

Joshua: How To Live Courageously

Now, sooner or later, you're going to come face to face with some circumstances that require great courage in your life.

Some of you might be there this morning.

Some of you say, I'm not going to get there.

I am there.

What you're facing has perhaps created fear and anxiety.

Some of you may be facing matters that even seem hopeless to you.

Some of you may be questioning if you have the stuff to endure, if you have what it takes to conquer your fears and

and to go forward in victory.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote and said, whatever you do, you need courage.

Whatever course you decide upon, there's always someone to tell you that you're wrong.

You've heard that, haven't you?

There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right.

To map out a course of action and follow it to the end, however, requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs.

Fame World War II tank commander, General George Patton, said this.

He said, courage is fear holding on a minute longer.

If you give in to your fears, you're on the path to defeat.

If instead, however, you stand strong in spite of your fears, you're on the path to victory, he said.

And we must never forget that we're not in the battle alone.

With the power of God on our side, we cannot be defeated.

You know, as we continue in this series on heroes of the faith today, I want to talk with you about Joshua.

Joshua was a man who demonstrated great courage, and that courage enabled him to lead the people of God into the promised land.

You may be facing one of those courageous moments.

I remember now about 23 years ago,

Here at RBC, we undertook a God-sized vision to build and to remodel this campus in order to accommodate our growing congregation.

And I'll be honest, I didn't understand at the time what all God was going to do.

I just knew what He had put on my heart and the vision that He had given to me.

And so I appointed a team of people, a team that would work with planners, strategic planners, Christian organizations, and then architects and designers to

to put together plans of what I really believe God wanted for our church and they came together they began to do their plans and then the architect began to work and design our campus and redesign and reconfigure what would be remodeled all of those kinds of things it was a massive undertaking and at that time 23 years ago the price tag was 16 million right around 16 million dollars

And when they came back and they told us, here's what it's going to take to do what you're talking about doing, I have to tell you, when they said \$16 million, my knees buckled.

And that's in part because the pros, the experts, whoever they are, they're the ones we blame for everything, you know.

And the pros told us, though, they said, you can't do that.

Your church isn't strong enough, and you don't have enough of the demographic and the people and all of these sorts of things.

You're not a large enough congregation to tackle a project like this.

And so I began to pray and say, no, Lord, what do I do?

And I said, man, I had no idea.

And my knees were wobbly.

And I had to go back to this committee and say, okay, here's what we're dealing with.

And I sat in with that committee and I said, the price tag is enormous.

They tell us that we can't do this.

Now, I know God can do anything.

But they tell us that we're not big enough, we're not strong enough, our people don't give enough, and all of these kinds of things, and all these reasons not to do it.

And I'm trying to figure out what do we do, and so I said to the committee, here's what's before us.

I said, now there is an option.

I said, I guess we could approach it in stages.

So we could do this over a period of 10 or 15 years.

We could take stage one and we could do these things and cover that.

And then there would be stage two and we could do that.

And then stage three and so forth, which probably would be long after I was dead and gone.

And I said, we can do that.

But I'll never forget when I said, that's a possibility, this staging of this project.

One of the men on that committee, he looked at me, and with good intentions, he said, Pastor, I thought we brought you here to be a Moses and to lead us into the promised land.

And I paused for a second, and I looked back at him, and I said, I don't want to be Moses.

I said, Moses died before he got to the promised land.

I said, I want to be Joshua.

Joshua.

I want to take the people across the river.

And so here we are all these years later.

And the project has been completed and more, more.

But here we are.

And we still have a little bit to go on that.

But we've gone from 16 million to about just over 1 million.

And we'll get that knocked out here next week.

Y'all are going to do that, right?

But they said it couldn't be done.

But there was one man on that committee, and I put him on that committee on purpose, and many of you know him.

He used to sit right over here, James Morrison.

I put James on there because he'd seen everything.

This church started in James and Mary Morrison's home.

And so I wanted James on there.

And James was such an encourager to me.

And he's in glory now.

But James was such an encourager to me.

And I won't ever forget, after I said, I don't want to be Moses.

I didn't come here to be Moses.

I came here to be Joshua.

He said this.

The whole committee's there.

He said, Pastor, let's just do this thing.

He said, they've always told us here that we can't do certain things, and God has always come through.

He said, let's just do it.

And I don't know, but the Spirit of God filled that room, and we all said, yep, let's just do it, including the pastor.

