

# *Program Transcripts*

For June 2017



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY <sup>®</sup>



# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**June 2017**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **JUNE 4 – A FRIEND TO JESUS**

Everyone needs friends. The best friend you'll ever have is Jesus Christ. Jesus knows what it means to sacrifice himself out of love for His friends, and the Lord Jesus wants to have you as one of His friends.

## **JUNE 11 – THE MESSAGE PREACHED**

God sent His Son Jesus to the cross to die for our sins but chose a message preached to save those who believe. The cross and the gospel work together to bring about our salvation. The gospel opens the door to the cross.

## **JUNE 18 – PASSING ON THE FAITH**

We can find no greater need than to pass our faith on to our children, so they may teach their children about all the great things God has done for us. As parents, we must train our children to love and serve God.

## **JUNE 25 – DOES JESUS CARE?**

Life can suddenly become harsh, causing us to question whether the Lord cares about us. However, a sparrow cannot fall from the sky without the Lord's knowledge. He knows and cares for us through every storm of life.

## A Friend to Jesus

Everyone needs a friend, and the best friend you'll ever have is Jesus Christ. Today, we're exploring the friendship we have with Jesus. We go to God's Word, because we know God is our friend. He loves us fully and freely. His love is greater than we can imagine. Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" Few treasures in life exceed the value of friendship. Heaven is beautiful, not only because God made it so, but more because of who will be there. The Lord yearns to be our friend, now and forever. I know you're thankful for His love. Someone said, "A friend is one who knows all about you and still likes you." The Lord Jesus went to the cross for sinners. He gave His love freely to people who didn't deserve His love. Yes, He knows all our sins and our weaknesses. He knows our thoughts, good and evil. He knows all our secrets. In spite of it all, He created us and gave Jesus to save us from sin. He loved us as sinners, but wanted to provide something better for us than the pleasures of sin.

The more we get to know God, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the more we want to serve Him. The more we serve Him, the more abundant our lives become. Friendship with Jesus is the greatest blessing of life. Let's explore friendship with the Lord.

Our reading today comes from the Gospel According to John chapter 21:15-17. Jesus is having a conversation with Peter. "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said it to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'" Love is not just about saying we love someone, but also living it out in our lives.

Throughout His days, Jesus faced people who wanted to take His life and end His ministry. Matthew chapter two tells how Herod tried to kill Jesus as an infant after the wise men inquired about the birth of the king of the Jews. Sadly, Herod did kill many infants in Bethlehem, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy that Rachel would weep for her children. Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, is buried in Bethlehem; you can visit her tomb even to this day.

The New Testament tells of Jesus coming to His hometown of Nazareth to preach. The Lord taught things they didn't wish to hear. They had a hard time believing a hometown boy could be the Messiah. Luke 4:28-29 says, "When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and they drove Him out of the town and brought Him to the brow of a hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw Him down the cliff." Jesus was able to escape, but you can imagine His heartbreak and disappointment over the loss of His lifetime friends at Nazareth.

John chapter eight tells of the experience Jesus had in Jerusalem in the temple as He defended Himself before the Jews. Jesus spoke of Abraham's rejoicing to see His day. John 8:57-59 says, "So the Jews said to him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.' So

they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”

Again, in chapter ten of John, Jesus revealed to the Jews that He and the Father are one. But this didn't set well with the Jews. They thought He was blaspheming by claiming to be the Son of God. So John 10:31 says, “The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.”

John chapter eleven tells how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. When the report of this miracle reached the ears of the Pharisees and chief priests, they convened a council. They said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:47-49). Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said it would be better for one man to die than for the whole nation. So, from that day on they made plans to put Jesus to death. Matthew 26:4 says they plotted together to arrest Jesus by stealth and to kill Him.

The disciple, Judas Iscariot, whom Jesus named an apostle and entrusted the moneybox, became greedy and was a thief. Matthew 26:14-16 says, “Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?’ And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.” Judas led the mob who brought swords and clubs to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus frequently prayed. Judas had even agreed with the Jews on a sign. He said “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.” The Bible says, “And he came up to Jesus at once and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ And he kissed Him” (Matthew 26:49). Ah, this kiss must have broken the Lord's heart. It was cruel and selfish. There was no love to be found in that kiss. They bound the hands of Jesus and they led Him away.

