



For Christ and His
Kingdom

Things I learned from walking with God!



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Dedication

To my students in the preaching lab—thank you for pouring your hearts into the study of God’s Word with passion and diligence. Your dedication has been a gift to witness. May your journey in preaching be as rich and rewarding as mine has been. Keep pressing on, and I’ll see you on the other side.

The chaplain.

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CHAPTER ONE

How I Learned to Live for Jesus in a Wicked World

Philippians 2:12-18

Let me tell you something—I don’t have to look far to see that we are living in a wicked world! All I have to do is turn on the news, scroll through my phone, or walk outside, and I see it—confusion, corruption, and compromise everywhere. And over and over again, I’ve had to ask myself: How do I live for Jesus in the midst of all this mess?

The Apostle Paul gives us an answer in Philippians 2:12-18. And through my own journey, I’ve learned a few things about how to stand strong for Jesus in a sinful society.

I’ve Learned That I Have a Call on My Life

Paul told the believers in Philippi, “You were always careful to follow my instructions when I was with you, but now that I’m gone, be even more careful!” In other words, I can’t just live right when people are watching—I’ve got to live holy even when nobody’s around.

I’ve come to understand that I have a calling on my life. And let me tell you, that calling means:

- I've got to **obey God in everything I do**. I can't pick and choose which parts of the Bible I like—I've got to live by all of it!
- I've got to **show the world what salvation looks like**. When people look at my life, they ought to see a difference. They ought to see Jesus shining in me!
- I've got to **fear God and honor His name**. Not the kind of fear that makes me run, but the kind that makes me stand in awe of who He is. When I truly reverence God, I don't play with sin—I live like Christ!

And here's the best part: I don't have to do this on my own! Paul says, "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him." That means God is working on me! He's changing my heart, renewing my mind, and giving me the strength to walk this walk. "He's working on me!"

I've Learned That This Walk Comes with Challenges

Now, I won't sit here and act like living for Jesus is easy. It's not! I know what it's like to struggle, to resist temptation, and to feel like I'm the only one trying to live right in a world gone crazy.

Paul understood this too. The church at Philippi was surrounded by idolatry, immorality, and injustice. And guess what? So am I!

I've learned that if I'm going to live for Jesus, I've got to:

- **Stop complaining and arguing.** (Help me, Lord!) It's easy to fuss and fight, but I've come to understand that my words should build up, not tear down.
- **Live in a way that nobody can blame me.** I can't give the world a reason to call me a hypocrite. My life must match my confession!
- **Stay clean, stay holy, stay set apart.** I can't live like everybody else. No shady business, no secret sins—just a life that honors God.
- **Shine like a light in the darkness.** The world is getting darker, but I was made to shine! Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

I've come to realize that I wasn't saved to blend in—I was saved to stand out!

I've Learned That I've Got to Hold On

Paul now gives the Philippians a charge—he says, “Hold tightly to the word of life!” In other words, don't let go of God's truth!

I've learned that in times like these, I better hold on to the Word! The world is trying to change it, trying to water it down, trying to twist it to fit their own desires. But Paul says, “Hold on to it! Don't let anybody take it from you!”

And then Paul says something powerful: “Even if I have to be poured out like a drink offering, I will rejoice!” What is he saying? He’s saying, “Even if I have to suffer, I’m still going to praise Him!”

I’ve learned that suffering for Jesus is an honor! If people talk about me, if they laugh at me, if they persecute me—I won’t cry about it, I’ll rejoice! Because I know I’m in good company!

Paul said, “Rejoice with me!” And I’ve learned that if suffering is part of the journey, then I’ll rejoice and keep on running this race!

Conclusion: I’ve Learned to Keep Running!

Family, I am in a race. And I don’t know about you, but I’ve made up my mind—I’m going to keep on running!

I’ve learned some things along the way:

1. I’ve learned that God has called me to live for Him.
2. I’ve learned that this journey comes with challenges.
3. I’ve learned that I’ve got to hold on to God’s Word and never let go.

And because of that, I’m going to stay in this race! The world is getting darker, but my light is getting brighter!

So I ask myself:

- What has God called me to do?

- What challenges am I facing as a believer?
- How will I respond to the charge Paul gave to the Philippians?

I've decided—I'm going to live for Jesus in this wicked world, I'm going to hold on to His Word, and I'm going to shine my light until the day He calls me home! Somebody say, "I'm going to live for Jesus!"

CHAPTER TWO

How I learned not to lose my mind

John 4:46-54

Every now and then, life throws you a trial so heavy, so overwhelming, that it feels like you're about to lose your mind. I know this because I've been there! This life is full of unwanted suffering and pain. It brings heartache, heartbreak, and situations that can take the very breath out of you. Sometimes life is just plain cruel. The burdens get heavy. The weight of it all can feel unbearable.

I once heard an old preacher say, "Life is full of storms that come to take you out." And I've asked the same question that so many others have asked: How do I survive the suffering of this world without losing my mind?

I believe the answer is found in John 4:46-54. In this passage, I see a man facing something bigger than him. He was in trouble.

Discouragement was all around him. Disappointment had him in a headlock. Despair had him in a chokehold. But this brother gave us a blueprint for holding on when life is trying to take you under.

His baby was in trouble, and time was running out! His money couldn't fix it. His status couldn't change it. He needed help that was bigger than him. And then—he heard that Jesus was back in the city. And when he heard what he heard about the Master, he didn't just sit

still. He moved! He ran to Jesus in desperation, asking Him to save his child.

There are three lessons I've learned from this brother that have kept me from losing my mind.

Lesson 1: Get to Jesus as Fast as You Can!

Verse 47 says that when he heard Jesus was in town, he went straight to Him. He didn't wait. He didn't hesitate. He moved!

- He came believing that Jesus could fix his situation—even though he had never seen Him do it before.
- He came hoping that Jesus would do for him what He had done for others.
- He came trusting that Jesus wouldn't turn him away.
- He came anticipating that heaven was on his side.

I've learned that when life gets hard, I have to do the same thing!

When the crisis hits:

1. I have to find where Jesus is moving and get there!
2. I have to come to Him in faith, knowing He can do anything but fail.
3. I have to keep hoping and trusting that if He did it before, He can do it again.

4. I have to fix my eyes on Jesus and believe that heaven is on my side.

Lesson 2: Keep Your Faith in God in the Midst of the Trial

In verse 48, Jesus tells the man, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.” But the nobleman didn’t let that stop him. He said, “Sir, come down before my child dies!”

- He knew Jesus had the power to fix his situation.
- He was willing to believe even when it seemed like Jesus wasn’t interested.
- He kept pursuing Jesus even when it looked like nothing was happening.

That’s the kind of faith I’ve had to hold onto in my own life. There have been times when I’ve prayed and it seemed like God wasn’t moving. But I’ve learned that sometimes, you have to pull from past experiences. You have to remind yourself of what He’s done before!

- When I’m struggling, I pull from my past miracles.
- When I’m weak, I remind myself of how He’s come through before.
- When I’m doubting, I remember that God’s timing is perfect—even when I don’t understand it.

The nobleman held onto hope and faith, no matter what. And so must we.

Lesson 3: Walk in Faith Even When You Can't See It

In verse 50, Jesus tells him, “Go your way; your son lives.” And the man believed the word Jesus spoke—and went his way.

- He believed the promise of God without seeing it first.
- He took Jesus at His word and walked by faith.
- He didn't demand proof—he just trusted!

That's what faith looks like. Faith is moving forward even when you can't see the outcome. Faith is trusting that God has already worked it out, even when everything around you says otherwise.

- The nobleman didn't see his son healed right away, but he walked by faith.
- He didn't need Jesus to physically come with him—he took Him at His word.
- He didn't need a sign—he trusted the Word was enough.

And that's what I've had to learn in my own life. I've had to stop looking for signs and start standing on His Word.

- If you've got the Word of God, you don't need a sign!
- Real faith says, “I know You can do it because Your Word says You can.”
- If you have the promises of God, you have more than enough!

Conclusion: Don't Lose Your Mind—Help is on the Way!

You can keep from losing your mind:

1. By getting to Jesus as fast as you can.
2. By keeping your faith in God in the middle of the trial.
3. By walking in faith even when you can't see it.

The Bible is filled with people who walked by faith—and God always answered!

- Because of faith, God saved Noah from a storm—He's in the rescue business!
- Because of faith, He saved Joseph from calamity—He's in the rescue business!
- Because of faith, He saved David from Goliath—He's in the rescue business!
- Because of faith, He saved Jonah from the deep—He's in the rescue business!
- Because of faith, He saved the Hebrew Boys from the fire—He's in the rescue business!
- Because of faith, He saved Daniel from the lion's den—He's in the rescue business!

And when humanity was in trouble, Jesus came through 42 generations to rescue us! He died on the cross to set the captives free. He took the sting out of death and the victory from the grave. He rose early Sunday morning with all power in His hands!

And because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, I don't have to lose my mind. Because He lives, I know help is on the way!

So hold on! Don't quit! Don't lose your mind! Keep your faith—your rescue is on the way!

CHAPTER THREE

How I Learned to Slay the Giants in My Life

1 Samuel 17:40-54

Life is full of battles. Some, I've won. Others, I've lost. Some fights have left me wounded, while others nearly took me out. But through it all, I've learned that as long as I'm living, I will face giants. Giants of fear, giants of doubt, giants of temptation, giants of failure. And since I have no choice but to fight, I might as well learn how to win.

David's story in 1 Samuel 17 has taught me how to get victory in the valley. It shows me how to defeat the giants in my life and walk in confidence, even in a world that's constantly trying to knock me down.

When I first encountered this story, I saw myself in David. A young man stepping onto the battlefield, underestimated, overlooked, and unarmed—at least in the eyes of the world. But like David, I had something stronger than swords and spears. I had faith. And faith, when wielded properly, can bring any giant to its knees.

Through this story, I've learned three key principles that have helped me slay the giants in my life.

1. Fight from Familiarity

When David stepped onto the battlefield, he didn't wear Saul's armor. He didn't carry Saul's sword. He fought with what he knew. The text says:

“THEN HE TOOK HIS STAFF IN HIS HAND; AND HE CHOSE FOR HIMSELF FIVE SMOOTH STONES FROM THE BROOK, AND PUT THEM IN A SHEPHERD'S BAG, IN A POUCH WHICH HE HAD, AND HIS SLING WAS IN HIS HAND. AND HE DREW NEAR TO THE PHILISTINE.” (1 Samuel 17:40)

David rejected what didn't fit him. He knew that victory didn't come from wearing what someone else thought was necessary. Instead, he fought with what he had experience using—a sling, some stones, and most importantly, his faith in God.

I've had to learn this lesson myself. When I tried to fight my battles with someone else's strategy, I failed. When I tried to fit into expectations that weren't meant for me, I struggled. But when I leaned into what God had already placed in my hands—my faith, my gifts, my experience—I found victory.

So, if you're facing a giant today, take a lesson from David. Don't try to be someone you're not. Don't fight with weapons you haven't mastered. Use what God has already given you. Fight from familiarity.

