

# Part 7 - The Fear of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Sweet, my name is Jesse, like Bear said, and hello to everybody, and great to see a full house here, and also the boxes, if you're wondering what's going on, that Cherry Point Baptist, this is their fellowship hall, and they let us use this, but they do this really cool outreach program every single year, where they fill a bunch of backpacks with some real good necessities, and they take it up to really impoverished areas in the Appalachian Mountains, and they deliver them, they give them the gospel, all that kind of stuff.

So you're going to see these boxes will be here for a few weeks until about the middle of December, they pack them up and they ship them out, and so just bear with us, and I just wanted to give you that information knowing that, hey, if you understood what the boxes were for, it gives us a lot more grace for them, right?

So yeah, they're here for a very, very, very good reason. Cool. Those of you that are new, again, so glad you're here with us, hope that you grab a bite of pizza or salad or wings or whatever we got over there after the service, and I think it's a pretty good invitation, a really cool invitation.

You get to hang out with me and Bear. I mean, I don't know what everyone else thinks, but, you know, it's pretty awesome. It's pretty awesome. Thank you. Thank you. All right. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Man, it's so cool to see some of our Marines coming back from the places they've been to just, man, if you've, yeah. We really miss you guys.

[ 1 : 22 ] You guys know who you are. We really miss you. Great to have you back. All right. So, like Bear said, we are in this series called Ecclesiastes, and, man, you know, one of the idioms of the South that I really love and I never heard until I was here was this little phrase, you're getting it honest, right?

And that, to me, has been Ecclesiastes for the past seven weeks, right? It's this book that has just been giving it to us honest, right? It doesn't pull any punches. It is what it is. And sometimes, honestly, it feels like it's a little too honest sometimes.

It's like, hey, can you just, like, lie a little bit and let me know something's going to be okay here because it can sometimes feel really dark and hopeless. But you know what? As Proverbs says, it's the better the wounds of a friend than the kisses of an enemy, right?

Rather have someone tell you to it straight than lie to your face. And one of Ecclesiastes' refrains is that life is vapor. That phrase, it points out how vulnerable it all is, which points to how vulnerable we are, actually.

We are limited, weak, powerless people. We're powerless creatures. That's what it means to be created. And this isn't news to us because, you know what? Otherwise, we wouldn't experience fear.

[ 2 : 33 ] We would kind of go around without any anxiety, any worry, any fear in our lives. But we know that's not true. Fear is what is common to all of us. It's an emotion we all feel, we recognize, we know.

And to be honest, it's what drives many of our decisions and desires. It's why we have anxiety and panic attacks and nightmares. Think about this, right? What's one of the most common nightmares when you're a kid growing up?

Showing up to school naked or in your underwear, right? Like, am I the only one? I feel like that just happened to me right now. But we know that's like one of the most common themes.

We all had that nightmare once or twice or too many times growing up, just wearing it. And what that is getting at, it's a dream that, man, somewhere in our subconscious, somewhere deep down, it's recognizing that, man, we are vulnerable and we're actually scared of that.

We're scared of that vulnerability. We're scared of that being exposed. And the reason, the reason you and I fear, the reason we have fear is because we believe that there is something malevolent, something bad that we can't see, but we instinctively feel that's right around the corner.

[ 3 : 43 ] We know, man, something is looming. Something bad is going to happen right around the corner. Now, as people, there are many ways that we cope with this, right? We cope with this or we try and suppress it.

Last week, we looked at how we do that. We use pleasure and we use pride to really try to avoid reality, avoid this reality. And so those are a couple of big ways.

And there's still a real common way. A very common way we do this is we soothe ourselves through the belief that we can use good works as common currency, cosmic currency. We soothe ourselves through the belief that we can use good works as cosmic currency.

So this is the idea. My righteousness can buy me protection. My good works can buy me safety and security. And what that does, it turns God into the Godfather, right?