During His trials and crucifixion, they humiliated Him; they mocked Him falsely; they accused Him, slapped Him, scourged Him; and they forced Him to carry His own cross. Pontius Pilate found no fault in Him worthy of death, so he tried to find a way to free Jesus by offering to release a prisoner the Jews wanted. The people refused to free Jesus and cried for Barabbas.

When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus who is called the Christ, the people showed no mercy on Jesus. Matthew 27:22-23 reveals that they all said, “‘Let Him be crucified!’ And Pilate said, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Let Him be crucified!’” Though Pilate washed his hands of this matter in front of the crowd, the people said, “His blood be on us and on our children!” These bloodthirsty people callously called for the death of an innocent man because they were envious and they were afraid of what Rome might do.

So, they led Jesus away to Golgotha, and there they crucified Him. While suffering on the cross, His enemies showed no mercy. They were not content just to do away with Him; they had to humiliate and slander Him as well. The Bible says, “And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ‘He saved others; He cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we'll believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way” (Matthew 27:39-44).

Jesus endured terrifying physical pain on the cross; but when the crowds watching added insult to injury, it must have pierced his heart. Jesus could see a bigger picture. He went to the cross to save the very sinners who put Him there. The Lord endured evil against Himself without becoming ugly to others.

The Bible says, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He didn't revile in return; when He suffered, He didn't threaten, but He continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Jesus blesses us and blesses all, even when people do their worst to Him. He bore our sins, so that we might leave an old life of sin to live to righteousness. The Lord so befriended us that He opened the way for us to have a new and better life, filled with faith, hope, and love. The Lord Jesus does not leave people where He found them. He heals what is broken in our lives. He lifts up those who are down. He forgives our sins. He gives us hope that we can leave old habits of which we're ashamed and can have new lives filled with love and righteousness.

No one, I say to you, no one will ever be a better friend to you than Jesus Christ. Proverbs 17:17 says that a friend loves at all times. The Lord loves you for who you are and who you will become. Remember, God sees what we can become with His grace and help. By His grace, He forgives our past, helps us day to day, and guides us to an eternal home in the future. His love helps us every step of the way.

Christianity is friendship, friendship with God and with everyone who loves God. The New Testament describes Jesus as the "friend of sinners" in Matthew 11:19. Jesus called His disciples "friends" (Luke 12:4 and John 15:14). He wants everyone to stand with Him not against Him. He wants their friendship to be real, to be strong, and to last forever. He wants more than to just be an acquaintance or fair-weather friend. He wants people who will pledge their faith and loyalty to Him.

The Lord Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13-14). Then He said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." Jesus was willing to die for you to save and bless you. Do you really think He would do anything to hurt you or to lead you astray? He asks that you befriend him by being obedient to His commands. The Lord wants you to obey Him because you love Him. But the Lord is not being overbearing or cruel to us when He asks us to obey Him.

The Lord is not trying to enslave us with His commands. This is crucial. Some hear the word command and they get the wrong idea. The Lord never gives us a command to hurt us, to manipulate us, or to subdue us. God's commandments don't enslave; they set us free. Some people don't like following the rules or being told what to do. Our Father in Heaven is indeed a loving Father to us. He gives us His commands because He knows that His instructions will bless our lives and keep us from hurting ourselves.

Every commandment, in the Word, leads to blessing. Every commandment helps us to avoid the pitfalls of life. Every commandment keeps us on the straight and narrow road that leads to an abundant life. Love leads us to do what is right, what is best, and what brings a blessing to all. The commandments of Jesus are designed to teach us how to do just that! The

more we walk in the Lord's way, the more we see how God was loving us through His commandments. God's commandments are God's gift to us.

In the Old Testament, Moses reminded Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land, "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:7-8). If that were true of the Law of Moses, how much more true is it of the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament? We have a great God who has blessed us with the way of righteousness. Oh, what a wonderful gift!