2. Face Your Foes

David didn't just prepare for battle—he stepped onto the battlefield. He faced Goliath head-on.

“SO THE PHILISTINE CAME, AND BEGAN DRAWING NEAR TO DAVID... AND WHEN THE PHILISTINE LOOKED ABOUT AND SAW DAVID, HE DISDAINED HIM; FOR HE WAS ONLY A YOUTH, RUDDY AND GOOD-LOOKING.” (1 Samuel 17:41-42)

Goliath tried to intimidate David. He mocked him. He cursed him. He tried to break him before the fight even started. But David didn't back down. He stood his ground and responded with boldness:

“YOU COME TO ME WITH A SWORD, WITH A SPEAR, AND WITH A JAVELIN. BUT I COME TO YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LORD OF HOSTS, THE GOD OF THE ARMIES OF ISRAEL, WHOM YOU HAVE DEFIED.” (1 Samuel 17:45)

I've had giants try to intimidate me too. The giant of fear told me I wasn't good enough. The giant of failure told me I wouldn't make it. The giant of doubt told me to give up. But like David, I had to face them. I had to stand firm in my faith and declare that my God is greater.

When you face your giants, don't let their size scare you. Don't let their words shake you. Remember who you are. Remember whose you are. Stand your ground and face your foes.

3. Fight with Faith

David didn't just walk onto the battlefield with a sling and some stones. He walked onto the battlefield with faith.

“THIS DAY THE LORD WILL DELIVER YOU INTO MY HAND, AND I WILL STRIKE YOU AND TAKE YOUR HEAD FROM YOU... THAT ALL THE EARTH MAY KNOW THAT THERE IS A GOD IN ISRAEL.” (1 Samuel 17:46)

David wasn't hoping for victory—he was expecting it. He wasn't wishing for success—he was declaring it. That's the kind of faith I had to develop in my own life.

I used to hesitate when facing my giants. I used to wonder if God would really come through. But then I remembered David. David didn't fight with uncertainty—he fought with assurance. And that's how I learned to fight too.

If you're going to slay your giants, you have to believe that God is with you. You have to trust that He has already won the battle. You have to fight with faith.

Conclusion: The Victory is Yours

David didn't just face Goliath—he defeated him.

“THEN DAVID PUT HIS HAND IN HIS BAG AND TOOK OUT A STONE; AND HE SLUNG IT AND STRUCK THE PHILISTINE IN HIS FOREHEAD, SO THAT THE STONE SANK INTO HIS

FOREHEAD, AND HE FELL ON HIS FACE TO THE EARTH.” (1 Samuel 17:49)

David didn’t hesitate. He didn’t second-guess himself. He ran toward the giant, slung the stone, and watched as God secured the victory.

I’ve learned that when I step out in faith, God shows up in power. When I fight with what I know, when I face my foes head-on, and when I put my trust in God, giants fall. Every time.

So, if you’re facing a giant today, take heart. The battle is already won. Just step onto the battlefield, trust in the Lord, and watch as He brings your giants down.

Now go and slay your giants!

CHAPTER FOUR

How I Learned to Use What I Have for Ministry

John 6:1-14

I want to share a story with you today about how I learned to use what I have for ministry. This lesson didn't come easy, but through the Word of God, and through my own experiences, I discovered that God can do more with my little than I ever imagined.

The Need for Ministry

This story is told four different times in the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and now John. Each time, we see Jesus and His disciples trying to step away for a moment of rest, but the people just kept coming. They had seen Jesus heal the sick, teach with authority, and perform mighty miracles, and they wanted more. They were hungry—not just for food, but for the presence and power of the Lord.

And Jesus? He had compassion on them. He didn't see them as an inconvenience. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. That's how Jesus sees people—lost, wandering, vulnerable, and in need of a Savior.

I remember when I first realized the weight of this truth. Ministry isn't just about programs, preaching, or church events. It's about people. It's about seeing them through the compassionate eyes of Jesus.

The Challenge of Ministry

Jesus turns to Philip and asks, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” Now, Philip was a logical man. He immediately calculated the cost—two hundred denarii wouldn’t be enough to feed them all. In other words, “Jesus, this is impossible.”

I can relate to Philip. When I first stepped into ministry, I looked at my resources and said, “Lord, I don’t have enough. I don’t have the money, the skills, or the influence to do what You’re asking.” But what I learned is that God doesn’t ask me to calculate the cost—He asks me to trust Him.

Andrew took a different approach. He scouted the crowd, looking for a solution, and found a little boy with five barley loaves and two small fish. But even he hesitated: “What are they among so many?”

Oh, how many times I’ve asked that question! “Lord, what is my small gift compared to the great need?” “What is my voice among so many others?” “What difference can I make?”

The Power of Surrender

But here’s where the miracle happens. The little boy didn’t have much, but he gave Jesus everything he had. And that’s what ministry is about—bringing what you have to Jesus and letting Him multiply it.

Jesus took the loaves, looked up to heaven, gave thanks, broke them, and distributed them to the people. And everyone ate until they were

full! Not just a snack—not just enough to hold them over—but they ate as much as they wanted. And when it was all over, twelve baskets of leftovers remained.

That's the power of putting what you have in the hands of the Master.

I've seen this in my own life. I've seen God take my small offerings—my limited resources, my humble abilities, my simple obedience—and turn them into something far greater than I ever imagined. Every time I've stepped out in faith, trusting God to use what I have, He has provided in ways I never expected.

The Call to Action

So, here's the lesson I've learned and the lesson I want to share with you:

1. No matter how big or small, bring the Lord all that you have and let Him use you for the Kingdom.
2. No matter how poor you are, bring Him your talent and watch Him bless others through you.
3. No matter how insignificant you feel, bring Him your time and see how He uses it for His glory.
4. No matter how little you have, bring Him your tithe and offerings and watch Him multiply it.
5. No matter how weak you may feel, bring Him your life and let Him strengthen you in His grace.

God specializes in using little things to accomplish great things. He used a little shepherd boy named David to take down a giant. He used a little virgin girl to bring forth the Savior of the world. And He wants to use you—right where you are, with what you have—to do something amazing.

The Invitation

When the day was over, the disciples realized that they had more than they started with. And that's what happens when you serve the Lord—you always get back more than you give.

So let me ask you: When your day is over, when your journey is complete, how many lives will you have touched? How many souls will have come to know Jesus because you said “yes” to using what you have for ministry?

Give Him everything, and watch what He does with it. Amen.

CHAPTER FIVE

How I Learned to Handle Jeopardy on the Journey with Jesus

MARK 4:35-41

Life is a journey. I've learned that firsthand. We're all traveling from point A to point B, making our way through this world toward our eternal destination. But let me tell you something I've discovered in my 42 years of living—no matter how smooth the road seems, there's always some jeopardy waiting around the corner.

Jeopardy—that's just a fancy word for trouble, danger, calamity. And if you've lived long enough, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Just when you think life is all sunshine and blue skies, a storm comes out of nowhere. No warning, no preparation—just trouble knocking at your door.

I've been there. I've been caught off guard, blindsided by life's storms. But I've also learned something through the Word of God, something that changed the way I handle jeopardy on the journey. And today, I want to share that lesson with you.

Journeying with Jesus

I can relate to the disciples in Mark 4. They were on a journey, but they weren't alone. They were with Jesus. And not just that—He gave them a command: “LET US PASS OVER TO THE OTHER

SIDE.” That means He had a destination in mind, and He expected them to make it!

Now, let me paint the picture. That sea, that journey, it represents our lives. We, as believers, are crossing the sea of time, making our way to the other side—heaven. But just like those disciples, we’ve been given a promise. We’re going over, not under. We’ve been given a divine assignment to travel with Jesus. And yet, even when you’re with Jesus, jeopardy still shows up on the journey.

I’ve faced it. You have too. Life as a child of God is not a smooth sail—it’s a journey:

- 1. A journey filled with trials and tribulations.**
- 2. A journey with unwanted surprises.**
- 3. A journey with twists, turns, and dangers designed to take you out.**

And just like that night on the Sea of Galilee, storms come when you least expect them.

Jeopardy on the Journey

Mark 4:37 says, “A FURIOUS SQUALL CAME UP.”

That storm wasn’t in the forecast. It wasn’t expected. But suddenly, the wind started howling, and the waves started crashing. And before

they knew it, water was coming into the boat. Now, it's one thing to be in the water, but it's another thing when the water starts getting in you!

Let me break this down:

- This storm came **suddenly**.
- This storm came **violently**.
- This storm came **at night**.

And that's how life's jeopardy works! Just when you think you're safe, the storm hits:

- You get a call that your marriage is over. **Storm.**
- A loved one dies unexpectedly. **Storm.**
- You get laid off, and bills are piling up. **Storm.**
- Your child is caught up in drugs. **Storm.**
- You go in for a routine check-up, and the doctor says, "It's cancer." **Storm.**

These storms don't announce their arrival. They don't give you time to prepare. They just come, and they come hard.

And let's be real—sometimes these storms shake our faith. The disciples were in **full panic mode**. These were fishermen—experts in the sea—but this storm was too much. They thought they were going to die. Maybe you've been there. Maybe you've had nights where you thought, LORD, I DON'T KNOW HOW I'M GONNA MAKE

IT. That's where they were. But here's what I love about this passage: **Jesus was in the boat!**

CHAPTER SIX

How I Handle the Transitions of Life

Joshua 3:1-5 (NKJV)

THEN JOSHUA ROSE EARLY IN THE MORNING; AND THEY SET OUT FROM ACACIA GROVE AND CAME TO THE JORDAN, HE AND ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AND LODGED THERE BEFORE THEY CROSSED OVER. SO IT WAS, AFTER THREE DAYS, THAT THE OFFICERS WENT THROUGH THE CAMP; AND THEY COMMANDED THE PEOPLE, SAYING, “WHEN YOU SEE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND THE PRIESTS, THE LEVITES, BEARING IT, THEN YOU SHALL SET OUT FROM YOUR PLACE AND GO AFTER IT. YET THERE SHALL BE A SPACE BETWEEN YOU AND IT, ABOUT TWO THOUSAND CUBITS BY MEASURE. DO NOT COME NEAR IT, THAT YOU MAY KNOW THE WAY BY WHICH YOU MUST GO, FOR YOU HAVE NOT PASSED THIS WAY BEFORE.” AND JOSHUA SAID TO THE PEOPLE, “SANCTIFY YOURSELVES, FOR TOMORROW THE LORD WILL DO WONDERS AMONG YOU.”

Introduction

Life is full of transitions. Some are exciting, some are painful, and some leave us wondering how we will ever make it through. I know

this firsthand because my life has been one transition after another. And if I'm being honest, there have been times when I didn't know how I was going to handle the next step. But I've learned something—God has already gone before us, and He has a plan for every transition we face.

Maybe you're going through a transition right now. Maybe you're aging, and your body doesn't respond the way it used to. Maybe you're facing the loss of a loved one, and you don't know how life will go on without them. Maybe you're looking for work, searching for stability, or just trying to figure out what's next.

