

# John Essig

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Preacher: John Essig

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Pastor Marv this morning for giving me this opportunity to share with you. It's a great privilege to be able to share, and I love preaching. I love being in the pulpit. As you know, I don't have to tell you, but I'm going to tell you anyhow, Marv's a great guy. You've got a great pastor. I visit a lot of churches, and you've got a healthy church, and you've got a great pastor, and I'm grateful for that. So you're blessed. You're blessed to have him. As one of the pastors at Fellowship for 40 years, I was a pastor at Fellowship for 40 years when the Lord surprised me with this new call, this new role in life to be the superintendent in Emmanuel, and I just frankly just did not see that coming. I had to ask myself in that moment, like, why would the Lord call me to this, you know, and disrupt that long career? I'm not obviously at 40 years in one spot. I'm not a guy that moves around a lot, but, you know, it was clear to me that the next generation was why. There's a need to empower the biblical worldview in our next generation, and it's so, so important. Marv and I had lunch all the other day, and we were just talking about the significance of that and how important, how critical it is today versus even 10 years ago, because of the culture and its pervasiveness. There's a greater need now for homeschooling, for Christian education, for biblical worldview integration than ever. So, you know,

Emmanuel partners with churches, with families, and obviously in its efforts as well to provide a foundation for our young people, and hopefully one from which they will not depart. So together, we integrate the biblical worldview, and we prepare them for their life's calling. Let me just give you an illustration. It was kind of a humorous one for me. I don't know if you ever go down Durr Road, but a year ago, that thing was under siege, you know, in construction for a year plus, and it was just funny driving down that road every day, watching drivers who don't know what to do with the lack of lines. So for a long time, there were no lines, and it was just funny. I saw three groups of people, one that would be like, they were just all over the place. They're just like, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. They just had no idea where to go, and then another who would be like on the far edge, you know, I mean, like practically in the gravel, you know, because they just wanted to be sure not to run over or run into anyone else. And then the third kind, which was to me the most oblivious, but they just go right down the middle of the road, like it was like one way, their direction. You know, it's just funny because as I watch it, I marvel at the power of a line, a thin little painted line, and the significance it has on all of our lives. You know, you go down, we go down two lane roads, right, fairly narrow, and semi-trucks will pass us at 55 miles an hour, and the only thing saving us from a head-on collision and certain death is this little tiny painted line. It's so significant. We all are influenced. Our lives are changed by those little lines, and I thought, well, why are they so powerful? Is it their reflective quality, you know, or is it the law behind the line that says you don't cross that line or you'll be arrested, or is it just self-preservation, just knowing the fact that if I go over there, I'm in trouble, right? I really think it's ultimately a driver worldview because your whole life, even when you're young, you're looking out the window, you watch your parents drive, you grow up your whole life knowing that you're supposed to stay in your line. You've been trained to stay in those lines, and I think that's what a biblical worldview education is. You're being taught the right path, the lines to live a godly life, to live a life for the Lord. So a key verse for us is Proverbs 22, 6. You're probably familiar with it. Train up a child in the way they should go, and when they're old, they will not turn from it. So that's why Emmanuel exists, is to put the lines on the roads of life so folks, children will grow up and they'll know the way to go. You know, the question, I mean, they're following somebody's lines, right? I mean, somebody's leading them. The question is, do you want our modern culture today, our pervasive culture to lead them? Do you want them? Do you want our culture putting those lines on the road? Or do you want to do that as a parent, as a church, as a family, as a family member, as a student yourselves? What do you want? Or do you want biblical

values, godly training to put those lines on the road? Because it's life-altering. Children be exposed to content on devices today. That's staggering. Christians, by and large, we're losing the culture war. I mean, it's a battle, and we're losing it, by and large. Wonderful exceptions. But the reason we're losing is because they're sleeping with the enemy. I mean, they literally will have your phone with you in bed, right? I mean, their culture, the world's culture is around us constantly. So there's a greater need now than ever to teach the ways of Christ. And it takes all three. It takes families. It takes your church. And it takes Christian education, whether it's school or homeschooling. And if you don't have all three, you've got extra work to do. And sometimes parents, it just, you know, it really is unsettling to me because parents will drop them off at school, and they'll drop them off at church. And they think they're double covered, but they're not doing it at home.