And we did.

But we felt a little bit like Joshua in some respects, and all these years later, though, here we are.

That was similar to what Joshua faced.

He faced a task, and that task required leadership and courage.

In our passage this morning, we read the story where Joshua picks up
where Moses left off.

And if you're physically able to do so, I invite you to stand with me as we read these verses, beginning in verse 1 of Joshua 1.

Another one of the great stories, you know, my son-in-law, he listens to his father-in-law podcast and live stream, which is a blessing to know that your son-in-law doesn't say, I ain't listening to him.

But he's such a great guy.

And he was telling me, we were out in an outing this weekend and we were riding around and he said, I've been listening to the Heroes of the Fates series.

And he said, which of the characters is your favorite?

And I thought for a second, I said, well, I said, I know this sounds strange, but it depends on the one I'm preaching on this week.

So they've all been so good to me.

I have been excited about this series since my sabbatical back in July.

But so today my favorite is Joshua.

That's what I want you to get.

And I think you're going to enjoy and be ministered to by God from the life of Joshua.

After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant...

Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now, therefore, arise.

Go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I'm giving to them, to the people of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, just as I promised to Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the great sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life.

Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

I will not leave you or forsake you.

Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

Only be strong and very courageous.

Being careful to do all according to the law that Moses, my servant, commanded you.

Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Have I not commanded you?

Be strong and courageous.

Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Lord, we thank you for that passage and the story and what it reminds us of and the continuing journey that they would take as a result of this.

But Father, we pray today that you will help us be people that are strong and courageous.

I don't know what the challenges are to people that are listening to this message, live stream, television, radio, in this live.

I don't know what the challenges may be, but I know this, Father, there are people hearing these words today that need new strength and new courage and need to know how to live courageously for you, to walk by faith and not by sight.

And so, Father, would you take now this passage, would you take your word now

Would you cause our hearts to receive it?

Would you cause our ears to hear it?

And Father, would you transform our minds with it?

For we're listening, and we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Amen.

Thank you.

You can be seated.

Now, a lot of this is background-wise pretty self-explanatory.

You know Israel had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

They come to this place.

There really are only two people left.

from the original wilderness nation.

That's Joshua and Caleb.

Everybody else had died off.

And you remember the reason Joshua and Caleb are still alive and still around.

And they're 80 plus years old now.

They are around because they were the only two of the 12 spies that looked at the land and said, we can do this.

We can do what the others say we can't do.

And so because of that, God kept them as inspirations and leaders to the people of God.

But now we come to that place where it's 40 years later, and Joshua, who had been the right hand of Moses, is tapped by God to lead the people on.

Moses is now dead.

Joshua has this task, and it is a God-sized task, but it is to take the people of God into the promised land.

And though God had promised them that land, never forget that.

God had told them, I'm giving you the land.

It was never, and even when the spies went out, let me just back up a second.

When the spies went to look at the land, you remember that?

The 12 original spies went to look at the land.

God didn't send them in to see how Israel, or if Israel could take the land.

He sent them in to see how they were going to take the land.

It was never a question because God had already said, I've given you the land.

But ten of them came back and said, we saw the people in the land and we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes.

That's another sermon.

I'll preach it some other time.

I've preached about that before.

But they had a grasshopper mentality.

They saw themselves instead of the way God saw them.

Lesson there for us.

But so here they are now, and it's time for them to go in.

But even though God had promised to give them the land, he says it here again in the passage that we read, the land that I'm giving you, they still would face obstacles.

They'd have to cross the Jordan River.

All of these people would have to cross, and God would drive the river again.

They would have to face walls like the walls of Jericho.

There would be battles that they would have to fight.

And there would be enemies that they would have to face and defeat.

And in these first kind of introductory words to Joshua and to the people, three times God tells Joshua only be strong and courageous.

And he reaffirms some things.

He affirms the power of God on him in verse 2.

The land that I'm giving you, I'm giving it.

I've already delivered it to you.

The power of God would be with them.

The promise of God was to him.

Just as I was with Moses, I will be with you.

The presence of God was with him.

I will be with you.

And the prosperity of God was promised to them that you might have good success.

Now you say, well, Pastor,

That's good and well, but that was history.

That's ancient history.

That was then.

But friend, I'm living in the now, you say.

And I just say to you, if you wonder, how can this story apply to me?

Well, I want to inform you of something this morning.