Transitions can be tough, but they are also opportunities for growth and deeper trust in God. As I reflect on how I handle the transitions of life, I find wisdom in Joshua's story. His leadership, his load, and his lesson offer us a roadmap for crossing the Jordan Rivers in our lives.

I. My Leadership in Transition

The Bible says Joshua rose early in the morning and set out on the journey. When I look at that, I see a principle: handling transitions requires preparation, diligence, and faith. I've learned that when God calls me to move, I can't be lazy about it. I have to get up early—spiritually speaking—meet with God, get my marching orders, and be ready to lead.

Let's be real—leading in transition is hard. Not everyone wants to move. People get comfortable where they are. Some resist change, some complain, and some just outright refuse to follow. I've been there. I've led when people wanted to stay put. I've given direction

when folks wanted to go their own way. And I've learned that obedience to God matters more than pleasing people.

When God says move, I have to move. Even when the waters ahead look deep. Even when the way isn't clear. Even when I don't know what's on the other side. God is in control, and my job is to follow His lead.

II. The Load I Carry in Transition

Joshua had a heavy load. He was responsible for thousands of people. That's a weight I can relate to. When God calls you to lead in transition, it comes with responsibility. You have people depending on you. You have choices to make that affect others. And let's be honest—it can feel overwhelming.

But Joshua didn't carry the load alone. He had officers, leaders, and priests who helped guide the people. And most importantly, they all followed the Ark of the Covenant—the visible representation of God's presence.

That's my lesson right there: I don't have to carry the load alone. I need godly people around me. I need a team. And above all, I need to follow God's presence. When I stay behind the Word of God, when I trust that He is leading, I don't have to fear the unknown.

Somebody needs to hear that today—stop trying to carry your transition alone! Surround yourself with godly people. Follow the Word of God. Let Him lead, and you'll make it through.

III. The Lesson I've Learned in Transition

Joshua told the people, “SANCTIFY YOURSELVES, FOR TOMORROW THE LORD WILL DO WONDERS AMONG YOU.” Before the miracle, before the breakthrough, before they crossed over, they had to prepare themselves spiritually. That’s a word for somebody today.

I’ve learned that every transition requires consecration. I have to check my heart, let go of what’s holding me back, and set myself apart for what God is about to do. Transitions aren’t just about a new place—they are about a new me. God uses transitions to refine us, to teach us, to draw us closer to Him.

So here’s my encouragement: if you’re in a transition, don’t fight it. Prepare for it. Seek God. Consecrate yourself. Because if He’s leading you into something new, He’s getting ready to do wonders among you.

Conclusion

Life’s transitions can be scary, but I’ve learned to trust the One who goes before me. Whether it’s a new season, a new challenge, or an unknown future, I know God is already there. And if I stay behind His Word, surround myself with godly people, and prepare my heart, I can handle any transition He brings my way. And so can you.

CHAPTER SEVEN

How I Learned to Handle Difficult Assignments in Ministry

Genesis 32:1-3

I remember the first time God called me to face something difficult in ministry. It wasn't something I wanted to do, but rather something I HAD to do because I was walking in obedience. I had messed up before—handled things poorly, hurt some people along the way—and now, God was calling me to go back and make things right.

Jacob's story in Genesis 32 reminds me so much of my own journey. He had left home on bad terms, and now God was calling him back. He had to face the consequences of his past actions. That's a tough assignment! But what I love about this passage is that it shows us how God doesn't leave us to handle difficult assignments alone.

I've learned three key things about healing relationships when I've been the one who caused the hurt: REPENTANCE, RESTORATION, AND RECONCILIATION. Jacob's journey gives us a roadmap for handling those tough moments.

God's Divine Assistance

"AS JACOB AND HIS HOUSEHOLD STARTED ON THEIR WAY AGAIN, ANGELS OF GOD CAME TO MEET HIM. WHEN JACOB SAW THEM, HE EXCLAIMED, 'THIS IS GOD'S CAMP!' SO HE NAMED THE PLACE MAHANAIM." (Genesis 32:1-2)

Looking back, I realize now that every difficult assignment I've faced in ministry has come with divine help. God knew what Jacob was about to face, and He sent heavenly warriors to assist him. I believe God does the same for us.

Here's what I've learned:

- **God never sends you on a mission without divine supervision.** If He calls you to do it, He's going to guide you through it.
- **God's plan is for you to succeed, not to fail.** Even when it feels overwhelming, trust that He is working it out.
- **God sends reminders along the way.** Just like Jacob named the place "God's Camp," we ought to remember the places where we've seen God show up in our assignments.

Let me ask you:

1. Has God ever called you to do something hard for Him?
2. Have you ever had a moment where you knew without a doubt that God was with you?
3. Can you recall a place where you saw God's goodness, protection, and guidance in a tough situation?

Going Down Anxious

"JACOB NOW SENT MESSENGERS TO HIS BROTHER, ESAU, IN EDM, THE LAND OF SEIR. HE TOLD THEM, 'GIVE THIS MESSAGE TO MY MASTER ESAU: HUMBLE GREETINGS FROM YOUR SERVANT JACOB! I HAVE BEEN LIVING WITH UNCLE LABAN UNTIL RECENTLY, AND NOW I OWN OXEN, DONKEYS, SHEEP, GOATS, AND MANY SERVANTS, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. I HAVE SENT THESE MESSENGERS TO INFORM YOU OF MY COMING, HOPING THAT YOU WILL BE FRIENDLY TO US.'" (Genesis 32:3-5)

Jacob was nervous—REAL nervous. And I get it. When I've had to go back and fix something I messed up, I've felt that same anxiety. The shame, the guilt, the fear of how the other person will respond—it's a heavy burden.

Jacob didn't just show up at Esau's doorstep unannounced. He took some steps to soften the situation:

1. He sent a message ahead of time.
2. He expressed humility.
3. He let Esau know where he had been and that he wasn't coming empty-handed.
4. He hoped for acceptance.

Here's what I've learned:

- Facing people we've hurt is tough, but we have to be willing to do it.
- The fear of rejection or anger can be overwhelming, but obedience is greater than fear.
- God doesn't just want us to say "I'm sorry"—He calls us to RECONCILIATION.

Esau had every reason to still be angry. The last time Jacob saw him, Esau had sworn to kill him! (Genesis 27:41) And yet, Jacob still had to go back.

Let me ask you:

1. How do you handle it when God calls you to fix a broken relationship?
2. Have you ever had to approach someone you've hurt and make things right?
3. Has God ever challenged you to be the first to reconcile?
4. What does the Bible say about reconciliation? (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

Closing Thoughts

I've learned that handling difficult assignments in ministry isn't just about obedience—it's about trust. Trusting that if God sends you, He'll go with you. Trusting that even when it's uncomfortable, His grace is sufficient. Trusting that He can heal even the deepest wounds.

If you're facing a difficult assignment today, be encouraged. God sees you. He has assigned heavenly help to guide you. He wants you to succeed. And He will be with you every step of the way.

Let's trust Him together.

CHAPTER EIGHT

How to Go Through Your Gethsemane

Mark 14:32-42

I remember the first time I truly realized what it meant to enter my own Gethsemane—the place where my calling would truly be tested. It wasn't just a matter of answering the call; it was about understanding that sometimes, the journey will bring us to a place where we're surrounded by people but, in reality, we're all alone with God.

In my own walk, I learned something powerful: there are moments in life that are tough, moments that are meant for you to walk through alone, even when you're with others. That place—your Gethsemane—is where you come face to face with the hard things that God has already ordained for your life. It's a process that's essential, even if it's painful, for our growth in the kingdom.

Let me take you through what I learned from this text. Through Jesus' experience in Gethsemane, I realized how to go through my own personal Gethsemane moments, moments that God was calling me to endure, for His greater purpose.

1. Go with a Heart to Pray

When I read the opening of this passage, I was struck by how Jesus brought His disciples with Him to Gethsemane, but He made space for Himself to pray alone. He didn't invite everyone to come into the depths of His struggle. He wanted to be alone with the Father.

The word "Gethsemane" means "the oil press." It's a place where olives are crushed to release oil, and that's symbolic of the crushing Jesus was about to experience. His heart was heavy, His soul was deeply distressed, but He still needed to get alone with God.

And then I saw something profound. Jesus took Peter, James, and John deeper into the garden with Him. These were the ones who were closest to Him. He was troubled in a way I couldn't fully grasp until I experienced my own struggles. Jesus, in His humanity, was dealing with "terrified amazement"—a crushing burden in His soul, one that threatened His very life. I can't help but think that in our own Gethsemane, we too face burdens that feel too heavy to bear, but the first step is always to go to God in prayer.

2. Go Deeper Than Normal in Prayer

Then, Jesus prayed a prayer that still echoes in my heart: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." There's a key here. Jesus wasn't afraid to ask God for what He needed, but His prayer wasn't just about His own will—it was about aligning His heart with the Father's will.

At first, I didn't understand why Jesus would pray this way. But then I realized: sometimes, we know God has called us to something painful, and yet, the flesh cries out. In my own journey, I've had to pray through moments where I knew the path ahead was difficult. I understood it was part of God's plan, but my heart still struggled. There were times when my flesh wanted to know: "Is there any other

way, Lord?" But, like Jesus, I had to learn to say, "Not what I will, but what You will."

That's when I understood what it truly meant to surrender—to pray, not just for my will to be done, but for God's will to take precedence, even when it hurt.

3. Go Guiding Others to Do the Same

Here's the part of the text that hits me every time. Jesus, after pouring out His heart in prayer, checked on His disciples—Peter, James, and John. He found them asleep. He asked them, "Could you not watch one hour?" It broke my heart to see this. Here Jesus was, in the deepest agony of His life, and His closest disciples couldn't stay awake and support Him.

But it's not just about them. This speaks to me personally, because in my own Gethsemane, I've had moments when I had to care for others while carrying my own burden. Have you ever been there? You're going through something heavy, but you still have to look out for the people around you? Jesus understood this, too. He didn't let the disciples off easy. He encouraged them to watch and pray, to stay alert, because He knew the temptation of the flesh was real.

And I've learned from this—our Gethsemane experiences are not just about us. We have a responsibility to guide others, to encourage them to stay awake, to pray, and to watch with us as we go through our trials. It's not just about enduring; it's about helping others endure too. We can't afford to be spiritually asleep.

4. Go Back to Prayer

After finding His disciples sleeping, Jesus goes back and prays again. And again. He models for us that, even when we feel like we've prayed enough, we must keep coming back to God. When we're in the thick of our Gethsemane moments, the flesh will try to tell us to give up, to stop praying, to stop watching. But Jesus showed us that prayer and vigilance are crucial to making it through.

There are times when it feels like we can't go on, but if Jesus could return to God in prayer again and again, so can we. We must keep pressing in, keep asking for God's will, and keep trusting that He will guide us through.

Conclusion

As Jesus moved forward, He faced His darkest hour. He was betrayed, falsely accused, and ultimately sentenced to die. Yet, because He endured in Gethsemane, He was prepared for the trial ahead. His prayer in Gethsemane set the stage for His ability to walk through the suffering that would bring us salvation.