I'm telling you, home's the most important of all three. Because if you're not doing it at home, they just learn how to fake it, to look Christian in front of Christians, and to not be one.

I say to my students all the time that you cannot be a Christian without Christ. As crazy as that sounds, that's what a lot of people are trying to do.

[ 6 : 30 ] I'll act like a Christian, call myself a Christian, but I don't really know and walk with Jesus. I mean, the point of it all is Jesus. So, today I'm going to talk about an aspect of that.

As we think about it, as we prepare, we're going to get into the Matthew 5.6 or 5.8, if you want to turn there. It's just the Beatitudes.

So, I've been studying the Beatitudes for months, and so I'm going to just pick up on one of them with you guys. But let me just ask you, what road are you on? Upon what foundations are you standing? What road are you on, and upon which foundations are you standing?

You know, the average American is living for some version of the American dream. Unfortunately, Christian or otherwise. And that might sound something like, I want to go to good education.

I want to have a good job. I want to have family. And I want to have a happy life. Some version of that. Those things themselves are not particularly bad, but they fall short of what God intends for you.

[ 7 : 42 ] We all know tragedies happen. We all know that even if it doesn't, life goes by fast. And the older you get, the more it accelerates.

And so, wow. There's got to be more to life than that. We all know that we are in a perpetual state of decay. You know, we could go around the room, and every one of you can tell me, young or old, what you've got ailing you.

We all know. You know, I'm looking forward to that day when I have a perfect body. Woo! And, you know, it's rather short-sighted then, really, to make your life go about this world.

Right? About this life. But that said, we can live this life with Christ. We can have, as Paul said, we can have, you know, to live, Christ dies to gain, but to live is for Christ, right?

So, we can live abundantly this life, even with the goal of eternal life, right on our heels. So, it makes most sense to me to make Jesus your first priority.

[ 8 : 49 ] And I don't mean a deferred kind of priority. Like, I just want to think about Jesus. I'm going to try to, like, be the best Christian and not experience Jesus. It's kind of crazy to try to be a Christian without Christ.

So, Jesus is bigger than theology. He's bigger than morality. He himself is our great prize. As I mentioned, I've been digging in pretty heavy and deep to the Beatitudes.

And so, we're going to look at Matthew 5, 8. And we're going to cover a lot of text, although our primary text is just one short verse. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. You may not understand this point immediately, but you will as I progress. That's our goal in life.

What, to be pure in heart? No. To see God. To experience God. That's why you're a Christian, is so you might know Christ.

[ 9 : 55 ] So, in a sense, this is our primary objective for life, is to see God. It's the reason we live. And we are there to see and experience Him now and forevermore.

So, according to this verse, if you want to see and experience God, you must have a pure heart. Let's just turn it around. This verse will tell you, if you want to see God, you have to have a pure heart.

Okay. All right. To see and experience God, I have to have a pure heart. Okay. Well, there lies a dilemma, does it not? I mean, how can this be?

Right? How can we have a pure heart when we know there's all these other evil things in our heart? Right? So, a lot of times we think, well, therefore, I just can't see God. That's just something for some other day or for some special people.

Like 1 Chronicles 28.9 says, The Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. Ugh. I don't like that verse.

[10:58] You know, I'd rather hide all that stuff from God. But He sees every heart and understands the motive behind every thought. So, even when I do the right thing and I have selfish motives, God knows that too.

So, there's a dilemma, right? You know, hey, this Christianity thing would be a lot easier if it's just a matter of doing the right things, having the right outward behavior, would it not? I mean, do your best and then have God grade you on a grace curve, right?

