

Lesson 1: Frozen

-New series! (Funny photos: 4)

“Don’t let them in. Don’t let them see. But the good girl (guy) you’ve always had to be. Conceal. Don’t feel. Put on a show. Make one false move and everyone will know.”

Why is it that we have such a hard time letting people know when we’re struggling?

It probably has something to do with **one word**, one of the major themes of the movie Frozen, the word fear.

We’re afraid. We’re afraid to let people in. To let them see. And so we conceal and we put on a show, and we ICEolate ourselves. Why? Because all it takes is one false move and everyone will know.

Will know what exactly? That we’re not perfect! I’m not sure any of us are fooling anybody on that one. None of us is perfect. Not your youth minister, your cocoon leader. There’s no such thing as a perfect family, no such thing as a perfect marriage.

But still we say things like: “Man, their life is soooooo perfect.” When in fact there’s only been one perfect life lived oh and by the way it He was crucified. Still jealous of a life that’s soooooo perfect?

James 3:2 says, “For we all stumble in many things.” That’s a really short verse, with a very simple, but important truth. We all struggle. We struggle in many ways. The struggle is real.

Here in a minute we’re going to do something that—if you take seriously—will be something very powerful.

Everybody who came in tonight should’ve gotten a piece of paper and a pen. If you didn’t, raise your hand and we will get those two things to you.

I’m going to give you time here in just a minute to write something down, so please listen and don’t be writing anything until I finish explaining how this is going work.

Here’s what I want you to do. You don’t have to write your name (you can if you want to), but I want everybody here tonight to use that piece of paper to answer one simple question: what do you struggle with?

I want to ask you to write down something on this piece of paper that you struggle with. If it’s more than one thing, write down as many things as you’d like. Don’t just write something down to write something down.

For the next few weeks, we are going to address as many struggles as we can that are inside of this room. You guys are going to build this series. Each week we are going to tackle one of the struggles inside of this room.

We’re going to take a couple of minutes and think about this. I’m going to give you guys about 2 minutes of silence to work on it. When you finish, fold it up and pass it to the end of your aisle...

Before we take a moment to do that, let’s take a moment to pray.

“Father in Heaven, you know all of the struggles inside of this room. You see them already. Help us, Lord, to have the courage to acknowledge our shortcomings and struggles. Strengthen us, and help us to fight harder against satan. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

-2:00 of silence. Write down as much or as little as you want.

Before we dismiss to cocoons, I want to give you 4 Secrets to Getting Real about the Struggle.

1. **Be real about your struggles.**

James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Why would ever tell anybody that I struggle with ____? God says confess to each other and pray, why? It's for our own good! That we may be healed. Why else should I tell my brothers and sisters about my struggles? God says when righteous people pray, it avails much. Avail is a word that means to profit or value or to give an advantage. I like that. When we have righteous people praying for us it means we've got an advantage against our opponent...

Sort of like deflating footballs.

Be real about your struggles. If you're not ok, don't pretend like you are. Be real. Tell someone who can help. That's the first step in getting help. And be real with God about it, too. Pray to Him.

2. **Know you're not alone.**

Remember James 3:2 "We all stumble..."

That means we are all in the same boat. Whatever it is you're facing, there's someone else out there who's facing it.

To quote Solomon "There is nothing new under the sun." There's nothing that I will face that is unique to only me. In fact, I daresay

someone in the room is probably struggling with the very same thing you are struggling with right now. You're not alone! No, you're not alone. Not only do we have a church family, but we've got a Savior who is right here sympathizing with us in our weaknesses!

3. **Allow God's Truth to expose satan's lies.**

Eph.5:8-11 8 For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit[b] is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.

When you are struggling, it's easy for things to get really dark really fast. satan loves to whisper lies into our ears. We must allow the Word of God, the Voice of Truth, to shine into the darkness and expose the lies for what they are, and the liar for who he is.

4. **Remember God can bless you even in your struggles.**

satan wants us to be **frozen** by our fears.

But you know how the movie ends: love trumps fear. In fact, it's an act of true love, a sacrificial kind of love that changes the entire story.

Hmmm...haven't we heard this story before?

Perfect love casts out all fear? Greater love has no man than this than to lay down his life for his friends?

When we were dead in our trespasses, when we were frozen in a state of fear and dread, Christ died for the ungodly. It was an act of true love, a sacrificial kind of love that changed the entire story.

-I want to end tonight with **this clip**. And then we will be dismissed to our cocoons.

Lesson 2: Evangelism

Tonight we are going to talk about the second-highest rated struggle that you guys said you were facing: struggles with evangelism.

Encouraging: out of all the struggles you could've written down, you guys wrote down something that has to do with your concern for others. I also think it's something that I would say is one of your strengths.

A cruise ship was out on the ocean deep into the night, when suddenly an S.O.S. call comes across the ship that there's a passenger has gone overboard. Immediately the captain turns boat around, the crew runs to the spotlights to shine them into the water, passengers line the deck searching for the one who has gone overboard, they lower boats down into the water and rescuers go out with the rafts.

When finally a guy looking over the deck says I saw him I saw him! The rescue boats pull him in, take him back to the ship, where medical personnel resuscitates him, and a nurse cares for him all night long as he regains consciousness.

The next morning, when he finally comes to, he asks: I'd like to say thank you for whoever it was who saved me last night. Could you tell me who it was? The caretaker says, "That's hard to answer. Because there were a lot of people that saved your life last night. Was it the one who saw you go overboard, sounded the S.O.S. call, was it the captain, the men shining lights, the passenger who spotted you, the men in the lifeboats, the one who care you mouth to mouth, or the nurse who stayed up with you all night?"

The answer is it took them all to save a life.

You know, **maybe the reason we say we struggle with evangelism is because we don't understand that everybody plays a different role.**

Sometimes we think "Well, I didn't baptize them so I didn't lead them to the Lord—I didn't do evangelism." I didn't have a Bible study with them so I didn't really do evangelism.

The fact is, everybody plays a role. The one who invited that person to come on a retreat for the first time played a role. The person that went out of their way to make you feel welcome on that first time you came. If they were not there you wouldn't have come back. The person that introduced you to some friends that would be real difference makers. The Cocoon leader or youth minister that prayed for you, or gave a lesson from God's Word, or sent you an encouraging text message at the time when you needed it most.

Everybody plays a part in saving souls.

Do you get that **every week you are presented with opportunities to make a difference in eternity?** I am going to repeat that because we don't get this: EVERY WEEK YOU ARE PRESENTED WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO CHANGE ETERNITY. What are you doing with them? Well, I couldn't get any of my friends to come. Do you realize that any given week we have somewhere between 3-10 guests?

The next time you get mad because your parents canceled your Netflix subscription, or when "Nobody in the youth group texted me today," or the next time you go on a social media rant because "My life is literally over because (fill in the blank with a trivial cir-

cumstance), keep in mind, Christians, that there are bigger problems than our hurt feelings, or our bad days—

The big problem is that **there is a hell and a lot of people going there. Not my words. Jesus' words. So,** what are you going to do about it? That's called evangelism.

I want to give you guys time in cocoons tonight so I'll have to move quickly. I want to "9 Things Great Evangelists Get."

5. They get that rejection comes with the territory.

Why are we so afraid of rejection?

Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. I John 3:13

If they reject you, you're in good company—they rejected Jesus. It's not the worst thing to be rejected. In fact, it means you did what you were supposed to do. If you don't get rejected it means you never made an effort.

6. Evangelists get the urgency and emergency for the Gospel.

We cannot afford to waste time.

I Corinthians 5:10-11 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.

The Gospel is urgent. People are counting on us...

7. At the same time, evangelists get the importance of building relationships.

Not trying to dog people that do this, but it doesn't seem to be an effective way to do evangelism to just stand on a corner and yell at people. Why? No relationship with them!

You've gotta love this. "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." I Cor.9:22b-23.

8. They get that awkwardness is better than disobedience.

"But it's awkward inviting people to church and talking about God." Let me ask you a question: is it better for you to do God's will and feel awkward or to ignore God's will so you can feel comfortable? God didn't call you to a comfortable faith. I'm just going to put this verse up here again.

I Corinthians 5:10-11 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.

9. Evangelists get that you cannot lead someone to something you are not following yourself.

That goes back to last week's message on hypocrisy.

Matthew 15:14 "Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

10. Evangelists get the role and responsibility of prayer.

Eph. 3:20-21

11. They get that there is life-changing power in the Word of God. (That means studying/preparing!)

I do not have the power to change people. Only God can.

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, John 6:68

12. They get that every soul matters.

Matthew 23: the least of these. Luke 15. 1 sheep.

13. They get that if you can't hear it, it doesn't matter.

We are good at telling people things. Some of us are good at gossip. Some of us are good at talking about sports. We need to get good at talking to people about Jesus.

We wanna help! T.A.G. promo. Tell About God.

Cococonversation Starters

Who is someone that you know that does evangelism well? What makes you say that? (Jot down their responses. It will craft answers to the next question.)

What makes someone a good evangelist? (Note: we will take time to talk about what evangelism means, but it wouldn't hurt to review what an evangelist is!)

