



Message **Transcript**

Sacrificing For Growth

Jeff Schwarzentraub

I've had many teachers over my life. One of my favorite teachers of all time was Dr. Howard Hendricks, who taught at Dallas Seminary for the majority of his career. He was one of the most incredible teachers I'd ever been around. He was one that could engage a classroom, whether it was five people or whether it was 150 people. And I remember one of my first classes at Dallas Seminary, I sat in his class to learn how to study God's word. And everybody that was in that class was riveted. There wasn't any talking. There weren't any paper shuffling. Everybody was taking notes. When he told a joke, everybody laughed. When he said something serious, everybody was connecting with him. He had that special gift as a teacher that very few people have. And I remember asking him one time, how are you so good at what you do?

Because he was the kind of teacher and we've all had different kinds of teachers. Some of the teachers, they know their stuff, their scholars, they teach it. But when you leave, you feel small, like, I'll never learn any of this stuff. Howard Hendricks had a way of teaching in such a way that when I would leave his class, I remember thinking to myself, I can do this. I can learn this book. I think I can actually teach this book. And I remember asking him, how are you so skilled at what you do? And he told me about how he dedicated time every single day, not only to the study of God's word, but how to teach it. And I said, well, how long? He said, and this was when he was in his 80s. I studied the word every morning for at least an hour.

And I thought, that's incredible because I was in my 20s at the time. And I remember thinking, well, I thought I went to seminary to study the Bible and I study it for four years then I'd know it and just teach it. And here's this man in his 80s, he's still

studying the Bible. And he said, "If I don't get it in the morning, I find time in the afternoon. I make that a priority in my life." And isn't it true in all the areas of life that we want to grow, we continue our education. I mean, doctors and teachers, they do continuing education so that they can continue to be certified and continue to grow in their trade, musicians and athletes, they train, they practice over and over again, financial advisors study the stock market so they can be aware of trends and what's going on because they realize the more that they understand, the better that they're going to be.

And even when you see somebody that's extremely gifted at what they do, if you really peel back the curtain, you'll realize they also really, really, really worked at it. Even if it's an Olympic athlete or professional athlete, there's a lot of talented people. But when you get to that level, it's the ones that go over, above, and beyond. And do you know the same thing as true spiritually, that if you're going to grow in Christ, there's some things and ways that you need to sacrifice in order to get to where you're going to go. I remember asking professor Hendricks one time, I'm like prof. I said, how is it that you find time every single day? And he said, "Because I don't do what you do." And I said, well, what do you mean? He said, "Well, what did you do this weekend?" And I told him about, I was a youth pastor at the time and hanging out with students and he is like, "Yeah, I didn't do that."

And I said, well, we went to see a movie. He goes, "I didn't do that." I'm like, well, what did you do? He goes, "I studied the word and I prayed." Said, ah, makes

sense. Oftentimes we think that growth in the Christian life is automatic. That once we accept Christ and have the Holy Spirit in us, it's his job if he wants to grow us. But we have also 100% responsibility too, to partner with who the Holy Spirit is and what the Holy Spirit is doing in our life. And there's some sacrifices or changes that we may need to make in order to grow in Christ. There may be some things that we need to lay aside that are important and good in order to have the best with Jesus. As we've been studying the book of Hebrews, we've learned about how Jesus Christ is the greatest, the greatest prophet, the greatest priest, the greatest king greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than anyone who's ever lived.

He's the superior sacrifice. He's the king of Kings. He's the Lord of Lords. And because of this, we should all continue to persevere and grow in our faith. And he's been talking to this Jewish community of professing believers, some of whom genuinely had a relationship with Christ, some who it was just lip service, telling them to go in all the way. And if you're all in, don't go back to your religious practices, just keep on persevering. And here at the end of this book in chapter 13, he exhorts us. He gives us some challenges to stay the course and keep on going. And as I was putting this together this week, I thought I can tell you what they are, because you'll see them here. They'll fall right off in your lap as we read through the text, but I want to ask five diagnostic questions, five personal questions that you can take with you.

And you can ask, is this where I'm at? And is this what God's doing in my life? Because the reality is every one of us wants to grow. I mean, as a pastor, I'll talk to people and they'll say, hey, help me understand how my marriage can be better as a

Christian man or a Christian woman, or hey, how can my singleness flourish as a Christian man or a Christian woman? Or how can I be a better parent as a Christian man or a Christian woman? How can I be better in my job? How can I be better with my finances? What's it look like for me to do the things God wants me to do? And here in this text, he's going to unpack some things for us that if you truly want to grow in your relationship with Christ, here's some ways that you can do it.

So I invite you this morning to open up your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 13, we're going to be taking a look at verse 10 through 24. And then like I said, I'll ask five diagnostic questions. I'm going to make them personal for you that you can ask of yourself. And I promise you, if you write these down, they may not be completely applicable right now. But over the time of your journey with Christ, you'll find that all of them are helpful. Let's hear the word of the Lord from Hebrews chapter 13 versus 10 to 24. And then we'll unpack them together. He says, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat for the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the holy place. By the high priest, as an offering for sin are burned outside the camp.

Therefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people through his own blood suffered outside the gate. So let us go out to him, outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city, which is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise, that is the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing for with such sacrifice as God is pleased. Obey your leaders and submit to them for they

keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, let them do this with joy and not grief for this would be unprofitable for you. Pray for us for, we are sure that we have a good conscience desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. And I urge you all the more to do this so that I may be restored to you all the sooner.

Now, the God of peace who brought up from the dead, the great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus, our Lord equip you in every good thing to do his will working in us, that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. But I urge you brethren, bear with this word of exhortation for I have written to you briefly take note that our brother Timothy has been released with whom if he comes soon, I will see you. Greet all of your leaders in all the saints. Those from Italy greet you, grace be with you all." And here's he concludes his letter to this group of people. This community of professing, Jewish believers, some of who have are converted. Some of whom haven't gone all the way in, telling them to stay the course.