And so, basically, in the end, even though we all failed because of the curve, we're okay. And that's kind of, it would be easier in some ways to just try to do all the right things and then realize that, you know, where we fall short, God's not going to count it against us.

In some ways, I think the human flesh would prefer having rules and guidelines versus trying to have pure motives. Whoo. That's a tall order.

That's a tall order. I mean, you can find that. You can go to, let's say you go to a nursing home and you visit somebody who's been locked in and you walk out of there, yeah, I really feel good that I did that.

[12:04] So, why did you do it? To bless them or because you feel good when you did something kind for somebody else? I mean, our motives are so suspect. And our flesh is so prevalent.

Even when we try to do something totally for someone else, we have trouble teasing out that which is for ourselves. It's tempting to try to maintain the clean outside, just manage what is seen by others and pretend that God does not see what is on the inside.

How many of you had a child hide behind the curtains, you know, and there's a big lump, find me, where do you find me? And you're like, okay, I've got to look really hard for you. You know, they're right there. Or your cat that hides behind a blade of grass, you know, you can't see me.

You're like, well, yeah, I can. And it's kind of like that. With God, we think, you know, he doesn't really see all these sins of mine. He doesn't really understand my heart. So, I'm kind of impressing God.

And frankly, I mean, he's fortunate to have me on his team because, you know, I'm a pretty good guy or a pretty good gal. I mean, it's kind of easy to get into that kind of mentality because it's our flesh.

[13:09] You know, if my hands were muddy and I was greeting you this morning, you'd be like, yeah, well, we'll just do an elbow bump, you know. Save me with that because your hands look pretty nasty. Or if I had a giant yogurt stain up here, which is entirely possible.

Yeah, that's good. But if I had a yogurt stain up here this morning, you'd be staring at that yogurt stain and not listening to anything I'm saying, right? It's easy to kind of deal with the outside stuff. The inside stuff is a whole different story.

And the Beatitudes and the whole Sermon on the Mount just turns it around. And Jesus is talking to a group of people that everything was about the behavior and had nothing to do with the inside. So all through the Beatitudes, you've heard it said, but I tell you. You've heard it said, but I tell you. You've heard it said, but I tell you. Because he's turning it around. And he's saying inside out, not outside in.

We forget that God sees right through our skin deep morality into the deep hollows of our heart. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus teaches us a little bit about this impure heart in Matthew, elsewhere in Matthew.

[14:19] So let me just read two verses to you. Matthew 15, 8 and 9. These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain, but their rules, but are, I'll say, but their teaching are but rules taught by men.

He's talking about the Pharisees. And before we pick on the Pharisees, they were the religious people of the day. We're the religious people of our day.

We need to hear, are we being similar? Later on in Matthew 15, 19 to 20, he says, Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murder, idolatry, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander.

These are what make a man unclean. Jesus is telling us, look. Now those are behaviors. Murder, adultery, sex morality, theft, false.

Those are behaviors. But he says, out of the heart is where they come. Now, you're going to tell me that if I have a pure heart, I can experience God, right?

[15:41] I can see God. That doesn't make sense, does it? I mean, it doesn't add up. We'll get to that. Jesus confronted the religious majority of that day for their exterior-only lifestyle.

And I'm sure you've read these passages. I'm going to read them to you again. But I believe they're the harshest words that came out of Christ's earthly ministry, at least that were written down, that we know of. And they were reserved for the religious of the day.

And then in that culture, these were very, very strong words. In our culture, our language has gotten so bad, put it, I'll just say it that way, that the intensity of these words don't wake us up.

But let me just tell you that they are, in that culture, strong words. Matthew 12, 34, he says, Brood of vipers, snakes, considered evil.

Go all the way back to the garden. Couldn't put it in stronger words. Jesus told them in Matthew 23, 25 through 28, he said, Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites.

[17:09] And they weren't hypocrites because they weren't doing the right things. They were hypocrites because what was on the inside didn't match with the outside. You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Blind Pharisees, which is a blind Pharisee, the Pharisees were guides. So it was basically saying, blind guide. You can't lead anybody, you're blind. First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean.