Now, it's one thing to believe that, but as you grow and you experience life and you get older, you start to realize that, man, that's a big wish, but it's really a fantasy.

[ 4 : 45 ] And so we're going to launch into Ecclesiastes verse 15 right now and look at why this is. It says, We've all seen that.

We all know that. We all know people like that. Everyone agrees with this. And if you don't, you're probably eight years old or you are living in a doomsday bunker. Now, while we would say and agree that absolutely this is true, right?

Bad things happen to good people and evil people live way too long. We may say and assent with our minds, but we actually don't live like this all the time. Do you remember that show, Howie Mandel's Deal or No Deal?

Remember this guy? You remember that? I don't even know. It might still be on. I just haven't seen it in a long time. But this is what always struck me, right? In that show, there was always a point where they would interview the contestants' family or friends.

And this is what they would always say about them. Oh, they deserve to win the million dollars. They deserve to win big. It was always the constant theme. And they would list off their resume of good works.

[ 5 : 54 ] This is why they deserve it. They're a good sister or a brother or a friend or parent or spouse, and they're generous and they're thoughtful. And they do all these amazing stuff. Look at their life. So we, in one sense, we agree, okay, it doesn't work out that way, but, man, we live like it is, man.

We talk and act and believe deep down. There's something very primal about us that believes our good works become cosmic currency. And that lie leads into another false assumption.

If good things are more likely to happen to good people, then, you know what? I should do all I can to stack the deck in my favor. I should be as righteous as I can. I should do as many good works as I can.

I should add rules upon rules upon rules so that I could be more and more righteous. But here we're warned, verse 16. Be not overly righteous and do not make yourself too wise.

Why should you destroy yourself? So the fundamental Baptist on this shoulder says, tear that out. Like, I don't like that verse. That makes no sense to me. All right?

[ 7 : 01 ] Be overly righteous? There's no such thing. And then there's the devious devil on this side of the shoulder saying, like, you know what? Make this your life first, Jesse. Don't be overly righteous.

Man, God's giving you... What's happening here? Is God's giving you a divine hall pass? Is that what's going on? But that's why we don't lift verses out of context. Before we get too excited and start planning our sin world tours and going on them, we have to read what's next.

Verse 17 says this. Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? Okay, did that help anybody?

All right? I'm looking at some of your faces. You're confused. Hey, I get it. So, okay, don't be too righteous and don't be too wicked.

What other options are there and why are you flip-flopping? Now, if you're like me, you go right to the conclusion of, oh, there must be this middle, this happy middle that I'm supposed to live in, right?

[ 8 : 06 ] But wait a second. Aren't we...are we really meant to be mediocre? I mean, I thought God hated that. I thought he spewed the lukewarm people out of his mouth.

And, you know, beyond that, like kind of living a happy, mediocre, simple life, like not up here, not down here, just kind of like this, that looks a lot like flatlining, right?

Like who wants to live that kind of life? Solid, man. You feel me? Someone's tracking with me. Thank you. Thank you.

Who wants to live that life, right? Boring, vanilla, just like simple middle mediocre life, man. Sounds more like the living dead than anything else.

Who wants that? So what are we left with? I can't park myself anywhere. I can't park myself in this extreme being righteous. I can't park myself in this extreme being evil. I can't park myself in the middle.

[ 9 : 08 ] Man, it makes you want to say, I give up. And you know what? That's the answer. That's the answer. Give up. The escape from being vulnerable.

The escape from feeling fear and living out of fear is that. It's to give up. It's not about what you and I do. Verse 18.

It is good that you should take hold of this. And from that withhold not your hand. For the one who fears God shall come out from both of them. Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.

Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. That's humbling. That is humbling. Wisdom from God can do more for you than ten billionaires can?

Really? I feel like I could buy myself a lot of security and a lot of happiness with all that money. How can that be? Because here's the thing. Truth is always the most valuable currency that we trade in.