He gives them some exhortation and what they need to sacrifice in order to grow with the Lord. So I want to ask those five questions of you right now, and I want you to write them down. And my goal is not necessarily, you remember all five today, perhaps there's one specific question that the Holy Spirit wants to ask you and see how you would respond. And the first question is this, am I living like the world lives or as one distinctly set apart under Christ? Listen, this is your question, you're asking yourself, am I living like the world lives, or as one distinctly set apart under Christ? Now verse 10 through 14, admittedly are difficult to translate in different Bible translators take it

different ways. It starts off by saying, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat."

The question is, who's the we? Is the we Christians or is the we as a community that I'm talking to you Jews know. Here's what he says, "For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priests and offering for sin are burned outside the camp." Is he saying, we as Christians have an altar that those who serve the tables, those who work in the tabernacle don't have a right. In other words, if we believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and Jesus is our Lord, that's the only way into heaven not your religious practices, or is he saying, we understand as Jews that we have a tabernacle. And we understand that at the tabernacle, when the sin offering happened, the priests were not allowed to eat the sin offering. They could eat of the animals for the other offering, but on the day of atonement, that animal was burned outside the camp.

Why? Because the sin offering had to be taken away from the people. Sin had to be taken out from the people. We understand how it had to be that way. That's why he says in the same way, Jesus was crucified outside the city. Jesus had to be taken away because he was going to bear the sin of the entire world. Sin needs to be removed from the community of God. So no matter how you translate this, no matter how you understand God's word, I believe verse 13 gives us the insight that we need. It says this, "So let us go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach." It means this, am I willing to identify with Jesus Christ? Am I willing to separate from the world

that I live in such a way that the world would see that my pure identity and whom I'm aligning with is Jesus even if, and especially when it costs me something, that's what it means. Because it's easy to become a Christian. And oftentimes in North America, we stop preaching the gospel.

We tell people how to get in, that if you believe Jesus died and rose and repent and believe you're in that's the end, when that's really just the beginning. That once you come to Christ, you're a babe in Christ, you're a new creation in Christ. And from that moment on you begin to live much like when a family wife gives birth to a child, they don't just leave the child at the hospital and cheer that they gave birth. They bring the child home, they grow the child up, they're excited about what the child's going to become. In the same way when you come to Christ, God's excited about who you're going to become. And oftentimes in America, in North America, in the west, we tend to teach this.

You're a Christian, don't worry about how you live, don't worry about what you do, grace covers all that. So you know you're going to heaven, so just live like you want to live. You will not find that teaching anywhere in the New Testament. It's not that you're in, it's that you have a relationship with Jesus and you want to grow to the full. So what's it look like to separate yourself unto the world and to identify yourself with Christ? See if you're really seeking the Lord and asking him, like David asked him, Psalm 1:39 verses 23 and 24, "Search me oh Lord and know my anxious heart, see if there's any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." What was he praying? He was praying this way, and this is how we need to pray. Lord, is there any

way in which I am living aligned with the world?

Is there any way in which I'm not bringing pleasure to you? Is there anything in my life that needs to change? Are there any attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs that I need to reorient and realign so that when people see me, they will know that I'm truly identified with you. What's that look like? I mean, that's a question that if you're willing to ask and you'll boldly pray, the Lord will show you. Now I'm here to tell you, I've been a Christian for 30 some years. I mean, I'll tell you, there's certain times in our lives where the Lord may not have an answer to that question. I can tell you there's certain times in my life where I feel like, I don't know what else I can possibly give you. And it's okay to be in a season like that. When I was a young believer.

I remember when I went into the ministry and I started tithing and I was doing everything I remember honestly saying to people, I don't know what else I could give the Lord. I think I've given him everything. But as I journeyed, I realized, oh, you want that too? And you want that? And you want that. I mean, God has a way of growing us in such a way that even when we're in a place where God is pleased with where we're at, he's never going to leave us where we are, because you never graduate from the school of discipleship. If you're really open to what the spirit of God may do in your life, we don't arrive. And what often happens in the west is we think that there's some pinnacle of what it means to be a godly man or woman. And once we get kind of close to there, then we kind of closed, you cannot close. You are either green and growing or you're ripe and rotting.

And so for us, the question is, are you living in such a way that the world would

see you in all the facets of your life and say, I know they're a believer there's no doubt about it. Now, if you're a Christian, it means the Holy Spirit's in you. So we're all going to have some evidences of that. What we want is more growing evidences of that. It means not just here in church. I think church is the place that you can be the most aligned with who Jesus is, or at least pretend that way. I'm asking what it's like at work, and school and at the mall and on the golf course and at different sporting events and where you are. Do you live in such a way where people would see you and say, that's distinctly Christian, that's different than the way I live. Singles do you live in such a distinct way that when people see you, they say, that's just weird, married people and families. Do you live in such a way that some of your neighbors that don't follow the Lord would say, you prioritize weird, right?

Because what I find that God wants to do is grow us in such a way, taking baby step after baby step after baby step to say, are you going to identify more with me? Or are you going to identify more with the world? Are you going to grow with me? Or are you going to listen to where mainstream says you should be? And even in the church, when God starts pulling us towards greater holiness, there's oftentimes even people in the church, well-meaning people that want us to stay where we're at. And God says, no, I want you to press onto holiness. Now God declares at the moment of salvation that we're already holy, but then we spend the rest of our life growing into the holiness that he wants us to get into.

And none of us, pastor included, none of us have ever achieved the fullness of

the holiness that God requires in all areas of our life. He's always working on our hearts. He's always wanting to grow. So I'll ask you the question again. Am I living like the world lives or is one distinctly set apart under Christ? When Paul writes the Colossians church in Colossians chapter three, he says in verse 17, and then again in verse 23, almost the same thing. He says, "Whatever you do, that means everything in word or indeed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks through him to God, the father." That means whether you speak or no matter what you do, no matter where you're at, do it all for the reputation of Jesus.