So, see, inside out versus outside in. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrite. You are like whitewashed tombs. We're talking about the tombs this morning with Lazarus coming out of the tomb.

You are like whitewashed tombs, cleaned up tombs. You look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you're full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Those are strong words. And we often say, yeah, those Pharisees, they were bad people. They were religious people. And we have to be careful because the human heart is predisposed to religion.

[18:32] What I mean by that is just works, cleaning up stuff on the outside, having no heart for God or having the right motives to serve God. We become just like the Pharisees.

And so much so that today's church has lost its witness with so many other, the world around it, because they look at you and go, hypocrites. And you're like, no, no, we're all, you know, we're forgiven.

We're not perfect. And we make an explanation. But our life is lacking that power, that influence, that people will take note of what we are doing because we are disconnected. We do live two lives. There's a profession and there's what we say we believe, but in our hearts and in our actions, the world around us can see when it's not pure.

And that's tough. The religious in that day were extremely careful to keep their outward appearance clean, but they thought nothing of their heart motives.

[19:38] Who crucified Jesus? The religious, the Pharisees, right? Why did they crucify Jesus? There's a lot of answers to that, but let me answer that for you in context of this message because they did not see Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us.

And it's a literal fulfillment of that verse that we're studying today. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. They needed a heart transformation.

And then they would look at Jesus, which many did, and say, well, you're the son of God. You're the Messiah. Those who killed him didn't see that because their hearts were not pure.

So those of you this morning who are practicing religion, a form of morality without knowledge of Jesus, this loving rebuke, the scripture, the text I just read, it's for you, and I hate being the one to bring that, but at the same time, I would hate for you not to be in close proximity of Jesus, to know him and walk with him.

The human flesh, I think that's our number one challenge as human beings is that we prefer religion over that interpersonal relationship with God.

[ 21 : 00 ] How many of you have had a small child and I like to throw them around a little bit, you know, my nephews and nieces come up and like, woo! You know, and they love it. And they'll say, again!

I'm like, woo! And they'll go again, and I'll go, woo! And they'll say, again, I'll go, all right, go see your mom. You know, it's like, well, after the first time, it wasn't nothing to do with me and them. It was they liked the feeling, right? They liked the sensation. And it wasn't about me anymore, us connecting and having a moment together. It was, I like the feeling.

We do that with God. I think we have an incredible moment with God. We have a great time in devotion. We have to spend time worshiping or whatever it is. And then we just say again to God. We say, God, I just want the feeling. I want to feel really intense or close. And we forget who we're asking that of.

[ 21 : 57 ] We forget that relational part of it. That's just right there. It's right there. I mean, even in our most spiritual moments, our flesh is right there. We so want just what we want.

That's why we need a Savior. So let me recap, and then we'll transition. Does God want us to have our behavior to be pure? Absolutely.

Does God want your heart pure? Absolutely. Is your heart hopelessly flawed, imperfect, fallen, and depraved? Absolutely. Okay.

How then do we live under this madness, right? We are told that we need to have a pure heart to see God, and we're told our heart is wicked and not pure. How do we deal with that?

Well, what is impossible for man is possible for God. Will you just say that with me? What is impossible for man? We'll practice that again.

[ 22 : 59 ] What is impossible for man is possible for God. This is what Christ came to do.

So if we do it in the flesh, if we just garnish our own abilities and our own willpower, we're going to fail at it. God promised in the Old Testament what we have, we can experience today.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, you can look at Jeremiah 31, 33, if you want to flip there quickly, and then 32, 39, prophet Jeremiah says, I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. You see the continuity there? I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. This was God's plan all along to free us from this outward behavioral, moral, self-willed pressure and to do something amazing in our hearts so we might live a new life.