This is not just a story about what God did.

It is also a reminder of what God does.

And so this story there reminds us of what God does right here and right now.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians, these things happened to them as examples for us.

They were written down for our instruction as we live in the end of the age.

So this story of strength and courage is also a story of victory and how you and I can possess and live in the victory

that we already have.

Let me make this statement to you this morning.

Every Christian has access to victory.

Every Christian has access to victory.

I didn't say every Christian is living in victory.

I said every Christian has access to victory.

And while the Bible admits that we all fail, the Bible never assumes that we have to live as failures.

or in failure.

So I want to expand just a little bit this morning on how you can be a courageous and a victorious follower of God.

To do that, the first thing you need is found in verse 5, and that is to live in the constant companionship of God's presence.

I think it is important that Joshua knows and God certainly wanted him to know that I'm going to be with you.

You know I was with Moses, but just as I was with Moses, I will now be with you.

You and I, if we're going to live victoriously and courageously, we must live in the constant companionship of God's presence.

And this is a reassuring promise to this rookie leader.

He was now the leader.

He was a rookie, but God says, your success is tied to your companionship with me and to your obedience to my commands.

Now, I would add this morning that while God is telling Joshua that he will never leave him, that doesn't mean that Joshua could never wander away from God.

How do we know that?

Well, we know that from verse 7 because God tells Joshua, he said, now look, this law shall be in your mouth and you shall obey my commands.

And God tells him then, he says, and you are not to turn from the right or to the left, but you're to do everything that I've commanded.

Just that statement means that Joshua had the capacity to wander, to go to the right or go to the left.

So God says, you're not to do that because you can't.

Because you might... Listen, I tell our staff what I'm about to say to you.

I tell them frequently, and they would tell you this, but I say the same to you.

There is no substitute for proximity to Jesus in your life.

There's no substitute for that.

Staying close to Jesus in life is a game changer.

And if you want to know why many people struggle in their relationship with God...

That's the culprit.

Their proximity to Jesus.

They want the benefits of knowing God, but they don't want the responsibility of staying near God.

The discipline of walking with God.

The problem is never about God staying near us.

It is always about us staying near God.

If there's any drift in your life between you and between God, it's always on us.

It's always on you.

It's always on me.

Why?

Because God does not abandon us, but we can drift from Him.

I've told this story before, but Leonardo da Vinci, when he was painting The Last Supper, you've seen the painting of The Last Supper, that marvelous painting.

And he went looking for models to sit for the various disciples and the characters there.

And when it came time for him to find a model of Jesus, he found a handsome and an innocent looking man who was in one of the churches.

He was in the choir in one of the churches in Italy.

And

And so he took this man and he paid him to sit so he could paint an idea of what Jesus would look like in that painting.

And so he paid him and he brought him in.

And the man's name was Pietro Bandonelli.

And years passed as da Vinci continued to work on this painting.

And he had painted everybody and he left for last, I bet you can guess who, Judas.

Judas.

And so he left just the image of Judas blank.

Everything else was painted, and it came time for him to finish the painting.

And he went out to find a model into the streets of Rome, and he looked for what he believed was the most haggard kind of image that he could find.

And at last he saw a man that he wanted to come and sit as the disciple who betrayed Christ.

And this man, it is reported, his face was drawn.

He was villainous looking.

And so Da Vinci said, perfect.

And he hired the man to come and sit for the face of Judas.

And when he had completed the work, he was about to dismiss the man when he asked, by the way, sir, I didn't get your name.

What is your name?

And the poor man responded, don't you know me?

I am Pietro Bandinelli.

I'm also the model who's set for the image of Jesus.

This man had drifted so far that now his face had gone from the idea of Christ to one reflecting the very betrayer of Christ, Judas Iscariot.

Friend, do you understand we must be on guard against drifting?

Let me tell you why you must stay in close proximity to Jesus.

First of all, because proximity to Jesus will enable you to distinguish the words of God.

The world is full of voices.

There are a lot of noises.

There are a lot of sounds out there, aren't there?

And whichever source you are closest to is the source you're going to listen to.

Proximity to Jesus enables you to distinguish his words among all the noise.

Now, I've noticed something as I get older.

I use the word huh more than I've ever used it before.

Huh?

Huh?

I've noticed as I get older, that word has become a consistent part of my vocabulary.

Don't be offended if you talk to me and I go, huh?