As I reflect on my own Gethsemane moments, I see how vital prayer, surrender, and the guidance of others are in this journey. I've learned that, no matter how heavy the burden, God is with us in the garden. We may feel alone, but we are never truly abandoned.

If Jesus could face the cross after what He endured in Gethsemane, then I know that with His strength, I can face whatever comes my way. And so can you.

Watch and pray, my friends, and when the hour comes, you'll be ready to walk through your Gethsemane, just as He did.

CHAPTER NINE.

How I learned to deal with the Enemy of my Soul

2.Sam. 5:17-25

I want to talk to you today about how I learned to deal with the enemy of my soul, using David's strategy against the Philistines as a guide. You see, there's a truth I've come to understand: the moment God promotes you, that's often the moment the enemy starts looking for ways to attack you. That's what happened to David. The moment he was anointed king over Israel, the enemy took notice and came after him. But David had learned how to handle these attacks.

Let me take you to the moment when the enemy came after David. The Philistines heard about David's promotion, and they gathered to come against him. They were determined to stop him, but David did something profound. The moment he heard of the enemy's plans, he didn't just panic. He didn't ignore it or try to handle it on his own. David went to the stronghold, a place of refuge and protection. And that's the first thing I had to learn in my own life—when the enemy comes after me, I need to find my stronghold.

What's the stronghold? It's not just a physical place; it's a spiritual position. It's where you go when you need to be fortified, when you need to stand strong. For me, it's a place of prayer, a place where I remind myself of God's promises and seek His strength. I can't fight the enemy on my own; I need to get into the stronghold.

David knew his enemy. He had fought them before, and he knew their tactics. So, instead of being passive, David took the threat seriously and sought refuge. He didn't wait for the enemy to come to him. He took action.

I had to learn that. When trouble comes, I don't just sit back and wait for the storm to pass. I get into the stronghold and fortify myself. I remind myself that God is my refuge and my strength. I learn from David that I must prepare for battle, not because I am strong, but because I know where my strength comes from.

And then, David does something else. He inquires of the Lord. He asks God, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?" David didn't assume he could win because of his own strength. He recognized that his success in battle depended on God's direction. This is the second lesson I learned: when the enemy comes after me, I need to ask God how to fight. I need to seek His will for the battle.

You see, God didn't just give David a blanket "yes" every time. There was a time when God told David to go and fight, and David went to Baal Perazim and had a breakthrough. It was a victory, a moment of deliverance, where David could say, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water." That victory, that moment of breakthrough, came because David followed God's instructions.

But then the Philistines came back for more. And this time, God gave David a different strategy. This time, He told him not to go up against

them head-on but to circle around behind them and wait by the mulberry trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the trees, God said, “Then you shall advance quickly.” This wasn’t the same strategy as before. God was giving David a surprise attack, catching the enemy off guard.

Here’s what I learned from that: God doesn’t always fight the same way. Sometimes, the battle might seem familiar, but He’ll use a new strategy. It might not look like what you expect. It might not make sense to you, but when God is leading, it’s always the best plan. I’ve learned to trust that God will guide me with the right strategy, even when it’s different from the last time.

So, the victory didn’t come through the same methods. David had to trust God’s timing and trust that He was leading him. And when they heard the sound of marching in the mulberry trees, they moved quickly, and the enemy was defeated. The Lord went out before them, striking the Philistines, and the Israelites won.

I’ve learned that victory doesn’t always come in the way I expect, but it always comes when I trust in God’s direction. Sometimes the breakthrough happens in the strangest places or in ways I wouldn’t have imagined. But God knows exactly how to defeat the enemy.

So, when the enemy comes after me, I’ve learned not to react in fear or frustration. I seek God first. I find my stronghold in Him, I ask for His direction, and then I trust His strategy. Whether it’s a direct confrontation or a surprise attack, I know that the victory belongs to God.

And the best part? I get to name the victory, just like David did. He called the place where they won the victory Baal Perazim, which means “The Lord of the Breakthrough.” I’ve had my own moments of breakthrough, and I’ve learned to give God all the glory for it. Every victory is a testimony of His faithfulness and power.

So, let me encourage you today: when the enemy of your soul comes after you, don’t run from it. Don’t pretend like it’s not happening. Get into the stronghold, ask God for His direction, and trust His strategy. The enemy will never stop trying to attack, but with God on your side, you will always have the victory. Can I get a witness?

CHAPTER TEN

How God Uses Trouble in the Church: Lessons I've Learned as a Pastor

In Acts 8:1-3, we see the church in Jerusalem facing intense persecution. It wasn't just some minor inconvenience; this was life-altering. People were losing their lives, getting arrested, and the entire church was forced to scatter. The saints had to watch every word they said, who they spoke to, and where they went. Following Jesus was no longer easy—it came with a real cost.

When Saul and the other religious leaders got a taste of blood, there was no stopping them. It was open season on Christians—arrests, beatings, imprisonment, even murder. The church was under fire, and it seemed like things couldn't get worse. But the real question that comes up for me, as I reflect on this passage, is: where was God? Why did He allow this to happen?

As a pastor, I've had my fair share of moments where I've wondered where God is when trouble hits the church. I've learned, though, that God's hand is often working behind the scenes in ways we can't immediately see. This passage teaches us some powerful lessons about how God uses trouble in the church.

God Uses Trouble to Send the Church

In Acts 8:1, we read that after the persecution, the church scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles. They didn't run; they stayed behind. I've often asked myself why the apostles didn't flee too, especially considering how dangerous the situation was for them. But then I realized that they had been given a deeper understanding of their mission. They knew their calling was to remain strong, to be witnesses, even in the face of persecution.

For the rest of the church, though, the scattering was part of God's divine plan. See, the early church was made up of Jews who were deeply attached to Jerusalem, the temple, and their homeland. But God had a bigger plan. Jesus had told them to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), and the persecution was the means by which that mission was finally pushed forward. The scattering led to the gospel being carried beyond Jerusalem to other cities like Antioch and Cyprus.

As a pastor, I've come to understand that sometimes God allows trouble to disrupt our comfort zones, forcing us to move out of our familiar places and into new territories. It's often through adversity that the church is propelled to fulfill its true calling. What seemed like a setback was actually a setup for the gospel to spread.

God Uses Trouble to Send Men

In Acts 8:2, we see that some devout men mourned deeply for Stephen and gave him a proper burial. Stephen's death was tragic, but it also marked the beginning of something significant. These godly men didn't let the trouble of Stephen's martyrdom scare them into silence. They mourned his loss, yes, but they also continued to honor the gospel and the faith for which Stephen had died.

The mourners showed us something important: they were not ashamed of the gospel, even in the face of death. They weren't afraid to stand in solidarity with those who were persecuted. They honored Stephen because they understood the value of his sacrifice, but more importantly, they understood the cause he had given his life for was worth every bit of the trouble.

As I look back over my own journey as a pastor, I've learned that trouble often reveals who truly stands with Christ. It's easy to follow Jesus when things are going well. But when persecution or hardship comes, it separates those who are just along for the ride from those who are truly committed to the cause. God uses trouble to send men and women who are faithful to the gospel, even when it's costly.

God Allows Trouble to Bring Saul to the Table

Finally, Acts 8:3 tells us that Saul was actively trying to destroy the church. He was going from house to house, dragging people off to prison, and causing chaos. Now, as a pastor, I've often wondered why

God allowed Saul to have so much power in the early days of the church. But then I see that Saul's persecution, while terrible, would eventually lead to his own conversion.

God allowed Saul's destructive actions to unfold because He had a greater plan for Saul. Saul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus would change the course of his life and, ultimately, the history of the church. What looked like trouble for the church was actually the beginning of something extraordinary—Saul, who would later become Paul, would be one of the most influential apostles in the New Testament.

I've seen in my own ministry that sometimes God allows trouble to bring people into our lives who we least expect. We might not see it in the moment, but those who oppose the gospel today might one day become its greatest advocates. God has a way of turning the hearts of even the hardest people. Saul's transformation reminds me that God's plans are always bigger than our immediate circumstances.

Conclusion

So, what have I learned as a pastor about how God uses trouble in the church? First, I've learned that God uses trouble to push us out of our comfort zones and spread the gospel. Second, I've learned that in the midst of trouble, God raises up faithful men and women to stand firm for the cause of Christ. And third, I've learned that God allows trouble to prepare us for what He's going to do next—even if it means using the hardest of circumstances to accomplish His will.

As the church, we will face trouble. But we can trust that God is always at work, even when we can't see it. We may not understand why trouble comes, but we can be sure that God will use it to advance His kingdom, strengthen His people, and bring glory to His name.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

How I Developed a Heart for God's House

Haggai 1:1-12

I remember when I first started to understand what it meant to have a heart for God's house. It didn't happen overnight. It wasn't something I just woke up with one morning. No, it was a journey—a process that God had to take me through. And as I look back, I can see how my story lines up so much with the story in Haggai.

The Israelites had been set free. God had brought them out of captivity, given them another chance, and allowed them to return home to rebuild their lives. They rebuilt their cities, their homes, and their communities. But when it came time to rebuild the temple—the very house of God—they put it on the back burner. They started the work, but in the midst of distractions and personal priorities, they walked away. Sixteen years passed, and still, God's house remained in ruins. They had become comfortable worshiping Him in a broken-down place. And if I'm honest, that was me at one point in my life.

God Uses Preachers to Speak to Leaders

When God wanted to deal with Israel's priorities, He sent a preacher. Haggai showed up with a word from the Lord, and it wasn't an easy one. He had to tell the leaders—Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest—that they had been neglecting God's house.

That reminds me of how God got my attention. I was busy, involved in everything, trying to build my own life, my own comfort, my own success. And God had to use a preacher to remind me that while I was making sure my house was in order, I was neglecting His house.

When God speaks, He speaks through His Word, and He often does it through preaching. That's why we need to stay under sound teaching. That's why we need to keep our ears open to what the Lord is saying. God still uses the foolishness of preaching to correct, to challenge, and to realign us with His will.

When Priorities Get Out of Order

Haggai's message was clear. He said, "You all are living in nice, paneled houses while the Lord's house is in ruins." That hit me hard. I thought about all the time, energy, and money I had poured into making sure my personal life was set. I was making sure I had the best opportunities, the best connections, the best everything. But what about God's house? What about the work He called me to do? What about serving in His kingdom?

God asked the people to "consider their ways." And that's exactly what I had to do. I had to stop and really think about what I was doing with my time, my resources, and my energy. Was I truly honoring God with what He had given me, or was I just making sure I was comfortable?

The Consequence of Neglecting God's House

Haggai told the people that they had been working hard, but nothing seemed to be enough. They planted, but didn't have enough food. They drank, but were never satisfied. They made money, but it disappeared like they had holes in their pockets. That's exactly how I felt when I was doing everything for myself and leaving God's work undone.

I was busy but unfulfilled. I was running, but I felt like I was going nowhere. And it wasn't until I shifted my focus back to God's house that I started to experience His provision in my life.

Putting God's House First

Haggai didn't just point out the problem—he gave them the solution. He told them to go up into the mountains, bring down timber, and rebuild the temple. In other words, get back to work! And when they did, God promised that He would be pleased and His glory would return.