The Lord has also blessed us with a spiritual family, the church, who are friends. The little epistle of Third John ends with the words, "The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name." The Lord has blessed me with the opportunity to travel all over this country and into other countries to meet my brothers and sisters in Christ. Because of Christ, they are my brethren and also my friends.

The Bible calls us to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). Friendship means that we care about others personally, sharing their joys and their pains. We take care of each other. Being a friend to Jesus means being a friend to His church and all the people who are in it. They are indeed family.

Being a friend to Jesus means that we'll take our stand with Him. We believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We pledge our lives to serve Him and Him alone. We lovingly, respectfully but firmly stand up for His teaching and for His teaching alone and for His morals. To be a friend to the Lord Jesus means we trust Him fully and freely. What He calls sin, we recognize as evil. What He calls false, we recognize as wrong. Friendship with Jesus calls us to serve Him, to preach the gospel, and to sacrifice ourselves. Oh, we do this with love, and joy and thankfulness for the opportunity. Are you a friend of Jesus?

As the Gospel of John closes, the Lord Jesus has his first personal conversation with Peter after the resurrection. Only days before, Peter had denied the Lord three times. "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to Him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep'" (John 21:15-17).

I've wondered if the Lord Jesus might ask that question to you or to me today, "Do you love me?" or "Do you love me more than these?" Friend, how would you answer? Can you say that you have been faithful to the Lord, that you're attending church faithfully, you're reading your Bible, you're praying daily, and you stand up for what is true and right? Are you a friend to Jesus? To become a friend to Jesus, the Lord said we should obey His commandments. You must believe; without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Then you must turn from everything sinful and offensive to Jesus and turn to what is right and pleases the Lord. That's repentance. Confessing Jesus as the Son of God is also necessary and being baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins is also necessary just as the Bible teaches in Acts 2:38.

## The Message Preached

What do you think about the Bible and its message? Do you know of its treasures? Today, we're going to examine the treasures found in God's Word! You might think the Bible is old, or boring, or confusing, or even irrelevant; but have you taken the time to read it for yourself? The Bible actually contains some treasures that you need. It may be old, but it's stood the test of time. You might think it boring, but a closer reading and a knowledge of its background will show you how exciting and interesting it can be. You might think it confusing. Of all the books you'll ever read, none are as relevant as God's Word. Your circumstances of life are not so unique that the Scriptures cannot guide you and help you through your struggles.

Some people look at the Bible and look at preaching negatively. They regard the Bible and preaching as something that makes them feel badly about themselves. Some act as if preaching were something dreadful and punishing. But the message preached is actually your greatest treasure and hope. Nothing will bless your life more than the knowledge of the gospel found in your Bible. The Bible is your treasure!

Paul said, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). The message preached and welcomed was the story of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is good news, because it gives us the information that we need to have the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

Our reading today comes from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 21 to 25. "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." God is wise and strong. We need to listen to Him.

Whether we realize it or not, sin makes people feel badly about themselves. Nothing will make you feel small and worthless in your own eyes more than sinful behavior. God made us with a conscience, that moral voice that's inside of us, that constantly evaluates what we do. Even people who know little of Scripture have a moral sense of right and wrong. Paul described people who didn't know much about God, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (Romans 2:14-16).

Our conscience works every day telling us about what we did or we didn't do. It accuses and rebukes us when we do something wrong and excuses us when we do something right. The conscience makes us like the judge, the defendant, and the witness all in one. The witness always knows the truth about what we did or didn't do. When it condemns us, we know that we're guilty. We can hide the truth from other people, but our conscience knows

what we did. That guilt causes us to be ashamed of ourselves. Our behavior determines our guilt, but shame comes from our disappointment with ourselves. A person who's never forgiven himself feels shame in his heart every day.

We must all live with the nagging reality of our sins, and the Scriptures teach us what is right and wrong. We may reject the Scriptures, ignore the Scriptures, or deny what the Scriptures teach; but that doesn't change what they say or relieve our consciences. Inside, we know the truth about ourselves. Nothing will make you feel small and worthless in your own eyes more than sinful behavior. Nothing will make you feel better about yourself than doing the right thing!