Huh?

And what I found out is it's not that I can't hear sounds.

I hear sounds and noises and all of that sort of things.

But when they get all jumbled together with background noise and everything, listen, sometimes I can't distinguish words.

Anybody else have that problem?

Except when I'm preaching, you don't have that problem, do you?

And what I found out, I did some research on it because I hear the sounds and everything, but sometimes words come out and my family will laugh at me because I'll say a word that they didn't say.

And what I found out is it's a frequency issue.

You're hearing frequencies change as you get older.

And so you don't process the sounds the same way.

But I've also found, by the way, it's a wonderful excuse.

Oh, I thought you said this.

That's why.

Well.

But you know what has to happen when that occurs?

It's more important for me to be close.

So the other sounds, the ambient noise and the background noise doesn't distort what I really need to hear.

You get it?

That's why proximity to Jesus is so important.

Because the closer you are to Him...

the more distinguishable are his words.

But let me give you another reason proximity to Jesus is so important.

And that is because not only will you distinguish his words, you'll be able to detect his will.

As you hear the word, there's a conversation going on here between God and Joshua.

And God is making known to Joshua his will.

His will for Joshua, you're about to lead these people, and his will for the people.

proximity to Jesus enables you to detect His will.

As you hear His Word, you will know His will.

You'll know what He wants, and you'll know how to carry it out.

And then third, proximity to Jesus is important because not only does it enable you to detect His will and distinguish His Word, it enables you to deepen your walk.

If you distinguish God's Word...

You will detect His will.

And guess what?

You will subsequently go deeper with God.

Look, it's real simple.

The closer you are to Jesus, the more you will grow spiritually.

Okay?

That's why proximity is so important.

That's why this companionship is so important.

At the end of my message, if you don't have a relationship with Christ, if Christ is not your saving companionship, I'm going to tell you how to have that.

So living victoriously and courageously requires that you and I stay in constant companionship with God.

But secondly, it also...

It also means that you're going to have to live in complete compliance with God's commands.

Did you notice verse 7?

He actually reiterates this truth a couple of times in these verses, but he says, be careful to do all, circle that word all, be careful to do all according to the law.

Now, God has given Joshua a promise that

And that promise included God's presence with him and his victory to come.

But there was action required.

Joshua was told to be fully compliant with the instructions of God.

It wasn't just, I am with you.

It was, I am with you, but here's what you're going to have to do.

There's action required.

You're going to have to comply with my commands.

I'm going to lead you every step of the way, but you're going to have to obey.

You're going to have to comply with everything.

Folks, that still is true today.

that if we're going to be courageous for God, if we're going to be strong for God, if we're going to live victoriously for God, we are going to have to be completely compliant with the instructions of God, and God will give you more.

Don't you wish, don't you wish sometimes that God would just say, here, I'm going to just show you everything right now, right up front.

Wouldn't that be wonderful?

I think it'd be horrible.

You know why I think it'd be horrible?

I think it'd scare us to death.

If we saw things ahead that God's going to be with us and take us through, and if we saw them right now, I'm not sure I want to see all of it.

But what is important is what I do see that I respond to, that I obey what I do know.

That I obey the instructions.

Because here's kind of how it works.

That as you take a step into the light, guess what?

He shows you more light.

You take more and more light.

He doesn't say, look way down there.

He instead says, one step at a time.

You follow me.

You obey me.

I will be with you.

I will be your strength.

I will enable you to walk and have good success.

Yes.

But you're going to have to walk with me.

And you're going to have to obey everything I say.

Do everything I say.

Have you ever done that with a child?

Okay, you've got to do this.

You've got to do it exactly the way I say.

Except if they're grandkids.

Our grandsons have been in town this weekend.

And I love how I can relax the rules for them.

Because I know their mom and dad are going to turn around and say, this is what you got to do.

You got to do this and this and this.

They're headed home, maybe even now.

The boys are.

Our daughter is staying for a few days, but the boys are headed home.

And so I went up and talked and prayed with them early this morning.

And that's tough.

Let them go.

But our

Their mama said, but hey, guys, we'll be back in just a few weeks.

They're coming back down and spending the Thanksgiving holidays with us, and we're coming back down.

And I loved it when the oldest one said, well, if we're coming back in a few weeks, Mom, why can't we just stay?

And I looked at her and I said, yeah.

Why can't they just stay, you know?