That's what I had to do. I had to get back to work. I had to stop making excuses and start making moves. I had to be intentional about serving in His house, giving to His work, and prioritizing His kingdom. And when I did, I saw God move in my life in ways I never imagined.

The Bigger Picture

This isn't just about a physical building—it's about our commitment to God's work. And when I look at Jesus, I see the ultimate example of someone who was fully committed to God's house. He came to build a temple that would never be destroyed—the body of Christ, the Church. He laid the foundation with His own life, saying, "Upon this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

At Calvary, He secured our foundation. He gave His life so that we could be built into a spiritual temple. And because of what He did, we now have the privilege of being part of something eternal.

Conclusion:

Just like the Israelites had to make a decision, so did I. And maybe today, you need to make that decision too. Maybe you've been busy with your own plans, but it's time to prioritize God's house. Maybe you've been making excuses, but it's time to get back to work. Maybe you've been feeling unfulfilled, and God is saying, "It's time to put Me first."

The good news is, when we realign our hearts with His, He is faithful to provide, to restore, and to fill our lives with His presence. That's how I developed a heart for God's house. And I pray that you will too.

CHAPTER TWELVE

How I Learned to Never Give Up on People: Helping the Lots in Your Life

I've learned something in my walk with God: some people will keep getting themselves into mess after mess, and no matter how much you help them, they'll keep running back to trouble. But God has taught me never to give up on them.

One of the clearest examples of this in Scripture is Lot. My man Lot had a way of making bad decisions. He chased after what looked good but wasn't good for him. He moved into a wicked place—Sodom—thinking it would bring him success, but it only brought trouble. And when that trouble came, it didn't just affect him—it affected those who loved him, too.

That's why I want to talk about how to help the Lots in your life. You know who I'm talking about—that friend, that family member, that church member who keeps drifting away from God. There are three lessons I've learned from this story in Genesis 14 that will help us as we deal with the “Lots” in our lives.

Lot thought he was making a personal choice when he moved into Sodom, but what he didn't realize was that his decision would put others in danger. When war broke out, Lot and everything he owned were taken captive. And who had to go save him? Abram.

When I read this, I thought about how often we have to step in and rescue people we love because of the bad choices they make. Parents have to bail out their kids. Friends have to help someone out of a situation they should've never been in. Churches have to pray and intercede for people who knew better but didn't do better.

But here's the thing: God calls us to go after them anyway.

Abram didn't sit back and say, "Well, that's what Lot gets!" No, he gathered his men and went to battle for Lot's life. That's what true discipleship looks like! It's not clean, it's messy. It's not safe, it's risky. But when we love someone, we fight for them—even when they've made bad choices.

Personal Reflection

- Have you ever had to step in and help someone who made a bad decision?
- How did that affect you emotionally and spiritually?
- What does Galatians 6:1-2 say about restoring someone who has fallen?

Lot's decision to live in Sodom put him in a mess he couldn't get out of on his own. But here's the beautiful part—God still made a way for him to escape. That's grace.

I've learned that no matter how far people drift, God always provides a way out. The question is: Will they take it?

Abram fought and won the battle. Lot got all his stuff back. You would think that after all that, Lot would've said, "You know what? I'm done with Sodom. I'm going back with my uncle Abram where I belong." But no. Lot went right back to Sodom.

And that's what makes it hard to keep helping some people. They keep running back to what almost destroyed them. Have you ever helped someone, only to see them return to their bad decisions? It's frustrating! But here's what I've learned—we're not responsible for their choices; we're responsible for our obedience to God.

Personal Reflection

- What do Romans 12:1-2 say about being transformed instead of conforming?
- How do we stay patient with people who keep making the same mistakes?

After Abram rescued Lot, two kings came to meet him. One was Melchizedek, the King of Salem—a priest of God. The other was the King of Sodom. One represented God. The other represented temptation.

The enemy always shows up after victory. The King of Sodom tried to make a deal with Abram: "You can keep all the goods, just give me the people." But Abram wasn't fooled. He said, "I don't want anything from you. I don't want you to ever say you made me rich."

See, Satan doesn't care about your stuff. He wants your soul. He'll let you keep your job, your money, your status—as long as he can keep control over you. That's why we have to be careful after a spiritual victory. The enemy is always looking for an opportunity to trip us up.

Personal Reflection

- When have you experienced temptation right after a spiritual high?
- How does 1 John 2:15-17 warn us about the dangers of loving the world?

Lot went back to Sodom, but God still didn't give up on him. Later in Genesis, God sent angels to rescue him again before destroying the city. That's the patience of God!

So what have I learned? Never give up on people. Keep praying. Keep loving. Keep fighting for them. But also, be wise. Know when to step in and when to step back. Trust that God is working, even when you can't see it.

Let's be like Abram—willing to fight for those we love, patient when they mess up, and strong enough to resist temptation when it comes knocking.

Who is the Lot in your life? And how is God calling you to fight for them today?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

How I Learned to Have Peace in Difficult Times

John 16:31-33

Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? Indeed, the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Finding Peace When Life Falls Apart

There was a time in my life when I thought peace meant the absence of trouble. I believed that if I prayed enough, did enough good, and stayed faithful, then everything would fall into place. But Jesus’ words in John 16 shattered that illusion for me. He made it clear that trouble isn’t an exception to life—it’s a guarantee. The world is full of tribulations, hardships, disappointments, and struggles. But He also gave us a promise: **IN ME, YOU MAY HAVE PEACE.**

So how do we hold on to peace when everything around us is falling apart? I’ve learned that it starts with understanding that peace isn’t about circumstances—it’s about presence. It’s about knowing that God is with us even in the darkest moments. Just like Jesus said, even when He was abandoned by people, He wasn’t truly alone because the Father was with Him. And that same presence is with us today.

The Warning I Needed to Hear

Jesus told His disciples, **THE HOUR IS COMING WHEN YOU WILL BE SCATTERED**. He was preparing them for the difficult truth that they would all abandon Him in fear. And yet, even knowing that betrayal was coming, Jesus didn't panic. He remained steady because He knew that His Father was still with Him.

I had to learn this lesson the hard way. There were seasons in my life when I felt completely abandoned—by friends, by family, and even by those who claimed to be followers of Christ. But I discovered that even when people walk away, God never does. He is the constant in a world full of shifting relationships and unstable circumstances.

So when I face moments of uncertainty, I remind myself of this truth: **EVEN IF EVERYONE ELSE SCATTERS, I AM NEVER TRULY ALONE**.

The Peace I Didn't Expect

Jesus didn't sugar-coat reality. He told His disciples plainly: **IN THIS WORLD, YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION**. He didn't say **YOU MIGHT**, He said **YOU WILL**. But then He gave them an incredible reason to hold on: **BE OF GOOD CHEER, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD**.

That changed everything for me. Jesus wasn't asking me to have peace because my problems would magically disappear. He was telling me to have peace because He had already conquered everything I was afraid

of. If He could overcome death, suffering, and the forces of darkness, then surely He could handle my struggles too.

So I began to shift my perspective. Instead of praying for a trouble-free life, I started praying for the kind of peace that stands firm in the middle of the storm. And you know what? God answered that prayer. The more I trusted in Him, the less my circumstances had the power to shake me.

How's your prayer life these days, do you the peace of God covering you? Try shifting your perspective and see what that will get you. I am praying for you family!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

How I Learned to Do the Right Thing

Ephesians 4:1-3

I can't tell you how many times I've had to learn the hard way about doing the right thing. Life, ministry, relationships—each of them has taught me something about walking in a way that honors God. And when I think about Paul's words in Ephesians 4, I hear him not just talking to the church at Ephesus, but speaking directly to me. He's urging me—urging us—to live in a way that reflects our calling.

Paul wrote this letter from prison, yet he was more concerned about the spiritual health of the people in Ephesus than his own chains. That's love. That's commitment. And as I reflect on his words, I can't help but think about my own journey—how I've learned to walk worthy of the calling God placed on my life.

Learning to Walk in Humility and Gentleness

Paul says we are to walk with all lowliness and gentleness. Now, let me be honest with you—this wasn't always easy for me. There was a time when I thought leadership meant always being strong, always having the answer, always being in control. But life has a way of humbling you. Ministry will teach you that real strength isn't in pride, but in humility. Real power isn't in force, but in gentleness.

I remember early in my ministry, I was so focused on getting things right that I sometimes bulldozed over people's feelings. I thought I was helping, but really, I was hurting. It took some wise counsel and some deep prayer for me to realize that leading with humility and gentleness wasn't a sign of weakness—it was a reflection of Christ.

Learning to Be Patient and Bear with Others in Love

Paul talks about longsuffering—about bearing with one another in love. Now, let's be real: some folks will test your patience! Whether in church, in family, or in life, there will always be people who rub you the wrong way. But I had to learn that patience isn't just about tolerating people—it's about loving them in spite of their flaws, just as God loves me in spite of mine.

One of the hardest lessons I learned in ministry was how to love people who didn't always love me back. There were times I wanted to throw in the towel, walk away, and say, "Lord, you deal with them!" But God reminded me that if I'm going to walk worthy of my calling, I can't just love when it's easy—I have to love when it's hard.

Learning to Keep the Unity of the Spirit

Paul says we must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That word 'endeavor' means to strive, to work at it. Unity doesn't just happen—it takes effort. And I had to learn that firsthand.

There was a time in my life when I thought unity meant everyone had to think like me, act like me, and agree with me. But that's not unity—that's uniformity. True unity is when we come together, despite our differences, and choose to walk in peace. It means valuing

relationships over being right. It means listening more than speaking. It means choosing reconciliation over division.

Conclusion:

So what has life taught me about doing the right thing? It's taught me that walking worthy of my calling means walking in humility, patience, and unity. It means treating people right, even when they don't treat me right. It means choosing love over pride, peace over conflict, and service over self.

Paul may have been in prison when he wrote this, but he was freer than many of us. He had discovered the secret to a life well-lived: walking in a way that reflects Christ. And that's my prayer—not just for me, but for all of us. That we would live, love, and lead in a way that honors the One who called us.

Amen.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

How I Learned to Walk in the Light of the Lord

John 8:12 (NKJV)

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

I'll never forget the moment when I realized I needed to walk in the light of the Lord. It wasn't just a theological concept; it was a deep, personal conviction. Life had its way of pulling me into dark places—places of sin, confusion, and frustration. I had tried to navigate on my own, but the deeper I went, the more lost I felt. Then I heard Jesus' words: "I am the light of the world." And that changed everything.

This passage is a divine invitation. It's Jesus calling us out of the darkness and into His marvelous light. And if you're anything like me, you've had moments where you needed a fresh start, a way out, a new direction. This scripture has our name on it if we need to be set free, if we're looking for a way out of a bad situation, or if we want Jesus to lead us.

I relate to the woman caught in adultery from earlier in this passage. She was dragged before Jesus, accused, humiliated, and framed by the religious leaders. But Jesus did something incredible—He defended her. He refused to let the darkness of condemnation consume her. And after dealing with her accusers, He extended mercy to her, giving her a second chance at life. That's what He did for me, too.