Who was a better at doing evangelism: Peter or Andrew? (The quick answer is to say Peter! Acts 2:38-41. 3000 baptized. But look at John 1:40-42).

It's not about how many you bring to the Lord. It's about reaching **someone**. That someone might

Being "good" at evangelism doesn't mean you stand up and preach a sermon and baptize 3,000 people every week. It means inviting a friend from school to a retreat. And on that retreat they may hear something that changes their life forever.

That's you doing evangelism. It never starts without an invitation.

How many people did Andrew lead to the Lord? One more than Peter.

If Andrew hadn't invited his brother Peter it probably wouldn't have been Peter preaching at Pentecost that day.

Lesson 3: Dealing with Difficult Relationships

Texts – Mt 5:38-47; Rom 12:14-21

Major points

- 1) See all people as God's creation - SOULS
- 2) Go the extra mile in a difficult relationship
- 3) Love your enemies and make them your friends
- 4) Associate with all classifications of people. Do not turn away from anyone.
- 5) If you suffer because of the positive way you treat people, this is a good thing and pleasing to God – 1 Pet 2

Personal challenge

Go to school and find someone that you avoid. Take that energy used in avoiding them to renew a positive relationship with them. Make an enemy a friend. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Prove it.

Lesson 4: Depression

Everyone feels sad sometimes. But if you're sad most of the time, and it's giving you problems with:

- your grades or attendance at school
- your relationships with your family and friends
- using alcohol, drugs
- controlling your behavior in other ways

The problem may be DEPRESSION.

Clinical depression is a serious illness that can affect anybody. It can affect your thoughts, feelings, behavior, and overall health.

However there is treatment and HOPE. A majority of depressed people never get the help they need. And, when depression isn't treated, it can get worse, last longer, and prevent you from getting the most out of this important time in your life.

So how do you know if you or someone you love is depressed.

You should get evaluated by a professional if you've had five or more of the following symptoms for more than two weeks or if any of these symptoms cause such a big change that you can't keep up your usual routine.....

When You're Depressed:

- You feel sad or cry a lot and it doesn't go away.

- You feel guilty for no reason; you feel like you're no good; you've lost your confidence.
- Life seems meaningless or like nothing good is ever going to happen again. You have a negative attitude a lot of the time, or it seems like you have no feelings.
- You don't feel like doing a lot of the things you used to like—music, sports, being with friends, going out—and you want to be left alone most of the time.
- It's hard to make up your mind. You forget lots of things, and it's hard to concentrate.
- You get irritated often. Little things make you lose your temper; you overreact.
- Your sleep pattern changes; you start sleeping a lot more or you have trouble falling asleep at night. Or you wake up really early most mornings and can't get back to sleep.
- Your eating pattern changes; you've lost your appetite or you eat a lot more.
- You feel restless and tired most of the time.
- You think about death, or feel like you're dying, or have thoughts about committing suicide.

Talk to Someone

If you are concerned about depression in yourself or a friend, TALK TO SOMEONE about it. There are people who can help you get treatment:

- a counselor
- a trusted family member
- your family doctor
- your youth minister
- a school counselor or nurse
- a social worker
- a responsible adult

Some Facts about Depression:

Depression can affect people of any age, race, ethnic or economic group.

Having depression doesn't mean that a person is weak, or a failure, or isn't really trying...it means they need treatment for depression.

Depression can be helped with Christian counseling, medicine, or both together.

Counseling for depression would mean talking about feelings with a trained counselor who can help you change the relationships, thoughts, or behaviors that contribute to depression.

Medication has been developed that effectively treats depression that is severe or disabling. Antidepressant medications are not "uppers" and are not addictive. Sometimes, several types may have to be tried before you and your doctor find the one that works best.

Treatment can help most depressed people start to feel better in just a few weeks.

So remember, when your problems seem too big and you're feeling low for too long, **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**. There's help out there and you can ask for help. And if you know someone who you think is depressed, you can help: Listen and encourage your friend to ask a parent or responsible adult about treatment. If your friend doesn't ask for help soon, talk to an adult you trust and respect -- especially if your friend mentions suicide.

What You Need to Know About Suicide...

Most people who are depressed do not commit suicide. But depression increases the risk for suicide or suicide attempts. It is not true that people who talk about suicide do not attempt it. Suicidal thoughts, remarks, or attempts are **ALWAYS SERIOUS**...if any of these happen to you or a friend, you must tell a responsible adult **IMMEDIATELY**...it's better to be safe than sorry...

Why Do People Get Depressed?

Sometimes people get seriously depressed after something like a divorce in the family, family crisis, someone you love dying, a messed up home life, or breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Other times - like with other illnesses - depression just happens. Often teenagers react to the pain of depression by getting into trouble: trouble with alcohol, drugs, or sex; trouble with school or bad grades; problems with family or friends. This is another reason why it's important to get treatment for depression before it leads to other trouble.

Depression and Alcohol and Other Drugs

A lot of depressed people, especially teenagers, also have problems with alcohol and drugs. (Alcohol is a drug, too.) Sometimes the depression comes first and people try drugs as a way to escape it. (In the long run, drugs or alcohol just make things worse!) Other times, the alcohol or other drug use comes first, and depression is caused by:

- the drug itself, or
- withdrawal from it, or
- the problems that substance use causes.

And sometimes you can't tell which came first...the important point is that when you have both of these problems, the sooner you get treatment, the better. Either problem can make the other worse and lead to bigger trouble, like addiction or flunking school. You need to be honest about both problems -- first with yourself and then with someone who can help you get into treatment...it's the only way to really get better and stay better.

Depression is a real medical illness and it's treatable.

Myths about depression often prevent people from doing the right thing. Some common myths are:

Myth: It's normal for teenagers to be moody; teens don't suffer from real depression.

FACT: Depression is more than just being moody, and it can affect people at any age, including teenagers.

Myth: Telling an adult that a friend might be depressed is betraying a trust. If someone wants help, he or she will get it.

FACT: Depression, which saps energy and self-esteem, interferes with a person's ability or wish to get help. It is an act of true friendship to share your concerns with an adult who can help.

Myth: Talking about depression only makes it worse.

FACT: Talking through feelings with a good friend is often a helpful first step. Friendship, concern, and support can provide the encouragement to talk to a parent or other trusted adult about getting evaluated for depression.

Depression and the Bible

You won't find the term "depression" in the Bible, except in the New Living Translation. Instead, the Bible uses words such as downcast, sad, forlorn, discouraged, downhearted, mourning, troubled, miserable, despairing, and brokenhearted.

You will, however, find many Bible people showing the symptoms of depression: Hagar, Moses, Naomi, Hannah, Saul, David, Solomon, Elijah, Nehemiah, Job, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Judas Iscariot, and Paul.

Depression strikes both women, like Hannah, who was barren, and men, like Jeremiah, the "weeping prophet."

God Is Not Angry About Our Depression

Discouragement and depression are normal parts of being human. They can be triggered by the death of a loved one, illness, loss of a job or status, divorce, leaving home, or many other traumatic events.

The Bible does not show God punishing his people for their sadness. Rather, he acts as a loving Father:

God Is Our Hope in the Midst of Depression

One of the great truths of the Bible is that God is our hope when we are in trouble, including depression. The message is clear. When depression hits, fix your eyes on God, his power, and his love for you:

Verses for help on Depression:

Psalms 32:10: Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

Psalms 37:3-4 Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 42:11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

1 Peter 5:6-7 (KJV) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you.

Deuteronomy 31:8 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Psalms 34:18 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand;

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever

Matthew 28:20 "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we live by faith, not by sight

He Has Great Plans for You; Hang in There

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you hope and a good future.

John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure 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.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those

who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Biblical Ways to treat depression:

1. Talk to a Christian counselor.

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

God tells us to bear one another's burdens. God has gifted many Christian counselors with the ability to bear other's burdens and teach them how to better cope with these burdens

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Depression in itself is not a sin but sometimes it can cause us to sin. Confessing your struggles to a Christian counselor can help you learn how to manage your depression and not sin while doing so.

2. Learn to retrain your thoughts

Words that we say to ourselves are so powerful. But God's words are MORE powerful. His words can and will (if we allow Him) create a new self (Ephesians 4:22-24). Sometimes we need a thought closet makeover. We need God to help us control our negative thoughts and replace them with positive, godly ones. God tells us to think on things above (Colossians 3:1-2; Philippians 4:8). When we replace our negative thoughts with God's word and Biblical truths that is exactly what we are doing! We are allowing God to give us a thought closet makeover.

A Better Way to Think

In place of the lies (and negative thinking) we must begin to replace the lies with God's truth.

2 Corinthians 10: "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ..."

We can retrain our thoughts by allowing God to transform us by the renewal of our minds.

Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Realize that those defeating thoughts are not from God, but from our enemy, Satan, who wants to destroy us and keep us captive.

John 8:43-44 “Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

One way we can get better at recognizing the lies Satan makes us believe is to know God’s truth by reading Scripture. One great way to do this is to memorize scripture. This is one of the most effective ways to renew the thoughts of your mind.

When the defeating thought comes to your mind correct it using God’s word.

EXAMPLE

Thought: I’m alone. No one loves me.

