continues, verse 18, "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread." Why? Because leaven represented sin. "I don't want my sacrifice combined with sin. My sacrifice washes away sin." He says, "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning." That means the fat was the best part of the sacrifice. That means complete it. The fat was the part that was to be done. "Don't leave that stuff. Don't eat it. Give me the best of your sacrifice. Give me all your best." And He's going to highlight what we've already talked about in verse 19. He says, "You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God."

What is that? Bring God your best resources and give Him your best resources first. Just as you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things will be added unto you. You put God first place in your life, He'll take care of everything else. It's an act of trust and faith to do it. But that's what He says. And then we get to this obvious verse at the end of verse 19. He says, "You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother." And all of us say, "Amen." You know what I mean? What in the world is that doing there, right? I mean, you look at it contextually and like, "What in the heck? Okay, I'm good on that one. That's a law I can keep." Like what does it mean? As I've done some study this week, I've learned that for the Canaanites, there was a fertility ritual where they would do something like this. And they believed that if they boiled a goat in its mother's milk that their soil would be more fertile, or that women could get pregnant easier.

And here's what Jesus was saying. Here's what God was saying to the people. He's like, "Don't adopt pagan rituals to worship and honor Me." That's the principle. And you think about all the pagan rituals that we do. We say God helps those who help themselves. He's never said that, right? Or we think we have little trinkets or good luck charms. Or we dress a certain way or we do this or we throw a penny in the fountain or we... He's like, "You don't need to do any of that stuff. As a matter of fact, stop that. Don't do that." That's why He was telling them, "Don't boil a young goat in its mother's milk." If you go to Israel to this day, you will find, if you go through a buffet, they will not have milk and meat products together. They separate them. They took this literally, all right?

I think what God's saying is something even bigger. "Don't use pagan idolatry to worship My name. I want nothing to do with that." Don't take other people's little sayings and clever sayings from clever books and Instagram. "Oh, that's so good." If the world thinks it's good, I guarantee you it probably does not honor God. God gives us everything in His Word that honors Him, and the world doesn't really like His Word. Just take what His Word says and honor Him that way. I believe that's what He's talking about here. Some people think it really means that that milk that was to nourish the young goat was being used to actually boil or kill. So don't take something that God intended for good and use it for evil. Okay? I buy that principle too. And that's what He's talking about. But in this context of worshiping the Lord, that's what He's doing.

So the key word from rest is cessation. What's the key word for worship? Here's what I would say. It's celebration. Celebration. Do you celebrate the Lord? I mean, sometimes when I talk to people, they'll say stuff like this, "Tomorrow, I got to go to church tomorrow." That doesn't sound like a celebration. I've talked to pastors that'll say stuff like this, "Oh, I have to preach tomorrow." To which I always correct them. I'm like, "You don't have to do anything." I'm like, "You're getting the privilege of doing it. Don't ever waste it because you may not ever get another chance." I mean, you may never get another chance to come and worship at Brave Church. If this was your last day to worship Jesus on the face of the earth, did you prepare yourself for that level of worship?

Because the reality is, if we spent our week pausing and thinking about all that God's delivered us from and all that He's given to us. And how good He is and how our

future is secure. You would come so welled up, fired up, overflowing with joy in the Holy Spirit to worship Him. Expecting a word from Him, expecting prayers of His people, expecting God to answer because that's what our God does.

He's with us. Amen.

One reason I love being a champion of [inaudible 00:36:45] is because prayer is the culture that we're going to set here. We do it with our staff. We do it with you, because we believe this. We believe that when God is honored, not just with leadership and staff, but with the entire congregation, God speaks to us. And God answers our prayers. Just on Tuesday night, we're praying for a guy in Westminster. He needed a new heart, needed a heart transplant. I got word last night. He went into the hospital last night to get his new heart, was praying for him all last night. We hear stories like that all the time. But more importantly, the reason we do this and the reason we worship the Lord is because there's nobody here on staff or in our congregation that's smart enough to know what God wants to do.