After committing adultery with Bathsheba and arranging for the death of her husband, Uriah; David cried out to God, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:1-3). David accepted responsibility for his sins and asked God's forgiveness. He said later in that same psalm, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit" (Psalm 51:7-12). David understood that he would never feel good about himself until he restored a right relationship with God. Neither will we!

Unlike David, some people seek to find every way possible to justify their sins rather than face them and deal with them. Some run off to a far country like the prodigal son. Some hide in the bushes like Adam and Eve. Some blame others for their faults. Some blame culture, or their parents, or the media, or the internet, or a teacher, or their DNA, or some other thing for their own choices in life. Many think that if they reject God and the Scriptures that they all of a sudden are free thinkers, but they're only fooling themselves. When someone rejects God and rejects His morality because he wants to continue his sinful behavior, what he does is he enslaves himself to sin. The answer to the problem of sin is not more sin. You can't drink or drug your way out of a guilty conscience. You can't destroy God's Word or vote God out of ruling the universe. You can't change God's rules in the Word. Remember, God has the last say at judgment. Psalm 119:160 says, "The sum of your word," speaking of God's Word, "is truth, and every one of God's righteous rules endures forever."

The book of Hebrews warns people not to drift away from God or the Scriptures. Hebrews 2:1-3 says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" God didn't give you the Scriptures to suppress you, or manipulate you, or discourage you, or to enslave you. God gave you the Scriptures to keep you from injuring yourself with sin and teach you a better way of life. God wants the best for you! He's your friend, so listen to Him please!

Many Christians have wandered away from the wisdom of God and have ended up with hardened hearts. Hebrews 3:12-13 warns, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another



every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Don't let your sins deceive you into thinking that you don't need God. When you reject God, you lose everything that you hold dear.

We need God's love, God's grace, and God's wisdom to live abundant and prosperous lives. The Bible itself is a treasure far beyond anything this world can provide. It contains for us great wisdom. Proverbs 3:13-18 says, "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her," God's wisdom, "is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed." David calls the Scriptures "sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10).

God's way is the way of hope, of forgiveness, and of starting over. You might look at yourself and because of your guilt despise what you see, but there's hope for you. There's a way to overcome the past and start fresh. You can be born again! Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Rather than looking at Christ and the Scriptures as putting you down, see them as the way to a better life, free from guilt and shame.

You can change your life and your relationship with God. You don't have to be stuck in sin, stuck in guilt, or stuck in being ashamed of yourself. God can help you rise above your past to something far better and nobler. You can start looking at yourself not as a sinner but as a child of God. Please don't fall for the devil's lie that you cannot change your life. Don't fall for the lie that God will accept you whether you repent or not. He won't! God expects us to forsake our sins and to live in righteousness. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Many fail to realize that they have sinned or what the consequences of their sins mean. A large number of Americans fail to read their Bible and they fail to go to church. Recently I learned of a couple who was simply living together without marriage. They didn't realize that what they were doing were wrong. I also recently learned of a person who supported herself by prostitution, and she didn't know what she was doing was wrong; no one had ever taught her better. Nearly 40 percent of Americans have grown up without any spiritual training at all. My friend, when you break one of God's laws, you not only sin against God, you endanger your own soul. You sin against yourself.

Isaiah 59:2 says, "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." Sin breaks your relationship with God and leaves you without promise. Paul described what sin does, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:1-3). What a terrible condition!

The Lord Jesus came to deliver us from the evil in our world and to transform our lives into godly people. Titus 2:11-14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing

salvation for all people,” that includes you and me, “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

We can be born again; we can leave the old man of sin behind and we can start a new life. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). You can have a new life if you are willing to believe in Jesus Christ, turn from sin, and obey the truth in baptism. Romans 6:4 says, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” The apostle Peter wrote, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:22-23). When we obey the Word of God, the Bible, God purifies our souls and causes us to be born again through an imperishable seed. We must listen to the Word of God and obey it.

Wouldn't you like to have hope, to start each day knowing that you have a right relationship with the Lord Jesus? God is not against you. He wants you to start over by being born again to a newness of life, a life better than you've ever known. God wants to bless you; He wants to free you from sin and give you eternal life, hope, peace of mind, and joy. If you ignore or reject Him, just think about what you're missing. You only have one life. Don't waste your opportunity to be right with God.