Retrained thought: God says he will never leave me or forsake me. (Hebrews 13:5) and that He loves me so much that he sent his one and only son to die for me (John 3:16)

Also challenge your thought by thinking who has God placed in your life? Is it family? Is it a minister? Is it a church family? Is it a teacher? Is it a coach?

3. Pray

Another effective way to manage depression and retrain your thoughts is by praying God’s word. Find verses that you relate to your situation (or thought patterns), take those verses, and pray them.

For example, you might pray:

“Dear Lord, I know that your word says the thief has come to kill and destroy me (John 10:10). Lord, he is trying to destroy me with negative thinking. So many times I think I am fat, ugly, stupid, and not good enough. I know these thoughts are coming from Satan. Lord, help me to replace these thoughts with your powerful, truthful word. Help me to let you take over my thought life with Your words. I know that you tell me I am so important that you died for me (John 3:16). You tell me that you knitted me in my mother’s womb and that I am wonderfully and fearfully made (Psalm 139). You have made me good enough. You make me better than I am. Thank you that I am wonderfully and fearfully made! Make me remember that in times of my negative thinking. In Your Son’s mighty and powerful name, Amen.”

4. Know that sometimes medicine is needed and that is OKAY!

Some cases of depression may be caused by chemical imbalances. If that is the cause, then antidepressant drugs and Christian counseling may be the answer. God has allowed mankind to learn about many medical tools, and He sometimes uses medicine to heal. There may also be some cases of depression so severe that medications are necessary to bring the sufferer to the place where they can tackle some of the other issues; such cases might require medication, at least temporarily. I know of no Scripture that forbids such use.

5. Know that there is HOPE and that God will take care of you and give you the resources for you to get help.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Romans 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Lesson 5: Getting Involved (How to be blessed by the church)

Are you excited about Marcus Mariota coming to town?

Did you hear the news? He's retiring. (I'm kidding, but what if he retired right now?)

Oh, I'm sorry. You thought I was going to actually get in there and play? You thought I was going to like go to training camp and workouts? You thought I was going to learn the playbook? You thought I was going to be committed to the team? Oh no. That was never my intention. That was never part of the plan! I just wanted to get a jersey. I just wanted to be drafted!

Imagine how crazy it would be for us to think that the Christian walk is all about draft day, the day when God adopts us into His family, the day we're baptized into Christ. And so we never connect with our teammates, the church. We never show up for team meetings, like Bible class or worship. We never meet together with the team to workout our spiritual muscles, that'd be like serving, and studying, and praying. We never read the playbook (hold up the Bible). We never discuss strategy how to win against our opponent.

We think it'd be crazy for Marcus Mariota to never show up after draft day. Doesn't he get it? Doesn't he understand that he's got a job to do?

Christians, it was never God's intention for you to get drafted and not be part of the team.

It was God's intention for His church to be a blessing to you and for you to be a blessing to His church.

So why are we talking about this? Tonight I want to talk to you about something that maybe some of you in this room have struggled with.

I want to talk to you about the importance of getting involved in the work and mission of the church.

Some of you struggle with that. You come to class on a Sunday morning or maybe even a Wednesday night, and that's it. It's great that you come to class. But the church ought to be so much more than that.

Maybe you struggle because you don't feel like you belong here, or like you don't fit in, or like nobody cares. Maybe you struggle because you feel like you don't have any close friends here.

Maybe you struggle because you don't think that church is really all that important. Maybe you've sort of looked at baptism being this really important thing, but you really haven't looked beyond "draft day."

Acts chapter 2 is the chapter in the Bible where over 3,000 people are baptized into Christ in one day. Like a huge NFL draft day. All of these people putting on their jerseys and saying, "I'm committing my life to following Christ."

And so imagine all of these rookies, these brand, new Christians, the very Christians that we ever read about. What happens after draft day—the day after they are baptized? How do they behave? What do they do? What are some of their habits?

Acts 2:41-47 **41** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. **43** And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. **44** And all who believed were together and had all things in common. **45** And they were selling their possessions and belongings and

distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

What are some words you would use to describe these Christian rookies? (How was the church a blessing to them?)

Is this church the blessing to you that God intended it to be, and are you the blessing to the church that God intended you to be?

Guys, we're right on the brink of summer. It'd be a great time to get involved. More than just coming and showing up and leaving. It can be a blessing to you. It can be a place (point back to Acts 2 and some of their answers) where you learn more about what it means to be devoted to the teachings of the Word of God, a place of fellowship, a place where we can watch our God work in awe, a place with people who share a common goal: we want to go to heaven and we want to please our King.

You've got some opportunities here in this church and in this youth program (which represents a segment of the church) that are pretty unbelievable. God has given you a huge blessing here, and I'm sorry but for you to squander the blessing that God has given you in this church family, is pretty foolish.

It was God's intention for His church to be a blessing to you and for you to be a blessing to His church.

I'll move quickly here without a lot of commentary, but as we wrap up, here is "How to Not be Blessed By the Church." Maybe you struggle with some of these.

1. Keep to yourself.

If you always sit in the same seat, or maybe beside that one person, and you never take the time to get up and walk around and smile and greet people and introduce yourself to anybody, you're not going to be blessed with a lot of relationships inside of this room. If you don't try to make friends, you probably won't have any.

1 Thess.5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

2. Complain constantly.

Old saying: "Misery loves company." If you listen to negative people all of the time, you're going to start to see the negative all the time. There are ALWAYS things to complain about. There's too much good going on than to focus on the bad.

3. Withhold forgiveness. (Hold grudges)

If someone mistreated you in the church, welcome to the stinking club. That's life. No it doesn't make it ok. But the church is made up of people. And people aren't perfect. Forgive. Move on.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

4. Blame people.

Those people are snobs. The people in my grade are just so unfriendly. Nobody there cares about me.

5. Create drama.

You know why you will not be blessed by the church if you love drama? Because God **hates** it. Strong word?

Proverbs 6:16, 19b There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him...one who sows discord among brothers.

6. Make the church all about you.

Newsflash: the church doesn't belong to you. (Matthew 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.) It's not the people's church. It's the Lord's.

7. Don't have concern for the souls of others.

Instead, play the victim. Focus on how wrong you've been treated. And how nobody cares. We've got a world out there to save, guys. And there are too many people going to hell than for me to sit around and feel sorry for myself. Put your helmet back on and get back out there on the field.

8. Don't make it important.

Eph5:25 "Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Jesus died for the church. It must be important.

So when you get a job, be sure to tell them you want to work as many hours as you can and that making money is the most important thing to you. Don't talk to them about Sundays and Wednesdays. Don't worry about making God your number one priority. And when you come together with God's people, be sure to play games on your phone the entire time when you're here. And if you stay up late the night before and you're tired, by all means, you get your beauty rest. It's just the church that Christ died for.

How to Be Blessed By the Church

1. Become a part of the church. (COMMIT)

The day you're drafted is an important day! If you've been thinking about being baptized, about becoming a Christian, and you wanna talk some about that, please talk to me tonight. Shoot me a text and let's talk. Nothing would make me happier!

2. Get to know your teammates. (connect)

The people in your cocoon. Your cocoon leaders.

And you really wanna do something great for yourself? Introduce yourself to an older person tonight at church that you've never met. If you need pointers on someone you might meet, tell me and I'll point you in the direction of somebody you need to meet. =)

Do something with the church outside of the church building. Relationships are built outside of these walls. Summer is full of fantastic opportunities for you to make some connections. I hope you'll take advantage of it.

3. Take the spiritual matters seriously. (GROW)

Maybe, and again this is a maybe, maybe you're not getting anything out of church, because you're not coming here with a heart is intent on seeking God.

Ask someone to pray for you. Ask someone if there's anything you can be praying about for them.

4. Get involved. (SERVE.)

5. Look for someone to lead to Jesus. (Tell)

6. Stick with it even in the hard times. (Thrive)

Again, it was God's intention for His church to be a blessing to you and for you to be a blessing to His church.

Let's all make the most of that blessing.

Pray.

Cococonversation Starters

1. When was a time in your life when you didn't feel like you fit in?

2. What was the game-changer for you?

3. I will probably make an X-Men reference here, about Charles Xavier's School For the Gifted. How he offered mutants a place where they could fit in. A place that was set apart and was different than anywhere else in the world. Something greater than the world offered them.

Another good thing for us to remember is that we were not called to fit in when it comes to this world. The idea of the church is sort of like God bringing a group of misfits together, and knitting them together in beautiful fashion. The church is the one place where everybody that is willing to be part of what God is trying to build should be able to fit in and find a place!

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Lesson 6: Gossip

Get everyone to sit with their eyes shut. Think of something you would never want anyone to know about you. Most of us have at least one secret we don't want people to know. Do your parents fight all the time, maybe your dad cusses at you every night, you have dyslexia and you can't read well, you have an eating disorder, etc. Think of that one thing. Now imagine telling that secret to a friend. You feel scared that you told her but hopefully she won't tell. Sit and think about the process for a minute – what are some of the thoughts that would be running through your mind? Now imagine she does tell. People know your secret. How would you feel about your friend? How would you feel about the other people who carelessly spread this gossip around about you, these people who are talking about the thing you never wanted anyone to know? Now open our eyes. What are some words that come to mind about how you would be feeling right now if you had trusted your friend to keep this secret? What are words that come to mind about how you would be feeling if you were the friend who told?