Our plans we hold like this. And if Jesus says to me or to people in our congregation as a whole, "Not sensing that pastor." Well what? He's given the Holy Spirit to all of us. So what's He saying? How do we need to do it His way? What does it need to look like to honor Him? Why? Because I want God to be honored with everything we do. That's called worship. And if you're part of a congregation that's worshipping the Lord, you should run to get here. You should run to get here. One day you will, because there won't be any seats for you. Because what God's doing here is

overflowing into our community and into our culture and around the world. And I'm telling you, men, if you'll lead your families here and you honor the Lord, God will do more among us than we could ever think or imagine.

And you want a spiritual key to unlocking your heart? Worship Him. Honor Him. Sing to Him. Praise Him. If you're alone, perhaps dance to Him. Dance before Him. David danced before the Lord. I'm not that bold in the congregation just yet. I got a little bit to grow in my faith. But rest in the Lord. Worship the Lord. And I'll give you this final one. Trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord. Rest, worship and trust. Three easy words. What did Pastor Jeff preach on today? Rest, worship and trust. Trust in the Lord. Notice what He says. Verse 20. He says... And before I do this, let me just give you some keywords of trust, because we say trust. And when we say trust, Hebrews chapter 11, verse one says, "Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Faith is when God shows me through His word or subjectively what He's going to do. And I believe it and start acting on it without seeing it. And Hebrews 11:6, it says, "Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. Because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him." So faith is important to God. You can't please Him without it. It's a spiritual key for growth. But I want to give you three words you can look for. They interchange all throughout this passage and there are these key words. They're identification, separation, and expectation. And you just write those down. Identification, separation, and expectation. This is how trust works together in really this three-legged stool. So really we see first,

notice this. He says, "Behold, I'm going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared."

That's what He says. So what's He going to do? He's going to send a messenger before. Now, we know that from our reading in Exodus chapter three, that angel was the pre-incarnate Christ. Before Jesus Christ became flesh, Jesus is still leading His church. And here's how you know that. Verse 21. He says, "Be on your guard before him and obey his voice." God would never have anybody obey another voice other than Jesus. All right. "Be on your guard, obey his voice; do not be rebellious towards him, for he will not pardon your transgressions, since", what? "My name is in him." Who is God's name in? His Son. This is Jesus. He's saying, "Jesus is going to lead you." So there's this expectation that God is still at work leading His people. Faith today is believing. Trust today is believing that God is still at work leading His people.

He's leading you in your families. He's leading you in your job. He's leading you in your career. He's leading you in school. He's leading you with your friends. He is the one who is going before you. I love in Deuteronomy chapter 31 verse eight, one of my favorite verses in the entire Old Testament talking about who God is and what He does, says that, "The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." God's in front of you. He's with you. He'll never fail you. He'll never leave you. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed. Don't get all worked up. He's got this. So trusting in the Lord is trusting in our expectation. But it's also our identification. We need to identify ourselves with Him.

Notice verse 22. "But if you truly obey His voice and do all that I say." Not some

of what I say, but all that I say. "Then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversary. For my angel will go before you and bring you in the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely, completely destroy them." "I'll go ahead of you and destroy all your enemies. Nothing that stands in your way, will stand in your way if you're following where I'm leading you. There's no obstacle that's too big for Me. There's no chasm that's too great for Me, if you're walking in My way." Now, notice what He said, verse 22. "But if you truly obey his voice and do all that, I say." That's listen and obey. How much? "All that I say."

Now, many of you are saying, "Well, thank goodness this is the Old Testament, New Testament, we're just forgiven. We don't have to do hardly anything and we're in." But that's not what the New Testament teaches either. Jesus said in the Great Commission, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go. Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." And what? "Teaching them to obey everything or all things. And I'll be with you always to the end of the age." So what are we called to do? We're called to live in obedience to all things and teach people to obey all things. One of the reasons that when you say, "I'm trusting the Lord for..." But you're not seeing your results. One of the reasons may be, and I say may be or could be, that you're not living obedient to the Lord.

If you're praying as a single for a godly spouse, but you're living immoral and

somebody comes along, I promise you that's not God's answer. If you're cheating at work and praying for a promotion, I promise you, even if you're given something, it's not God's answer. God does not bless disobedience, Old or New Testament. One of the reasons sometimes you don't see the fulfillment of the things that you're praying for, is God showing you sin in your life. And you refuse to see it. See, I believe that God does everything that He's always been able to do. I believe God delivers from sin and the demonic activity. I believe He delivers from hell. I believe He still heals people. I believe He does everything that the Bible says. I believe that many of the time why Christians that want to see those things, that are praying for those things, don't see those things, is because you're being disobedient in some area in your life that the Lord is pointing out to you.

