

How to Get Eternal Life - Part 3 Things That Stand in the Way

I recently learned that there are several budding romances springing up in our junior high and high school groups here at Compass. Someone pointed out to me these teen couples that seem like their head over heels in love. So, having learned that after the worship got started I snuck across to the youth rooms and as a duly authorized representative of the State of California I joined several of them together in holy matrimony this morning. So parents of Compass teens congratulations! Your family is growing. Now you recognize had I really done that I would be in big trouble. Would I not? That would make the Register and the LA Times tomorrow. Robed pastor secretly solemnized dozens of teen marriages received multiple death threats. Something like that. I mean that would be bad. That would be a scandal. But really think about it for a second. Is there a whole lot of difference than if I were to come up to you after the service and say, hey, one of our youth pastors led your kid to Christ this morning. You might go, that's great, fantastic. Tell me which would be more scandalous. Would it be me not consulting you about getting your kid into a legal relationship with another person that will impact the rest of his life or would it be me not consulting you about getting your kid into a sacred covenant relationship with Christ. A person he now has to follow and obey and relationship that will impact, redirect, re-prioritize the rest of his or her earthy life and effect their eternity. I mean really which one is a bigger deal? Which one would have more implications? Which one would be more costly?

Now think about it, we've been working through the 19th Chapter of Matthew, rich young ruler, and he comes to Christ. Now imagine with me for a minute if what happens in that exchange is Jesus brings a good Jewish girl out of the crowd and says, hey rich young ruler I see that you single. I want to marry you off right now. I mean think about that. That would effect his life wouldn't it? Major-ly. That would totally change his living arrangements. It would change his social life. It would cost him time and effort and money, right? It'd be big. But had he really signed on with Christ that morning. Think through the story. You know how it goes. We've been in it for three weeks now. It would have cost him everything. Right? Sell all of your possessions and give them away and come and follow me. Rich young ruler would have left with none of his possessions. He would have had to change his job. Can't go do what ever it is that you entrepreneur - earned all this money - he can't do that now. Now you're going to have to daily follow me like these fishermen that had to leave their nets. Oh, and your position in the synagogue as a ruler there - that's not going to work. Can't do that any more. Your position in the community - that's going to change. I mean at least if he got married that he could have kept his job, right? I mean he would've had to share his money, but he wouldn't have to lose all his money. You see the potential relationship that almost took place in Matthew 19 would have had a greater more severe impact on this guys life than any other thing that might have happened there. This was huge.

Now I know there is a lot to the analogy of marriage. That's why it's employed so many times in the New Testament and in the old to relate our understanding of what it is to relate to God as we relate to our earthly spouse. Because we understand so many similarities like the two sides to it all. And we understand there's a side of attraction. This is what I want. This is the girl I want to be with. And then there's the side of responsibility. Well, yeah, there's an obligation.

There's an allegiance you have to have to this one person. There's abandonment; a forsaking of all others. I mean that's the talk you have with teenager when he comes home and says I found the girl I want to marry. Right? Well that's great attraction, check, you've got that part. But let's think through this. What about all those girls that email you all the time son? Are you really ready to say no to all of that? I mean think about it. You're like black book; it's gone. And now you've got to worry about her and all the little implications that may come with it. That you're going to have to feed and change. That's a lot to process. Son, are you ready for that? You see when it comes to a marital covenant, we're quick to point out not only the privileges and the benefits, but also the responsibilities. It's funny how when people come to Christ though. When they raise their hand and say I want to be on God's team, we don't seem to get into any of that. I'm so glad if Jesus is our model that he has provided for us a well-rounded and very balanced approach to all of this. Because he often stopped people and said, listen do you even know what you're talking about?

I understand last week, please know that - you may think, well he's lost his mind. Last week you said this was all free. You talked about grace last week. Now you're talking about some kind of costly - this is costing me my life. I thought it was free, why is it costing me my life. Because it's the same way it is in marriage. There is a wonderful exchange of my life for Christ's when I come to him in faith, but with that as Romans 6 says comes also the fact that he now is my life. That if I've died with him and received the benefits of his death I also have to walk now in newness of life. He now is my King. That's the transaction. From the beginning of the gospel in the New Testament all the way to the end. We don't like to talk about that because it often brings the sobriety to the whole commitment of knowing what it is to be related to Jesus Christ. To receive eternal life. There's no contradictions here. Last week we hit it as hard as we could hit it. If you want to be saved; if you want eternal life you have to trust in Christ alone. You cannot earn it by your righteousness. But if you want to get into that kind of covenant relationship where you exchange your resume for his then he gets your life. That's how it works. And Jesus made that crystal clear did he not with the rich young ruler. Take a look at it with me again. Matthew 19. He asked the question. You know how this all started. He says it there in verse 16. "Man comes up to Christ and says teacher what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus got a lot of ground work to do. Now he's a synagogue leader, he's a Sabbath school graduate so he makes him recall with precision with the use of his words that only God is good. We spent a week just contemplating that. If God is the starting point of the gospel, we've got to make sure we're talking about the right God. Then he gets into the law. He says you want to talk about a good thing, I'm not talking about a good thing I'm talking about all the good things. You want to be right before a holy God you've got to keep all the rules. The problem is you can't, but here's the real problem of the rich young ruler. Jesus is just trying to get this guy to admit that he doesn't keep the rules and the guy just won't admit it. Which by the way begins to introduce the theme of the morning and that is whose opinion about yourself are you going to believe. Are you going to defer to Christ and his opinion about you or are you going to continue to use yourself as your own reference point? Are you going to be in charge of your view of yourself or are you going to let Christ be in charge of your view of yourself. Are you going to decide to trust in yourself or are you going to do what I say and Jesus is saying to him and throughout the New Testament, hey, you've got to trust in me. I mean this is just an introduction of the whole theme. Then he brings it home. Take a look at it. Verse 20. After he says, listen I've kept all of these what do I still lack? Verse 21. Jesus says, if you want to be complete. He