This is what we do to people when we gossip!

--- did any of you think right then, but I am not telling people's deepest darkest secrets just little ones...

Ephesians 4: 29- the writer is saying that you have put on Christ so you have put on a new life. He then goes through a list of things read 4:25-29. Sometimes we think gossip is not a big deal. Seriously, everyone does it! Everyone! Do any of you think stealing is a big deal? God is listing all sins in this verse, stealing is right before gossiping. All sin is equal don't let the devil trick you. Also, just a side note; Please realize that gossiping is stealing. You are stealing someone's words which is probably one of the most precious things to people!

Unfortunately, gossip feels good and the short-term rewards often distract us from the fact that we know better.

What feels good about gossip? Describe it.

- **It makes us feel better about ourselves to know something about someone else and share that with another.**
(‘We gossip to share our worries, seeking reassurance and support,’ says psychiatrist Frédéric Fanget. ‘It’s an indirect way of speaking well of yourself, and your listeners. It’s also fun to arouse others’ curiosity and monopolise the conversation, when you have information to reveal. A woman who says in her partner’s ear, “Have you seen the length of my sister’s skirt? It’s outrageous!” may be trying to reassure herself that she’s as sexy as her sister. This is what leads us to target anyone who makes us feel uneasy about our weaknesses. Gossiping about them provides a sense of reassurance.’)
- **Speaking about the personal faults of others makes it easier to overlook our own.**
(Being mean begins at an early age when children compare themselves with others,’ says psychoanalyst Virginie Megglé. Forbidden to bite or hit, they turn to verbal violence. ‘They want to remain their parents’ favourite, and so devalue their friends,’ she continues. ‘To reassure themselves they are normal, they say bad things about anyone who is different’.)
- **It might feel like it brings us closer to someone if they start thinking badly about their other friend.**
(Gossip builds social bonds because shared dislikes create stronger bonds than shared positives. Two people who don’t know each other will feel closer if they share something mean about a third person than if they say nice things about

them. It's a way of demonstrating their shared values and sense of humour.)

- **We like the attention!**

Okay so there is some instant gratification involved in gossip! So we have to figure out a way to train ourselves to not fall into that temptation!

First let's look at your **own personal standard** on the issue of gossip. If our standards are low, we won't think too much about the damage we do when gossiping.

Are your parents your standard?

Your friends?

Your youth group?

(Discuss each of these)

There's a huge problem with any of these groups being our standard!!! Why? Who is supposed to be the standard we pattern our behavior after?

Jesus is our standard!!

Close your eyes again. Picture yourself in the atmosphere where you struggle with gossip the most. Now picture Jesus there with you. Don't picture Him judging you – Picture Him giving you ideas to help guard what you say! What does it look like?

He does give us guidelines about what is acceptable to say and what isn't:

Matthew 12:33-37

Matthew 15:11,18-19

Ok Question:

- Do you struggle with gossip? If so, what do you gossip about most?

We see from scripture that it's wrong (a sin) to gossip but it's a hard habit to break!

Where do we start?

- **The most powerful thing you can do to stop gossiping is to pray that God will give you strength when the opportunity presents itself and to help you remember the standard you are trying to uphold.**
Matthew 6:5-13, Matthew 7:7-12, Ephesians 3:14-21 (Read it all – verse 20 is the main point we want you to see!)
- **Next, Learn to wait before you talk!! Ask yourself: Is this something Jesus would say?**
James 1:19-20 and 26- SLOW TO SPEAK,
- **Engage in meaningful conversations about the people around you.**
There is a 100% chance that you have not fully explored the deepest places of the heart and life sitting right in front of you. Rather than engaging in conversation about someone else, choose to ask deeper questions about the hopes, dreams, and fears of the people who are present.
Philippians 2:3-8
- **Stay positive with your speech.**
Use positive words as much as possible – even when talking about another. Speaking positively about a person who is not present rarely leads to gossip and almost always leads to a closer ally. This positive speech will also encourage the people around you to do the same.

Colossians 3:1-17 (These are HUGE verses!!! They say everything about how we live our lives and speak if we are truly living IN CHRIST. Please Please read and study these and see how beautiful Christ like living is! Truly amazing to think that we could grow to be like this!!)

An old proverb tells the story of a person who repeated a rumor about a neighbor. Soon, the whole community had heard the rumor. Later, the person who spread the gossip learned that the rumor was untrue. He was very sorry and went to an elder in the community who had a reputation for great wisdom to seek advice. The elder told him, "Go to your home and take a feather pillow outside. Rip it open and scatter the feathers, then return to me tomorrow." The man did as the elder had instructed.

The following day, he visited the elder. The elder said, "Go collect the feathers you scattered yesterday and bring them back to me." The man went home and searched for the feathers, but the wind had carried them all away. Returning to the elder, he admitted, "I could find none of the feathers I scattered yesterday." "You see," said the elder, "it's easy to scatter the feathers but impossible to get them back." So it is with gossip; it doesn't take much to spread hurtful words, but once you do, you can never completely undo the damage.

ENDING:

Speak up with **intention** rather than speaking up for **attention**. Gossip gives you attention. It's time to stop seeking attention and start speaking with intention - when you do this, you will get people's attention because you will be different, unique. Everyone is gossiping. If you aren't, people will notice and your God will notice. He will be glorified and you will be blessed.

Lesson 7: Leadership

Leadership MJYG Notes

Leadership is too vast to cover in one class, so let's focus on the cornerstone

Many common denominators, but one (that I have found) stands out noticeably among all great leaders

All of you are more important than I am, it has to be that way

Capt. Sully US Air story, Policeman story of burning house- what did they have in common?

"The Big Reveal"- there you have it. The cornerstone of a true Godly Leader is putting everyone else before you. Then by doing so, it is human nature that they begin trusting you enough to follow you.

What does a Godly leader look like? Col: Chapt 3:12-16, Gal 5:14 (what the leader can expect in return, [fruit]).

Who are you? Really? Are you 3:12 material?

Lesson 8: Struggles at Home

Cocoonversation Starters The Struggle is Real: Struggles at Home

What would you say has been the biggest source of your struggles at home? (Let them open up)

Five Takeaways

God did not plan chaos in your house, but He planned for chaos in your house.

If your parents aren't loving, know that you have a loving Father in Heaven.

If your siblings aren't concerned about living right, know that you've got brothers and sisters in the church that are trying to live right.

If your house isn't a place of love, joy, and peace, know that God's House, the church, is a place of love, joy, and peace.

If your house isn't a home, know that this world is not our home—Heaven is.

No God. No peace.
Know God. Know peace.

End in prayer.

Lesson 9: The Curse of Cursing

Once, Poseidon, the god of the Seas, fell in love with Astypalaia, the sister of Europe. The couple gave birth to a son and named him Agaeus, who later on would participate in the Argonautic expedition.

Agaeus lived on the island of Samos and was an excellent winegrower. But undoubtedly, he was very harsh on his workers and treated them like slaves.

One day, a servant became furious about the way Agaeus treated him: "Never should you drink wine from your vineyard!", he cursed his master.

Time passed by, until one fine day the wine was prepared and ready to drink. Happily, Agaeus called his servant and told him: "See how ridiculous you were! Your curse was in vain!"

Calmly, the servant replied: "There is a long distance between this glass and your lips..."

Right at that moment, a slave informed Agaeus about a wild boar that destroyed his country. Hastily, Agaeus left his glass and rushed against the beast. Ultimately, the boar devoured Agaeus and the prophecy was verified.

Several horror movies have been cursed by groups that protested their making within recent years. The movie *Poltergeist* is believed to have been cursed because after the first movie the main actress was shortly killed by her bf. After the second movie was made the lead actor died of a disease. Then following his death another actor died of kidney failure. The curse, seemed to be picking up speed. Not too soon after that death the child star of the movie caught a severe case of the flu and died at the age of 12. Many attribute all these to the curse placed upon the movie because of the protest before hand.

Wither or not these curses are true or just folk tales, there are some curses that really do seem to be true. For instances, one of the cruelest, unjust, and uncanny curses of all time is the Madden Curse. This curse is put upon any athlete placed upon the newest cover of the Madden NFL video game. The tragedy is unparamount.

Also, there's the James Dean Curse. Movie star James Dean was killed in a car accident when his 1955 Porsche 550 Spyder crashed on a highway. He only had the car for nine days when he died. Before his death, the actor made a commercial saying, "Remember, slow down. The life you save might be mine." The engine in the car was later used during a race. The driver of the race car crashed and received serious injuries. The car was sinister.

These are terrible. However, we do have proof that curses can be broken. For instance the curse of the Great Bambino:

In 1918 the Red Sox won their 5th World Series, the most by any club at that time. One of the stars of the Boston championship franchise was a young pitcher by the name of George Herman Ruth, aka *The Babe* or *The Bambino*.

In 1920, however, Red Sox owner Harry Frazee needed money to finance his girlfriend's play, so he sold Babe Ruth's contract to Colonel Jacob Ruppert's New York Yankees for \$100,000 (plus a loan collateralized by Fenway Park).