Because, look, God said, I can let them do whatever they want.

But mom and daddy says, no, you've got to do this.

You've got to do exactly this way.

If you don't, there are consequences.

Well, that's what God says.

If you will do exactly what I say, you're going to like the outcome.

But the devil whispers to you and to me and says, if you do what God says, he's going to make your life miserable.

Why is it that we believe the lies of hell that God is going to make us miserable if we obey him?

The devil wants you to believe that.

But did you hear what God said to Joshua?

If you will do everything that I tell you to do, then you will prosper in the way.

Then you will have good success.

But the devil says, you really believe that?

And we go, no, I don't believe that.

So God is telling him this, live in complete compliance with my commands.

And so today, like in Joshua's day, there are many people that don't get that.

Joshua was told to be fully, completely compliant with God and His instructions, not partial compliance.

He was to do it all.

But there are people today, you would agree with this, and maybe those who are listening are in the sound of my voice, there are many people who are more than happy to do some of God's commands.

and feel satisfied that they've done some of what God says.

Furthermore, many people today assume that God is satisfied by partial obedience.

Do you know God is not satisfied with partial obedience?

You may feel good about it.

The devil would like you to feel good about it, but God is not satisfied by partial obedience.

You see, to God, I told you to circle the word all.

To God, the word all still means all, not some.

All.

An example of that is found in, you remember the story of Saul, when he began to wander away from the instructions of God.

And there's this one occasion, it's a long story, so I'll make it brief.

But there's one occasion where God had told him to wipe out the Amalekites and to wipe out all of the plunder and everything and not to keep any of it.

But Saul did.

He kept some of it.

And then Samuel shows up and says, why didn't you carry out the instructions of God?

You remember what Saul said?

We did.

Oh, hey, wonderful.

The man of God is here.

Why didn't you obey God?

We did obey God.

And I love it.

And Samuel says to him, then why do I hear the bleeding of sheep in my ear?

If you completely obeyed God, why do I hear sheep?

Meaning you kept some of the sheep and the flocks.

And here's Saul.

He could be a modern-day American.

He said, oh, that, you mean the, oh, those sheep, oh, we kept some of the best of the plunder to offer it as a sacrifice to God.

Can't you just see that?

And Samuel's going, that's the best you got?

But that's what Saul said.

Oh, yeah, we did keep.

That's what you mean.

No, we have completely carried out the will of God.

Except, you remember what Samuel says to him at that moment?

And Samuel said, Has the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.

And to listen is better than the fat of rams for rebellion is as the sin of divination and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.

And now because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you from being king.

Wow.

Did you get that?

You know what Samuel said?

God doesn't want your partial obedience.

Don't even try to say, but we were going to do something religious with it.

And don't presume that you know better than God because he says in the... For rebellion is like presuming upon God.

We just figured God would be pleased with this.

Friend, listen.

Listen.

In a culture like the one you are living in, it takes spiritual courage to do all that God says.

Because Saul represents the age you live in, I think, and how he responded to that.

Well, we did most of what God said.

We even did it with good intentions.

In this passage, we are told to be careful with our response to the commands of God.

How can we be careful?

Let me suggest three things.

If you want to be careful with the commands of God, first of all, you must not debate the commands of God.

I know to say this, I don't mean to insult your intelligence, because I know we all at least know this.

I'm not sure we just all operate this way.

But the fact is, God does not need correcting.

So when God...

tells us to do something, we don't need to say, okay, but God, that was back then.

It's different today.

But we hear that, don't we?

We hear it from pulpits.

We make adjustments and accommodations and compromises to the truth.

Why?

Because, well, if Jesus or God were operating today, they would adjust that, you know.

They would change things.

Time out.

Time out.

They are operating today.

But what we sometimes do is we have our reasons.

God, you know, I just think this would be a better way.

Look, we must be careful not to debate the commands of God.

I just don't think that's wise, God.

Do you know what's going on?

The commands of God are not subject to our opinions.

God doesn't... When you offer your opinion to God, it may be a good one, but God doesn't go, oh, I hadn't considered that.

I'm sorry, I didn't think about that, right?

Listen, if you want to be careful with the commands of God, not only are you not to debate the commands of God, second...

You are not to deny the commands of God.

Now, here's a second kind of approach we will take, and that is we may not overtly deny them, but did you know if you do not do the commands of God and you say, well, I didn't debate the commands of God.