So here's the question is, it may not be, "Well, I have great faith. I'm just not being obedient." Well, then you don't have great faith. Faith is obedience. It's the obedience of faith according to Romans 1:5, "If you're not walking in obedience, you're not walking in faith." So here's the question. It's rhetorical. What may God have been showing you in your life that's off, that you need to confess and repent of? Now, here's the truth. None of us keep God's law perfectly, right? I mean, the Bible makes it crystal clear. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He's holy. I'm not. So I can't live perfectly. So what do I do? Well, I spend time on my rest day and I spend time on my worship time giving God my best so He can show me the areas that are off so I can do what?

I can confess my sin and forsake it. Repentance is not, "Yeah, you caught me.

I'm repenting. I'll never do that again, till this afternoon." Repenting is, "I'm confessing that. And Lord, with Your help, I'll get away from that." And that's faith. And as you grow in Christ, one of the spiritual keys in your trust, is learning to confess and forsake sin. That's both an Old and a New Testament principle that God teaches us. And if you're not seeing some of the things that you believe God has shown you, perhaps, just perhaps. Not all the time. Perhaps one of the reason is that there's sin in your life that you're refusing to confess and forsake. And it's worth an internal look through the Holy Spirit. And if there is something, I promise you, you won't need to naval gaze for very long. The Holy Spirit will show you quickly. And it's usually that one thing that you don't want to change. But God wants you to change for His glory.

So we're going to expect things. There's an expectation. Then there's this identification so that when we say that we're walking with the Lord, guess what? We're actually walking with the Lord. Not perfectly, but what? Increasingly. But notice what He says He'll do. Look at this. Look at this expectation. Verse 24 and 25. He says, "You shall not worship their gods." Is He saying the same thing over and over again? Do you think God has a problem with people worshiping other gods? I mean, I think He's bothered by it all the time. "You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do anything according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their sacred pillars in pieces. But you shall serve the Lord your God." What's he saying? "Don't adopt any pagan practices." Here's your TION word for this.

It's called separation. It's called separation. You must be separate among the people that aren't living the way God wants them to live. Now, it doesn't mean you

can't hang out with a non-Christian. It just means you have one purpose in hanging out with a non-Christian. You know what that purpose is? To live and model who Jesus is and to share who Jesus is. And to call them to repentance. That's why you hang out with non-believers. Otherwise, you ain't hanging out with them. Why would you hang out with them? Because bad company corrupts good morals. And what the Bible says, if you hang out with pagan people, they'll make you more pagan than you'll ever make them more Christian. I was challenged when I was in college and I was living in a fraternity at one time, by a Campus Crusade for Christ director, and he said, "Hey."

I said, "Well, I think God wants me to live here because I'm sharing my faith." He said, "Really?" He's like, "What percent of your friends in the fraternity are Christian?" I said, "I don't know, like 5%. But you got to understand, I'm sharing my faith." He said, "Good." He goes, "Who'd you share your faith with this week?" "Well, I mean it was a busy week." He goes, "Well, who have you led to the Lord?" I'm like, "Well, I'm working on them." He goes, "Then how come you hang out with all your friends and do everything they do? You're not being a witness. You're actually helping them get to hell faster. Why don't you pray about where God may want you to live and what He may want you to do?" And I took him up on the bet and I began to pray. I'm like, "Lord, if you want me to move out, I don't want to live in some rundown beer-stained carpet apartment. I want to live in someplace kind of nice."

And if we really call Him, you got to make it crystal clear. Wouldn't you know that within a week, I was in his friend's apartment and his friend says to him as we walked in the door. He said, "Andy, you got to pray for me. We just got called out to Colorado

Springs. We're leaving our apartment. We don't have anybody that can sublet and we need to get somebody else in here in two weeks." And I was looking around at this apartment, it was 17 high foot ceilings. It used to be an old school house. It had tin prints, it had brick walls. It was like the coolest apartment I'd ever seen, and as he was saying that, I'm like, "I'll take it." My friend and I moved in there and here's what happened.