And then he says in verse 23, "Whatever you do, do your work heartedly as for the Lord, rather than for men." In other words, here's what he's saying. For those of you who have trusted in Jesus Christ, he's taking you on an eternal journey. He's growing you into holiness because the world that is to come is going to look like that. And when we pray, let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We're saying, God, start with me. Let me live your kingdom values and your kingdom principles in such a way on the earth that if I were living in heaven right now, I wouldn't need to change anything because I'm honoring you. It's a tough question to ask and answer, isn't it? Because for many of us, no matter where we are in our journey, there's a pull away from the world and there's a deeper identification with Christ.

It's going outside the gate. It's burying the reproach of Christ. It's, are you going to identify with us, our friends, our money, our stuff. Are you going to go your own path? That's what he's saying. Who are you willing to identify with? Are you living like

the world lives? Are you identifying with the world? When people see you outside these walls, would they say, yeah, I know you're a Christian, but we're pretty much the same. Or would they say there's something different about you? Why are you making that choice? Why are you making this hard on us? Why are you going that way? God is always growing us in identity with him. And honestly, that's what worship looks like. Worship is our entire life giving glory to God in every area. We are to be living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

It means no matter where we are, we represent the king, we represent his reputation, we've been ambassadors that have been sent from his throne to be godly men and women, godly boys and girls all for his glory. So there can't be an area of life that God's not going to touch. Question is, is there any area of your life that you don't let God touch? God, you can have everything, but you can't have my money. My dating life, my marriage, my kids, my job, God has it all. And he's growing you in it in such a way that you would live out the values that you say that you believe in every facet of your life. And for all of us, that's a question that we need to routinely ask. We need to ask because God is constantly growing us in our sanctification. Am I living like the world lives? Or am I distinctly set apart under Christ? That's question one.

Let me give you a second diagnostic question. Question number two. Do I desire to give the Lord more praise and do I desire to become more generous? Do I desire to give the Lord more praise and do I desire to become more generous? In verse 14 he says, "For we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city, which is to come." In other words, the Jews were seeking Jerusalem. Jerusalem's the place, it's

the religious place that they're going to serve and love the Lord. We're not seeking that. We're seeking the new Jerusalem. The one that's going to descend from heaven, like a bride, the one that's going to be there forever and ever, amen. That's what we're seeking. And now he says this, because of that, and because of who Christ is, do you desire to give him more praise?

And do you desire to be more generous with all the things that God has entrusted you to. Notice verse 15, "Through him, then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name." Do you know that God wants us to praise him? If worship is our life in every area of our life, then part of what we do is we praise him with our lips. We give thanks to him for all that he's done. And oftentimes in church, when it comes to praise, we start thinking only music. And then we start to say, do I like that genre of music? And guys, here's what we sometimes do, that's for the women to do. That's kind of a motive, just give me the word. Now God wants us to praise him because you know what? He's worthy of our praise.

Now, why would he be worthy of our praise? Here's just a couple reasons, because he created everything in the whole universe, out of nothing in six literal days, he puts you together in your mother's womb. You're fearfully and wonderfully made. He sustains the whole world and sustains you. He has purpose for your life. God, the father loved you so much he sent his son to be the savior of the world. The savior came and fulfilled the law that you couldn't fulfill. He died on the cross and took all of his father's wrath that was going to be intended for you, took it all himself and took it all to the grave. Three days later, he rose from the dead and offered everyone life who

would repent of their sin and didn't want their sin and wanted life.

And when you trusted in Christ, he gave you the very life of his spirit, who will be with you always forever in the day, forever and ever amen. Who desires to grow you in holiness, and you have access to the throne room of God every single day. What do you have going on in your life, that's any better than that?

He's so worthy of our praise. And yet, oftentimes even when we come into church, it's like, I don't know if I like that song. I'm kind of tired. I haven't had my coffee yet. Jesus Christ got out of the grave for you. He died for you. He's alive living in you through his spirit. He's worthy. Can we just give him a praise clap this morning because he is so worthy.

If you read through the Psalms, all sorts of Psalms, tell us to praise the Lord. Psalm 1:50 tells us to praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise him in the sanctuary, praise him with timbral, praise him with the lyre, praise him with instruments. It ends by saying this, let everything that has breath do what? Praise the Lord. Now it's not just in church, but do you really look to praise the Lord when good things happen in your life? When a friend of yours gives birth to a child and they're super excited about the child, do you say praise the Lord, God did a great work there. Isn't that incredible? Or are you like, hey, good vibes, right?

And I'm not talking about being funny. I'm not talking about being inauthentic. Different ones of us are different ways. I'm not telling you to run around and be like, oh, praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Be authentically genuinely you, but let's give

thanks and praise to the one who's actually doing the work. Amen. Let's praise the Lord. He's worthy of our praise. Now I had to grow on this over my journey. That was not the first thing the Lord began to do in my heart. As a matter of fact, even when I became a youth pastor and I was getting trained to become a youth pastor and I went through eight weeks of training, one of the things that they were doing was teaching us how to lead worship, teaching us how to lead praise songs. Well, they'd already taught us how to delegate. So I knew I was never going to have to worry about that.

And I didn't like the praise songs. Some of the songs we sang today, I didn't like those songs. I didn't like doing song books. I didn't like singing to guitar. So they would start every session with a couple songs they would sing. I didn't like that part. I'd hang out and get a donut or a glass of juice or something and kind of walk in late because I didn't enjoy that. And I knew when I got to the church, the Lord was going to take me to, somebody there could do that. And I wouldn't have to ever worry about that part again. When God sent me to the church of 100 with four youth and we began to put together a Saturday night youth service and began to talk about how we were going to do praise and worship. Guess how many people knew how to lead worship? Zero.