says then go sell all your possessions and give to the poor, then you'll have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me. And when the young man heard this, verse 22, says he went away sad because he had great wealth. Now that's an interesting exchange there. But Jesus now gives commentary to it, verse 23, Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." What does that have to do with anything? Well, he had just confronted this guy not only about believing and admitting the things that Jesus says you should believe and admit, but he takes it to the nth degree. I want you to do something with the stuff you love the most and I want a show that you are going to be loyal to me above your stuff. In other words I want you to prove that God is going to be God for you. Give it all up, and the guy said, no. And Jesus said, you know it's hard for a guy who loves all of his stuff and usually when we have more of it we love it even more. We've got more attachments the more we have. He says it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Really hard. I tell you again, and then he uses an old colloquial phrase for impossibility. He says, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And that spells impossible. I know you've heard Sunday school stories about the camel going through the key-hole gate. He's got to get down on his knees and unpack him and that is not the picture here. That is a late interpretation of this passage. It has nothing to do with the original context. The Talmud, the Jewish commentary on theology and doctrine used to use a similar phrase and because it had its roots in Persia the phrase for impossibility, the colloquial phrase was it is hard for an elephant to go through the eye of a needle. They're just borrowing the Talmud phrase except there are no elephants in Palestine so he's using the largest animal they have which is the camel. Hard for a camel to go through the eye of that needle that you guys use to patch your clothes at home and that spells, impossible. And if that's not clear, the disciples are marveling at this whole thing saying, wow, it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. A guy like that, a synagogue leader, a successful guy, a guy that seems blessed of God, he says who can be saved. Greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible," You can't do it. "But {here's the good news} with God all things are possible."

Let's try and understand this passage. First from the 30,000 foot view. What is Jesus doing here with this guy? Getting this guy to the cross roads of, are you going to do what Jesus says, or are you going to do what you want? What are you going to do? What's that all about? Why are you going straight to the thing that he loves the most and asking him to give it all up now? Can't we just kind of ease into this? See that's the thing about Christ. When it comes to people wanting to get into a relationship with him and get the benefits and goodies of being a follower of Christ you always want them to stop and, number one on your outline.

1. Count the Cost.

He's always asking for that. Think about it. Count the cost. Are you sure you want to do this? You want eternal life, but do you really know what you're getting into here because not only do you have to agree with what I'm saying which started with you should think through the rules and realize you don't measure up. That's what's implied. He's not even willing to do that. Now he takes it to the extreme. He says, how about this, are you will to do what I tell you to do right now, and that is take all the stuff you love and give it away and follow me. And the answer was no. And Jesus turns around and he doesn't say, man it's too bad he can't be a super Christian

like all you guys. He said it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, no, it's impossible for him to do that. You've got to count the cost. Just like Jesus was always trying to make people do. He wanted them to see that if you are going to have the benefits of Christ this is a full life exchange. His life for mine and my life for his. And is there any contradiction from last week? None at all. You do not earn your salvation. You cannot do anything that is good enough to merit the favor of God. This is simply the contractual or covenant relationship I'm stepping into. He is mine and I, as the old hymn says, am his. He becomes God, I become follower. He is King, I am subject. He is teacher, I am student. And that's the picture in the scripture. Matter fact that's the number one word in the New Testament for a person that has eternal life. It's the word disciple. Disciple means a learner. He's the teacher. You listen to him. He grades the tests. He sets the agenda. He's in charge. You really have to see it that way? Is it a whole life exchange? Yeah.

Turn to Matthew 13. When Jesus talked about having a piece of the kingdom of God, if you will. The kingdom of heaven; having a place in it. He describes it. How do you acquire that? Verse 44 and in this passage you can see the attraction and the responsibility. The abandon, the allegiance, look at it, verse 44. "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field and when a man found it" he discovers it, he gets it. This is not just a rabbi who's going through town teaching people how to live well. This is it. This is the guy. This is redemption. This is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. When you find it; when you realize the whole implication of this, he says "with joy then he went and {key phrase} and sold all he had then he bought the field." I want that and to get that I give up all that I am to get all that that is. That's the picture of the kingdom here - a full life exchange. I want all the benefits of Christ. Great. Then he has my life. I give it all to him. Next illustration; verse 45. Again, it's, the kingdom of heaven, it's like a "merchant looking for fine pearls when he found one of great value {This is it. None better. This is the premier pearl.} he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." Do you see the picture here of attraction and of allegiance and abandonment - forsaking all others. This is marriage and it's not all that unusual. It's the thing that you would expect to hear at a marriage proposal. Right? I mean you don't hear this, hey I'm not really going to abandon all others. I mean at the marriage you want to hear that forsaking all others until death do us part. Now that doesn't mean every marriage is going to be perfect, but it better start that way or no one's going to accept the proposal, right? You don't say to your would be wife, hey, I want to marry you. I'm going to forsake most of my girl friends, but I've got two or three I've just really got to spend time with. And you know, Saturday is kind of the date night for her so I can't do Saturday's with you. Oh, and I usually go on walks on the beach with the other one on Monday's so, Monday night's out. But I want to be your husband. Please? See how this works? The answer is no. Sorry. That's not how it works. It is a full exchange. You sell all you have to get this pearl of great price. You give away all that you have and you come and follow me Jesus says. You're willing to say, I'm ready to be all in. I mean if you want to put it in a phrase that it. I'm all in. It's not partial. It's not selling half of what I have. This is a mind set of I'm going to have his resume for my life and my life becomes his.