I just acted like I didn't hear them.

I just denied them in the way I responded, or I ignored them.

You know, so, and by the way, many people today, they just ignore the commands of God.

But you don't get a pass with God by pleading ignorance.

Well, God, I didn't, you know, I didn't take it that seriously.

I didn't, I'm not sure I really understood it.

I just didn't do it.

But God, you know, I've done a lot of other good things for you.

I've obeyed you in some other areas.

What counts is are you and I obeying Him fully.

Ignoring the commands of God doesn't give you a pass.

And then here's the third thing.

If you're going to be careful with the commands of God, don't debate them.

Don't deny them.

And third, you must be careful not to dilute the commands of God.

That means to minimize or to compromise them to fit your agenda.

So we reinterpret things or the instructions of God or the Word of God or the truth of God.

We shape it and mold it to fit an agenda we've already decided to live by.

That's what Saul did.

Oh, that, that.

Well, yeah, we did keep some things, but we kept it.

We had this God-honoring purpose.

And so if we're not careful, we can try to dilute the commands of God where we don't have to really obey what God has said, but we can mold them.

Do you know the commands of God are not given for you and I to shape them?

They're given to shape us.

And so we must be careful.

You got it?

Not to debate the commands of God.

Not to deny the commands of God.

And not to minimize or dilute the commands of God.

Courageous and victorious living requires complete compliance with God's commands.

And you're going to look like a weird person sometimes among your family, your friends, maybe your colleagues.

Say, thus saith the Lord.

I'm just trying to obey the Lord.

I'm going to do what the Lord has told me to do in His Word.

And make sure it's from God and it's not your word.

But we are to live in compliance with his commands.

And then last, and then last, if you want to live courageously and you want to live victoriously, you must live in continual contemplation of God's word.

Verse 8 says,

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

There's that all thing again.

And for then you will make your way prosperous and you will have good success.

We are to live in continual contemplation of God's Word.

What does that mean?

Well, the book of the law, do you know the book of the law he's talking about was the word of God at that time?

It had been given to them by God.

It was the very word of God.

And it was given to direct their lives.

And they're told to contemplate its message.

And notice that being strong and courageous is associated with our commitment to following God.

and obeying the Word of God.

And in this verse, God gives us three areas that continual contemplation of Scripture should govern.

I want you to write these down.

If we're going to continually contemplate it, it should govern your talk.

Did you notice he said, now look at this in your Bibles as you write, do both.

He says that this book shall not depart from your mouth.

And what that means is it should govern what comes out of here.

It should govern your talk.

You see, Jesus said that what comes out of your mouth, you remember this, reveals what's in your heart.

Jesus says the mouth is a revealer.

That's what he says.

It shows who we are.

It reveals our priorities and it reveals the values that we hold.

It reveals what's really going on inside of us.

Let me ask you this morning.

How much of Jesus is in your talk?

How much of God is in your talk?

Think about it.

We come to church.

We talk about sports.

We talk about the weather.

We talk about politics with each other.

And there's nothing wrong with talking about those things.

But how much Jesus do we actually talk about with each other?

Right?

I mean, how much Jesus do we actually talk about with each other?

We talk about a whole lot of other things today.

But how much Jesus do?

How much Jesus, when you walk in, you say, well, we talked about it more today than we talk about it out there.

Exactly.

He says, let this book be on your lips.

And what he means is that it is so important and so valuable to us that we talk about it.

We love to talk about it.

We have a man in this church, and he called me.

I guess it was Wednesday.

And he said, Pastor, could I come by and see you for just a few minutes?

He said, it'll be brief.

I said, sure, come on.

And he did, and he came in my office.

He said, I just got to show you something.

You know what he wanted to show me?

He said, let me show you something.

I was spending time in the Scripture this morning, and look at this.

And he showed me a passage and how God had opened that passage up and made it real to him.

He said, I had to come and talk about that.

He said, I didn't mean to bug you.

I said, you didn't bug me.

I love it when the sheep want to talk about the shepherd.

I mean, not this shepherd, the shepherd.

I love it.

How much of Jesus is in your talk?

Look, I'm not talking about walking around saying, how art thou today?

You understand what I'm saying?

I'm not talking about religious jargon or Christianese.

You know, that's like a language, Christianese, you know.

And we have to be careful how much, but how much genuine God and Jesus comes through how we talk.