As I separated myself from all my "friends" and begin to grow in the Lord, let me tell you what happened in the next six months. I led more people in my fraternity to the Lord in six months than I had in three years prior living there. Because I didn't hang with them.

I lived with Jesus among them and everything changed. What's my point? If you hang out with your non-Christian friends and they don't see any difference in you than they see in themselves, you're not helping them. You're helping them go to hell faster. "But these are my golfing buddies. But this is who I play cards with. But this is who I go to football games with." Leave them. Tell them why you're leaving them. If you don't have the majority of your friends who are solid Christian people, who are building you up in your faith, who are teaching you what it means to be a godly man or a godly woman. Or teaching you what it means to be a godly single or a godly married. Or teaching you how to steward your resources in a godly way and that's not primary for you?

You're not helping the Kingdom expand and you're not helping the people that you

hang out with. That's what Jesus was saying. He says, "You know what? There's identification, there's expectation, but there's also this separation." Separate. Separate. Doesn't mean you can't be with them when you're sharing the gospel. Doesn't mean you can't go play golf if you're going to share the gospel. So much so, these people be like, "You changed." "Yeah, I'm living for Jesus now. Sorry, I wasn't doing it earlier." That's what happened to me. That's what happened to every single person who wants to walk with the Lord. One of the reasons you may not be seeing the Lord come through for you when you're trusting Him for great things, is you're not separate unto Him. You haven't been separated from the things of the world. You're so immersed and steeped in the things of the world that the enemy's got you kind of under his thumb.

Even though he's lost you forever, your soul still belongs to God, but you're not seeing God work through you. Because you're living pagan, but you're calling yourself Christian. Separate. And then finally really expect God to do great things. Notice what He says. He says, "He will bless your bread and your water. He'll remove your sickness from your midst. There will be no one miscarrying or barren in your land, I will fulfill the number of your days." Now, let's just pause there for a second. Because I know people trip over this verse and be like, "Wait, wait, wait." First of all, this is to Israel. God tells Israel, "There will be no miscarriages in Israel if you do the things I'm telling you to do." Now, I know I'm talking to a congregation where I know several women in this congregation that have miscarried well more than once, and you read a verse like that and you say, "Well, that doesn't mean God's not true."

Here's what God's trying to say. "I'm the one who opens and closes the womb, and if you walk faithfully with Me and identify with Me and separate yourself unto the world and you expect Me to do things, I can do things even when the world says that you can't." That's what God's promise is. You know God is the one who makes pregnant. I mean I tried this earlier this year. I felt burdened during the week, earlier this fall or last fall to have people stand if they've been trying to get pregnant and couldn't. And I had the audacity to, "Okay, Lord, if that's what You're doing, I'll do it." And I had people stand up and we prayed over those people and they sat back down. I even went home that afternoon. "My God, I hope that was of You." I've had about 19 different people come tell me from the time that they stood until now, they got pregnant. Several of whom were told they couldn't. And somebody caught me after first service, said, Jeff, I'm number 20. We forgot to tell you."

That's what He's saying. "If you walk in my ways, even when the world says you can't, I can." That's the promise. But you got to walk in His ways. You got to obey everything He commands. You got to be identified with Him and have separation unto Him and have expectation He can do that. And He'll fulfill the number of your days. All your days were given to you before one of them came to be. When you die and you arrive before the Lord, He's not going to be like, "What are you doing here? I didn't know what it was going to be today." It's already set. But there's a fulfillment of your days if you live for the Lord. There's a fulfillment of God using all of those days for His glory if you do that. And that's what He says.

Then He says this, as He's talking about going to the land, He said, "I'll send My

terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. I will send hornets ahead of you so that you will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you." Now here He mentions three of those city states. Before He mentioned seven. He's using [inaudible 00:52:26] to say, "I'm going all in to help you if you'll do all in with Me. You go all in with Me, I'll go all in for you." I mean, the rich young rulers' problem was not that he didn't keep the commandments, he really didn't, but he thought he did. He was a good religious guy. But his problem was he was greedy, he was coveting. Jesus said, "One thing you lack, go sell everything you have. Come follow me."