And as I was praying to the Lord and asking Lord, find somebody, you got to bring a kid in that knows, bring a college student. The Lord said, I want you to lead it. Do you know what I did? I went and bought a guitar and I learned five chords and I was embarrassed. And I remember some of the songs we sang, I remember the first night we ever had a service. I'm leading worship on a guitar with about 30 kids. And as I'm there in this small church on a Saturday night thinking, I made some serious vocational

error and I'm playing this song, some of you remember from the 90s, humble thyself in the sight of the Lord, you remember that? And I'm playing that song, that's an E minor and a D and there's only two chords. And I'm singing, humble by myself in the side of the Lord.

Hold on.

Maybe they'll come a day I'll lead again. As I was doing that, that's the song I was singing and teaching, but here's what was going off in my head. You are a sissy in the side of the Lord. I mean, that's how I was singing, and I was embarrassed to be leading worship, but God began to change my heart. I went to a promise keepers in Chicago outside, and I had this burden during worship during one of the services that I was at to raise my hands. And I'd never done that before. And nobody that I was going to the conference with had ever done that, before they were traditions, you didn't do that, that was kind of showy or this kind of thing. But I felt it so strong that I told my dad, I got to use the bathroom. And I went out. We were at Soldier Field in Chicago, went all the way around to the other side, went down on the ground, and I just started worshipping the Lord with my hands in the air.

And I felt the presence of God in a special way, that changed me. Because there's something about giving God praise and telling him how awesome he is. And there's nothing wrong with that. Everything's right with that. We need to give him more and more and more verbal affirmation and verbal praise, and thanks for all he is done. The reason you're here today is because God sustained you. While you were sleeping

last night, God was the one that was holding you all together. God's the one that brought you here. It's our Lord that's worthy of all of our praise and the fruit of our lips. Give it to him. Tell him there's a weapon when you praise. Well, I don't feel like praising right now. That's why you praise, because I promise you, you cannot put a smile on your face and start praising even when times are down and not experience the presence of God. Praise is a weapon that God's given us. Amen.

Amen.

So the question becomes, do I desire to give the Lord more praise? I mean, he rose from the dead, and I'm telling you this. I don't have the talent that our worship team has. Fortunately, we had a great worship team, but I know I could lead worship here. And it may even be better because you know that it ain't because of me, because it would require all of us to sing. Do you know what I'm saying? Praise is not about the person leading us. Praise is about who's receiving the praise. It's the Lord Jesus Christ because he's worthy. Friends I encourage you. I don't know how you drive in the car. I don't know what you listen to. I don't how you walk around your house, but at some point in your day, praise the Lord.

Tell him thanks. Tell him that he's worthy of all your praise. Give thanks to his name. Give thanks for his reputation. Be thanks that he's sustaining you and keeping you alive. Be thankful for every good thing you have. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord. And then he says this, "And do not neglect doing good and sharing for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Doing good to others. God didn't save you by your good works, but he saved you for good works. And one of the ways that we do good to

others is by sharing, sacrificing to share. Oftentimes there'll be situations that happen in our church and all of us go through this. Sometimes things are going along really smooth or things are on the increase. And other times things are rocky and they're going down. And sometimes people come to me and say, hey, I'm aware of a situation in our church.

They have a need to get their rent paid or they have a need for a doctor bill to get paid. And what's the church going to do? You're part of the church too, why not just pay it? That's called generosity. Just pay it, just do it, and not do it in such a way where then you tell people at your small group, "Yeah, this person in our group, church they need to get paid. And I took care of it because I'm so spiritual." Your reward is in full if you do that. Just do it so that the one who sees what you do in secret will reward you. And oh, by the way, you cannot give God. Did you know that? You cannot give him. When you're generous, God will be generous to you. Generosity is a test of your faith. It's always a test of your faith.

That's why when people in church say, well, I can't afford to tithe just yet. It's like, no, you just don't have the faith enough to tithe just yet. That's okay. God needs to grow us in our generosity, grow us in our ability because when we're giving of ourselves and we're giving of our time and we're giving of our gift and we're not worried about how it's coming back to us that's when God can truly pour out his blessing on us. And generosity is not just in your money. Generosity is with your gifts. Every gift you have, right? Every talent you have, where did that come from? That all came from the Lord. Every possession you have. Where did that come from? Came

from the Lord. All the time that you have. Where did that come from? That came from the Lord. When you prioritize your time, your talent and your money in such a way that you would say, Lord, is there any way I can be more generous with everything that you've given to me?

How would you like to use my gifts? How would you like to use my resources? How would you like to use my time? I promise you if you genuinely pray that, the Lord will show you. I started praying that back when I was 20 and I was all excited about Jesus and the Lord started showing me, I want you to be a pastor. Then I wasn't as excited anymore. God has an individual way of desiring to grow you in such a way that if you're generous, you experience more measure from God, because what does generosity require? Generosity requires a sacrifice of something else in order to serve someone else. I'm either sacrificing some of my time or I'm sacrificing where I could be using my gifts elsewhere or I'm sacrificing where I could give my resources elsewhere in order to serve Christ and his church, or in order to serve you.

And when God sees that our heart is to serve him and to serve others, then God pours out a measurable blessing upon us. It's called generosity. In the Proverbs and you'll hear this verse again. In the Proverbs chapter 11 and verses 24 and 25 it says, "There is one who scatters and yet increases all the more. And there is one who withholds what is justly due and yet it results only in one. The generous man will be prosperous and he who waters will himself be watered." I believe so much in the principle of generosity, that principal's changed my life so much. I'm going to spend

some time this fall and teach on it for a period of weeks, because I want you to experience the blessing of it. And here's what I mean. Some people will say, especially in Bible churches that are rooted in the word, oh, you're just going to teach prosperity gospel.