He says, let this book, let the words of this book govern your talk.

Paul writes in Colossians 3, he says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Why?

So that you can teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your heart to God.

The Word of God should govern our talk.

But secondly, it should govern your thoughts.

Write that down.

Not only your talk.

He says meditate on it.

Did you catch that?

He said it should be on your lips.

It should govern your talk.

But he said it should govern your thoughts.

Meditate on it day and night.

Did you get that?

Listen, the Bible, the Scriptures, the Word of God is not just a Sunday study.

It's a daily pursuit.

It is to be in the background of our minds and in the foreground of our thoughts.

Why?

Because we are to be shaped by the Word of God.

And if that's going to happen, we must meditate.

We must ruminate.

Some of you remember my parents used to use the word cogitate.

It means to think on it.

We must contemplate the Word of God.

We should chew on it.

It should dwell in us richly.

And I've told you this before, but you know when he says meditate on it day and night, it means it's always there.

And the idea, biblically, of meditation is that of like a cow chewing its cud.

You know, a cow has multiple stomachs and

You know, I don't want to gross you out, but the image is important.

So it chews, it's cut, it swallows, and it digests it, and then it brings it back up.

And it chews on it a little bit more, and then it digests it in another stomach, and then it brings it back up.

And then it chews on it.

The only thing I've ever been able to do that with is liver.

Liver.

But meditation is that repeated process.

And that's the idea there.

So the Word of Christ dwells in you richly.

And it ruminates.

You contemplate it.

You think about it.

You speak it.

You talk about it.

And go back to Deuteronomy 6.

We don't have time right now.

But go back there and notice what God told Israel.

He said, you shall talk about these things in your coming and your going.

And you shall tell them to your kids and your grandkids.

I sat on the bed last night and said, Pops, would you read us a Bible story?

I sure did.

You know what I read them?

I read them the story of Calvary.

That's what I read them.

Think on these things.

Teach them to the next generation.

Hold fast to them in the current generation so when you pass them on and the generation coming behind us, they'll have the truth in their hearts so they'll hear it

I'm looking right over there and I see Stephen.

Stephen right there.

You know what he showed me this morning?

He has a notebook.

He comes in here.

And he showed me his notes.

You know what they are?

They're notes of my sermons.

And they're better than my own notes.

And I told him one day, I said, I'm just going to let you come up here and preach.

And he would, by the way.

But we pass the truth on to the next generation and the next generation and the next generation.

Why?

We meditate.

We hold it.

It shapes our thoughts.

I remember how we used to mark daily Bible reading.

Some of y'all have been Baptists that long.

Y'all remember what we used to do?

I don't know.

Do we still do it?

Is it on there?

On your envelopes?

It's still on there.

And you check all the boxes, right?

I just put my tithe and building monies and all that in mine.

I don't check anything anymore.

I figure if I'm not staying in the Word, y'all are in trouble.

But on those envelopes, we used to check.

And I remember as a junior boy, I'd have those envelopes.

And I don't know, there were all kinds of things.

You know, a perfect attendance and Bible reading and contacts, bring your Bible to church.

What else, class?

Some of y'all remember.

Tithes.

Yeah, all of that kind of thing.

Did you do all these things?

You read your Bible.

And man, I can remember as a junior boy, I wanted to check every box because you were 100% sure

attendant yeah i mean you were a hundred percent present is what it was called and there was even a bonus box on the ones that we had and if you checked it you could actually be 110 present so i want i don't know how you do that but there's 10 more of me here today than there was you know yesterday

But, you know, as a junior boy, I didn't understand what it really meant.

I read my Bible, but I didn't understand.

And I would remember occasionally that I had read my Bible.

And so, you know what I'd do?

I'd just open it up and just read something.

And then I could check the box.

Some of y'all did that too, right?

Because you wanted to check all the boxes.

But here's the deal.

I had no idea many times what I'd even read.

And honestly...

I didn't care.

Because I was just trying to check a box.

I was just trying to get a check mark instead of meditating on and reading and trying to figure out what God wanted to say to me.

There are people today that read their Bible and wonder why they aren't getting anything out of it.

And the fact is they're not because they're not reading to receive something.

They're just reading to read something.

God, speak to me.

I'm listening.

It's kind of like the definition of education that I recently read.

It said, education is that process by which the material in the professor's notebook gets into the student's notebook without going through the mind of either one.