And the man walked away sad. Jesus is not looking for part-time allegiance. He's not looking for 90% in. What's he looking for? "I want all of it. I want a 100%. And where you're not living a hundred percent, I want you to repent." That's what He's saying. But He says, "If you do, I'll go all in for you." Now, what does he mention? He mentions terror and fear, confusion and helplessness, defeat in battle and attack by wild animals and insects. I don't think He was being just specific like, "Only do these four things." I think Jesus was saying, "I will open up my entire arsenal to destroy any enemy that stands in the way of Me getting my work done through you." That's what He was saying. When I read hornets, everybody tries to figure out, "Who are the hornets."

I think a hornets, a hornet. He was saying, "Even the animal kingdom obeys Me. I'll use anything at My disposal to help you." Here's what He's saying to you. If I've shown you something I'm going to do in your life and you'll obey Me, you'll identify with

Me, you'll separate yourself unto Me and you'll expect Me to do things. There is nothing at My disposal that I will not go to work for you. And I will make sure that anyone who says no if I said yes, I promise you it's a yes." Like what are you trusting Him for where you're hearing the world say, "No, it's not going to happen. I can't..." What are you trusting Him for where God's shown you in His Word, He can do it, that you haven't seen? Could it be because there's something you're not obeying? Could it be you're not separating yourself under Him?

Could it be you're not expecting Him to do it? That's what He's saying. He says, "If you do, I will drive out all your enemies." Which is exactly what He did. Now we read this and like, "Oh, that's that mean Old Testament God killing everybody again." No. Do you know why it took him 430 plus years to deliver Israel? Because he was bearing with great patience for that same amount of time all those pagan Canaanites that finally got to a place where their evil had gotten so much that there was absolutely no hope for them. That's why when He says, "Drive them all out. Women, children, everybody." And people say, "Oh, the innocent women and children." Nobody's innocent. We're all born dead in our sin. And if we don't turn our hearts to Christ, we're not innocent. And God knew that the evil of those city states had risen so much.

He's like, "Drive them all out. Just kill them all. They're no good to Me anymore. They'll never turn back to Me." God knows when that is. We don't know when that is. We're just called to be obedient. But here's what I want you to see. God will go to any length for you, when you're resting in Him, when you're worshiping Him, and when

you're trusting in Him. By identifying with Him, being separate unto Him from the world and by expecting Him to do great things. Now, notice what He says. This is really interesting about prosperity. He says, "I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beast of the field become too numerous for you." What does God say? "I'm going to do all this, but I'm not going to do it right away. Because if I did it right away and I drove them all out and you were left with all those animals, you don't even know how to handle that level of prosperity.

All the animals would die. You couldn't till the field. You haven't learned anything yet. So I'm going to do this over time, little by little." Listen to me. The Bible says, "He who is faithful with little, will be faithful with much." If you're generous with a little now, God will give you much. God is a prospering God, but God does it in incremental ways and entrusts you with things once you can handle it. But He doesn't do it overnight. I remember when I was making \$12,000 a year as a youth pastor in Joliet, Illinois, praying to the Lord like, "Lord, how in the world can I get married living off \$12,000 a year? I can't do it." And I remember hearing the Lord say to me in my spirit, "Are you married?" And I was like, "No." And that was the end of the conversation.

It was like His way of saying, "If you walk with Me when it comes time, you'll have the resources you need." God always unfolds prosperity over time. Because God knows if He gave us everything that He could possibly give us, we would choke on it. Ask any lottery winner how happy they are after five years after winning the lottery, majority of whom are bankrupt. They actually did a real cool study, I mean, amazing study. They took paraplegics that were paralyzed in the same year that people won

the lottery and they did a study over time. And they found out over time that the paraplegics were happier than those who won the lottery. And I know what you say. "Well, not me. Not if I won the lottery. I promise you I'd be happy." Because when you get prosperity that you don't have the maturity to handle, it's not prosperity.

It's a burden. So even if God's shown you things He's going to bring you into, there's things He's stirring in your heart. If you're not married yet, there's things He's building in your heart. If you haven't had that child yet, there's things He's building in your heart. If you don't have that dream job yet, there's things He's building in your heart. If you don't have the resource, there's things... He's building your character all the time so that when you have it, you won't hold it. That's what He does. So He tells them, "I'm going to bring you in over time." And then He says this, "I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land." Then He promises He'll do what He says He's going to do. "I'll fix your boundary from the Red Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the river Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you."