No I'm not. I don't want to teach prosperity. Gospel prosperity. Gospel teaches what you can get so that you can individually grow. Prosperity the way God does it is how can you be generous, so you can see God's faithfulness in your life, even greater than the generosity you pour out. So that you'll have a desire to be even more generous going down the road. And we want that. I learned you cannot outgive God. When I made more money in the business world then I went, when I started going into the ministry, I wasn't giving much money when I was in the business world. But when I went in the ministry and stopped making much money, I remember saying, all right, Lord, I'm convicted about tithing. I'm going to start tithing, and I've told you this before. I told the Lord, if I run out of money, I'm quitting the ministry, that was 25 years ago.

God's taking care of me every step of the way, God's taking care of all my schooling. God's taken me on opportunities to travel around the world. God's taking care of my family. God gives abundant, immeasurable. I'm not worthy of everything that God's given me. And all it makes me want to do is give more. It's the principle of generosity, and God wants you to be generous. He gave each one of you specific talents not to use for yourself. He gave each one of you at a specific amount of time not to use for yourself. He gave each one of you, specific possessions and resources, not to use on yourself, but to steward to him and to others. And when that's primary in

your life, you experience a joy of the Lord that's greater than what you're currently experience. You say, well what's generosity. It's the opposite of being calculated.

Because if you're sitting there saying, I think I'm generous enough or how generous is he asking me to be? That's the wrong question. The question is, Lord, what would it look like for me to be lavish with those three things? What would it look like? Because if you truly believe that God is sovereign. If you truly believe that God placed you on the earth in this season and gave you the breath that you have to serve him in any way, I promise you when you meet the Lord, there's the greatest return on investment if you've stewarded your resources, your time, your gifts, the best for him and for his glory and his people. What's he doing in your heart? What's he doing in your life? That becomes the diagnostic question. Number two, do you desire to give the Lord more praise? Do you desire to become more generous?

If not, then ask him, Lord, help me give you more praise. Help me become more generous. Say, Pastor Jeff, why are you always talking about money? Well, because Jesus did. He said where your treasure is there will your heart be also. If you spend your life pursuing money, you will never fulfill God's desire and design for your life. Amen. How about question number three, question number three is this, do I obey and submit to leadership or do I grumble and complain? Now this is a difficult one in our culture. Do I obey and submit to leadership or do I grumble and complain? Now we're going to talk specifically about leadership in the church, but I believe that people in our culture have an allergic reaction to the word authority. Kids have an allergic reaction to their parents' authority. We have allergic reaction to political authority.

We have allergic reaction to police authority. We just kind of have an allergic reaction and it bleeds its way in the church where we use the terms like this in the church, servant leadership. Are we all called to be servants? Yes. Are we all called the lead and have influence? Yes, but oftentimes I was talking to another pastor on our staff this week about this idea of servant leadership. And sometimes what we mean by servant leadership when we're under somebody's leadership is if they serve me in the exact way I want to be served and I'm happy about it. I'll submit to their leadership. That's not what the Bible says. Let me read to you again what it says.

And I'm telling you this and I'm teaching this passage as if I were going to get run over by a truck this afternoon. And you were going to have a different pastor standing in this pulpit next week. I'm talking about the office of pastor. I'm talking about the leadership network in a church. Here's what it says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." Do you know what that means in the original language, it means obey your leaders and submit to them.

That's what it means. It means obey them. It means submit to them, is I'm coming under your authority. What it means is this. Some people don't understand what my title is. I'm not talking about me, relationally. My name is Jeff. But as your pastor, I'm Pastor Jeff. If you only get one of those two words right, I'm pastor. Why not? Because of who I am, but because of the office and how much we value the office. Who established the church?

Jesus.

Okay. That's not rhetorical. Only five of you knew that. Let's say out loud, who established the church?

Jesus.

Jesus, who appoints leadership in his church.

Jesus.

Jesus called me to be the pastor of this church. No matter where you go to church, you are called to obey and submit to leadership in the church. That means this, don't ever speak badly about another pastor or another church ever. Don't ever listen to somebody speak badly about a pastor and another church ever. Why? Because when you speak bad about it, you're speaking bad about Jesus. When Saul was converted on the road to Damascus, what was Jesus's first question, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" I'm not persecuting you, it's this stupid Christians over here. How you treat leadership in the church is how you treat Jesus. When people come into BRAVE and they it's okay when God moves you from another church, if he does, go tell your pastor, God's moving our family over here, this is what we're going to do and do it. No problem.

But if you speak badly about a pastor and you speak badly about a church, you don't love the Jesus of the Bible. When I hear people come in here and they tell me they came from another church, that's fine. But if they start to chit chat about that pastor and that church and what, I don't have ears for that. And here's why, because I know in just a matter of time, you're going to be saying the same thing about me and

BRAVE. Do you know it takes two people to gossip? Because some of you say, I'm never gossiped about the church, but I'm just a very comforting source for people to come and talk to.

It takes a mouth and it takes ears. And if you've talked about a pastor, talked about a church, listened bad about a pastor, listened bad about church. I'm telling you, you need to repent. If I'm not your pastor tomorrow, whoever comes here is pastor so and so. And in case you're wondering, I've been with many of you, a lot of you guys are my close friends and you're out and hey, who's this? Yeah, I'm your friend. This is my pastor. Don't have to choke on your words. It's cool. This is my pastor, Pastor Jeff. That's my title. That's my role. God called me to this service. If you have a problem with that, take it up with him. We should be in church in such a way where people hear we're thankful for our pastor. We're thankful for our pastors. We're thankful that the word of God gets preached.