And just a little bit later in Jeremiah 32, 39, he says, I will give them singleness of heart and action. Woo! I love that verse. Because, you know, when I just said, when I presented that problem of like how can we be, you know, have a pure heart and have an evil fallen heart.

[ 24 : 25 ] He's saying right there, I will give them singleness of heart. Wow, that's a great promise. You see how Jesus fulfilled Scripture.

So although it was impossible for us to have a pure heart in and of ourselves, we can have a pure heart by the grace of God. It is the good news that both scares me and impresses me.

It scares me because I don't want God to see all the things in my heart and life. I'd rather hide it. You know, sometimes I'm like Adam and Eve, you know, I'm like, why are you hiding? I'm like, because you don't want to know what I know.

And it impresses me because God loves me no matter what. He knows all those thoughts, all my motives, and He still loves me.

It's the ladder that draws me to Him. It's the ladder that changes my behavior. It's the ladder that purifies my heart. It's that incredible, overwhelming, unconditional love that comes from Christ that changes us.

[ 25 : 38 ] Praise God. I mean, it cannot be found, that cannot be found anywhere else. And that was fulfilled for us.

That's been made available to us. And Christ completed His work on the cross, overcame death, resurrected, appeared to how many, and then ascended to the right hand of the throne of God. Amen. He's made it available for us. The gift of salvation, the gift of a new heart, with the gift of the new heart, we can have a pure heart, a life that is morally pleasing to God and fully devoted to Him. We don't have to live in the madness. We can live in grace and singleness of heart and see God. Look at Philippians 3, 7 through 9. Paul's, it's almost like he's just right there with this text, right where I'm trying to express to you.

[ 26 : 49 ] I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Everything Paul has accomplished, he would consider it a loss for knowing Christ.

And he goes on, for whose sake I have lost the things, I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him. Here's the point I'm making. Having not a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, in other words, not from my outward behavior, not from just trying to do all the right things and having self-will and pretending there's nothing going on inside, but that comes, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God is by faith.

Now notice, Paul is not talking about something down the road. He's talking about right now. He's saying, he's in the present tense.

I consider everything I've done a loss for knowing Christ and for realizing His righteousness by faith. It's not something that, oh, it's just going to happen in heaven.

Yes, it's going to happen in heaven, but we don't have to wait until then. It's here and now. Some people think that's kind of crazy. It's kind of pie in the sky or like to say piety in the sky.

[ 28 : 18 ] Okay? It's like, it's like something out there, just a bizarre concept. I know maybe some super spiritual people can do that, but not me. It's not real. Okay? I have to live in this strange duality.

And that's just a lie. It's pie in the hand right now. It's Thanksgiving, all right? And there's pie right now. You can enjoy it. You don't have to just think about that pie's going to be great in heaven.

You can enjoy Jesus right now. He's here. He knows you. He knows all your thoughts and your motives, and He loves you.

Wow. That's what we sing about. And see, when you understand that you're blessed, and then you see God. Matthew 5, 8.

You're blessed. The Beatitudes are blessings. And it's making you aware those of you who understand that are blessed. You have, God has done something in your heart, and you get it.

[ 29 : 22 ] And you can experience God. Blessed is the pure in heart, for they will see God.

The word see in the Greek, it's kind of, there's a lot of facets to it. It's a rich word. One of the aspects of it, of see, is experience.

So it's not just a beholding. It's like, oh, there He is. No, you can experience Him. And I don't know about for you, but if I ever was asked to lay down my life for Christ, it wouldn't be because of my theology.

It wouldn't be because of my title, or my years in the Lord, or whatever. It'd be because I cannot deny the living Christ, whom I've tasted and seen is good.

I could not deny that. I can deny a thought, a theology, a thinking, or a construct, but I can't deny my Jesus.

[ 30 : 36 ] And that's available for us. So there's two modalities here. And I want you to make sure you understand the sequencing of them. The first is that you have to understand our faith, which is basically what I've been talking about.

You cannot practice Christianity without Christ. You have to first, you can't, I'll just start over. Most people start out with this, I'm going to clean my life up and become a Christian.