Luke 14. You cannot talk about counting the cost without looking at where the phrase comes from in scripture. The phrase comes from this. Luke 14:28. Please look at this passage with me. Now I know we're jumping into the middle of this. You can get a little bit of the context in verse 25. Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. See whenever you see this being really popular a bell rings and Jesus says well wait a minute they must not quite understand this. So he

turns to the crowd and he's got some things to say. Now we'll get to verses 26 and 27 in a minute, but let's go to verse 28. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower, will he not first {here's where we get the phrase underline it} estimate the cost. Won't you count the cost. Won't you figure out how much it's going to cost to see if he has enough money to complete it. You're going to start a building project you should figure out whether you can finish it. That would be good because if you lay a foundation, verse 29, and you're not able to finish it everybody looks at you and they laugh. Look at that, the guy didn't finish - what was he? why would he even start that if he can't finish it? Remember Jesus told the parable of the seed and the sower and the man went out to sow well one of the soils you might remember embraces the word with joy, but the worries of this life and the desire for riches choke it out and it's no longer fruitful. Bails out. The picture of that soil is, oh, I love this. I'm all into it. I want Jesus and then it's like, but I also want all this other stuff and this is, I can't really say no to that. I mean can I just add Christ to my life and eventually Christ says no I'm not into that and he walks away and everybody goes, well what's this. You're into religion last year and now you're not this year. Come on, you're a joke. They begin to ridicule people like that. Or better than that, we didn't finish the statement, verse 30. This fella began to build and wasn't able to finish. He must not have known what he was getting into. Verse 31. This one's even better. Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. I can ward this off. I don't have to bow the knee to Christ. This is the picture here right? Will he not first sit down and consider. There's our theme - counting the cost. Whether he is able with 10,000 men to oppose the one coming against him with 20,000. Now here's the picture of the rich young ruler. I know how to take care of money. I know what to do with my money. I got here. I'm a smart entrepreneur and Christ says no. I've got some advise for you. Here's where you're at in your life. Sell all you've got and give it away. Now wait a minute. I think I know better than you. Now wait a minute - hum - now you're the Lord - uh you're the king - you're God in human form, but I don't know. You start doing this - you count the cost. Can I really know better about my life than he does. Estimate, consider whether he is able with 10,000 men - my knowledge, my intuition, my thought, my smart, my autonomy - to oppose the one coming against him with 20,000 men. Now if you're in a battle and you've got 10,000 and the guy and his army encroaching into your land has got 20,000 those aren't good odds. Cause if you've got that kind of scenario like the rich young ruler, you've got the king of kings, lord of lords, the creator of all things who gave you all that stuff and then you've got you, the guy who thinks he figures out everything right. If you're not able, verse 32, if you're smart enough to figure out, I'm not able. I can't really resist this, then he will send a delegation while the other is still far off, far away, and you will ask for terms of peace. Now think about that. If you have land and property and you cannot defend it with your resources than you do and you say, hey, can't we just get along. Let's just be at peace here. Is that how it works? And then he takes his army and goes away. Is that how it works? Is that what Saddam Hussein did when he came into Kuwait. And Kuwait goes, well we've got sling shots and sticks. I'm sorry we can't fight against you Mr. Hussein, so Mr. Hussein just went away. Right? No. He was an occupying force. Now if I own land in Kuwait. This is taking you back away, but if I own land in Kuwait. I'm a Kuwaitee oil farmer - these are my rigs. Take a look at my oil. This is it. Now, all of a sudden I can't defend myself. Here comes Saddam Hussein's army. What happens to my oil rigs? Well, there no longer mine. I mean I may still be the one responsible to take care of them, but I'm no longer the owner I'm just a steward. Are you getting the Biblical picture in words here? He comes and takes over. I've asked for peace. No, don't kill me. Let's just be at peace with one another. Great. If I'm going