[ 10 : 13 ] It's not money. It's not our good works. And here we find the truth that is priceless. No one. No one is really righteous. Everybody sins.

On your best day when you haven't cussed or ran a red light or you haven't peaked twice at that person on the treadmill. Even on that day you sinned.

Even on that day you end up with zero dollars in cosmic currency. That's humbling. But that's the point. We aren't meant to look at ourselves and be impressed.

We aren't meant to look at ourselves in despair. We aren't meant to look at ourselves as the solution to solving our vulnerability. And I think the crux of this whole passage we're looking at today is this.

The one who fears God will come out from both of them. The one who fears God will come out from both of them. It's not about fearing what can happen to us.

[ 11 : 15 ] It's about fearing God. Fearing God means we don't pursue evil. Righteousness matters. But it also means we don't use righteousness as currency to buy a better future and keep the boogeyman away.

Fearing God, what it does, it leads to uprightness but not uptightness. Now Christians, we need to hear this. Let's be honest. We can be some uptight people.

Especially new Christians. Or new theologians. If you're into studying God and learning about him, man, we can be some cantankerous, mean-spirited, know-it-all people. But I remember when God first got a hold of me.

Man, I was torn apart. I was convicted of sin. It was legitimate. I had legitimate conviction of sin because I realized in that moment I was not a good dude.

I judged people. I used people. I ran after every desire of my heart. Then in an instant, my heart switched because I had experienced Jesus. And when that happened, all of those things that I enjoyed became empty to me.

[ 12 : 19 ] I can't tell you why that happened. But it was like I was enjoying a juicy ribeye that suddenly got turned into kale chips. It was like that disappointing. My sin that was so fun and so enjoyable just didn't, it wasn't enjoyable anymore.

And that's what happens. I lost my appetite for sin and became passionate for Jesus. But then in my passion and zeal, I did some regrettable stuff, right? I was judgmental.

I thought, man, there was ways to become not just holy but super, super holy. There was tears in Christianity that I had to reach. And so I did some crazy stuff like throwing away CDs and movies, right? Now, some of that was probably good, right?

Getting rid of Dr. Dre's Quranic album, probably a good idea, right? But throwing away Predator, the DVD, why did I do that? That wasn't necessary.

See, while God made me upright in Jesus and as he did that as a free gift, I became uptight in my misdirected zeal to achieve even more righteousness. So how do we do that?

[ 13 : 21 ] How do we avoid uptightness and just rest in God's grace? There isn't any other magic sauce really beyond this. It's all about the fear of God. Now, on first examination, fear of God and grace don't seem to mix well, right?

So let's unpackage this phrase fear of God a little bit because you're going to see that actually they're not in conflict with each other at all. And this phrase fear of God, man, it is a gold mine of treasures.

It helps us understand our relationship to God. First of all, think about what fear is. You can only fear what you believe is real. You only fear what you believe is possible.

We fear death because we know it's real. We fear it because we know it's possible for us. We know it's going to impact us personally. I'm not afraid of some horrible dictator in an African country that's abusing and slaughtering people.

Why? Because he has no effect on me at all. I don't have to be afraid of him. He's not close to me. Now, he may be real enough, but he has no power. He's too far away.

[ 14 : 30 ] Atheists and agnostics, they have no fear of God because they don't believe he's real. There's no fear there. But here's the thing, guys. It's easy to pick on those guys, right? But too many Christians, if we're honest with ourselves, too many Christians act like God is more like that far-off African dictator.

Yeah, we believe he's real, but he's far away. We don't live with any real fear of him, which means we actually have a faith problem.

See, faith is the beginning of fearing God. And that's what I got when Jesus saved me. God opened my eyes and showed me that he was real.

And not only that he was real, but that my sin was real and my guilt was real. And that was my beginning into the fear of God, which is, at the beginning, it's a fear of a different kind.