Okay? Wrong sequencing. First, you understand in faith what Christ has done for you. Be overwhelmed by His love and then you'll make the changes.

Frankly, if you don't do it that way, you're just covering them up, hiding them, putting on appearances no different than the Pharisee. When you have the gift of grace in Jesus Christ, you have the power to live a different life.

So, that's a sequential thing. And that's a sequential thing for you every day. You're not going to live the Christian life if you don't first humble yourself before God, experience Him, understand His love for you, so that your motives are pure when you go about serving Him that day.

[ 31 : 56 ] If you do it the other way around, you're just going to be religious. So, the two modalities are first faith and then how do we exercise our faith? How do we exercise our life, our faith in Christ?

How do we build habits that reinforce or call us back to Christ? Call us back to the first point which is faith. Not just reinforce our false sense of wellness but call us to a point of humility and brokenness before the Lord when we understand what Jesus has done in our life.

And I hesitate to give you the things to do because I know our propensity and my fear is you'll start doing those things instead of first realizing what Jesus has done for you.

It's where temptation it's the temptation battleground. It's where we fight and it's where we lose and we win. And it's in those sequential steps that we find win.

It's not a moral race to keep us on the straight and narrow. I think we think that sometimes like we're supposed to stay on the straight and narrow path right? Follow Christ and that's the goal.

[ 33 : 02 ] Don't fall off left. Don't fall off right. Stay on the path. It's not that way at all. What Jesus was trying to explain to you is that we the path is following Him.

It's not a balance beam. You know? It's a path. And we don't understand it because we oftentimes don't understand Eastern culture.

And I was so blessed when I was in Israel I think my first or second trip we were driving to the southern the Negev to the southern part of Israel to the Red Sea and everybody was passed out to sleep you know resting.

That was a two hour drive and I was alive. I was just soaking it up and I saw a shepherd leading his sheep and I'm like stop the bus! And so I'm like grrrr!

I'm like what? I think there's a shepherd and they're like okay. I'm like I'm getting off. So I went out to see the shepherd you know and the reason it hit me so strongly is because he was leading his sheep.

[ 34 : 07 ] You don't see that in the West. What we do in the West is yah! Get out! Coo coo! You know scare him! You know do everything we can to scare him along. We think of our shepherd as that way our Lord as that way.

It's like stay on the path! Get off! Oh oh! You know and he's yelling at us or he's mad at us or he's angry he's always disappointed with us. In the East the shepherd leads his flock.

And so this is what the guy was doing. He was walking along and the sheep were just single following him. It's awesome. They know him.

That's why they follow him. It did kind of ruin he had Nike shoes on. It would have been better it would have been better if he had sandals but you know I'm like I'm going with it you know. But that's how that's how they put them together at night.

They would bring in ancient days they'd bring everybody all the sheep together in one giant pen and they'd put heads of thorns or rather whatever kind of hem them in and the shepherd literally would sleep in front of the opening the gate and that's why Jesus said I'm the way I'm the gate you know I am the shepherd and in the morning when it's time to take them back out to grace they just walked through the flock.

[ 35 : 20 ] Hey Joey hey Spot hey Gimpy or whatever they called him I don't know and they would just follow him out. They weren't branded or anything. Shepherd the sheep know their shepherds they know his voice.

So we're talking about the straight and narrow it's not a balanced being it's following Jesus. I know that sounds maybe elementary but it's so profound and I think that's why we get it mixed up in our heads sometimes and we think we have to first deal with our behavior in order to be a good Christian.

In order to be a good Christian you have to follow Jesus and let the Spirit of God who lives in you change the behavior from the inside out and when you have that happening in your life it's a wonderful journey.

Christianity is not a moral maddening dilemma of hypocrisy it's a wonderful adventure of knowing Jesus experiencing him. So that's my warning label when I tell you these couple practical things I'd like for you to do after you first experienced Jesus.