Since then, the Yankees, who had never won a World Championship before acquiring Ruth, have gone on to win 26, and are arguably one of the greatest success stories in the history of sport.

Meanwhile, the Boston Red Sox have appeared in only four World Series since 1918, losing each one in game seven. Many consider Boston's performance after the departure of Babe Ruth to be attributable to "The Curse of the Bambino."

Thankfully for Boston fans everywhere the curse was broken in 2004. Curses have been around since the beginning of time.

Did you know that the first curse actually came from God himself. Throughout the Old Testament you will read passages of God cursing or mentioning that He will curse a person/people because of disobedience. Right in the beginning in Genesis after the fall, God curses the serpent (Satan) as it says, *“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.”* (Genesis 3:14) God also curses the ground because of Adam as He says, *“cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life.”* (Genesis 3:17) Later on in Deuteronomy chapter 28:15-68, God gives a list of curses that will come out of disobedience. The passage starts like this: *“But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.”* (Deuteronomy 28:15-19) God is serious and He wants and deserves perfection from us.

Curses and words that intend harm on others is talked about very clearly in the Bible. God cursed man to teach man and to rid the world of evil. However, when man curses it's for greed, envy, hate, spite, and selfishness. We might not ever come across curses or intend to curse someone like they did in medieval times, but we do run into curse or cuss words all the time. You might not think the cuss words you use or others use inflict harm, but any word spoken that doesn't edify tears down, and as we'll look at later, a Christian's word should be only fruitful for building others up.

Language is such a beautiful thing. Created by God to communicate with us, but also so that we could communicate with the world. Language is something that is so wonderful. However, just like anything else that humans get a hold of, it can be changed and molded into something that is not pretty at all.

Language is kind of like nature. In the beginning it was beautiful, wonderful, and magnificent. There was no pollution there was no habitat destroyed by invasive humans. Everything is pure and everything is natural and there is no evil. However when man is placed in nature, things go wrong. Things began to change things become weaker and die out. Living organisms suffer because of the pollution and damage caused by man.

Language is a wonderful thing, but man has changed it into something that causing havoc.

The havoc that man has used language for can be summed up into 3 categories: swearing or cursing, gossiping, and lying.

Let's get real for a couple minutes...

I want you to think about the average conversation you have with people at school on a regular basis. How much of it revolves around these three categories of language? How much time do you spend gossiping? Or using language you shouldn't? What about lying? Is that a huge part of the way you communicate?

Let's talking about swearing for a minute. What is under the umbrella of swearing?

Taking the Lord's name in vain certain falls under that category. (Ex. 20:7)

Crude or Obscene language falls under that umbrella. most often this is sexual in nature, but any type of inappropriate language does too.

Are there any types of sin that you find worse than others? What are somethings that you never personally would do?

Why is that we find some things so easy to NOT do?

If we find these things so easy to not do, why are we so careless with the way we talk?

The Bible very clearly states that we should NOT behave this way in (Eph. 5:4; Col 3:8).

It doesn't get much more plain than that. I personally believe our language is a powerful enough tool to lead us away from God. It is a sin to not hold our tongue, and Romans 3:23 says that the result of sin is death.

The same goes for gossip.

I want to ask you a question.

In Gen. 1:26 God said that he would make man in "our image." Does that mean anything to you?

Ok, here's another question: When Jesus died on the cross, who did he die for?

Why did he die for them, for us?

What if you loved someone so much that you created them in your image, and you also gave up your life for

them, and someone slandered their name. Told rumors about that person or even told private truths of their life to others for the sake of your own personal gain. How would you feel?

How is that we can abstain from said sin, but blantly put down the very creation of the our God who we so dear to us?

When we gossip about someone it shows others not only what you think of the person, but it also shows how important you value God and His creation.

Eph. 4:31-32

Lying

Maybe we needed to find passages about rude, obscene, and gossip type language, but i doubt that i need to spend any real time discussing and proving that lying is bad to you, right?

Does anyone believe that lying is ok?

Well then why do we do it? What are reasons for lying? gain, easy, etc.

In the past three months alone, 66 percent of American teens who attend church have lied to a parent, teacher or other adult; 59 percent have lied to a friend or peer.

There's another way to use our language. It's the way our language was supposed to be used, but we have twisted it.

God intends for our words to edify and uplift one another.

So, my challenge for you is, to speak a kind word to someone tomorrow. Do it to someone who particularly needs it. Not someone

who you find it easy or convenient to do. Compliment them, encourage them, what ever it looks like do something to build someone up.

For some of us, or maybe all of us, we have used language for so long in a way that's unpleasing to God that it'll be hard to completely purify our speech, but God has given us ways to help ourselves.

First, of all he has given us His word. He devote our self to reading, studying, and memorizing His word, then purifying ourselves will become inevitable.

I think we neglect the power of scripture memorization. Just think about much easier it would be to abstain bad language, gossip, or lying if we were constantly putting scripture to memory.

Here's another challenge: Memorize 1 Tim. 1:5 this week. Write it down, say it aloud, read it over and over again until it becomes engrained in your mind.

One more challenge for you: sing a song of praise and uplift and every morning. You don't have to sing at the top of your lungs or even out loud, but consider this song:

“

1. We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

Refrain

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

2. We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

3. We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.

4. All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,
And all praise to Christ Jesus, his only Son,
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one.”

And lastly, pray. Pray that God would use your words for his Glory.

How much easier would we find it to speak kindly of one another if we committed to doing these things every day!

- 1. Text someone something encouraging every morning.**
- 2. Memorize, read, write, and say 1 Tim. 1:5 everyday.**
- 3. Sing (outloud or in your head) “they know we are christians by our love”**
- 4. Pray that God would use your words for His Glory.**

Lesson 10: Bible Study

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." **4** But he answered, "It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6** and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and

"On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone."

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" **8** Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9** And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." **10** Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve."

11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Imagine seeing a church sign in the 1940s with the following on their marquee: Welcome Special Guest Speaker: Adolph Hitler!

How would that make you feel? Angry would be an understatement. What business does Hitler have speaking for God? How could a man so wicked, and so vile proclaim the Word of God?!

Here is Jesus. And for the last 40 days what has he been doing? The answer is not starving himself. The answer is strengthening himself in the LORD His God. He is fasting. He is preparing. He knows that the tempter is coming. And so for the last 40 days he has given up food, his physical sustenance in order to be sustained by His relationship with the LORD His God!

Here along comes satan and what are the words coming out of his mouth? He is speaking the Words of God.

Can you imagine the anger Christ must've felt to hear satan, the tempter, the deceiver, the distorter of truth, the destroyer of every good thing, a murderer, a liar, and a master manipulator, speak the Holy Words of GOD?

Jesus must've thought: How dare you? How dare you speak HIS Word, you wicked, vile, good for nothing liar?! Your mouth isn't worthy to speak those Words! How dare you twist the Holy Words of the LORD to fulfill your wishes!!! How dare you take the Word of God to make it say what you want!!!!

Guys, this past week I cannot remember a time in the last 5 years when I have been more saddened, angry, and disgusted. I have a friend who is rebelling against God. And after reading some of the articles online that I've read, after seeing some of the videos that people are posting, after I've read through people's comments, and after I've seen the things that people have "liked" you can ask my wife, I haven't been much fun to live with this week. It's weighed on me.

It saddens me whenever someone turns away from God, but it sickens me to see the way that so many will twist the Word of God to try to make it say something it does not say!

Tonight I stand before you and I beg you as the next up and coming generation of the church, DO NOT twist the Word of God! Do not manipulate the TRUTH.

Before you or I get ready to “explain” what the Word of God says, you and I had better think twice! You and I better think long and hard about having that kind of boldness. How stupid, and I’m sorry if you don’t like that word, but it’s beyond foolish, how FOOLISH would you be to manipulate the Word of God in an effort to justify something that you want to believe?!!

If we are guilty of that, it ought to cause us to shudder. I do not want to stand before the LORD our GOD on the Day of Judgment and have to discuss that with Him.

I beg you, I plead with you, to know the Word of God. And to know it, you must read it. This is going to sound so simple, but you cannot know what God’s Word says about such-and-such topic unless you have taken the time to look. Before you speak for Him, you’d better know what He has said.

Let’s pray. Far be it from us, O LORD, to do something so wicked as to change your Word. May we never be like satan, a distorter of truth. Help us to stand firmly in your Truth even when our culture tells us to bow down before what is modern. In the OT they bowed before idols, in the 1st century they were told to bow before Caesar and curse God. Today, we are told to bow down before what our culture says. Lord, may you be the only One we would bow down before. Take us home soon, LORD, for this world is not our home. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Let’s go ahead and bring up our panel: Pat Hackney, Randy Duke, Faye Loyd, David Harper, and Debbie Banks.

Tonight we are in for a treat. What we have in store is going to be a real blessing. We are talking about the struggle of studying the Bible. And I thought it’d be cool to let you guys hear from some people that are people of the Word.

These are people that love the Word of God. They don’t just talk about it. And they don’t just talk about following it. They read it. And they love it. And they live it.