It's, man, in that moment of salvation, you know God and you see him as just, but also as your final judge. But then salvation, the beautiful thing, it's not only knowing God as a holy judge, but it's also knowing him as a gracious and loving Savior.

[ 15 : 41 ] And that's when your fear of God's justice gets overwhelmed by the reality of his love. That is what makes up the Christian's fear of God. Man, it's awe and wonder in a God who is holy and just, and yet he is rich in mercy and grace.

And that is why the one who fears God comes out from the extremes of righteousness and wickedness. That's why we give up on thinking, oh, I got to do something. I got to do this. We both see him as holy and as merciful and gracious.

And so wonder replaces worry. Grace replaces guilt. Freedom replaces striving. And this is the richness of what it means to fear God.

But we can know that, but it's easier said than done. Like staying in that place of the fear of God, it's easier said than done. We are so prone to take our eyes off of him and start treating him like that distant African dictator.

Far away, don't need to worry. And the other thing is that Satan's sin in this world, man, they provide us with plenty of distractions to get our focus off of God. One of the ways, one of the big ways that happens in our day and age is when we start caring more about what people say or think about us than what God says and thinks about us.

[ 17 : 03 ] Where fear of God is lacking, fear of man multiplies. Verse 21 says this, Do not take heart. Do not take to heart all the things that people say lest you hear your servant cursing you.

Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. See, the fear of man manifests itself in two ways. We're highly sensitive to the smallest criticism, and we are prone to criticizing others.

It's a double-edged sword of the fear of man. Remember, fear is dependent on what we believe to be real. So every false, harsh, cutting, derogatory word spoken about you has its counter in God, right?

The question is, for our hearts, in that moment, whose words are more real? Is it man's words, or is it God's?

Who do you fear? When we're firmly established in our faith, God's kind, loving, truer words are way more real to us. This not only gives us thicker skin, it gives us softer hearts, right?

[ 18 : 13 ] I heard a pastor say that once, man, we need thick skin and soft hearts. Thick skin so that, man, when we're assaulted by lies and betrayals, and people speak wrongly about us and bad about us, they gossip or slander or put us down or belittle us, we need thick skin.

But we also need soft hearts. And it means we also see others how God sees us. So when we have the fear of God, we're less prone to criticize and focus on people's faults.

And the less we sit in God's good judgment over us, the more we sit in harsh judgment over others and ourselves. That's the reality of it, guys. Too often, Christians, we're just too critical.

And let's not minimize the sin here. Do you know Jesus gave us one pattern for prayer? He gave us one pattern for prayer. And there is this line in there that gets to the heart of what we're talking about right now.

He says this, speaking, say this to God your Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And that is a prayer that fights hypocrisy.

[ 19 : 19 ] That is a prayer that fights the fear of man and elevates the fear of God. And we would be good to fight it. Our hearts are like buckets. They're like buckets that leak. When our heart bucket is filled with Jesus' grace, we have the grace we need to forgive others.

That is living in the fear of God, full of grace and mercy, right? Thick skin, soft heart. The problem for many of us is that we don't think we need God's grace and mercy. And so we don't remain in it.

We often think of God's grace, it kind of works like a deep sea diver. Those guys that have the oxygen hose permanently connected to those huge metal helmets, you know?

You know what I'm talking about? It's just the oxygen is constantly pumping in. We act like God's grace is constantly pumping in. But God's grace is more like scuba diving. We need our heart tanks refilled all the time.

I mean, Paul says in Ephesians, be being filled with the Holy Spirit. There's this ongoing filling and refilling that we need of God's grace all the time. But too often, we don't.

[ 20 : 24 ] We don't go and we don't go to him and we don't seek him out and we don't enjoy his grace. We don't enjoy his love. We don't enjoy him and the relationship and the access that we have to him where that love and that grace pours into us and fills up that heart bucket.

And there's many reasons why we don't do that. Many seeming legitimate reasons. And one of the biggest obstacles you and I face today is this, busyness. We are too busy to stop and be with God.