Our time on earth is brief, so don't waste your life. Don't imagine that you'll get right with God one day. Remember the foolish virgins who failed to have oil for their lamps in Matthew 25. When the bridegroom arrived with the wedding party, they had gone in to town to buy oil and they missed the homecoming. So he closed the door and rejected them. The foolish virgins had good intentions, but didn't prepare for His coming. To suggest that the Lord will forgive us anyway, even if we're not prepared, is also foolish.

The Scriptures show people were so excited and ready to obey the Lord in repentance and baptism that they didn't delay their obedience in the least. Three thousand gladly received Peter's message; they repented, and were baptized on the day of Pentecost according to Acts 2:38-41. They didn't wait! Acts 8:12 says, “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.” They didn't wait! When the Eunuch saw water in Acts 8, he asked what prevented him from being baptized. He didn't wait! Paul baptized the Philippian jailer at midnight! He and his family didn't wait! Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16 not to delay but to rise and be baptized and wash away his sins.

Why did they all do this? They didn't want to spend even one day without the grace of God. They acted with urgency, because getting right with God is an urgent matter! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and confess Him as the Son of God; repent of your sins and decide you're going to follow Jesus; and be baptized into Christ, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins. When you do God's will, God will cleanse you with the blood of Jesus and add you to His family. You won't regret doing the right thing!

## Passing on the Faith

Every Christian wants to go to heaven, and they want their children to go to heaven as well. Today, we're looking at the need to pass on the faith. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). We carefully examine the Scriptures to know what the Lord commands. Loving Him means listening to Him and serving Him every day.

God blessed our home with four precious children. Jackie and I never considered our children as burdens, but as blessings. We were happy to pass on our faith in Jesus Christ to our children. We prayed that they would mature and pass on the faith to their children. When children are small, they see their parents' faith and commitment. When parents are committed to God, their children are more likely to be committed. Little children may not understand all the reasons why they should believe, but they know by their parents' behavior whether God matters.

As children reach elementary school, they want to be like their parents and identify with their parents' faith. In middle school, they begin questioning things and search for reasons to believe. They realize that some don't believe in Christ or take the Bible seriously. They see Christians who profess faith but fail to practice it. This causes questions, and so parents must help their children find answers to their questions and work through their problems.

First Peter 3:15 says, "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." Children usually ask their parents first for answers about their faith. What are you doing to pass on the faith to your children?

Our reading today comes from the book of Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." That was the teaching of Moses to the people of Israel and it's good advise for us. The book of Deuteronomy contains three lengthy speeches that Moses gave to Israel shortly before his death. These lessons reveal his desire for Israel to remain faithful to God and serve Him with all their heart and soul. Every godly leader and every godly parent wants those who follow Him to continue in the faith. Moses said, "Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 6:1-3).

Moses died soon after these speeches, and God chose Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land. God promised, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be

careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Joshua 1:6-8).

The people remained faithful to God during the life of Joshua. Judges 2:7 says, “The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.” For a while things went well; but Judges 2:10-12 says, “there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and they served the Baals, and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.”

One generation may be faithful, while another generation falls away and does evil. Through the history of Israel, one can see how the nation went back and forth in their devotion to God. We must devote ourselves to the Lord and to the spiritual training of our children, so they will not forsake the Lord and follow the people around them.

God gave parents the primary responsibility of spiritually training their children and teaching them the will of God. God said of Abraham, “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him” (Genesis 18:19). The apostle Paul said to Christians, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

There are several reasons to instill Christian values and standards in our children. First, we must help our children understand God and His Word, and that they are the ultimate authority. The Word of God must be impressed upon our hearts if we are to impress them upon our children’s hearts. The Word of God applies to every situation in life. No one is better suited to model and apply God’s teaching to every area of life than a parent. Parents cannot lead their children where they are not going. That’s the reason why we must teach them the Word of God. Romans 10:17 simply says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

The command in Deuteronomy 6:8 to bind God’s Word “as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead” emphasized constant remembrance and attention. They should keep the Law before their eyes constantly, so that wherever they looked and whatever they did, they would remember God’s teaching. In our complex and confused world, our children need the constant morals and values of God’s Holy Word. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.” We must establish Biblical guidelines, so that our children will know right from wrong. We must also teach them discretion between what is wise and what is foolish.