James 4.4 you know you can turn if you want I'm just kind of paraphrasing it but tells us to separate from the world. We were talking about that this morning.

[ 36 : 50 ] The world is not your friend and it's never been more persuasive than it is now. Holiness is not piety like holier than thou self-righteousness.

holiness is separation. You're a holy people because you separated yourself from the world. We think holiness is kind of not much fun.

Stiff people can't laugh or have fun. Holiness is just being segregated from the world. You're set aside.

You're a holy people because you're following Jesus. you're not following the world. So heart purity is about your attitudes, perspectives, belief, your soul ties, your addictions, your habits.

You've got to surrender all those things to follow Jesus, to be holy. And you can't do that if you're best friends with the world.

[ 38 : 04 ] You can't serve two masters. others. So the next step would be, this is a real obvious one, I know, I'm going to reinforce it anyhow, feed on the word of God.

So separate from the world, number two, feed on the word of God. Psalm 119 tells you to hide the word of God, where? Anybody know? In your heart.

Here we go. We're talking about the same thing. Hide the word of God in your heart. So, you know, Marv's taught you well, but that's prayer, that's memorization, that's study, that's reading.

It comes in so many forms. If you're like me, I do things differently. I change it up constantly so it stays fresh. If it's boring to me, I don't stop having my devotions.

I just find a different way to have my devotions. Sometimes it's walking, talking, sometimes it's worship songs. I mean, I could talk an hour about that. But the point is to hide it in your heart.

[ 39 : 06 ] If it's not getting in your heart, change it up. Make sure it's penetrating your heart. As your heart softens, it'll ache, it'll long, like an athlete, you'll look forward to that exercise, it'll look forward to the feeding as your heart softens for the Lord.

Number three is encourage others to walk in their faith with Jesus. Hebrews 10, 24 says, spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Again, not just for love and good deeds' sake, but with Jesus.

So when you're on the path following Jesus, you want to say, hey, get on the path with me. Right? And those who are on the path, don't stray. Stay up here. Encourage them.

And you know, one of the good things about that is, as you're encouraging others, it encourages you. AA's learned that a long time ago. So if you're in recovery, one of the things they'll tell you to do is help those who are in recovery.

And why? Because it keeps you who are in recovery, in recovery. They just learned a biblical principle is all. Encourage those all the more as we see that they approach.

[ 40 : 17 ] Spur them on. Not, I don't have time to get into that, but a long time ago, I was a jockey. I was a horse jockey, so I rode all words, spurs are not gentle, okay?

And you put them in horses' ribs. And I don't know about you, I don't like being poked in the ribs, let alone with a spur. So I don't mean just like kindly say, yeah, yeah, you should follow.

Spur them on. I mean, sometimes you got to grab somebody and go, what are you thinking? You know? That's an aggressive, that's an aggressive statement. And my last point, which is where we'll close with, in case you were wondering, is talk to God all day long.

Talk to God all day long. He is with you. Emmanuel, God with you. We've already covered it.

He knows all the stuff going on in your heart anyhow. Don't clean up your conversation, make it real. If it's clean, great. But if you're struggling with X, Y, or Z, I don't care how ugly it is.

[ 41 : 29 ] God knows it. The power that you have in Christ is that you can talk to him about that, pray, and he'll help you with it. He's not surprised by anything that's going on in your head or your heart.

He's disappointed, though, if you're not talking to him about it. Most of you are old enough to have kids, right? Your kid gets off track and you know it. And what do you want?

Just talk to me. Talk to me, son. Talk to me, daughter. I can help you with this. And, you know, when your head gets stiff and you can't get him looking in the eye, you know, what do you want?

Just communicate. Well, your Heavenly Father just wants, he longs for that communication with you. And you should talk to him all day long. Share with him like he's your best friend.

Because he is. John 15, 15 tells us that you're not mere servants, but friends. Now, I don't mean like he's not the sovereign lord of the universe, and so he's like, you know, just your little buddy.