-The worksheet and how it works. Write down four things that you hear these guys say that you think, “Wow. That is a really great, powerful, or helpful statement. And if you want to write more by all means, please do that!

Let’s get right into it.

Panel Questions

-We’ve been talking a lot as a church family about the oak tree and how every oak tree was once something small and young starting out. How did you get into a habit of Bible study?

-What was the turning point (if there was one) that made you get serious about becoming a person of the Word?

-What have you learned from experience that doesn’t work when it comes to reading your Bible? Follow up: What does work?

-Over the years, what is one thing that you have grown to love and appreciate more and more about the Word of God?

Lesson 11: Worry

The world is full of worry. Everyday it seems like there's something new to worry about, and the weight of yesterday's worry is still upon us. Maybe you're a senior and you're worried about college. How am I going to get in? How am I going to pay for college? How will I make it without my best friend? When am I going to meet that one girl or guy? Maybe you're a teen that worries about being cool or fitting in, and who doesn't want to fit in, right? How am I going to fit in? What should I or can I do to be the cool kid? Will I make the sports team or band? How will I have a social life if my parents won't let me text after 9:00. Some of the things we worry about are certainly important, but far too often we worry about things that really don't mean much. A wise man once told me "Don't sweat the petty stuff." Then he also went on to say, "Don't sweat the petty stuff, and don't pet the sweaty stuff."

Far too often we focus on the petty things of this world and let the worry from them ruin or get in the way of living our life. The inventor and CEO of the MAYO Clinic once said that I've never known a man that has died from work, but many who died from worry. Worry can seriously hinder the fun we have in life, but even more crucial: it can hinder our spiritual life. According to professional counselors and psychologists, this is the first generation of teens that have a higher and stress and worry count than their parents. That means that, on average, the teens in this room are the first to worry and stress more than their parents.

On a side note, can I just say that I'm sorry for that? In no way is it your fault that you are living in a time when teen stress and worry is at an all time high. You didn't choose to be stressed and worried. You were taught that, and I'm not trying to take all the

blame off you and throw it on parents or society, but I hate that you have to deal with the things that you deal with. With social media and everything else that you are surrounded with, it's no wonder that you have so much you worry about. However, worrying is still a problem that we must address.

Jesus talked about worry. He actually talked about worry in His most famous sermon: The Sermon on the Mount. In the same sermon that he preached the beatitudes, the model prayer, loving your enemies, and judging one another, he talked about worry.

So, tonight, who better to go to with our struggles than Jesus. Everyone grab a phone or Bible and go to Matthew. Our text for tonight will be Matthew 6:24-34. Before we begin I want to give just want to lay down a couple of things, just in case we don't have time to fully discuss them. 1. The things you worry about are important. 2. If you're worrying about something you can do something about, DO IT! Don't use worry as a crutch for taking action. 3. When in doubt, pray for Wisdom and turn it over to God. With that said let's dive in to our text.

If you're looking at your Bible, you might have a caption that says, "Do Not Worry," or "The Cure for Anxiety" starting with verse 25, but the reason we're starting with verse 24 is because 25 starts off the word "therefore." When studying the Bible that should automatically make us check out what just happened previously. So, we'll start in verse 24 and read through 25. It says,

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. **25** "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you

will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

I. Choose: GOD or STUFF

So, when Jesus decided to preach about worry, he starts off by saying you can't choose God and stuff. So, the first thing we must do is choose. Are we going to serve and devote our heart, life, and soul to the things of this world or to God? We have to choose God or Stuff, because what we are devoted to is where our emotions lie, and where emotions lie is where we'll find our worry. You worry about the things that you are devoted to. If we are devoted to this world we will have worry, because the world is not on our side and the things of this world cannot promise anything, but God can promise, and He does promise.

Jesus said earlier in this same sermon in Matt. 6:21 "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." It's interesting that rather than give us a way to deal with our worry, Jesus instead ask, "what are you devoted too?" Jesus is saying the root of your worry is not the act of worry itself, but rather what you have devoted your hear too. Jesus is saying do not devote yourself too STUFF, because isn't life more than just STUFF? Isn't life more than fitting in, going to college, getting good grades or a a girlfriend, isn't life more than what's going to happen in the future, which we aren't even guaranteed?

If worry is an issue in your life, rather than worry about curing your worry, we need to get our priorities right. We must find our treasure in God, not the World. The first step to fixing the problem of worry is to CHOSE GOD, because life is so much more than the things of this world.

2. Trust that God loves you more than the Birds.

I don't want you to misunderstand me, or misunderstand Jesus. I don't think he's saying that the things we are worried about aren't important. All he's saying is put things in perspective. He's saying don't ruin your life worrying about money, girls, boys, sports, grades, college, body image, and everything else we worry about, because life is so much more than all of these things!

Jesus illustrates this point in verses 26-29. It says,

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; **29** and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Jesus isn't saying that we need to just not be concerned about things. He's simply saying take a step back and look at the greater picture. To illustrate, in almost a comical way, he says "look at the birds!" Ahhh look at the birds. These people must have thought, "Are you serious Jesus? I'm not sure if i'm going to eat tomorrow and you're telling me to look at the birds! Jesus doesn't stop there though. He says look at the birds, and look at the pretty flowers. What in the world do birds and flowers have to teach us about worry? Well Jesus says that can teach us a lot about worry. He says they don't sow, nor reap, nor gather food for tomorrow, yet everyday they are fed by who? (GOD) God feeds them everyday.

The birds of the field and the flowers on the hill don't worry that God will provide, but we, who are the only creation to be

created in HIS image, worry. Are we not more precious to God than birds and flowers? If God takes care of the little things, then won't he take care of us? The birds don't worry because they trust that God will provide for them. Jesus isn't belittling your problems by comparing them to insignificant things like birds. He's just saying "Trust Me." When worry comes our way we need to First, Choose God and Secondly, Trust that God loves you more than the birds.

3. Have Faith

Let's continue reading in verse 30. It says.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" **32** For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

"O you of little faith." I think that phrase is huge, because maybe our worry problem is much more deeper than that. Maybe our worry problem is actually a faith problem. Jesus says, "do not worry about the 'what shall we's.'" What shall we eat? What shall we wear? Today that might sound more like: What will I wear? How will I get into college? How will I make friends? How will I get her/him to like me? Jesus says don't worry about those petty things. If we've done what we can, then now it's in God's hands, and we must have faith that he will handle it. Do you really have faith that God will take care of you?

In verse 32 to it says the gentiles, some translations say pagans don't have faith and worry about these things. Are you the same as them? When we live our life with worry about things to come, it's like we're living our life like an atheist. Seriously, how are you living life any different from an atheist if your worry and have no

faith that God will take care of you? Isn't that a big reason we all became Christians? So, we wouldn't have to worry about the things of this world?

We must have faith that God will handle the things that we can't. Living a life free of worry is a chance to show the world and those living without Jesus that we are content and happy with life, because God is in control of it. We must Choose God, Trust that He Loves us more than the birds, and Have Faith that he will handle things.

4. Seek First His Kingdom

Jesus concludes his thoughts on worry in verses 33-34. It says

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. **34** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

So, the solution to all this is to redirect our devotion. We can't quit worrying by trying to quit worrying. It's kinda like trying to go to sleep. You can't really try to go to sleep, right? In the same way we can't just quit worrying, but Jesus gives us the solution. He says rather than quite worrying, redirect your devotion to God.

In the world there is uncertainty, but in God there is a solid foundation. To cure our worry we need to quit putting on time, heart, devotion, and emotion into the things of the world. Instead we need to SEEK FIRST the KINGDOM of GOD. When we worry we're seeking our own pleasures, but when our treasure is in God we find contentment.

What does it mean to Seek First God's Kingdom? He tells us in the model prayer in this same chapter in 9-10. He says, "**YOUR KINGDOM COME. YOUR WILL BE DONE. ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.**"

That means we seek God before grades, girls, boys, jobs, college, and what ever else it may be.

My prayer is that we can all say that at the end of the day we all want God's will done in our life. Let's change our devotion from being all about us to all about GOD and HIS KINGDOM. When we make that commitment I promise our worries will begin to fade away.

Lesson 12: Doubt

“If I doubt, am I still a Christian?”

...I think I may have a better question: How would Jesus react if you doubted right in front of Him? Imagine standing before the Son of God, and you have the audacity (that means bold courage) you have the audacity to doubt with him standing right in front of you! How would he react?

What would he say? Would he say, “You’re not worthy to be my disciple”? Would he say, “Just get out of my face.” Would he say, “Hey, when your faith is stronger, then come back and we can talk”?

How does Jesus respond to your doubt?

Let me tell you something awesome: you don’t have to imagine what would happen. That’s not a hypothetical question that I laid out for you. We know exactly how Jesus responded when His followers doubted standing right in front of Him.

Let’s look at *Matthew 14:25-31*. Maybe you’ve heard this story before, but maybe you’ve never connected it to doubt. So I want you to see it through that line of thinking.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

You can already hear the doubt in Peter’s voice in his reply.

28 And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

He’s not completely sold on who the identity of this ghost is. I mean sure the ghost sounds like Jesus, but that’s probably exactly who the ghost wants me to think it is. All part of the ghost’s master plan to eat my soul.