to be at peace with you and I've got the bigger army. I'm in charge. You see that? You've got to estimate the cost. You ready to let someone else be in charge of your life? This is not works righteousness. This is the part and parcel, the natural effect of being in a covenant relationship with Christ. That's just how it works. And you can not be the Lord of your life. You want all of his life credited to your account, then your life becomes his and he wins. And if he says by the way to anything in your life, hey, I want you to change the way you relate to that, I want you to get rid of that, I want you to stop doing that, I want you to go over here with that, then you go OK. Hey, I've got 20 oil rigs here. I want you to take half of them tear them down, pave it and make it a parking lot. If Saddam Hussein says that to my as a Kuwaiti oil farmer I've got no choice. What do I say. Uh, I don't really want to do that. You don't say that because he is the occupying force. He's the boss. You do it. Jesus the rich young ruler to do something insane. Sell all your assets and give it away. What are you talking about? Quit my job and follow you, are you serious? Yeah, I'm serious. Pave it over and let's go. And he said no, which means what? I'll be in charge of my life. Thank you very much. And Jesus didn't say, hey, what a fantastic Christian, super pro, level 3, you gave up. Well see you in heaven. That's not what he said. It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Keep reading. If you read, verse 32, a delegation and ask for terms of peace you surrender and verse 33 ties it all together in the same way any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Now, does God take it all away. Well, he might. That's what he asked the rich young to do. Take all your assets and your independent, autonomous, governance of your stuff and your handing over the reins to me. And in that case I want you to give it all away. Sometimes he doesn't, sometimes like the Kuwaiti oil farmer, hey, keep on drilling. You'll be the steward, and in your heart you'll have to surrender. Verse 33, "in the same way any of you that does give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." Joshua 24, don't need to turn there, but please jot it down, verses 14 and 15. It's a great picture of this. Joshua gets up and he exhorts the people. The handoff had taken place. Moses is gone. Joshua is there. He says, throw away the gods of your forefathers. Throw them away. Serve the Lord. "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you then choose for yourself this day who you will serve." Is that a great line. That plastered on a little yard flag at your house. "But as for me and my house {remember that} we will serve the Lord." It's really the question of Christianity. If you're going to get the resume of Christ credited into your account. It comes with this covenant understanding. God's going to have to be God. You can't be God. You can't be the king of your own life and get the benefits of Christ. That's not earning it - that's just a covenant relationship. That's how it works.

Lot of people take all these passages and write them off and they say well none of that's true. Because there is a dichotomy in the Christian life. There are Christians and then there are disciples. These are passages for disciple. Did you read the word, he says, you cannot be my disciple. I just want to be a Christian Mike. I don't want to be a disciple. Here's your assignment this afternoon if you believe that dichotomy and you've heard people teach it and you're kind of tempted to believe it or you want to believe it. Because you don't want God to be the God of your life, but you want the ticket to heaven. Look up all those passages, take your concordance, go to the website, the blue-letter Bible, go in your software program and look up all those passages about how to become a Christian and not a disciple. Look them all up and you can report to me next week on that. All those passages about becoming a Christian but not a disciple. Here's what you're going to find. Only 3 references to the word Christian. You know that right. Sunday school grads know that. That's not a word that was used. That was a word of

derision, oh there goes a little Christ over there. Not until Antioch did they finally in the book of Acts say well that's not a bad term. Three times in the New Testament Christian is used. The word for Christian if by that we mean someone who has eternal life is the word disciple. That is the predominant description of someone who has eternal life. They are people that follow Christ. But the false dichotomy is, now I know this sounds funny, this is only going to be believable in church, but there are some people that teach this. You can be a follower of Christ, but not follow Christ. You like that one? I can be a follower of Christ, but I don't have to follow Christ. I don't know what kind of double talk that is, but you're not going to find it here. This doesn't teach that. This says you cannot be his disciple, insert word Christian, insert word have eternal life person, whatever you want. You can't be that unless you give up everything you have. Do you see where if you have nothing this is a whole lot easier. Right? That's why Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to get this thing figured out. Hard. Why do you think Christianity flourishes? I know why the sociologists says it flourishes, but among poor people. People that are at the end of their rope. Some people say well their just reaching out for some kind of cosmic crutch they've got to lean on. No, you know why? Because the rich ,erudite, educated, group who's all prosperous they don't like these words. And therefore, they don't embrace the Christ of scripture. They want to sprinkle a little Christianity on their success and go about their business as the God of their own life. But you've got to make this decision. Who's going to be the God of your life. You've got to choose and no choice by the way is a choice. Right? No choice means I'm choosing the status quo, and you were born being the king of your own life. Did you know that? I don't know that seems all encompassing. That's what it's all about. That's why he died for you. 2 Corinthians 5:15. Have I quoted that like a hundred times from this platform? "He died for us that those of us who live should no longer live for ourselves, but we should live for him who died for our sin and rose again." The point was not just to give us a resume and say go about your way now. It was for him to collect a people that would be his. He would be the king and we would be his subjects. He died for us that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but should live for him who died for them and rose again. Great bumper sticker. I haven't seen this in the Christian bookstores, but it's Luke 6:46 when it comes to this issue, here it comes, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I say?" You heard that one? "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, Jesus said and you don't do what I say. In other words, I'm not your Lord and if I'm not your Lord why are you even calling me that. Many will say to me on that day, Lord Lord did we not do this that and the other and Jesus said depart from me I never knew you you who practice lawlessness. You don't do what I say. Or to put it another way in Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who's in heaven." I thought we didn't earn our salvation? We're not earning our salvation. We're just recognizing that stepping into a relationship where we get the benefits of Christ we are stepping into a covenant relationship where God is going to God for us, and you can't be God any more. You are in Luke 14 surrendering to the leadership of Christ. That's not earning anything. That's walking an aisle and saying I do and for some reason our standards about marriage seem to be higher than our standards as it relates to Christianity. It's not that we think too much of the marital covenant, but that we think too little of the covenant of becoming saved, becoming a Christian. Count the cost.

OK, well, wow it's a whole life thing. Well the thing that's going to make it hard for your to become a Christian here it comes, number two on the outline. It's your idols and we better identify what those are.

2. Identify Your Idols

What are they for you? For the rich young ruler what was it? His money, and Jesus said it often you can't serve both God and mammon, God and money. Remember those passages? Matthew 6. You can't serve both so you've got to make a decision. Who's going to be the God of your life? You're stuff or you're God. Now you want the benefits of Christ, God's got to be your God.