And when that happens, guys, our faith fails or our faith falls, sorry. Our faith falls and so does our fear of God. Where fear of God is lacking, distractions multiply.

Where fear of God is lacking, distractions multiply. Verse 25, it says this, I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom in the scheme of things. And to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness.

See this alone, pay attention to this. See this alone I have found. Verse 29, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

[ 21 : 35 ] Distractions, busyness come in many schemes, come in many ways. Our kids' programs fill up our schedule. Social networking fills up our schedule.

Work, school fills up our schedule. TVs, movies fill up our schedule. Reading books fills up our schedule. Now, none of those things are evil things. I'm not saying those are evil things. The problem is, is how they all start to add up and fill up our calendar to full and then overflowing.

And when our calendars are full of doing, doing, doing, we can't stop and just be with God.

There is no time just for being. In our modern world, God's relegated to the margins. We're too busy. The one who's meant to be first and center in our lives can't be.

You know, the most common sin Christians commit isn't porn or lust or gossip or judging others. It's actually this. It's breaking the first commandment. You shall have no other gods before me.

- [ 22 : 42 ] It's not putting God first. That's the first, that's the greatest sin we break all the time. It's true. I do it all the time. We break that commandment 100 times a day, at least.
- I do it at least 100 times a day. Now, thankfully, God's grace means we're not crushed by that. It covers it every single time. But we are busy.
- We have to realize we are busy and our busyness pushes God to the margins. Now, let me be a little bit cheeky here. Church can be a huge contributor to that problem. We are notorious for making ourselves busy with the wrong things.
- We are so desperate to grow that we prefer planning to praying. We expect fruitfulness to follow the right strategy or the right activity or event.
- We look and we say, hey, let's analyze society. Let's fill ourselves up with all kinds of knowledge. And I'm not saying that's wrong. But it's funny.
- [ 23 : 40 ] You listen to pastors that have been doing this for decades. And they kind of laugh. And they say, man, you know, in the 50s and 60s, there was this new strategy for church growth. In response to the world, this new modern world.
- And you had to do this and you had to do that. And then postmodernism happened. And then there's this new strategy that everyone had to adopt for new growth. And doing this and doing that. And it's like we're always trying to hit this moving target that's happening.
- We try and grow God's kingdom through study and analysis. Let's get the latest, greatest plan and execute it right. And so what happens is, in our churches, we multiply plans and we multiply programs.
- And all this is really just a subtle drift into works righteousness. It's depending on ourselves for the results.
- Did you know that all the statistics show that most churches are praying less and spending more money? It's not a good trajectory. We're trying our best to have the best programs, the best this, the best that, the best whatever.
- [ 24 : 51 ] See, prayer is an act of dependence on God. And if that's true, which it is, then prayerlessness is what? It's practicing independence from God.
- See, we look at the modern church. We look at us. We can look at our own lives. It can be more planned out and programmed out and slick and clever. It could be that. Better than ever. But planning for God's kingdom doesn't produce desire for God's kingdom.
- I should know. I'm the most guilty. I'm a recovering over-planner. I just confess most of my pastoral story, to be perfectly honest.
- But thankfully, God's gracious. He's been working on me, especially in the past few years. And here's what I found, is that prayer feeds the fear of God, guys. Like nothing else, prayer feeds the fear of God.
- Now, you may be thinking, okay, fine. But really, what's the big deal? All the stuff that you kind of name being busy, it seems like busy with good things. Taking care of my kids, you know, filling up my schedule, doing church stuff.
- [ 25 : 56 ] I mean, there's a lot worse things that I could be busy with. And I would say in response to that, that's fine. But at some point, it will catch up to you. You push God to the margins.
- It doesn't matter how good and for how many good reasons you push him to the margins. At some point, it is going to catch up to you. Verse 26. And I found something more bitter than death.
- The woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. Where fear of God is lacking, sin multiplies.