I had been stuck in the cycle of my own failures, my own mistakes, my own pride. But Jesus didn't leave me there. He spoke into my life, just like He spoke into hers. And then He declared to the crowd—and to me—"I am the light of the world!"

He wasn't just making a claim. He was making a call. He saw the people celebrating at the Feast of Tabernacles, lighting their torches to remember how God led Israel through the wilderness with a pillar of fire. But Jesus knew something they didn't—those torches would eventually burn out. Their joy would be temporary. Their light wouldn't last. And I realized I had been doing the same thing—chasing temporary solutions to eternal problems.

Jesus said, "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." That's what I was missing. I believed in Jesus, but I wasn't following Him. I still tried to do things my own way. I still held on to old habits. But Jesus wasn't calling me to part-time discipleship; He was calling me to total surrender.

That's when I had to make a decision. Would I keep walking in darkness, or would I step fully into the light? Would I keep looking for temporary fixes, or would I trust the everlasting Light? I had to give up my old way of thinking, my old way of living, my old way of trying to control my own destiny. And let me tell you—when I finally let go, when I finally followed Him with everything, my whole life changed.

This world is dark. Sin is everywhere, and it has real consequences. I've seen it in my own life, and I've seen it all around me:

- Because of darkness, we experience pain, loss, and suffering.

- Because of sin, families are broken, lives are shattered, and hope seems lost.
- Because of sin, we look for joy in all the wrong places, only to end up empty.

But Jesus came to change that. He didn't just expose the darkness; He defeated it. His light isn't temporary—it's eternal. When I started following Him, I began to see clearly for the first time. The things that used to have a hold on me started to break away. The burdens I carried started to lift. His light showed me a better way to live.

Following Jesus isn't just about believing in Him; it's about surrendering to Him. When He calls us to follow, He's calling us to trust Him completely.

- It's a call to abandon our own agenda.
- It's a call to surrender our plans for His purpose.
- It's a call to trade our temporary pleasures for eternal joy.

That's what I had to do. I had to stop leading and start following. I had to stop chasing after things that didn't last and start holding on to the One who is everlasting. And let me tell you—the moment I truly followed Him, I found what I had been searching for all along.

Jesus made a promise: "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." That means when we follow Him, we don't have to be consumed by darkness anymore.

- We don't have to live in sin.

- We don't have to be bound by fear.
- We don't have to wander without direction.

His light gives us clarity. His light gives us victory. His light gives us life.

And here's the best part—His light never fades. Unlike the torches at the Feast of Tabernacles, unlike the temporary joys of this world, His light is eternal. And when we follow Him, that light shines in us.

So, how do we walk in the light?

1. **We stay close to Jesus.** The closer we are to the Light, the brighter our path becomes.
2. **We surrender daily.** Walking in the light isn't a one-time decision—it's a daily commitment to follow Him.
3. **We reflect His light.** When we walk in the light, others will see Jesus in us.

Jesus is calling us to step out of the darkness and into His marvelous light. And as we begin a new season, I encourage you—don't settle for temporary light. Don't go back to old ways of thinking, old habits, or old struggles. Follow Him completely. Trust Him wholeheartedly. And walk in the light of life.

I know firsthand that it's the best decision you'll ever make. Because when you walk in the light of the Lord, you'll never be the same again.

Amen.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

How to Get A Closer Look at Jesus

Luke 9:28-37

You know, I've come to learn that there's no greater joy in the Christian journey than getting an invitation from God to be alone with Him—to see what no one else gets to see. And every now and then, when I pray, God has a way of pulling back the curtain and giving me a glimpse of Him like I've never seen before.

That's exactly what happens in our text today. Jesus takes a few disciples with Him, and He shows them something extraordinary. He shows them what they can expect when they commit to prayer—an opportunity to see His deity in a way they never imagined.

And as I reflect on this passage, I realize that my own journey with Jesus has been filled with moments where He called me to take a closer look. So today, I want to walk with you through three key aspects of this passage: the appearance of Jesus, the awareness of Jesus, and the announcement of Jesus.

The passage tells us that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on the mountain to pray. Now, right there, something stands out to me—Jesus invited them. They didn't just stumble upon this moment. They were chosen to go deeper, to see what others wouldn't see.

I remember a time in my life when I felt Jesus calling me to come closer. It wasn't a literal mountain, but it was a spiritual climb. He was drawing me into deeper prayer, into a place where I would see Him differently than before. And just like these disciples, I had to make a choice—would I go?

The Bible says that as Jesus prayed, His face changed, and His clothes became dazzling white. That tells me something: if you want to see Jesus differently, you've got to be willing to meet Him in prayer. Prayer is where transformation happens! When I started praying more seriously, spending real time with God, I began to see Him in ways I never had before. It wasn't just hearing about Him—it was experiencing Him.

And then, something amazing happens—Moses and Elijah show up! Two men who had been long gone from the earth are now standing there with Jesus, talking about what's to come. It's a reminder that when you get close to Jesus, He reveals mysteries, He unfolds His plan, and He shows you things beyond this world.

Now, here's where it gets interesting. The Bible says Peter and the others were heavy with sleep. And when they woke up fully, they saw Jesus in His glory along with Moses and Elijah.

Have you ever been spiritually asleep? I know I have. There have been seasons where I wasn't paying attention, where I was distracted, where I almost missed what God was doing because I wasn't fully awake. But thank God for His grace that shakes us and wakes us up so we don't miss His glory!

Peter, once he wakes up, is so amazed that he blurts out, “Master, it’s good for us to be here! Let’s build three tabernacles—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!” I can understand Peter’s excitement. I’ve had moments where I was in the presence of God and I just wanted to stay there. I’ve had church services, prayer times, and personal encounters where I didn’t want to leave. But Peter was missing something—this wasn’t the final destination. Jesus still had a mission to accomplish.

I had to learn this too. There were times when I wanted to stay in the comfort of a spiritual high, but Jesus reminded me—there’s still work to do. There are still people who need to hear the gospel, still battles to fight, still lives to be changed. I couldn’t stay on the mountain; I had to take what I experienced there and bring it down to where people needed it.

Then, while Peter is still talking, a cloud appears and overshadows them. And out of the cloud, the voice of God speaks: “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”

Whew! If there was ever a moment where God interrupted our plans to make His will clear, this was it. Peter had good intentions, but God had a greater plan. He was reminding them—and reminding me—that above all else, we need to listen to Jesus.

I’ve learned that sometimes, I get so caught up in my own ideas, my own plans, my own excitement, that I forget to stop and just listen to what Jesus is saying. But God makes it plain—“Hear Him!”

If the church would just hear Jesus, we'd love one another better. If we would hear Jesus, we'd serve the poor and care for the hurting. If we would hear Jesus, we'd be better disciples, better witnesses, better reflections of Him in the world.

Conclusion

And then, after all of this, the Bible says when the voice ceased, they looked up and saw only Jesus. No Moses. No Elijah. Just Jesus.

At the end of the day, that's all we need. When the cloud lifts, when the excitement fades, when all the distractions are gone—Jesus is still standing. And He's the one we need to follow.

I don't know about you, but I want to take a closer look at Jesus. I don't want to be satisfied with surface-level faith. I don't want to just hear about Him from others—I want to see Him for myself. And I've learned that if I meet Him in prayer, stay spiritually awake, and truly listen to His voice, He'll reveal Himself in ways I never imagined.

So my question to you today is this: Are you ready to take a closer look at Jesus?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

How I learned to Meet With God

Exodus 34:1-2

I remember the first time I realized that meeting with God wasn't just a religious obligation—it was an invitation to intimacy. I grew up hearing about prayer, hearing about spending time with God, but it wasn't until I went through a season of struggle that I truly learned what it meant to have a meeting with God.

I was in a place where I needed direction. I needed clarity. I needed to hear from God. And in that season, the Lord led me to Exodus 34, where Moses had an appointment with God. As I studied the passage, I saw three things: God's Instruction, God's Intimacy, and God's Illumination.

God's Instruction: Be Ready for the Meeting

The Lord told Moses, “CUT TWO TABLETS OF STONE LIKE THE FIRST ONES, AND I WILL WRITE ON THESE TABLETS THE WORDS THAT WERE ON THE FIRST TABLETS WHICH YOU BROKE. SO BE READY IN THE MORNING, AND COME UP IN THE MORNING TO MOUNT SINAI, AND PRESENT YOURSELF TO ME THERE ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN.” (Exodus 34:1-2)

I love this because God gave Moses clear instructions. He told him to be ready, to bring something with him, and to show up at a designated place. And I realized that if I wanted to meet with God, I had to prepare myself too. I had to bring something to write with because when God speaks, His words are too important to trust to memory alone. I had to wake up early, make the effort, and position myself to hear from Him.

I learned that meeting with God isn't accidental—it's intentional. God desires to speak, but He calls us to be ready to listen. I had to stop treating my time with God as something I squeezed into my schedule. Instead, I started setting aside time, preparing my heart, and expecting to hear from Him.

God's Intimacy: The Meeting is Personal

The Bible says, “THEN MOSES ROSE EARLY IN THE MORNING AND WENT UP MOUNT SINAI, AS THE LORD HAD COMMANDED HIM... NOW THE LORD DESCENDED IN THE CLOUD AND STOOD WITH HIM THERE, AND PROCLAIMED THE NAME OF THE LORD.” (Exodus 34:4-5)

That part hit me deep—THE LORD DESCENDED AND STOOD WITH HIM THERE. God wasn't distant. He wasn't far off. He came near. And that's when I realized that meeting with God isn't just about bringing requests; it's about experiencing His presence.

I started to shift my focus. Instead of just coming to God with a list of things I needed, I began to sit in His presence and let Him reveal Himself to me. And let me tell you—God is so much more than what we ask Him for! Just as He revealed His name to Moses, He began revealing His character to me. He showed me His mercy, His patience, His faithfulness, and His love in ways I had never experienced before.

I also noticed that God called Moses to meet Him alone. Sometimes, you’ve got to separate yourself. There are moments when you can’t take everybody with you. Your meeting with God is personal. I had to learn that while corporate worship is powerful, there is no substitute for one-on-one time with God.

God’s Illumination: Seeing God More Clearly

Then comes the most powerful part of Moses’ encounter with God: “AND THE LORD PASSED BEFORE HIM AND PROCLAIMED, ‘THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, LONGSUFFERING, AND ABOUNDING IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH, KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS, FORGIVING INIQUITY AND TRANSGRESSION AND SIN...’” (Exodus 34:6-7)

God revealed Himself! Moses came to the meeting expecting to receive something, but he left with a greater revelation of who God was. And I’ve found that every time I make space to meet with God, He shows me something about Himself that I didn’t see before. He

gives wisdom. He gives direction. He gives peace. And most of all, He gives Himself.

Moses responded the only way he could—“SO MOSES MADE HASTE AND BOWED HIS HEAD TOWARD THE EARTH, AND WORSHIPED.”(Exodus 34:8) That’s what happens when you really meet with God. It shifts you from asking to adoration. You go from seeking His hand to seeking His face. Worship becomes the only reasonable response.