Now think this through for a second. What are your idols? Let's go back to Matthew 19. Just to give you two categories. Let's create two categories and maybe we can identify the idols that may be standing between you and eternal life. Verse 29. We'll get to this in earnest in 2 weeks, but in verse 29 Jesus responds to Peter who left his house and his devotion to his family and his fields. Jesus starts to encourage him saying you're going to receive a hundred times as much and you'll inherit eternal life, but look at the first and the last one on the list. Houses and fields in between that are all these relationships brothers or sisters, father or mother or children. But look at the first and the last one, houses and fields. Those are there clearly in the context because that was the problem with the rich young ruler. He wasn't able to relinquish his stuff, and maybe stuff for you is an idol. Maybe you're saying if Jesus said to you right now, and I know you're praying he doesn't come out from a back room right now and say it, but let's just think about it. If he said to you I want all your stuff and I want you to do this with all your stuff. You want a definition of an idol, here it comes. Here it comes straight out of Matthew 19. An idol is anything you won't give up for God. How's that? That help? And it will keep you from eternal life. Because you've got to let God be God not your idols. Who's going to call the shots for you? What are you ultimately and supremely loyal to? Is it God or is it your idols? Or to put it to your teenage son, what are you going to be loyal to your wife or your girl friends? You've got to make a decision. You can't have both. You can't serve both God and stuff. You've got to make a decision. Identify your idols. Maybe it's stuff. Luke 9:57-62. Great passage that really includes both categories, but a lot of really has to do with stuff. The first guy can't get over the fact that he's going to be a traveling disciple and Jesus says I know "foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but I've got no place to lay my head." If you're not up for that then you don't even understand what you're getting into. Are you ready to relinquish your stuff for the kingdom? If I can't be the God of your stuff, if your stuff is your God, I'm not signing up for this life exchange.

What's the other thing? You still in Matthew 19. Look at verse 29. We saw houses and fields at the beginning and end of the list, but in the middle we see all these relationships; brothers, sisters, father or mother or children. Hmm. You've left those? How do you leave those? Sometimes they have to be physically left. And I'm supposing in the history of the disciples, those 12 guys standing there there were some that could raise their hand to that. Others had their families traveling with them. But guess what there was now a conflict of priorities. Who gets priority here? My wife or my God? My kids or my God? My siblings or my God? I've got to make it clear. Here's the other thing I want to say that is a new flash for some people. Idols aren't just stuff. It's not just things. Idols most often in our lives are people as they were in the New Testament. Often their people. People I love more than I love God. Luke 14 we skipped over these 2 verses, verses 26 & 27, if that page is still warm and you can find it quickly let's

look at that one more time. Before he says estimate the cost, Luke 14: 26 - 27. First let's just get the context. He says large crowds are traveling with Jesus and turning to him and he said, Jesus says, verse 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters and {yes} even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Is that a head spinner? Think about that. Now I know it's so dramatic and in your face most people don't even grapple with this verse any more. But let's grapple with it for a second. You want me to hate all the relationships in my life? Yeah, that's what he's asking you to do. If you're not willing to hate those people, you're not willing or able to be your disciple. He's not going to get in the relationship if you're not willing to that. Wow? I thought I'm supposed to love my parents? Be good for me to love my wife. That's what Ephesians 5 says, right? I don't get it. What is this about? Now, kids is in the list to, and I think kids often is best example of this. There are things our kids want and because of my allegiance to Christ, if Christ is my king and God is my God, I look at my kids and I say I know you really want that, but you can't have it because my loyalty is to God and that would conflict in some way to my allegiance to Christ. So can't give you what you want. And you know what the kid says in his immaturity. What do you hate us? You hate me don't you? Right? And to have that feeling. The point is I've got to concede that feeling in the life of my kid. I'm sorry you feel that way, but I have a higher priority than you. And your wife may not say, but she may think it. Right? Peter's wife that traveled with them. Think about what Paul said Cepheus (Gr?) Peter was traveling with his family. Can you imagine being Peter's wife? Traveling preacher man. That's a rough life, and at times I bet his wife sat there and thought, man, you're just not loving me like you could. I mean all this other people have houses, they settle down, they have a normal life, and you, you're everywhere, and now they're persecuting us and we have to run from place to place at night. Why are you doing this to me? What do you hate me? The Bible says if you're not willing to have that reality in your relationships you can't be a disciple of Christ. Or to put it in a way that maybe without the in your face drama of Luke 14 let's just put it in words that maybe we can digest a little bit more easily.

How about Matthew 10. Take a look at this one. What are your idols? Are they things? You might have some things that rival for the position that only God should have in our lives. Maybe it's that thing - you think I wouldn't give up that stuff if God asked me for it. Well, then you've got a big problem. You've got a barrier between you and eternal life. Often it's people though. Look at verse 37. Matthew 10:37. How about this. Is this clear? Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me. Is that clear? You're not worthy of me. What? Yeah. It's that simple I have to be the supreme love in your life because I'm God. I've got to be the king here. You want to get my benefits. My life in exchange for yours; then your life is mine. Anyone who loves his son or daughter. I know this doesn't fly in Orange County. Right? We've got to talk our way out of this verse somehow, but we can't. It's so clear. Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. You should never ask a person to do that. Genesis 22 the prototypical person of faith. When he starts to illustrate a life of faith he takes Abraham and says Abraham, great you've got a son there you love. You're only son. I want him. Burn him on an altar for me. What? Yeah. Remember that? Genesis 22. Some are looking like they haven't heard that story. You know that story, right? Abraham has got to take his son Isaac and put him on an altar. You remember how that ended? See you know the ending so it's not as dramatic for you. But let's picture if you didn't know the ending. You're taking you kid and you're pulling a knife out of a sheath and you're holding it over you head. You've bound him to