29 He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.”

Ok, so here’s Peter. He hops out of the boat. He’s walking on the water towards either Jesus, or a ghost that is doing a really great Jesus impression.

But Peter is convinced that it’s the Lord, so he jumps out of the boat and walks on the water and comes to Jesus.

Then something happens. Doubt creeps into his heart. Verse 30. He sees the wind and the waves, and he’s scared and he’s starting to sink and he cries out to Jesus, “Lord, save me!”

Six Things About Doubt

I. Everybody doubts.

Timeout. Here’s one of the apostles. One of the guys who has literally on the very same day seen Jesus overfeed over 5,000 people with a little kid’s Happy Meal.

Any of you ever seen Jesus do that? Me either. But apparently, even if I had, I would’ve still had doubt in my heart.

Peter! For crying out loud, you were walking on the water! How could you doubt! After all that you’ve seen Jesus do! And you dare

to doubt Jesus' power and his identity right in front of His face!
How could you?!?

How's Jesus going to react?

31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

At first it might sound like Jesus is really disappointed in Peter, like shaking his finger and shaking his head at him. "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

But really look at what Jesus says, He doesn't say "You idiot! How dare you doubt Me!!!" He doesn't take His foot and stomp on his apostle Peter for sinking, and say, "You know what Peter? Just stay down there. Let me show you what I do to doubters!" He doesn't tell Peter how unworthy he is to follow after Him. He doesn't de-discipline him for doubting.

Instead He asks a better question and deeper question for Peter to consider: He says, "Peter, your faith is small. Why is that, Peter? Why did you doubt?"

2. And that's the second thing about doubt that I want to notice tonight. We usually doubt for a reason.

The Bible tells us the answer to that question as it applies to Peter. It says he saw the wind, and he was afraid.

"Why did you doubt?"

"Lord, it's because...because I was afraid."

...I have a hard time telling people that Jesus is mad at them for doubting. Instead I think He'd probably ask us the very same question in our doubt that He asked to Peter: why are you doubting? Where's it coming from? Why are you doubting?

Man, that's a deep question if you think about it, isn't it? It's not a question to make you feel terrible about yourself. **It's a question to help you realize something about yourself.**

I want you to think about that for a few minutes. Why are you doubting? Where are these doubts coming from?

Maybe you have gone through a really, really hard time, and thought to yourself, "God, I prayed to you and I prayed to you! Why didn't you answer me! Why did you let this happen! I don't understand, Lord!" And so you doubt. Maybe there's nobody up there. Maybe there is no God.

Maybe you doubt because you saw something on the internet that really confused you. Or something on TV. Something in a textbook. Something you heard a scientist say. Something a friend said.

Jesus asks Peter an important question: why did you doubt? Your doubts are coming from somewhere.

I don't know what your answer is, but whatever would go inside of the blank for you, it would probably all boil down to one word: fear.

What if there is no God? What if the Bible is just one big, made up lie? What if Jesus isn't really who we think He was? What if there really is nothing at the end of this life? What if the atheists are right?

There's something scary about those questions. Something that makes us afraid. And so we begin to sink.

But I love the 2nd word in verse 31. Did you catch it? *Immediately.*

Look at verse 30 again. It says, “*and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.”*”

3. Third thing about doubt, When you are beginning to sink, cry out to the Lord.

Listen, when you are **beginning** to sink, cry out to the Lord—**don’t wait until you’re drowning!** As soon as doubt creeps into your heart, cry out to the Lord! This might sound weird, but I’m telling you it’s powerful and it’s Biblical. The next time you start to feel doubt surround you like waters, pray these words: “Lord, save me!”

That’s exactly what Peter does, and look at the reaction of our Lord. Look what happens! “Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him...”

Imagine that we took a boat and then drilled a bunch of holes in it. Doubts are like those little holes inside of a boat. You won’t get in the boat and drown immediately but if you don’t do something about all of this doubt filling up into your life, it won’t take long until you start sinking.

Jesus keeps us from sinking.

Listen, just because you follow Jesus doesn’t mean you won’t sink.

This is an interesting point. Why did Jesus allow Peter to sink at all?

I think it’s because it’s in the times that we are sinking that we realize we need saving (4. When we are sinking we realize we need saving).

5. Finally, tonight, you need to know that just because you doubt, doesn’t mean that you’re doomed.

Jesus wants to pull you out of the doubt that you’re sinking in. *I think one reason for that is because **doubt is a dark shadow in which satan loves to hide.*** You know the very first thing we learn about satan is that he loves to cast doubt? Remember this line, “**Did God really say “Don’t eat of that fruit?”**”

satan’s been using our doubt to his advantage since the beginning of time.

But Jesus isn’t content in watching us drown. Instead he offers us His help: “**If you’re sinking, seek Me.**”

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

To me it’s almost like a dare from Jesus Himself: “Search all around, but you’ll find that there’s only one me. Seek, and I promise you, **I will deliver every time.**”

Heidi Kloser has already said that she’s not through. She says that she’s got unfinished business. She’s working hard for 2018 Olympics.

6. If you doubt, Jesus isn’t done with you.

Listen: if tonight you’ve got doubt in your heart, I’ve got some good news: in the Bible Jesus wasn’t through with His doubters!

-Read Matthew 28:16-20.

Think of his critics, think of Peter, Thomas, and the rest of the apostles. He had other plans for them and he's got other plans for you. He wasn't finished showing them things, and he isn't finished showing you things. He wasn't finished teaching them things, and He isn't finished teaching you things.

Even in times of doubt, if you will seek him, you will find him.

-Pray. "Lord, save us!"

Lesson 13: Fighting Temptation (Desiring Holiness)

-Show clip from the Sandlot. Get a baseball.

Scottie Smalls was the new kid in town, but he quickly made friends with a group of guys who liked to play baseball down at the old sandlot. After Bennie the Jet Rodriguez busted the cover off of their baseball, their only baseball, the guys didn't know what to do.

And that's when Smalls says "I've got a ball back at my house." And so he takes the old baseball sitting up on top of his stepdad's dresser.

When he returns with the ball, Smalls hits his first homerun, and sends the ball sailing over the fence! And he's pumped up and his friends are cheering him on, and he begins jogging around the bases when—oh, no. Oh no, no, no, no, no. The beast has my stepdad's ball.

Which wouldn't be such a big deal if it hadn't been signed by some lady, according to Smalls named Baby Ruth.

That's right. His stepdad's ball was by Babe Ruth, the Sultan of Swat, the King of Crash, the Colossus of Clout, the Colossus of Clout, the Great Bambinoooo!

And once they understand how important that ball is, they do everything that they can for it.

You know, holiness is like that. Our culture doesn't understand it. They don't see the appeal. And let's be honest, until we understand how important holiness is, it doesn't have much appeal!

I mean, denying yourself? Fighting temptation against the things that you wanna do? Ok, I've heard enough about holiness. No thanks.

Our culture doesn't get it. To our culture, holiness is boring. To our culture holiness is old-fashioned. Sure it might've worked back in the day for our great grandparents, but times have changed.

The world looks at holiness kinda like Smalls looked at that baseball. What's the big deal? It's just some old ball signed by some girl.

But once we understand how important that holiness is, we will do everything that we can for it.

Holiness might look old-fashioned. But holiness happens when God takes His name and He writes it on your heart and He gives you His Spirit.

Holiness is God's autograph. When God touches something it becomes holy. Nobody else can do that.

In Creation, He took a nap on a Saturday. And Saturdays became holy!

He lit a bush on fire a few feet away from Moses and the ground where Moses stood became holy.

He put His hand on Israel, and He made them a holy nation.

The Levites were the tribe that would serve in the temple where the Spirit of God was. Because of that, they were holy. Their garments were called holy, their anointing oil was called holy, the altar where they sacrificed was made holy. Why? Because the Lord's was in that place.

Listen when God touches something it becomes holy. And if God has written His Name on your heart, and if His Spirit dwells inside of you, you are holy.

Isn't that an incredible thought? That God has given us His Spirit, and consecrated us, just like He consecrated the priesthood and set them aside for work in His service?

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Once we understand how important that holiness is, we will do everything that we can for it.

In this culture of self, where everything is about me and what I want, my desires, and hey, if I'm tempted to do it, I'll do it!

Holiness is the polar opposite. Holiness is not about me or what I want or what I desire. It's about, what God wants, what He desires. And so there's this inner battle taking place between the self and the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-25 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Holiness and worldliness don't hang out. They don't spend the night at each other's house listening to Taylor Swift and Snap Chatting each other. They don't like each other. They don't go together.

Imagine trying to convince somebody that they should love Babe Ruth, when the reality is, they don't know the first thing about baseball. That'd be a hard sell, right?

You think that's a hard sell, try to convince somebody that they ought to love holiness when they don't know the first thing about the God who loves them so much He died for them.

Holiness is an acquired taste.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

And then verse 24 points back to the desires of the flesh and says, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Verse **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

I love verse 25 the way it connects back to verse 16. Walk by the Spirit—keep in step with the Spirit. As we close today, I want to zero in on that idea.

When I was preparing this lesson, I typed out a sentence on my computer that said something like this: "I want to challenge you to desire holiness."