We're thankful for the worship that happens. It doesn't mean you don't have a voice and it doesn't mean we can't have conversations. And it doesn't mean that you can't confront. It doesn't mean any of those things. It means that you may not always get your way. We have over 5,000 people that call BRAVE their home church. There is no way we can make every decision so that all 5,000 people put their head on their pillow every night and say, greatest decisions ever. Never going to happen. Obey and submit to your leaders. Why? For they keep, watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

One of the most terrifying things about being a pastor is knowing that when I get

to heaven, I give an account for every soul that's come through the doors at BRAVE. I don't have to know every soul, but I'm accountable for how I teach, I'm accountable for how I love, I'm accountable for how I lead, because who cares about this church more than me? Jesus, I'm just an under-shepherd. Jesus Christ is the leader of this church. So he's holding me personally responsible for how I lead and how I love and how I live and how I act. And I have to give an account for how I did that and how it translated in lives of other people. Scary? Yeah, that's why the New Testament says not too many of you should presume to be teachers. Let me just save you a lot of time.

If you're not called to be a pastor, don't be one. If you can do anything else and love the Lord and find satisfaction, do it. That's what it means. Because we have to understand that in the church, God's given authority to the pastor in the church. It's my title, it's my calling. And it's my authority under Christ to execute what he wants done here. And I give an account for that. I give an account. So if it doesn't go well, then pray for me. Prayer changes people, amen. Prayer changes things. We'll get to that in a second. But don't talk bad about God's anointed. Now, I'm not saying this because I'm perfect. Anybody that knows me knows I'm not perfect. You don't believe me. Go talk to my wife, she's sitting right in the first row. She'll give you an earful. There's nothing perfect about me.

I'm talking about the position, talking about the office of pastor, right? Go back to Numbers chapter 16, if you want to read what it looked like. There was a rebellion called Korah's rebellion. Because Korah was a man that rose up against Moses and asked this question, "How come Moses gets to make all the decisions? How come

Moses is doing this? How come everybody's listening to Moses?" Is not like Moses is doing it. We're following God here. Hey, Moses who put you in charge? His answer. God did. And Moses was pleading for Korah and all these others to repent. They didn't. And God told everybody move away from their tents. And if they die of natural causes, you know that I'm not in this, but if they're swallowed up, you'll know that I'm the Lord. And they all got swallowed up them and their whole families and they went to Hades, and everybody was terrified for some reason.

And nobody spoke bad about Moses again, right? You don't grumble and complain about the Lord's anointed. Just stop, there's plenty of reasons to grumble and complain. There's no perfect church. There's no perfect pastor, but aren't we blessed to be in a place where there's worship, where there's great community, where the word of God is being taught, where evangelism's taking place. Thank God for that. Praise him. Unforgiveness and gossip over what happens in a church are two of the biggest sins that hinder God from doing everything he wants to do in a church. If somebody's hurt you in a church that you came from, go talk to them. Not this, not you hurt me, you hurt me really bad, I left because of you, you're horrible. No, just say, you know what? Here's what happened, I was really sorry about that. Was there something I'm missing in this?

Is there something that you'd want to tell me? Here's why we made a decision to move on and I love you and I'm praying for you and I want the best for you, but here's how God's moving our family. That's okay. There may come a time where God moves

you into a different city or to another church, that's fine, but don't leave disgruntled and don't leave gossip, and don't leave with unforgiveness. I've only been a pastor for 12 years. I've watched this cycle over and over and over again. I've seen people leave well, I've seen people leave not well. Leave well, speak highly of pastors, speak highly of churches. I'm getting to know a lot of pastors. Now I've been in the city now for 12 years. I'm trying to meet as many of them as I can, so that when you go to their church, I can tell them about you and tell them that I support you.

Tell them I support the church. Tell them I'm for them. They don't all believe like I believe, they don't all think like I think. Don't have to, they're trying to be faithful servants of the word of God and shepherd God's people, pray for them and love them. Amen. It's a big question we got to ask. Am I submissive to leadership or do I grumble and complain? Listen, not only do we give an account, let them do this with joy and not with grief for this would be unprofitable for you. It doesn't help you if it's grieving to serve you. Let it be a joy. I mean, I'm telling you, we are a great church. So I'm teaching the word. I don't have ulterior motives here this morning. It's not like I hope so and so's listening. I don't have any of that in my heart. I'm saying it's a joy to pastor to this church.

There's some of the finest people in all of Denver that go to this church. I'm honored to serve this church. But here's what he's saying. Let it be a joy for those who are shepherding you, not with grief. Here's what grief is. You know what grief is? Here they come again. What are they going to complain about this time? How have we not met their specific needs today? Don't be that person. It's not profitable for you. What's

profitable for you is, hey here, pastor. I'm willing to serve under your leadership. I wanted you to be aware of this. Hey, I know this may not go my way, but I love you, and I'm for you. That's great. We want to hear you. We want to serve you, but we can't do everything for everybody. Let it be profitable. Do it so that those who are serving you do it with joy. Let me give you a fourth diagnostic question. If every believer prayed like me, would revival happen in my lifetime?

It's rhetorical. If every believer prayed like me would revival happen in my lifetime. Now when you talk to Christians and you say, would you guys want to see revival? Let me ask you this question. Answer it out loud. Who here wants to see revival in Denver by...

If everybody prayed the way you pray, would we see it in your lifetime? That becomes a question., Because I find that if all the ministries that we can do prayer is the hardest. Certainly is a contender for one of the most difficult, it's easier to go to a conference about prayer. It's easier to teach on prayer than it is to pray. Do you know why? Because the devil knows that when you spend time in the presence of the Lord, you'll change and circumstances change. He doesn't want you to pray. Praying is hard. If you don't believe me, set a timer tomorrow morning to pray at a specific time. And I promise you, if you don't turn your phone off, it will ring. I promise you, your kid will have a problem that needs your attention right then, I promise you, something will come up you don't expect.