a rock alter, and you're ready to kill him and burn him. Genesis 22:12. The angel of the Lord says "do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God." That phrase by the way, study it sometime. That means God is God for you. He is the ultimate authority because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son, the son that you love. Think about that. You know what we have to do with everything that is a potential idol in our life. We have to in our minds eye, like the rich young ruler was asked to do, put it on the alter. What do you love? You love your house? You love your family? You love your kids? You love your grand-kids? You love your lifestyle? You love the city you live in? You love living in America? You love your conveniences, your bank account? I don't know what it is, but everyone of those needs to be laid on an alter. You want eternal life - you're saying God you're going to be God for me, and any of these things you ask for including my family I'm going to give it to you. Because I want the benefits of your life being credited to me, therefore, my life is yours. I surrender to leadership that you have in my life. That's the covenant transaction of redemption. It starts with that. I'm trusting in Christ for eternal life. I now become his subject. God does that to us.

I was grappling with the gospel and as soon as I said, as best as I could in my mind by the grace of God, God you're my God. Been in church my whole life, but now I get it. God you are my God. I mean it was only a matter of time until he took the two things I loved most. One was my ultimate career path. This is what I want to do with my life. I was entrenched in this. It was the thing that universities were giving me scholarships to do. And the other one was my girlfriend - madly in love with her, high school sweet hearts. These 2 things - God said put them on the alter. It was tuff. God wanted to make sure he was the God in my life, and I put them there. And one he said thank you very much and it went up in smoke. Hey that really cool job you wanted - you're going to be a pastor. Ha. So I took up the cross of the pastor. The other one I laid on the alter and much like Abraham I was ready to walk. God if this is going to be a rival idol in my life - you got it. And just like Isaac, that relationship God have back to me, and she became my wife 21 years now. Twenty-six years in a relationship together. You can just hear God says you can keep it, but don't every forget, I'm in charge. You love me more than her. I just want to call curses down on my own head if I love her more than I love God. May God curse me, right? If I love my kids more than God. If I'm not willing to have my kids say, Dad, you hate me. OK, I'm ready for that because of my allegiance to Christ that's the way it is. I've got to let the chips fall.

Identify your idols and put them on the alter, and when you do that's called an act of repentance by the way. When you take idols and lay them on the alter and you're willing to walk away and see what God does with those that's the turning we talk about in this New Testament word we all repentance - metanoia (Gk?) - turning from our idols. That's the picture. One last passage on this point. 1 Thess 1. Don't miss this passage. It's so important. Let's grab this verse. Look at this in verse 4 Paul writes to the Thessalonians. He says, "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you." How would you know that Paul? How do you know we're real Christians? Well verse 5 "because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction." Isn't that what we talked about last week? Holy Spirit has to convict me of my sin. "You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers

in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message {verse 8} rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia -- your faith in God has become known everywhere. {The reality of your faith is clear.} Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, {verse 9} for they themselves {all these people watching you} they report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to service the living and true God, and to wait for his son {verse 10} from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath." Do you want to be rescued from the coming wrath? That's called eternal life - salvation. We put our faith in Christ and as we do that we are turning from all the idols in our lives to serve the living and true God. That's why repentance and faith go together all the time in the scripture. Because that's what it feels like turning and trusting - turning and trusting. I trust him for eternal life and trust him with my life and if he says hey I want to change that, redirect, I want that out, I want this in, we say yes sir. That's what I'm going to do. You're the king. What a great passage that is.

Well that sounds really hard. I was warned about this church. I don't know. That's that harsh gospel they always talk about. You know I get more criticisms about that than anything else. Pastor Mike's got a really harsh gospel. It's really hard and the bar is like really high. I know you've heard that criticism, some of you have. I hear it all the time. Stay away from that Compass Bible Church. They have a high bar gospel. Hey, the gospel that I preach, isn't hard it's impossible. OK? They gospel that I preach, if it's the gospel of the New Testament is not hard. It is impossible. That's what Jesus said, back to Matthew 19. He looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible." There's no way a man can say no to his idols and trust in Christ. He can't do that, but here's the gospel, the good news of the gospel, verse 26, "but with God all things are possible." Could that rich man really have turned from idols and trusted in Christ that day? Absolutely, he could have repented and put his faith in Christ. He just couldn't have done it on his own. He would've needed God's help for that. So, if I want to become a Christian I better start with that understanding of things. I can't do this. I can't let God be God in my life. I'm used to me being God and my loyalties being to all my idols. I can't let God be God. I can't do that. I understand you can't do that. That's why number 3 on the outline, you need to ask God for the impossible.