But that's not really what God is asking of us.

He doesn't say "Want to be holy as I am holy." He says, "Be holy as I am holy." The secret to being holy is being holy. Here's the thing, we

can desire holiness all we want, but if we don't go after it like a baseball signed by Babe Ruth, it doesn't matter.

I Peter 1:15-16 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

We can desire holiness all we want but to quote verse 25, if we don't keep in step with the Spirit, our desire for holiness doesn't really matter.

Jesus isn't just looking for desirers. Jesus is looking for disciples.

...I think it's safe to say that most everybody in here has a desire for holiness already. Truthfully, it's not a desire for holiness that most of us need. What most of us need is to actually be holy. What most of us need are some pointers on how to be holy in an unholy world. How to keep in step with the Spirit.

No, we cannot make ourselves holy. That is a work of God. He makes things holy, makes us holy. But what we can do is consecrate ourselves, and draw near to Him. It is in those times of drawing near to God that we are in the presence of holiness.

So how can you be holy? **You can be near to God.** That's why the priests were holy. They were in the presence of God.

When we are near to Him, we are made holy.

And so as we wrap up tonight I want to close with 5 practical things that you can do to be more holy. Maybe you're struggling with holiness, this idea of drawing near to God, here are 3 things that can help you keep in step with the Spirit.

1. If you struggle with holiness, **talk to somebody about your soul.** Speak to someone who will be honest with you. Someone that you can be honest with. Someone that you know

will give you advice or wisdom. Someone that will point you in the direction of God. It might be your mom or your dad (or it might not be). It might be your brother or sister. A minister. A preacher or your youth minister back home. An elder. A counselor.

We may or may not know each other very well, but I want you to know this: I care about you. And if I can help in any way, I'd love to.

So number one, talk to someone who can help you get where you need to be with God.

2. **Make Your Smart Phone Smarter.** Here are three apps that can help me draw closer to God. These will help you have a holier phone/iPad/what-have-you.

K9 Web Protection. It is a free app that does a fantastic job in blocking pornography. Maybe you struggle with pornography, maybe you don't, but regardless I **suggest** you download **this app anyway, because whether you struggle with it or not and whether you're looking for it or not, you will see pornography on the Internet.**

There's a busy street just a few feet away from our driveway. I have never thrown open my front door and said, "Hey! Have fun! Go play!" Yet, so many parents do that when they give their kids iPods, iPads, or iPhones.

Did I mention sin is way more dangerous than a busy intersection?

Instead of throwing open the door and telling my kids to have fun, I open the door to our backyard, where there's a fence, a boundary, something that says, "You can go out there, but stay in here," and the fence keeps them in and the fence keeps other stuff out.

How about we do something smart with our smart phones? Protect yourself.

I know statistically that there are a lot of people inside this room that are sick of losing battles with pornography. What if today you said “Ok, enough’s enough. I’m going to fight back. I’m not saying this is going to take away all of your temptations. But I am saying it’ll help. And I am saying it’s free.

I guess my question is, why would you NOT download this app? Did I mention it’s free? Did I mention that it blocks pornography? Do you really need more reasons?

But what will my friends say? Probably something like this: Hey, what is this app on your phone? Oh, it’s this internet protection thing. You mean like a porn blocker. Yeah. You got a pornography problem or something? I just figure given the choice between having porn that could come across my phone versus not having porn on my phone, I would prefer not to have it.

There ya go.

- 3. Take Time to Be Holy.** Let me talk to you about what to do if you struggle with studying like you should. If you struggle with holiness, maybe specifically Bible reading, download a daily Bible reading plan to your phone. Can I confess to you that I am a terrible reader? This has been so good for me this year. Has helped me tremendously. And get this, they even have Bible reading plans that will read to you. So that when you get behind on readings, you can press play, and listen, and catch up!

What to do if you struggle with saying something to God in prayer. For those of you who struggle with holiness (maybe specifically prayer): you might download an app for your prayer life called Echo.

You’re driving down the road on a long trip... Krystal. You keep driving. KFC. ChickFila. Cracker Barrel. Finally, Olive Garden. Or Out-back Steakhouse. Your favorite place to eat.

And we think, I’m not wasting my appetite on a meal that I could get anywhere at any given time. And so we wait. And when we finally get to the place where we wanna go, it’s worth all of the suffering.

And friends, that’s the most beautiful thing about holiness. If we will hold out, and we will wait, and we will pass on the world has to offer, until finally we get to the place where we wanna go, it’s worth all of the suffering.

Heaven is home for the holy.

Holiness. It’s not some old ball signed by some lady.

When we understand how important that holiness is, we will do everything that we can for it.

Pray.

Lesson 14: When Your World Gets Rocked

-Not too many of you know this story. It's the story about one of the hardest times in my life.

-I was in shock. I remember leaving the office and going off by myself just to think and try to clear my head. I couldn't believe it.

Maybe you've been there before. Maybe your hero let you down. Maybe a mentor. Or maybe a parent. Maybe that person isn't who you thought they were.

What do you do when your world gets rocked? When your world gets turned upside-down? When everything you've known and been able to trust in is suddenly gone? When something you've been able to rely on for so long is taken away? When the ground that you're standing on suddenly begins to feel like quicksand? When your world comes crashing down and you're not sure what to do?

What do you do? How do you move on from that? How do you recover?

33 *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'* **34** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* **35** *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Peter is a little thrown off by this. Wait, wait, wait...let's go back and revisit something you just said. What do you mean where I am going you cannot come?

36 *Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."*

Can you imagine that expressions in the group beginning to change? Maybe a sense of panic is setting in. But you're Jesus. You're just going to leave us? You're going to abandon us? I thought you were always going to be here for us. What do you mean you're leaving?!?

Peter says, "Well, if you're leaving I'm coming with you."

37 *Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."* **38** *Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.*

And we usually stop reading there, but it's sort of an unfortunate chapter break, because it's the same conversation. Not a different day or setting. Same stuff.

Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going."

Have you ever gotten incomplete directions? Maybe somebody left out turn or a really important detail from the instructions? Then it really sends you into a panic. Thomas is like, "Lord, you left out an important detail from your plan!

5 *Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

There is so much more that I wish we had time to really dig into tonight from this passage, but I love John 14 because Jesus makes it a point to remind his apostles of some important things before he gets ready to die.

And by the way, imagine how they must've felt on that night?

When this man that they'd spent all of their time learning from, and studying and wanting to be like. This man that they had come to realize is so much more than a man. Now that man is laying in a tomb. Maybe he's not who you thought He was. Maybe He wasn't invincible. Maybe He wasn't who He claimed to be.

What do you do when your world gets turned upside down?

Before we close our lesson this evening I want to give you six things to remember when it feels like the ground you've been standing on has fallen out from under you.

When You Get that Sinking Feeling

1. Remember that people are going to fail you.

You can count on that. You can expect that. That's a hard lesson, and I know that doesn't make it hurt any less, but we still gotta remember that. Our heroes, our mentors, our parents are human. They sin. They mess up. They blow it. They won't always do right.

And just like we learn from Goliath, even giants can fall.

If I'm someone that you admire and look up to, if it's a cocoon leader, if it's Jody, whoever it is, just know, you give me long enough, I'm going to let you down. I'm going to blow it. I'm going to mess up. Don't look to me.

Instead number two, I want to take this one straight out of John 14. What's another foothold, another thing we need to remember when our world comes crashing down?

2. Jesus says, "Believe in God; believe also in me."

Our heroes will let us down, but don't allow them to be the ones that hold you up!

Jesus tells us that we've got someone we can all believe in.

God has got you. God is still God. He is still in control even though everything around us might be pure chaos. And He will never let us down.

Remember in John 14, we're talking about a time that's coming when the apostles are going to really be put to the test as to whether or not they are going to believe in Jesus' word.

We know, and they came to know, that the Lord always keeps His Word. There are going to be times where we are not going to be sure who to believe or what to believe, but you can rest assured that we can believe God, and believe in Him—in His power and in His promises.

3. It's okay to feel what you feel.

If you're angry, be angry. In fact the Bible says "Be angry and do not sin."

If you need to break down and cry, break down and cry.

If your heart breaks for someone who's hurting, you're in good company. The shortest verse in the Bible says Mark 11:35 "Jesus wept." And it wasn't talking about when He died on the cross. It was

talking about the pain that he felt after watching the family of Lazarus hurt.

Jesus had all the power in the universe, and He allowed himself to feel emotional pain. That's a really neat characteristic of Christ. He wasn't a robot. He experienced grief.

4. Jesus hurts with you.

He sees what you're going through. Here's Mark 11:33 (just before where it says "Jesus wept.") When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

We serve a sympathetic Savior, not a sociopathic cyborg.

5. The Lord is our healer.

Psalm 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

6. Everything is going to be okay.

How can you say that? How do you know that?

Well let's play this out. Maybe your greatest fear comes to pass. You lose someone you love. A relationship ends. Someone walks out on you. Someone gets entangled in sin so much to the point that it destroys everything good in their life.

What's left?

You might lose everything. But there is one thing that nobody, not even Satan himself, can take from you: God.

And if all we have at the end of the day is the Lord, that's worth everything. Keep going.

Let us pray.