Who's going to do the work? Israel is. Who's going to be the one behind the scenes making it all happen? God is. God still has that dual role in our lives. God's the one who's spreading the gospel all over the world. God's the one who's doing all the work. God's the one who's saving everybody, healing everybody. Who does He choose to use to do that as His instrument? Us. Same thing in the Old Testament. And then He goes back to His mainstay of all of this, which He keeps coming back to over and over

again. "You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. You shall not live in their land because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

What's He say? "Quit serving their gods." Not even like a little bit. You say, "Well, thank goodness we live in America because we don't have idols here like they did back then. We don't have all those things." Really? Some of you, your job is your idol. If it got taken away, you would curse God. Some of you, your family, which is a good thing, is an idol. If it got taken away from you, you would curse God. Some of you, it's sports. Some of you it's entertainment. I mean, some of you, it's your bank account, some of you's... There's all sorts of idols. And here's what God says, "Quit worshipping them. If it's a good gift, hold it with an open hand. If I take it away and you're still honoring me, that's how you know I'm first place." If I lost my wife and my kids, I promise you I would cry my eyes out.

I promise you I'd be despaired. I promise you I'd hurt. I also promise you this, I would never turn my back on the Lord Jesus Christ, because how could I? He's given me everything that I have. My whole life is in Him. And all I would tell people at my wife's funeral is that she left me for another man that I wanted her to love more than me anyway. Amen?

It doesn't mean that I'd enjoy it. It just means she's not an idol in my life. She's a gift and she's a blessing. Your kids are a gift and a blessing. Don't make gifts and blessings idol. Your paycheck is a gift and a blessing. Don't make that an idol. Sports

can be a gift and a blessing. Don't make that an idol. And I know on Super Bowl Sunday, I mean, it's the Chiefs and the Eagles. So it's hard to make that an idol anyway. But you know, I'm just saying, don't make it an idol. If God took all that stuff away, would you still worship Him? And we find little ways that the enemy lies to us and says, "No, this little thing's more important than God. You don't have time to rest. You don't have time to worship. You don't have time to trust."

Friends, those are the three spiritual keys. Rest, worship and trust. Three simple keys that will unlock your future if you do what God's asking. And He was promising them this, "Don't go back on any other gods, it'll be a snare." It'll be a snare. Other gods, other idols will keep you from being the fullness of what Jesus Christ wants you to be. God wants you to be the fullness of Him. God wants you to love Him. God wants you to know that He loved you so much, He sent his only-begotten son, Jesus. Because when God gave us standards, He knew when He created you and that you were going to be created in a sinful environment, you couldn't keep it. And there was nothing you could do to get right with God. But God did everything to make you right with Himself. He sent His only-begotten son, Jesus Christ, who died on a cross.

And before He died, He said the words, "It is finished." Meaning paid in full. It is done. Your sin is washed away. And when Jesus died, He took all the wrath of His dad to the grave. Good news. Three days later, He rose from the dead, started offering life to anybody who wanted it, and said, "If you'll turn from your sin and turn to Me, I will come into your life, deposit my Holy Spirit who will be with you forever." And every time we commemorate this through this cup, this juice that represents the blood of Christ,

this wafer that represents the body of Christ, we are saying, "We are commemorating your death until You come. We are celebrating the victory that we have in You." And so today, as you're preparing your hearts to hear this song sung over you, you can prepare it by holding the elements in your hand and remaining seated.

You can stand and sing. However you prepare your heart, just remember this. God loved you so much, he gave you the greatest gift ever, His son, Jesus Christ, who died for you. After we sing this song, our campus pastors will come up on both campuses and administer the elements and we'll take together. If you're born again, if you've trusted Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sin, you're welcome to take this meal with us together.

Father in heaven, thank you for today. Thank you for these three keys. Lord, help us grow in our ability to rest in You. Help us grow in our ability to worship You. Help us grow in our ability, Lord, to trust in You. God, we give You praise. Thank you for the gift of Jesus who died for us, who rose, our God, our King. For forgiving all of our sin, for the deposit of Your spirit. Lord, we thank You for the gospel and so in Jesus name, we pray. Amen.