Listen, to get something from the Word, we must meditate on the Word.

And the idea that the Word of God is such a part of your thinking that it easily comes forth when you need it.

It is such a part of who I am that when I need it, it comes forth.

It rushes forward.

Well, I need to close.

But let me close by telling you this.

That continual contemplation on the Word of God should govern our talk.

It should govern our thoughts.

And last, it should govern your task.

Verse 3 in our passage, I mean, not verse 3, verse 8 in our passage, says that for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you'll have good success.

Listen, the Word of God should do more than increase your spiritual information.

it should accelerate your spiritual transformation.

There are a lot of people today that say they believe the Bible.

There's a lot of people in our culture that say they believe the Bible.

There are a lot of people in our churches that say they believe the Bible.

But there are many who say that but give no evidence in their life or lifestyle that they believe the Bible.

Listen, the proof that you believe the Bible is not in how much you affirm the Bible.

It's not even how much about the Bible you know.

The proof is in how much you obey and practice the Bible.

A lot of people say they love God.

Love God so much.

I love God.

But did you know what Jesus said about that?

Jesus said the proof that we love God is

is that we obey his word.

In John, Jesus said, whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me and will be loved by my Father.

You see, God makes a correlation between Joshua's obedience and his prosperity.

Then will you have good success.

You know what success is?

It's obeying God.

Do you know what victory is?

It's obeying God.

Do you know what makes God real to you?

Obeying Him.

So do you want to live courageously?

You want to live like Joshua in victory?

Then listen, contemplate the Word of God.

Comply with the commands of God.

And then cultivate your companionship with God.

I told you just a few minutes ago, I was going to tell you how you could have a companionship with God if you don't have that.

And that's the first and most important thing you can do is establish that kind of relationship with Him.

Here's how you get that.

You call on Him.

You say, Lord Jesus, I believe.

I confess with my mouth.

I believe in my heart, as the Scripture says.

I confess with my mouth that God raised you from the dead, that you are the living Savior.

You're not a dead religious leader.

And I confess, and I want you in my life.

I know you died for my sins on the cross.

And whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved, the Scripture says.

That may be you today.

It may be you watching by live stream.

It may be you watching on television this morning.

And you need to do just that.

You need to call upon the name of the Lord.

Would you all bow your heads with me?

No one looking about in this place, but this morning maybe you need to say, I need to do that.

Well, here's how you do it.

Say right now, Lord Jesus.

Thank you for loving me.

Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins.

I know I'm a sinner and I know I need you, but I thank you that you've paid for my sins.

And there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

So I invite you into my life.

Transform me.

Make me a new creation.

Save me today.

Now, Lord, I know you hear those prayers.

Give people courage to

to pray, and to invite you in, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Well, I'm so glad that you have tuned in to the broadcast today.

I hope you've been encouraged by God's Word.

It sure has been a joy to share it with you.

And even now, people at Ridgecrest are making decisions for Christ.

Perhaps as you've watched this broadcast, you've recognized the need for your own decision for Christ, the prompting of the Spirit.

It's caused you to recognize that

You need Christ as your Savior.

And the good news is you can receive him right where you are.

The Bible says, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Right where you are, you can call on him.

Say something like this from your heart to him.

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me.

I know I'm a sinner, and I know that you came into this world and died on the cross for my sins.

And right now, I invite you to come into my life.

Forgive me and be my Savior.

I can assure you if you'll call on him, based on what God has already told us in the Bible, that he'll hear that prayer and he'll answer that.

And he wants to begin this new journey

in your life with you, transforming you into His image.

We'd love to help you with that decision as well.

You'll see a QR code on your screen, and if you would scan that, or you'll see contact information, or if you'll contact us about your decision today, we'd love to help you take next steps.

There are no strings attached, no fees involved.

We'd just like to help you begin that journey with Christ.

You may be watching this broadcast today and say, I need a church family to belong to.

I already know Christ as my Savior, and I'd like to be a part of the Ridgecrest family.

Also, if you will, scan that QR code.

That'll take you to a location, and we'll be able to help you make those kinds of decisions like becoming a member here or if you've never been scripturally baptized, those kinds of things.

So contact us through that QR code or through the contact information on the screen.

Well, again, it's been a joy to have you with us today, and I hope you've been encouraged by God's Word.

Whatever decision we can help you with, by all means, contact us.

May the Lord bless you.