3. Ask God for the Impossible

That's what you're asking for. For him to do a work in your heart and if you want a passage to put next to that to study sometime. Ephesians 2:1-10. I feel like I quote that all the time. You know how that starts? "You were dead in your transgression and sins." Right? I mean you were all about the things that you did and you used to walk in the ways of the world. You did all that stuff. You were dead in that pattern of life. Think about it. Picture a dead corpse hanging onto an idol. Right? Picture that, and now go to that guy and say, stop hugging that idol. You know what the dead guy says? Nothing. He's dead. He can't stop. That's the position that he's in. He can't change it. That's Ephesians 2. We were dead in our transgressions and sins, but here's the good news in the passage. Another contrastive conjunctive, that means everything in the Bible, but God being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us he made us alive together with Christ. That's what he did, and you want to speak about grace. Here it is. You know 8 and 9, right? "By grace you are saved through faith, not of yourselves. It is a gift of God not of works so that you can't boast about it." Then he says in verse 10, "but he's created

you as this new creation – this workmanship in Christ. And he's prepared for you these good works that you would walk in those good works." It's all about grace. This message does not negate last week's message. This message just tells us the covenant responsibility of stepping into a relationship with trust in Christ. God's got to be God to put it simply. Ask God for the impossible. You cannot love God, you cannot serve God, you cannot make him the king of your life - it's impossible. You have to trust God to do that. And by the way just to speak to my critics for a second. You want to make the gospel easier? Go ahead. Galatians Chapter 1 tells me what I'm supposed to say to that because that's not the gospel at all if you tweak it. Can you see the danger in trying to make the gospel simpler so dead men can do it verses keeping it right where it's at and that is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and only God can do that. And it's amazing with my high bar gospel that everyone complains about that really I think is nothing more than the Biblical gospel, how many people are doing the impossible at Compass Bible Church? Right? Think about it. Now I'll show you - I can present you all the stats later, but do you know that more people are coming to Christ, and by that I mean willing to step in the blowup pool and get baptized and say I'm now a follower of Christ. I'm not just counting raised hands and closed eyes in a service at ten times the national average. I'm talking per capita rates here. In other words there are more people coming to Christ, ten times as many as the average church that's lowered the bar. I don't understand. Because if you preach the Biblical gospel and you rely on God to get that done and you say this is what God requires and it's all in. You love him with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, if he asks for anything you'll give it to him, that's a gospel by the way God is doing great things with. Not just in our church, but in a lot of churches that are gutsy enough to say I'm not going to change the message. I'm not going to change the message that Christ needs to be our supreme and ultimate love.

Speaking of fear that we that we ought to have about messing with this message. Just one more on this. How about Revelations 2. If you know the book of Revelations chapter 2 and 3 are 7 postcards to churches in Asia Minor. We call them postcards, because there very short letters. And they begin with something we usually gloss over, "To the angel of the church at..." Now a lot of people will scratch their heads on that, but angel, angleous (Gr?) in Greek is the word messenger and it can refer to in scripture human beings who bring a message and angels who come from heaven and bring a message. Now a church usually has a primary preacher like Timothy who is the senior pastor, if you will, and Titus was the senior pastor if you will at Crete. Now there are senior messengers at all these churches and that's how these all start. Look at it in verse number 1. Revelations 2:1. To the angleous (Gr?), to the messenger of the church of Ephesus write this and if you are a Greek student and you've got your Greek New Testament glance through this at the pronouns and tell me if their singular or plural. You'll find throughout, interestingly enough, they are singular pronouns, and he says things like this. Well first he starts with some corporate things that they are doing. I know your deeds, your hard work, he says your perseverance, verse 2. I know you cannot tolerate wicked men. You've tested those who've claimed to be apostles and they're not. You found them to be false. You've persevered, you've endured hardships for my name, you haven't grown weary. Yet I have this against you. You have forsaken. Now that the word it a cognate word related to the word forgiveness in Greek. Like, hey, forget it, done, don't worry about it. Here's what they were forgetting about and not worrying about. Here the message had shifted in the church. They'd made it more tolerable. It had been taken down a notch of two. You have forsaken, forgotten about, not put emphasis on,

here it comes, your protos (Gr?), your ultimate supreme love. It's translated in the NIV, first love, but not first in terms of time, right? Not some kind of, well that's the first one you ever loved. No. First in terms of priority. The ultimate love; you're not teaching that any more. It's not there. You're not proclaiming that. Remember the height from which you've fallen church, preachers. Repent, interestingly enough, of your lack of supreme love for Christ and do the things you did at first. If you don't repent, now here's a passage and a phrase to underline, I will come to you and remove your lamp-stand. You know what a lamp-stand is? Chapter 1 defines them for us relative to the Book of Revelation. What's a lamp-stand? It's a church. He'll take your church away. You will not be able - your church will atrophy. It will be lost. I'll leave it. It will become a country club or whatever, but I'm not going to be a part of that. If you do not repent I will come to you and I will remove your lamp-stand from its place. Hey, now this is an interesting phrase after saying that. Hey, in the meantime, I mean you're certainly condemning things that I condemn, right? You have this in your favor. You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. I mean I guess you're still there telling those, you know, those people are wrong and I guess that's good, but he who has an ear, verse 7, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. This is a message to all the churches. To him who overcomes, and that's always defined in these postcards by what we just read and the main message in this postcard to the church of Ephesus - don't forsake that protos (Gr?) love - that ultimate supreme love that you teach. Don't forsake it. You've got to proclaim that message. It's got to be about that. Christ's ultimate position of leadership and love in our lives. If you overcome to get that I will give you the right to be a super duper Christian, is that what it says? I will give you the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Which by the way if you read the end of the book you don't live in the kingdom unless you eat from the tree in the garden the tree of life in the paradise of God. We don't preach the message. You want to call it a high bar gospel - whatever you want to call it - of an ultimate love for God, we're not preaching the gospel and we're not even going to go to heaven. If we don't understand this message. It's basic and simple. You do not earn your salvation. You trust in Christ for it, but when you trust in Christ for that you forsake your idols and you cling to the living God. You serve him. And you say to him, and I know this phrase is overused sometimes by me, but forgive me let me say it again. It is to say to God, anything, anyplace, any time. You know what I mean by that. Lot of people say I can be a follower of Christ, but not follow Christ. No you really can't. To be a follower of Christ is to understand the covenant relationship that you have with the savior and that is that you say to him, like the rich young ruler refused to say and forfeited eternal life - he was not able to have it because he wasn't willing to say to him, anything. You want my money fine. Anyplace. You want me to leave great. Any time. A lot of people say anything, but that. Right. They say anywhere, but not there. They anytime, but not right now. A lot of people doing that. Ask God for the impossible.