Sin. Sin. It's the big problem that we all have and fight with, right? In the end, it costs us more than we can pay. It demands more than we can give. And it keeps us longer than we want to stay.

That's it. Sin promises us freedom. It promises us pleasures. And in the end, it delivers bondage. Now, in this passage, it uses adultery as the metaphor for sin.

[ 26 : 54 ] And to be honest, that's a very common analogy for sin in the Bible, right? This idea of sexually uniting. Sorry, I just went PG-13 there. I know there's some, like, 11-year-olds in the room.

But sexually uniting with sin is what we're often given. That's the picture we're given. When we look at what God said to Cain, one of the earliest stories in the Bible, and God dealing with sin, he tells Cain, you need to watch out.

He says, sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you. Now, the Hebrew language here, what's interesting about this is you can, it gives us a picture that looks more like this.

God is saying to Cain, sin is outside your door pacing around like an aroused amorous beast, wild beast, like a lion or something.

And it's waiting for an opportune time. It's waiting for you to open that door and let it in to unite with you in the most creative way to produce something. That's what sin is.

[ 28 : 04 ] And this is a good picture for us. It really makes sense to us. When we open the door to sin, it isn't some innocent game we're up to. We are uniting with it. And out of that unity, typically something evil comes.

Something of consequence comes. And you can't go back on it. When you look at what happened to Cain, he didn't heed God's warning and he united with sin. And the conception gave birth to him murdering his brother.

He couldn't go back on that. That was the consequence. He couldn't take it away. He couldn't undo that. See, sin promises us pleasure, but it delivers us into bondage.

And not only are we in bondage to the consequences of it, we are in bondage to the emotional fallout as well. We feel guilt and we feel shame for it. We experience that fear of God that isn't wonder and freedom.

Many of us know what this is like. Some of us might be here right now saying, yeah, I'm tracking with this, Jesse. That's exactly what I'm feeling. And like this passage said, this verse we just read, that is the bitterness of soul that we feel.

[ 29 : 11 ] That is the bitterness of soul that's described here. That bitterness that can even make death seem like a good option for escape sometimes. And I'm gonna say something controversial.

Death is your only escape. Now that I got everyone's attention. But that's the message of the gospel. Death is your only escape.

But here's the thing. It's not your death. It's Jesus' death. See, through faith in the cross of Jesus, man, we die to our sin.

He took our sin and was punished, put to death in our place for us. And so instead of, by faith, instead of uniting to sin, what happens in faith?

It talks about us being united to Christ. And we come and we do something. He creates something beautiful and wonderful in us new life.

[ 30 : 06 ] He makes us a new creation, a new person, a new being. The old has gone away, the new has come. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing. The cross vaporizes both our righteous works and our wickedness.



And this is what the fear of God is, guys. Faith in Jesus' works. It's giving up on all the other schemes that put us at the center. When we fear God, we come to him with empty hands, fully surrendered to his love, his will, and his ways.

Verse 23, he says this, all this I have tested by wisdom. I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me.

That which has been is far off and deep, very deep. Who can find it out? The fear of God multiplies surrender.

That's what he's saying here. He tried to find the answer. He tried to find the life hack to figure this whole thing out, to stop being invulnerable. And when he came to the end, he said, I couldn't find it out.

[ 31 : 19 ] God tells us in scripture that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom teaches that there is only one answer to our vulnerability.

Men have been trying to figure this out forever and they failed. But the hidden mystery, this hidden mystery has been revealed in Jesus, God's son.

What was far off, what was unreachable, what was impossible to find out has been revealed in Jesus Christ. In a few moments, for those of us by faith in Jesus, we believe in him, we're going to come, we're going to take communion.

This is a reminder that the mystery of wisdom that man couldn't reach came and put on flesh. His body was broken, his blood was shed so we can enjoy and live in the fear of God rather than be crushed by it.