[ 42 : 39 ] But he's not, he says he's not, you're not just servants. You're not just someone, I tell what to do, and then you do it. I'm your friend, I want the friendship.

That's why he created us to be friends with him. That's the pre-fall, that's what was going on. And we can have that full circle, we can have that friendship with him.

So I'm telling you, talk to God about everything, your sexual temptations, your language, your joking, what you watch on your devices and TVs, the motives of what you're doing at work or at play.

Talk to God about your temptations to lie or to gossip. Talk to God about why you dress and the way you dress, why you live in the house you live in, how you drive, uh-oh, yeah, how you drive, that's one of my struggles, and your motives behind everything you do and everything you don't do.

Have a constant conversation with the Lord. Jesus is the great prize. There's no merit badges when you get to heaven for all the things you did.

[ 43 : 45 ] It's Jesus. That's your prize. There's nothing else. You get to be with Jesus. I long to be in heaven because I'll have this struggle behind me and I won't sin.

I'll be able to just be with the Lord 100%, 100% of the time and and just revel in the glory of that. But that's available here and now.

So I'm going to take a few moments and we're going to just pray. I know you guys do a lot, sometimes you do discussions and questions, but I prayed about it and I thought, you know, rather than ask me questions, why don't you just talk to God about it?

Okay? So I'm just going to take a few moments of prayer. I'm going to leave you some silence in there to pray on your own and I'm going to ask you a few questions. We pray. Maybe you can think about, but you pray however the Lord's leading you.

You pray about whatever God's got on your heart. If you would, just join me. We'll take a couple moments and it'll seem like forever when you have silence, but it's really only a minute or two and you can do it.

[ 44 : 49 ] So just join me. Just bow your heads and let's pray. Lord Jesus, we come to you.

Lord Jesus, we just humble ourselves as we approach you. We recognize that our flesh is either afraid to be totally open with you, that we deal with shame or guilt.

so Lord, we ask in our humbleness that you'll forgive us. First John will not, you'll forgive us and cleanse us and purify us from all unrighteousness. you speak to our hearts this morning.

A couple questions for you to identify as we sit before the Lord. What lie are you believing? What are you tempted to believe is the most important thing?

Would you identify that? There's our culture around us pulling you constantly towards other priorities than Jesus. Will you at least identify those things right now before the Lord so you know how to pray?

[ 46 : 27 ] So Lord, open our eyes. Give us courage to be honest with you. while we're praying.

Identify that greatest weakness, that temptation, that sin. And it seems like it's always there.

It's your greatest struggle. You may have made friends with it. you may have given up thinking, I just can't overcome that so I'm just going to integrate that sin into my life and it's okay with God. Because of the lack of victory, you've kind of changed your theology. You just admit that it's a lie. God wants you free. And you find freedom in Jesus. Just ask Jesus to forgive you.

[ 48 : 06 ] Just ask Jesus to forgive you. Jesus, we love you.

We want to follow you. We want to see you. Lord, you purify our hearts so we might experience you every day.

Not one of us deserves that. But we're so excited by your grace and your mercy and your love towards us. It compels us to follow you.

Lord, from the inside out will you change us. Free us and the temptation to conform from the outside only without dealing with the deep issues in our hearts.

Whether it's motive or sin or addiction or habits or how we were raised or thinking that is errant.

[ 49 : 28 ] give us the courage to follow you and to communicate with you every day all day.

I'll just give you another moment of silence. Just pray as the Lord leads you. I won't interrupt you.

I'm just going to close at the end of this. So just pray. Continue to pray as the Lord leads. Jesus, Jesus, we love you.

We give our lives to you. We surrender again to you this morning. Be glorified in our lives and in our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name.

All God's people said. Amen, amen. It's great being with you this morning. Sorry I kept you a little long. I've listened to Marv's sermons.

[ 50 : 54 ] He goes at least an hour sometimes. Didn't go and out. God bless you. Thanks for being here. You're dismissed.