There was a guy that did that one day who didn't know he needed to. He was a church kid. Matter of fact, his dad was the pastor. Worse than that, his grandfather was a pastor. He was a third generation pastor and as a kid he was raised in the church, and he loved to read Christian theology. By the time he was in high school he had read all the classics. I mean this guy was well versed. He could pick out all heresy from a mile away. Smart, sharp, articulate, read his Bible every day. He used to go around to the parishioners of his dad and grandpa's church and straighten them out on what to think and what to believe, even on what to do. Story is told of him going into bars and telling these guys in saloons, he wasn't even old enough to be in there,

telling them you shouldn't be in here you're a disgrace to the church. This guy was like zealous. The problem was, he wasn't a Christian. Problem was he had a lot of that going on in his life. He was zealous for a cause, but Christ wasn't the king of his heart. He knew a ton of theology, but he wasn't a Christian, and he admits it. Everything changed one morning when he was headed to church. It was in Europe and it was cold and it was snowing, and he set off that morning for church and a blizzard set in, and the snow got so bad he couldn't make it any further. He thought I'm not going to even make it to church this morning. So he knew there was a church on the way to his church not far from where he was, so he thought if I can just get to that, I'll duck into that church and I guess I'll just hang out until the snow breaks, or if it doesn't I'll just go to church there. So he steps into this little church and because the blizzard was so bad most of the people in that church didn't show up. There were 22 people that showed up for that church service. And guess who couldn't make it because of the blizzard - the pastor. Imagine? You're showing up at basically an enlarged small group and the pastor's not even there. Nobody is prepped. So they kind of tug on the shoulder of some deacon as this kid sits in the back and says alright I guess I'm staying here for church today. And the layman gets up. Can you imagine well I guess the pastor's not here, so I'll, so take your Bibles and turn to this passage. And the guy gets up, later this guy I'm talking about wrote in his journal that was one of the most awkward and simpleton sermons he'd ever heard. I mean the guy wasn't prepped. He just started reading passages and commenting on it as best he could. It was interesting. In that service because of the simple passages that were quoted and the simple faith of the guy that was up there doing it, who's God was God and who's king was Christ. Something took place in that kid's heart. Well-read church goer, young hopeful guy. Everybody thought he was a great Christian, but he really wasn't. He later wrote in his journal, "my spirit that morning saw it's chains broken to pieces. I felt that I was emancipated in my soul and became an heir of heaven that morning. A forgiven one. I was plucked out from the miry clay out of the horrible pit and my feet were finally set on a rock. Between half past ten when I entered that church and half past twelve when I was back home again, what an incredible change had taken place in my heart." That young church goer who within a couple of short years of that snowy morning became a pastor himself. His name - Charles Hadden Spurgeon - ever heard of him? I guarantee it, as I've said for the last two Sundays, you would never have heard of him were it not for that morning sitting in church and saying what about me? The idols of my heart were so convoluted in religion he couldn't even see them. Am I willing to set those aside and let God be God and trust him for who he is with all of my heart. Never would have heard of him. He'd of been some third generation pastor. Who knows what his life would've turned out to be. God took a guy like that who was willing to do that self-introspection. Idols eradicated, trust squarely place in Christ. Eternal life was granted that morning and by God's grace his life changed a lot of other lives.

I know this is risky - for me to preach these sermons and word these points as though you're not saved, and I know a lot of you - I don't need this, I'm a Christian. Really? Spurgeon thought he was a Christian too. I just want you to make sure. I grew up in church and thought I was a Christian. Easy to think that, but the idolatry of my life, though it wasn't something that the people in the church could've turned up their nose up at. It was all socially acceptable - it was there and it was real, and it needed to be eradicated. To where I could look at my life and say whatever it is. You want my girlfriend - you've got it. You want my future, my career path - you've got it. You want anything - you've got it, because I want your life credited to my

account, therefore my life becomes your's. He died for us that those that live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again.

God may we like Charles Spurgeon does some self assessment this morning. Maybe it's just one passage that I read, maybe something that came to mind in a way that has never really been processed like it was this morning. I pray that you would use those verses to have hearts in this auditorium, listening on the radio, watching on television, whatever it might be. That they might say to you, God help me see you do the impossible in my heart. God you be by God, Christ by my Lord. I trust you and turn from idols. May that be the reality for some today and may it be like Spurgeon that later people would write in their journal that today was the day of radical change and our hearts were emancipated from the slavery of sin. God please, do the impossible in our hearts today. We uphold the most fundamental truth of all of scripture to love you more than anything else with all of our hearts, soul, strength and mind. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.