Second, we must give our children the family skills that they will need as parents. We rear our children to be Christians and to be examples for their children. They need to know how to be good spouses and good parents. They will learn it from Scripture and from our example. Times change, but knowing how to listen, to love, to forgive, and to be a Christian never changes. Your children will likely parent your grandchildren the way that you parented them.



Solomon said, “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck” (Proverbs 1:8-9).

Third, we must open the door to a personal relationship with God. Solomon said, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Children whose parents are faithful servants of the Lord are more likely to be faithful servants of the Lord themselves. Children whose parents remain close to God usually remain close to God themselves. The goal of spiritual training is to develop mature, loving Christians. This is a lifelong pursuit and doesn’t end just when the child is baptized. Baptism is not the end but the beginning of the Christian life. We must teach our children to stay faithful as long as they live.

Paul saw in the young man Timothy a sincere faith. This didn’t happen by accident! Paul wrote, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 Timothy 1:5). Timothy was faithful because his mother and his grandmother taught him the Scriptures! Paul urged the young man, “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Our children need what the Scripture gives. They need teaching so they will know what is true and good. They need reproof to avoid and forsake the dangers of sin. They need correction so they can overcome the burdens and the guilt of sin. They need training in righteousness so they can be equipped for every good work. God wants not only to save us but also to transform our lives so that we will be a blessing to everyone that we touch.

Solomon said, “My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So that you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones” (Proverbs 3:1-8).

Last, we must give our children the practical key to life. Solomon taught his sons what he learned from his own father, David. The book of Proverbs provides God’s wisdom for parents in so many areas of life. Solomon is addressing his sons with needed lessons in life. Good parents get involved with their children’s education in every area of life. They expect their children to listen and to learn. If school, and sports, and driving a car are important to life, then one cannot take a casual approach to the spiritual instruction that will take them into eternity. Your children will learn God’s way is best, and the value of persistence in the faith, and patience by watching and listening to you.

Solomon said, “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of

God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul” (Proverbs 2:1-9).

As you read the book of Proverbs, you can hear a father pleading with his son to listen to wisdom and to avoid the ways of sin. When children fail to listen to the wisdom of godly parents who know and love the Lord, and know the Bible, they can wind up in a great deal of misery. Remember the prodigal son. But when children learn wisdom and insight, their lives can flourish.

Solomon said, “Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, ‘Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.’ Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life” (Proverbs 4:1-13).

Psalm 78:1-8 says, “Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

There is no greater need in our world today than for Christian parents, especially fathers, to bring their children up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. Bible schools and youth ministers have great value, but God gave parents the responsibility of spiritually training their children.

God’s grace and love are abundant, and the joys of serving the Lord are without end. That means we must get right and remain right with the Lord, if we wish to live with Him throughout eternity. To get right with God, place your trust in the Lord Jesus, repent and turn from sin and come to the Lord’s way, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins—just as Acts 2:38 teaches. Won’t you do that today?

## Does Jesus Care?

Life can suddenly become harsh, causing us to question whether the Lord cares about us. When I'm hurting, does Jesus care about me? We have no doubt that the Bible will give us the truth, so we keep on looking to it for the answers. Our goal is to please God because we love Him and we want to be close to Him. Longing to be close to God is natural, especially when you're hurting. The sons of Korah described the heartache of longing for God. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'" (Psalm 42:1-3).

When tough times come, many feel that God is distant. They wonder if the Lord is watching or if He cares. They long for God's help and comfort. Does Jesus care when our hearts are broken with grief, when the bills pile up, when the children are hungry, or when we can't seem to get well? Does God know what you're going through and hear your prayers?

Nothing escapes the notice of God. Luke 12:6 says that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground apart from God's knowledge. God not only sees what happens outwardly, He can also see the troubles inside your heart. He knows all about you, because He created you. He knows your every need and knows your every heartache. There's never been a single moment in your life when God has closed His heart and not wanted to be close to you and bless you.