It's hard to pray. The enemy uses weapons of mass distraction every time we sit down to pray to the Lord. You'll start thinking about your day and the next thing you

know, you're 20 minutes into your thought life and you forgot that you were even praying, right? Notice what he says here. He says, pray for us, those are Christians, for we are sure that we have a good conscience desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. Pray for Christians. We're called to pray for the loss too, for sure but pray for Christians. Oftentimes the only time we pray for Christians is when they're at a desperate time in their life. Pray for Christians when things are going well in their life, pray for protection over them. Pray and keep on praying and keep on praying. And I urge you all the more to do this so that I may be restored to you sooner.

He says, if you pray, things will change. Now listen to me, I believe in the sovereignty of God. I believe God set the whole world up. I believe God's in charge. I don't believe things happen that God either doesn't allow or God doesn't author. But I also believe in reading my Bible, both Old Testament and new, when we pray, things change. 100% believe that. He says, if you pray harder, I'll see you sooner. Well, what does that mean? If you don't pray, I won't see you as soon. In other words, pray because God hears the prayers of his people. The enemy doesn't want you to pray. The enemy doesn't want you to seek his face. That's why the most important meeting we will ever have in our church is our prayer meeting. First Tuesday, it's the hardest night to make it. I promise you if you set your clock to be here at the next first Tuesday of next month in September, something will happen.

Job will go bad. Kids will have a problem. Marriage will be dysfunctional that day, money issue. Whatever, because Satan doesn't want you here, because he knows, if

you come and seek his face, that God has the ability to move and do things that only he can do. Pray, now, how do we pray? Now what I'm not telling you to do is this. Don't get all fired up and say, well, I'm not really praying much, but tomorrow morning I'm giving him a half an hour of my time. Brother, sister, you will not make it. Just because I'm teaching on running doesn't mean you go out and run a marathon the next day. How about try this? How about tomorrow, pray for two minutes. Just two, pray about something for two minutes. Maybe it's your marriage. Maybe it's your singleness. Maybe it's for my message next week.

Maybe it's for the church in general. Maybe it's for your job. Maybe it's for your employer. Just two minutes. Start small, you'll find that when you really start doing that, you can't do it in just two minutes. And it'll become relational with you and the Lord. And don't worry about the amount of time, concern yourself with who you get to spend time with. Pray. Now there's all sorts of teachings throughout the New Testament. In Matthew chapter six and the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter six, nine through 13, the Lord gives us the Lord's prayer. Our father who is in heaven, hallowed be be your name, let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

So mean just take one of those. Lord forgive me, my sins, in the same way I'm going to forgive those who sin against me. I mean just focus on that one day. I promise you sometime between now and next Sunday, somebody's going to sin against you.

And then go before the Lord, Lord, forgive me in the same way you're going to see me extend forgiveness to the person that sinned against me. It'll grow your faith. You'll pray longer because you won't want to do it. You won't want to forgive. Or Lord let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, I'm your kingdom servant. And I'm your ambassador here on this earth. And I have royal blood and I'm part of your royal priesthood. And this week, Lord let your kingdom come through me in a new and fresh way.

Show me how that's going to work. I mean, when you begin to pray these ways, God begins to move. Because sometimes we come to a church like this and think God's desire for us is to go work on things, got five questions I'm going to go work on them. God's not looking for your work, he's looking for your surrender to him so he can work on you. Are you humble enough after service sometime when God moves on your heart to come forward and pray with somebody, instead of going through the motions over and over again, you promise yourself every week that you're going to change and you never do. Maybe you just come forward and confess Lord, I've never changed. I say it all the time, but nothing ever changes. Help me, Lord, let somebody pray over you. And here's why prayer is so important because a prayer begins to capture your heart, everything in the church will capture your heart. I mean, I'll give you an example.

The Denver Broncos are getting ready to start their season, whether you know it or not. And I kind of enjoy that time of year. And if the Denver Broncos capture your heart and you're going to watch Instagram and social media and you're going to follow them. And by the way, you get tickets to games and they're going to be in Seattle for

Monday Night Football on September 12th, I believe. And you know all these different things and you're following it all along. When the game happens, you're not going to wake up Tuesday morning. And somebody said, what'd you think of the game last night? Like, oh yeah, I forgot. Especially if you bought tickets, you wouldn't forget that, because your whole attention is on that. Sometimes pastors are telling people, please come to church, come to church.

We need you at church. Please be in church. Why? Because church blesses you, church is a benefit for you. The body of Christ is a benefit for you. Here's what I know about people who have regular missing church attendants. Here's what's true in their life. They're not intentionally seeking the Lord about what he's going to do on a Sunday. You cannot pray every single day, Monday through Saturday about the message, about the spirit of God moving, about the worship. You can't praise the Lord all week and yearn to get together with your brothers and sisters in Christ and all of that. And then say, oh I forgot church was there, or I'm too tired. There's every part of you that's going to want to be here. So what do you do? You pray, you get intentional about seeking the face of God.

In the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus also talked about Matthew chapter seven, verses seven through 11. "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be open." It means to ask, and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking, for he who asks, receives. He who seeks, finds. He who knocks the door will be open. What does God promise? If you pray my way, I'll answer your prayer. Now what blew me away this week when I taught this to our

staff was this, we take prayer for granted. We take prayer for granted. I mean we can study all the scriptures about all the ways we can pray. But so few of us pray or pray fervently believing that the greatest work we can do in the church is pray. So pray. I mean, if the church spent its time praying, we would see God do things that only God could do.

Do you pray? That's what God wants from each and every one of us. God wants our hearts to be centered on him. He wants a relationship with us in prayer. God begins to change us and God begins to change our circumstances either so we'll be able to be encouraged in the circumstance we're in even if we don't like it or changing the circumstances around us, pray. I was on the sideline for a football game on Friday night here in town. And one of the guys that goes to our church has a daughter who's pregnant, who's struggling in the pregnancy, there's some challenges with the baby. And we just paused at the sideline. I'm like, let's pray now. So during the game, we're just praying, asking God for healing in his daughter's child. Do I believe God heard that? Yeah. Pray. God is available to everybody.