And before we come, let's reckon our hearts. Let's deal with our hearts right now. The fear of God is calling us to surrender everything. It's calling us to come to the table with nothing in our hands to take hold and be reminded that the only thing we can take hold of that's worthwhile is Jesus Christ.

[ 32 : 32 ] Every righteous work, every evil deed, every mediocre attempt, it's all surrendered. Let's surrender it all through faith in Jesus. And it stays surrendered, guys.

It stays surrendered by remembering the gospel and pushing in to God's grace. not once on a Sunday but every single day pushing into God's grace, remembering the gospel.

If you're here today and you don't fear Jesus, man, that's okay. I'm glad you're here. This was a rough, like honest, right, giving it to you, honest kind of passage.

But you know what? I am so glad you're here and I hope God's been speaking to your heart. I hope he's been showing you how real he is, how vulnerable you are in your sin.

And your invitation today is to put your faith in him. He is good. He is worth it. He is trustworthy. Man, unite to Christ. Let go of your sin. Unite to him.

[ 33 : 29 ] I'm gonna have the band come up. And this is what I wanna do before we come and take communion. I want us to respond in prayer. And it's a prayer of surrender that we're gonna pray together.

Okay? It's a prayer that disciples have been praying for 2,000 years. But that's about as old school as you can get for those of you counting in your head. All right? I discovered this practice about two years ago.

Been doing it at least once a day. Trying to do it about three times a day. I'm not saying that to brag. It's just something that I wanna share because it's something that in my practice over the past few years has really, really changed my heart and shaped me.

And to be honest, it took a whole year of practicing this before I started realizing that something significant was happening and that it was transforming my heart. But now, I look forward to praying this prayer.

It's become more than a duty. For me, it's become a time of sacred fellowship. I actually have alarms on my phone to remind me so I don't forget that go off. And when they go off, I look forward to stealing away and just spending time with my Father in heaven.

[ 34 : 42 ] My challenge to us, my challenge to you, and my hope for you is that you take this simple prayer and take time to pray it at least once a day. As you practice this prayer of surrender, you can go beyond what the words say.

You can amplify it in your own words. I do that all the time. It's really good. So let's stand and read this aloud together. Follow my lead.

It's going to be up on the screens behind me. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Let me pray and when I'm done come and take communion. Father, Father in heaven, we can say that because you redeemed us to be sons and daughters.

[ 35 : 54 ] That's the relationship that you define. That's the relationship you want. That's the relationship that actually we so enjoy and deep inside so want, so need.

And Lord, as we recognize that, that you're our Father, our response is, man, we want to see your name glorified. We want to see your name most valued. We want to see your name occupy the most sacred place in our hearts.

We want your name and your glory and what you're on about to be front and center of us all the time. We want it here. We want it in this church.

We want it in our country. We want it all over the globe, Lord God. And so, man, we desire that in response to seeing you glorified. We cry, your kingdom come. Your kingdom where your righteousness and your peace and your joy are full and perfect and unchangeable.

We want to see that. We want to live in that reality. We want to see that power, that kingdom where it's you over your people ruling and reigning. We want to experience that even now. And we long for it to come in its fullness when Jesus returns.

[ 37 : 03 ] But until then, we surrender. We surrender, Lord. We say, your will be done. Not our will, but your will be done. We surrender to it, Lord God. Help us, Lord, to live in the fear of you, that you would be the most real thing to us.

It's not a fear that makes us tremble because we're afraid of judgment and retribution, but it's a fear that you are so real and that you are an awesome God.

You are almighty and all-powerful. We can't escape you. There's nowhere we can run to get away from you and you're good and you're gracious and you're loving and you're merciful.

And I pray for us as we come to your table, you've invited us, that we come as sons and we come as daughters and we lay hold, we lay hold of the reality that Christ died for us so that we can be set free from the bondage of sin and be united to you.

Amen.