Our reading today gives us some details about an event in the life of Jesus. They come from Mark 4:35-39.

On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

Frightening, life-threatening storms happened suddenly on the sea of Galilee. In this storm Jesus is asleep, with "his head on a cushion." The disciples cry out "Master, don't you care that we are perishing?" We all ask questions like this, and we need an answer. We see the world's agonies and wonder if God is paying attention. We need help from Someone bigger than we are and we need His help now.

Jesus didn't answer their question immediately. Instead, He rebuked the storm and made the water calm. Then Jesus asked the disciples, "How is it that you have no faith?" In so many cases in life, the question is not whether God cares, but whether we believe.

Of course, Jesus cares. Mark five, in the first 20 verses, describes how the Lord Jesus delivered Legion, a demon-possessed man who lived like a beast. Later in the chapter, verses 25 to 34, Jesus heals a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years; and then later on, verses 35 to 43, He raised the daughter of Jairus.

Someone objects, "But why doesn't God stop every problem? Why is it the Lord seems asleep and uncaring?" Here is the assumption: if God doesn't stop all our problems, He doesn't really care about us. We want God to keep us free from any struggles or difficulties. It's tempting to question God's love when we face challenges or disappointments. We think if God loves us, that He will protect us from any and every problem.

But, is a painless world free from any problems, really the best for us? It may be convenient and comfortable, but is it best for our character? Doesn't the person who faces no problems and gets everything his own way think that the whole world revolves around him?

Challenges shape us into people of character. James 1:2-4 says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." We may see trials and struggles the wrong way. God permits them because He sees a greater good with them than without them. Struggles help us become the strong people that God desires. So, let's rejoice in our trials, because God uses them to mold us into His people.

James 1:12 says, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." It doesn't say, "Blessed is the man who has no troubles," but "blessed is the man who perseveres under trial." He's the man who won't quit on God on a rough day. Because he loves God, even in tough times, God will reward him with the crown of life.

The Lord demonstrates that He cares. You might ask the question, "How?" First, He shows that He understands suffering in that He himself suffered for our sins. He Himself endured the punishment that rightfully was our own. First Peter 2:24 says, "He Himself bore our sins in His body." It was personal, and He did it on the cross, "so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

God loved His Son, Jesus, but He didn't stop the crucifixion. Jesus prayed with tears in the Garden to let this cup pass, but God sacrificed His Son because He loved you and me, just as He loved His Son. Atoning for sin was more important to Jesus Himself than freedom from suffering. Have you considered how greatly our Father suffered in sacrificing His Son? No one has grieved over human evil more than God Himself has. No one has suffered more than Jesus, who bore the cross for our sins. He showed unmistakably how much He loved us. This loving God asks us to trust Him when we and our loved ones cry out for help.

First Peter 2:21-23 says, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." This is what the disciples in the boat needed to do and what we need to do: entrust our souls to God! First Peter 5:7 urges us to cast "all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."

God inspired the apostle Paul to write the book of Romans before the Christians began facing great persecution. Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered'" (Romans 8:35-36).

Paul answers the question in verses 37 to 39, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure," I'm convinced, "that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Their problems did not separate them from the love of God; and my friend, your problems won't separate you either.



God didn't stop the apostles from being beaten; He didn't stop Stephen from being stoned; and He didn't stop James from being beheaded by the sword. God didn't keep Paul from imprisonment. They knew God would stand by them. Suffering may tempt us to quit on God. Remember, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted or tested beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

These temptations or tests don't single us out, but they are common. We all suffer, and that suffering can challenge our faith. God isn't hiding when the trials come. He is faithful! You can trust Him! Nothing that you encounter today, nothing tomorrow, or nothing at any time will ever be bigger than what God and you together can handle. He doesn't remove all of our problems, but God does give us the strength and the ability to bear those challenges and those temptations and those tests. When the problem gets so big that we can't handle it, God makes a way of escape so that we'll never be overcome by it.