There's one mediator between God and man, the man, Jesus Christ. I don't need to pray for you. Now the prayers of a righteous man are effective and we can grow in our prayer and our ability to pray and our power prayer. But God's willing to listen to you too. So pray and don't give up. That's what God wants, because I believe with my whole heart, when we pray, God changes things. Now we talk about revival. I ask you who wanted to see revival? Most of us think revival's just a lot of people come into

Christ. Like if we saw another 7,000 people come to Christ that are now part of BRAVE, like revival, that's not revival. Revival is this, revival is when the church is so on fire for Jesus that the Holy Spirit in a supernatural way, breathes through the church in such a way we can't get enough of God.

And if you study the histories of revival in the church, there are times when revival hits, the church is open 24/7. People are preaching all day and worshiping all day. Businesses are shut down because people have to come to the prayer meeting. Athletic contests they don't continue because the teams want to come and be in the presence of the Lord. That's revival. Revival starts in the heart of God's people where they want him so bad. Revival is not, God if you want to do that, that'd be really cool to be a part of. I mean, if you want to save a bunch of people, I'll show up maybe. Revival's like, when God, we need a touch from you so desperately in our city. So desperately in our church, we need a touch from you so desperately in our nation. And in case you don't know, we do need a touch so desperately by God, in our city, in our state, and in our nation, we need it so bad, we're going to seek you to bring it because we can't bring the solution.

God save people. Change lives. Imagine if two thirds of the politicians in DC all got saved today? Would there be a change. Would be a massive change. That's what needs to happen. And only God can change the heart. You must be born again. How can somebody be born again unless God does the work, and how can they do it unless we're praying for it and proclaiming it? Friends I'm praying in such a way because I want to see revival happen in my lifetime. I want to see it happen before I go to be with

Jesus if he [inaudible 00:51:27], ask yourself the question. If everybody prayed like me, would revival happen in my lifetime? And then this final question, it's a question on surrender.

Is Christ working in and through you? Is Christ working in and through me, or is he just near to me? Is Christ working in and through me or is he just near to me? Notice what he says. One of the greatest benedictions in the Bible. The God of peace, that's our God, you want peace in this world that comes through Jesus Christ. Now the God of peace who brought up from the dead, the great shepherd, Jesus is called the good shepherd. In John chapter 10, he's called the chief shepherd. In 1st Peter, he's called the great shepherd here. The great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant even Jesus, our Lord, equip you. He wants to equip you in every good thing to do his will. How? Working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Let me tell you something. Friends, here's the question. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ or are you just religious? There's a massive difference. All throughout this book, he's been saying Jesus Christ is the greatest go all the way in with Jesus. Have you repented and trusted him? Because the good news of the gospel is when you repent and trust Christ, he comes and lives in you through his Holy Spirit. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Galatians 2:20 says, "For I had been crucified with Christ it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." The life I live. I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I'm living by faith because Christ is in me.

The Christian life is not about you getting better to please God. The Christian life is about God who already indwells you, who is wanting to live his life in and through you, do you have his life in you? Do you have a relationship with Christ? We don't work for our salvation. It's all by grace, but we are saved for good works. We are saved to do good things.

We are saved to be generous. We are saved to love other people. Where are you? I mean the biggest tragedy of teaching this book over the course of 24 weeks and having probably 24 hours of teaching and all sorts of study notes is for you to walk through all these texts and not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I mean, all these questions are so important and they're ones if you keep with you and continually ask, God will grow you. Am I living like the world lives? Or am I distinctly set apart under Christ? Am I desiring to give the Lord more praise and become more generous?

Do I obey submit to leadership or do I grumble and complain? If every believer prayed like me would revival happen in my lifetime, and is Christ working in and through me? Or is he just near me? I mean, he finishes this book by a word of exhortation. He says, but I urge you brethren hear with us. Bear with us the word of exhortation for I have written to you briefly. He says, take notice of our brother, Timothy, who has been released probably out of prison with whom if he comes soon, I will see you. He says, greet all the leaders in the saints. Those from Italy greet you, that's where he is writing from. Grace be with you all. What does he want? More grace. See, here's the

question. What's God doing in your life right now? Which of these questions is he moving on your heart?

See if you're a believer, God loves you so much. And so there's no shame in any of these questions. These are questions I continually ask myself, they've been questions for the last two weeks. I've been asking myself, God, where are you changing me? And what are you wanting to do in my life? What's he shown you today that you need to do? What's he showing you in your life where you need to separate from the world and go deeper and identify with him? Or maybe you're here today and say I'm religious, and I've always called myself a Christian, but I don't know that I've ever repented and let Jesus Christ be the Lord of my life. And maybe today's your day. Maybe today's your day as you've heard the Lord saying I'm done just sitting in my seat, I just want to be ministered to, and come and give my life to Christ.

Whatever it is, let the Lord have his way with you. Amen. Would you stand with me as we pray. Father in heaven, we give you all the glory and honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we thank you for your word, your word challenges us. It comforts us. It convicts us. Lord you're doing a work in us this morning, all of us in different ways for the sake of your body. So Lord, with whatever you're showing us, do that work. And if you're here today and you've never trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior, then why not pray with me now. Saying Lord Jesus, I repent on my sins and I believe that you are the Christ, the Messiah, come into my life and be my Lord and take it over, wash all my sins away and give me your life through your holy spirit.

Father, do a work here as we continue to worship and sing to you. God, we love you and we bless you and we praise you for all that you are. And for all that you're going to do in Jesus name, amen and amen. Could we give God praise this morning for who he is?