Conclusion: My Invitation to You

I don’t know where you are in your journey, but I do know this—God desires to meet with you. He has a place, a word, and a revelation just for you. But you have to be intentional. You have to prepare. You have to separate yourself. And when you do, I promise you this—God will descend and stand with you there.

I learned how to have a meeting with God, not because I was perfect, but because I was desperate. And in my desperation, I found intimacy, revelation, and transformation. And you can too.

The question is: Are you ready to meet with Him?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

How I Learned to Have a Good Perspective on Pastoral Ministry

John 3:22-36

I'll be honest with you—when I first started in ministry, I didn't fully understand what it meant to serve in God's kingdom. I had a vision of what I thought ministry should be, and when things didn't go my way, I struggled. But over time, the Lord taught me a powerful lesson about having the right perspective on ministry, and I want to share that with you today.

The truth is, everyone who has been saved and filled with God's Spirit is in ministry. You may not be on a church staff. You may not lead a nonprofit or work for a Christian organization. But if Jesus has saved you, you have a calling to be His witness wherever He places you.

That means ministry happens in more ways than we often recognize:

- Your ministry may be raising your children in a God-honoring way.
- Your ministry may be serving as a faithful employee in your workplace.
- Your ministry may be caring for a loved one or being a godly spouse.

Whatever God has assigned you to do for His glory—that’s ministry! Whether you’re a student, an athlete, a janitor, a police officer, or a business owner, you are in full-time ministry.

Our text today gives us a picture of someone who got ministry right—John the Baptist. He understood his calling and embraced God’s plan, even when things didn’t seem to go in his favor.

John had been preaching and baptizing, and people were coming to him in droves. But then Jesus showed up. Suddenly, John’s ministry started to shrink while Jesus’ ministry exploded. People were flocking to Jesus instead of John, and John’s disciples didn’t like it. They saw the shift as a threat.

I know how they felt! There was a time when I watched others succeed in ministry while I was struggling. I saw churches growing, pastors thriving, and ministries flourishing while I felt like I was treading water. It’s hard to watch someone else excel in what you feel called to do.

But John’s response is what changed my perspective. He wasn’t threatened by Jesus’ success. He didn’t complain or compare. Instead, he recognized that ministry wasn’t about him—it was about Jesus. He said in verse 30, “HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE.” What a powerful lesson!

Let’s be real—ministry doesn’t always go how we expect. Sometimes:

- Other ministries are thriving while yours feels stagnant.
- Someone else gets promoted while you’re overlooked.

- Another couple's marriage is strong while yours is struggling.
- Another leader gets the position you thought was yours.

How do you handle it? Do you get bitter? Do you give up? Do you start questioning your calling?

John didn't fight the change—he embraced it. He understood that ministry belongs to God. It's not ours to control. God can raise up whomever He chooses, and He can sit us down when He sees fit. The right perspective in ministry understands that **WE ARE SERVANTS, NOT OWNERS.**

John's disciples were upset that Jesus was gaining influence. They wanted John to push back. But John wasn't insecure—he was secure in his calling. He didn't compete; he celebrated. He knew that Jesus was the reason for the ministry in the first place!

That hit home for me. I realized that if I was truly serving Christ, I couldn't be jealous of someone else's success. Ministry is not about building MY kingdom—it's about building GOD'S kingdom. And if God chooses to use someone else in a greater way, I should rejoice, not resist.

John told his disciples, “**A MAN CAN RECEIVE NOTHING UNLESS IT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO HIM FROM HEAVEN**” (v. 27). That means:

- Promotions come from God.
- Influence comes from God.

- Opportunities come from God.
- Ministry growth comes from God.

I had to learn to trust that what God had for me was for me. I didn't need to chase after someone else's calling. I didn't need to compete for a platform. All I needed to do was be faithful where God placed me.

John described himself as the FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM—not the groom. He was content celebrating Jesus instead of trying to take center stage. That's the attitude we all need in ministry! It's not about US. It's about HIM.

- In the church, it's about Jesus—not us.
- In the choir, it's about Jesus—not us.
- In the pulpit, it's about Jesus—not us.
- In every ministry, it's about Jesus—not us.

When we make ministry about us, we get frustrated, discouraged, and envious. But when we make ministry about Jesus, we find joy in simply serving.

Conclusion: He Must Increase, We Must Decrease

At the end of the day, the best perspective on ministry is John's perspective: "HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE. "That's my prayer now. I want Jesus to be glorified, even if that means

I take a back seat. I want His name lifted up, even if it means my name is forgotten.

When we truly embrace that perspective, we stop striving, stop comparing, and stop competing. Instead, we serve with joy, knowing that our work is not about making OUR name great—it's about making HIS name known.

So let's shift our perspective. Let's embrace the role God has given us. And let's find joy in knowing that every part of the ministry, big or small, is for His glory.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

How the Holy Spirit Walks with Me

John 14:15-18

"IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS. AND I WILL PRAY THE FATHER, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER HELPER, THAT HE MAY ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER—THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE IT NEITHER SEES HIM NOR KNOWS HIM; BUT YOU KNOW HIM, FOR HE DWELLS WITH YOU AND WILL BE IN YOU. I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ORPHANS; I WILL COME TO YOU."

Everybody, at some point in life, needs help. Life has a way of knocking the wind out of you, doesn't it? But when help comes, and especially when it comes from God, it is always right on time. That's what Jesus is saying in this passage—God knows what I need even before I do, and He has already made provisions to meet those needs.

When Jesus spoke these words, His disciples were troubled. He had just told them that He was leaving, and they were struggling to understand what that meant. I can relate to that. I've been in places where I didn't know what was coming next, where I felt lost, unsure, even afraid. But Jesus didn't leave them (or me) without hope. He made a promise that still holds true today—He sent the Holy Spirit to

walk with me. And through this passage, I've learned three powerful truths:

1. God is always looking out for me.
2. God cares about the discouragement I feel.
3. God has already provided everything I need.

Jesus says, "IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS." That's a direct charge. It's not just a suggestion—it's the key to unlocking the blessings He has for me.

I've found that when I focus on His Word, when I trust what He's told me to do, my perspective changes. Have you ever had thoughts that tried to take you hostage? Worries that robbed you of your joy? I know I have. Life's troubles have a way of making us forget the goodness of God. But when I remember His Word, when I keep His commandments, those things lose their power over me.

Loving Jesus isn't just about feelings—it's about obedience. And that obedience brings blessings, including the very presence of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Jesus promised, "I WILL PRAY THE FATHER, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER HELPER, THAT HE MAY ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER." That means I am never alone. Ever.

The Holy Spirit is my divine Helper. The Greek word used here—PARACLETE—literally means "one called alongside to help." That

means when I walk through life's valleys, I don't walk alone. When I don't have the strength to carry on, the Holy Spirit carries me.

There have been times when I didn't know how I was going to make it, but the Holy Spirit came alongside me, strengthened me, and guided me. Have you ever felt God's presence lifting you up when you were at your lowest? That's what He does! He doesn't just visit—He dwells in me. He's my comforter, my guide, my encourager, my strength.

The song says it best:

“God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way.”

And I've found that to be true in my own life.

Jesus goes on to say, “THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE IT NEITHER SEES HIM NOR KNOWS HIM; BUT YOU KNOW HIM, FOR HE DWELLS WITH YOU AND WILL BE IN YOU.”

Not everybody understands this relationship I have with God. The world doesn't get it. They can't see Him, so they don't believe in Him. But I know Him, because He's alive in me.

I've experienced the Holy Spirit leading me when I didn't know which way to go. I've felt His peace in the middle of life's storms. I've heard His voice reassuring me when I wanted to give up. He's real. He walks with me, talks with me, and reminds me that I belong to God.

Jesus promised, “I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS ORPHANS; I WILL COME TO YOU.” That promise means everything to me. It means I

don't have to go through life feeling abandoned, lost, or alone. It means that in every situation, I have divine support.

And that promise isn't just for me—it's for you too.

Conclusion

God knows exactly what I need. He knew I would need guidance, comfort, strength, and peace. And He provided all of that through the Holy Spirit.

So today, I stand on this truth:

- I am never alone.
- I have a Helper, a Comforter, a Guide.
- The Holy Spirit is alive in me, leading me, keeping me, and sustaining me.
- No matter what comes my way, I have everything I need because God Himself dwells in me.

And that's how the Holy Spirit walks with me—every step of the way!

CHAPTER TWENTY

How to Be a Preacher Sent from God

John 1:6-9

Let me take you back for a moment. Imagine a time when there was complete silence in heaven. There were no voices from God, no prophets, no miracles. Heaven was silent for 400 years. From the closing of Malachi's ministry to the opening of the New Testament, God had not said a word. The priests were still in place, religion still carried on, but the temple was defiled. People were going through the motions, but they had no true witness. Then came John—out of nowhere.

John's arrival was like a divine breaking of the silence. He was God's voice. He wasn't just another speaker—he was a messenger sent to break that silence. Imagine the significance of it: 400 years of silence, and then, bam! John comes with a message directly from God. His mission was clear—to prepare the way for Jesus. John was a voice in the wilderness, reminding the world that God was still speaking, and that salvation was on the way. John didn't just come to talk; he came to shout, to proclaim, to declare that the Savior was on His way.

Application:

You know, I think about how this applies to us today, especially those of us called to ministry. Like John, God has called some of us to be voices in the wilderness of our time. We may not have the crowds John had, but our mission is the same—to prepare the way for Jesus. As preachers, we're not just talking about Jesus—we're making His

name known, calling people to repentance, urging them to prepare their hearts for the coming King.

John didn't just speak about God; he spoke about salvation. His whole message was centered on Jesus. John's mission wasn't to bring light; it was to point to the Light. He was a witness, testifying that the true light of the world was coming. John wasn't the Messiah, but he was sent to make the world ready for Him. He called people to repentance, to turn from their sin, and to look forward to the Savior who was coming to take away the sins of the world.

Application:

Just like John, as preachers, we're not here to be the answer to people's problems. We're here to point to the One who is. Our job is to help people see that salvation is in Christ alone. We point them to the Light—Jesus. Like John, we may not be the source of salvation, but we can be the messengers who show people the way to Him.

Preaching isn't about us; it's about lifting up Jesus.

John came to give hope to the hopeless. He wasn't just preaching to the righteous; he was preaching to the broken, the lost, and the hopeless. He called people to prepare their hearts and lives to receive the Savior who would change everything. John wasn't afraid to speak hard truths. He was calling people to turn from their sin, but he was also offering them a path to redemption through Christ. He came to be the voice of help for the helpless.

Application:

As pastors, we too must be voices of hope to those who are hurting. We live in a world that needs hope, and as preachers, we're called to

bring that hope. We're called to speak to the brokenness of this world and offer the only true solution: Jesus Christ. We must never forget that our message is one of hope, and our calling is to be a voice for the helpless.

John was a messenger who fulfilled prophecy, and his presence was a sign that God was still at work. His message was not one of compromise; it was one of urgency. He came with fire in his belly, intensity in his preaching, and power in his words. John was unorthodox—he didn't follow the normal religious patterns of the day. He didn't try to fit in. He came with a message that would shake the very foundations of society and religion. He was a sight for sore eyes because he came with power and authority, a direct witness of the coming Messiah.