God sometimes uses the physical struggles that we face to keep us from doing ourselves spiritual harm. God gave the apostle Paul some tremendous, miraculous revelations to help him in his ministry. But, God didn't want Paul to exalt himself, so He gave him "a thorn in the flesh" to torment him and keep him from exalting himself (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul prayed three times for the Lord to take away his "thorn in the flesh"; but God refused and said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

Paul realized that this thorn was not going away. Was he bitter? No! He learned something valuable: God's power is perfected, made stronger, in weakness. Paul said, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Struggles remind us that we need God. Many folks think that they can manage without God; but in our darkest moments, we see how much we really need God.

God's grace is indeed sufficient. Yes, it is! Suffering may torment your body, but it can't take away your soul. Suffering may open up for you an opportunity to see the great power of God, to help you sustain yourself even in times of weakness. Jesus does indeed care. Just as Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus, so He weeps with us. The Lord knows when we hurt, and He provides the comfort and strength that we need to overcome.

Sometimes people continue to ask, "Why the Lord doesn't stop all evil right now?" But if the Lord stopped all evil, wouldn't that also include the evil that you do? You know if we ask God to stop all evil, we need to consider the wrongs that we do. Your sin hurts; it hurts God; it hurts you; and it hurts others. The Lord patiently loves you enough to lead you to a better way. He asks you to change your life by repenting.

Repentance is not punishment, but healing. The Lord knows that there is a better person inside of you, wanting to come out. He knows that your repentance will not only bless your life, but bless all the people that you touch. When you come to Christ and stop the old way of sin, you bless people that you formerly hurt. He graciously gives us time to repent. "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus loved you and gave you the righteous example to follow. He showed us how to forgive and how to be forgiven. He gave us his Word to guide our lives. He could say, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you

and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Times of crisis call for the best in people. Bravery, heroism, love, self-sacrifice—all of these things flourish in times of crisis. People who exhibit such traits are cherished and honored as having gone “above and beyond the call of duty.” Was this not the very point that Christ was making when He said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

The most important question is not, “why did this happen to me?” but rather, “what shall I do now?” Some reject God and abandon Him when sorrow comes their way. Some turn inward in self-pity. Others exercise their faith and find that God has not forgotten them. They entrust their souls to Him and find His promise is true, which says “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Not everything that happens to us is good; but let’s not assume that the only way that God can care for us is to prevent our troubles. God also shows His care by taking the harshest things in our lives and using them for good, not only to bless us, but also to bless others. God has the power to prevent; and we have no idea all the harm from which He has protected us already. But, God also has the power to take the things that are at their worst and make good out of them. He can also do that for you.

Instead of blaming God for pain, look to Him for strength. Struggles remind us that God never intended this world to be our home. We are pilgrims, and our lives here are brief. Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). We too must learn to see with the eye of faith and trust. The last chapter of our lives has not yet been written. When Jesus comes again, He will bless and comfort His own.

Jesus cares about you. He wants to be your friend. He cares about your physical welfare, your finances, your family, and your future. More than anything, Jesus cares about your soul. The Lord Jesus knows all about you, the good and the bad. He even knows the number of hairs upon your head. In spite of it all, He loves you and He cares greatly about every detail of your life.

Sometimes we concentrate so much on our longing for God to act that we forget God is longing for a relationship with us. The Lord deeply desires that we draw close to Him. When we forget Him or get caught up in sin, He yearns for His people to come back. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for sinful people, yearning to have a relationship with them.

Do you have a close, loving relationship with God? Does the Lord see you as someone who is devoted to Him? In your quiet moments as you look into your heart, do you see yourself as a friend to God? If you have not given yourself to the Lord; today, is the right day to come to Him. Come to the Lord in faith, trusting in Him and His Word. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. In repentance, make Jesus your Lord; let Him rule your life.

Having done these things, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. In baptism, the Lord will cleanse you from sin (Acts 22:16); He’ll cause you to be born again (John 3:5); He’ll give you newness of life (Romans 6:4). In baptism, the Lord will also add you to His church (Acts 2:47). When you become a Christian, you’ll find the strength and grace to deal with all of life’s struggles. God cares enough to give us the strength to bear what He does not take away. Trust Him! Trust Him!