Application:

As preachers today, we too are called to be a “sight for sore eyes.” Our message may not always be popular, and we may not always follow the status quo, but that's okay. We're called to speak with boldness and power, just as John did. We don't need to fit in with the world; we need to stand out, to be the voice crying in the wilderness, calling people to repentance and pointing them to the Savior.

Conclusion:

As John was sent, so are we. Just as God called John, He has called you. Just as God empowered John, He will empower you. John was a witness to the coming King, and we too are witnesses to the same King. We're here to prepare the way, to make the paths straight, to point people to Jesus.

You see, when John came, he made a way for Jesus. And when we preach, we're doing the same thing. We're making a way for people to come to Christ. We're not here to be the savior; we're here to point to the Savior.

Application for the Church:

Christ can use a faithful witness like John. He can use a humble witness, a devoted witness, a preacher who serves like John. We may not always be popular, we may not always be accepted, but our calling is clear—to be witnesses for Christ and to prepare the way for His return.

So, I encourage you, my brothers and sisters, to continue in the work. Just like John, you have been sent by God. Keep on preaching, keep on testifying, and keep on preparing the way for Jesus, because He is coming again. And just as John said, when He comes, we'll know that the world will never be the same.

Let's continue to point to the Light, because just like John, we have the best news to share. Jesus is coming, and that changes everything. Keep preaching the Word! Keep pointing to Jesus!

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

How I Learned to Have a Right Ministry Perspective: Dwelling by the Brook

1 Kings 17:1-7

I remember when I first started in ministry, I thought I had it all figured out. I had the passion, the fire, and the conviction that I was going to do great things for God. But what I didn't realize was that God wasn't just calling me to do ministry—He was calling me to learn how to trust Him in the process. That's exactly what He did with Elijah, and that's exactly what He's done with me.

The Appointment: Called to Speak for God

I love how Elijah bursts onto the scene in Scripture. No introduction, no backstory—just a man with a word from the Lord. That reminds me that when God calls you, He doesn't need anyone else's approval. Elijah was called to stand before Ahab and declare judgment, and I've had my moments of standing before difficult people, speaking difficult truths.

When I first realized that God was appointing me for ministry, I didn't come from a long line of preachers. I wasn't the son of a bishop or the nephew of a great evangelist. Like Elijah, I came out of obscurity. But God's call doesn't require a famous background—just a willing heart. Elijah stood before Ahab and declared that there would be no rain until he said so. Imagine the courage that took! And yet, when I think back,

I see that God has given me moments like that—moments when I had to say something unpopular, moments when I had to stand alone, moments when I had to trust that if God sent me, He would sustain me.

That's the first thing I had to learn—when God calls you, you stand in His authority, not your own. I didn't need a title or validation. If God sent me, He would equip me.

The Assignment: Called to Hide

But then, just when Elijah had made this bold declaration, God told him to run and hide! That never made sense to me at first. Why would God call you to be bold one moment and then send you into hiding the next? But then I lived it.

There were seasons when I felt like I was ready to take on the world, but God was telling me to step back. To be quiet. To be still. And let me tell you, that's hard when you're a person of action! But God was teaching me what He taught Elijah—before you stand in power, you have to sit in His presence.

I had to learn that ministry isn't just about doing—it's about becoming. And sometimes, becoming requires isolation. Elijah had to go down by the brook, not because God was punishing him, but because God was preparing him. The same was true for me. When I thought I was ready to move forward, God would say, "Not yet." And those were some of the hardest seasons of my life.

But let me tell you something about the brook—when God puts you in a season of stillness, it's not because He's forgotten about you. It's because He's forming you. Down by the brook, I learned how to pray. Down by the brook, I learned how to trust. Down by the brook, I learned that being alone with God is sometimes the best place you can be.

The Arrangement: Called to Depend on God

Now, this part always amazes me—God tells Elijah that he will drink from the brook and that ravens will bring him food. Wait, what? Ravens? Those unclean, selfish birds? You mean to tell me that God was going to use a bird known for scavenging to be a divine delivery service?

That's when I learned another powerful truth—God's provision doesn't always come the way you expect. There were times in ministry when I didn't know how things were going to work out. I didn't know where the resources were going to come from, how the doors were going to open, or how I was going to make it. But then, out of nowhere, God would send provision in the most unexpected ways. Just like the ravens fed Elijah, God sent people, opportunities, and resources that I never saw coming.

I had to learn to trust that if God assigned me, He would sustain me. It wasn't about my ability—it was about His faithfulness. And I realized something else—God was also teaching Elijah (and me) that provision is daily. The ravens didn't bring a week's worth of food. They brought

what he needed for the moment. That's how God often works. He gives you what you need for today, so you learn to trust Him for tomorrow.

The Adjustment: Called to Move Forward

Now, here's the part that really hit home for me—after a while, the brook dried up. And I had to ask myself: What do you do when what God provided in one season is no longer there? I used to panic when things dried up—when opportunities changed, when doors closed, when the familiar was no longer available. But then I realized something—sometimes God dries up the brook because it's time to move.

God didn't abandon Elijah when the brook dried up—He was leading him to the next phase of his ministry. And that's exactly what He does with us. When the provision stops flowing in one place, it's because He's about to do something new in another. I've learned to stop mourning the brook when it dries up and start listening for the next instruction.

Conclusion: A New Ministry Perspective

Looking back, I see that every step of Elijah's journey was shaping him for something greater. And I see that in my own journey too. God had to teach me that:

- My calling is not about my background—it's about His appointment.
- My assignment may require seasons of stillness before seasons of action.
- My provision will come from unexpected places, and I must trust Him daily.
- When the brook dries up, it's time to move forward, not backward.

Maybe you're in a brook season right now. Maybe you feel like you're hidden, waiting, and wondering what's next. Let me encourage you—stay where God has placed you until He moves you. Trust that He is preparing you for something greater. And when the brook dries up, don't panic—just listen for His voice, because He's already made arrangements for your next step.

I don't know about you, but I've decided I want to have the right ministry perspective. I want to trust God in every season—whether I'm standing before kings or sitting by the brook. Because if God called me, He will keep me. And if He's keeping me, I've got everything I need.

Amen.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

How I Want to End My Ministry

2 Timothy 4:6-8

You know, one of the greatest truths in Scripture is found right here in this passage. It's the truth that one day, all of us are going to leave this world. And when we do, how we go and how we are remembered makes a difference. Paul, in his final words to Timothy, is giving him a glimpse of how he wants to be remembered. He's essentially preaching his own eulogy. And when I read these words, they make me reflect on my own journey and how I want to finish my race.

As I look back on my ministry, I want to be able to say that I lived a life poured out for God. Paul uses the image of a drink offering—a libation—that was completely emptied for the Lord. I want that to be my story too. I want my life to be poured out in service to God, in preaching, in teaching, in shepherding His people. I don't want to hold anything back.

When I think about Paul's words, I have to ask myself: Have I given my all to Christ? Have I lived sacrificially? Have I held anything back?

I want to end my ministry knowing that:

- When it came to serving others, I lived the poured-out life.
- When it came to preaching and teaching, I lived the poured-out life.

- When it came to taking care of the church, I lived the poured-out life.
- When it came to sacrificing for my family, for my congregation, for the call of God—I lived the poured-out life.

And I have to ask you today: Do you know what it means to live a poured-out life? Have you emptied yourself for the sake of Christ? Because that's what we're called to do—to give everything we have, so that when we leave this earth, we can say, "I held nothing back."

Paul shifts the imagery now to that of an athlete—a fighter in the ring, a runner on the track. He says, "I fought well, I ran well, and above all, I remained faithful." That's the kind of testimony I want to have when my ministry comes to an end.

Paul didn't say it was easy. He didn't say he walked a smooth path. No, he had to fight. He had to battle against opposition, against temptation, against discouragement. He had to run when he was tired. He had to push forward when everything in him wanted to quit. But through it all, he remained faithful.

I want to be able to say that, too.

- That even when I took blows, I remained faithful.
- That even when I suffered pain, I remained faithful.
- That even when I was tired, I remained faithful.
- That even when I was disappointed, I remained faithful.

Athletes don't quit in the middle of the race. Fighters don't walk away from the fight. And as believers, as ministers, we can't afford to quit either. So let me ask you: How are you running? How are you fighting? Can you say, like Paul, that you've remained faithful? Because in the end, that's what matters.

Paul could see the finish line. He could see the prize that was waiting for him. And that's how I want to end my ministry—with my eyes fixed on the reward.

I want to be able to say:

- I see the benefits of being a poured-out offering.
- I see the benefits of fighting when I didn't feel like it.
- I see the benefits of running when I was tired.
- I see the benefits of keeping my eyes on Jesus and staying disciplined in my faith.

Paul was sitting in Nero's prison, waiting for his execution, and yet he wasn't focused on his chains—he was focused on his crown. He knew that the righteous Judge had been watching. He knew that God saw every battle, every struggle, every sacrifice. And because of that, he could say with confidence, "The prize awaits me."

And guess what? That prize isn't just for Paul. It's for every believer who stays faithful to the end. It's for everyone who keeps their eyes on Jesus.

So I have to ask: Are you looking forward to the ceremony? Will you receive the crown? Are you living in such a way that you know, without a doubt, that the righteous Judge will say, “Well done”?

Because at the end of my ministry, that’s all I want. I want to hear Him say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” That’s how I want to end my ministry. That’s how I want to finish my race. And I pray, with everything in me, that when your time comes, you can say the same.

Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hey there, friend. I'm Rev. Dr. Angulus Dion Wilson, and if there's one thing you should know about me, it's that I love Jesus, and I love sharing His message with the world. My journey in ministry started back in 1991 when I answered the call to preach the Gospel, and it has been an incredible adventure ever since.

Alongside my wonderful wife, Sharon, we've been blessed to raise three amazing sons, and through the years, God has allowed me to serve as a pastor, preacher, church planter, theologian, and chaplain. I've had the privilege of ministering across the country and around the world, helping people discover the transforming power of Christ.

I've planted churches, walked alongside students as a University Pastor, and poured into the next generation of leaders through Bible schools, conferences, and seminars. Education has been a key part of my journey as well—I hold degrees from Fresno Pacific University, Wheaton College, Birmingham Theological Seminary, Ecclesia University of Divinity, and Azusa Pacific University. But more than any title or credential, I am a servant at heart.

Right now, I have the joy of serving as the Senior Chaplain at Wheaton College, where I get to shepherd students, faculty, and staff in their walk with Jesus. Whether I'm preaching, teaching, mentoring, or just sharing life with people, my mission remains the same: to point souls to Christ and encourage them to live for His glory.

Wherever God sends me—whether it's a pulpit, a classroom, or a mission field—I want to be a vessel He can use. And as you finish this

book, my prayer is that you, too, would embrace the calling God has placed on your life. Keep pressing forward, keep trusting in His grace, and keep shining His light in this world.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Dr. Angulus Dion Wilson