



## **Learning to Lead – Part 1**

### **Caring about What Matters Most**

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Good for nothing. I'm sure you've heard the phrase hopefully not directed at you very often. Good for nothing. We'd all like to be good for something, right? Be good for something. And yet there are seasons and days, sometimes weeks, I hope it's not a whole year when we feel like wherever we've been planted that we are good for nothing. Like we're some weakling on a weightlifting team or a tone-deaf person in the symphony or, you know, two left feet. We're a big klutz in the ballet academy. Wherever we're at we may feel like we're good for nothing at a particular time.

But I trust you're here today in a season of life that you're in, in the field that God has planted you in and you feel better than that. Like, somewhat helpful. Like I'm doing something, I'm gainfully employed, I've got honest work. I'm doing what I am supposed to be doing. And things are going relatively well. Even if your sales numbers aren't the highest, even if your designs aren't winning the awards, even if you're not a standout in your career, you think I'm doing all right. And that's good.

But if you're a Christian here this morning, you put your trust in Christ, God has indwelt you with his Spirit, you say, no, I follow Christ. Well, then there is an aspect of your life which really should be the central aspect of your life that in the place where God has planted you both out there and also in your church, where you should be a whole lot more than just somewhat helpful. You ought to be outstanding.

In this particular aspect of your life you're expected to. You should be and we can be. Not without some work, not without some focus. But there's an aspect of our life where we ought to, particularly when we think beyond the walls of the church, let's just start there, where you have an asset. You have a particular investment from God where you are really in the minority, you're the Christian minority I assume in your workplace, and you are to be salt and light in a remarkable way, in an outstanding way. And then within the church I know this because there are a variety of ways that God chooses to invest in each individual Christian for the common good of the assembly of the church, and you ought not just be okay with that. You ought to be a good steward of that investment. You ought to be outstanding in that. And God wants you to be. He stands ready to get you there. And we need to give some attention to that.

And Jesus made a point of this, didn't he, by choosing a team of people that he said, I'm going to use these people to change the world. They're going to affect lives like no one else. And he didn't go and pick like the best people who have transformed the fishing industry. Right? Or people who are doing amazing things in the Roman government. But he picked people who were just the outcast had-been politicians. Right? The zealot and the tax collector, the despised part of Jewish society and just the common young fisherman just trying to make a living. And he said, come and follow me and I'm going to make you into something that is going to change people's lives. So much so that 2,000 years later, on the



other side of the planet, they're going to be reading the things that I had you write. They're going to be reading stories about your life and you are going to be catalytic in changing people's lives around the world.

There is that sense in which even to the average rank-and-file person, you don't have to be an apostle to see that this is something that God does and expects to continue to do. When Paul writes to the Corinthians he says, God chooses just the normal things in life. Actually, he uses just a much more dramatic word, the foolish things in this world. And those are the things that God chooses to go out there and shame the wise. That doesn't sound like a great job description, but in the context it's about where's the debater of the age, where is the big philosopher, where's the big intellectual, where are the people that are supposed to be changing society. Well, here are the people that I choose. I choose these people and the wisdom of God and the things I invest in them. It's not that they're the best in their field. It's not that they're the best in their industry. It's not that they're the most successful or have the biggest bank account.

And I can prove this to you just by imagining down the road your funeral, because the things that will be said when you are they're dead and they are talking about your life, it won't be your sales numbers. It won't be how many, you know, awards you won at work. It won't be your professional accomplishments. I mean, that might be mentioned as a biographical sketch, but what will be tearfully discussed is how you impacted lives. And if you're a Christian, all you'll care about is how do they impact lives for the glory of God. How did I change their lives to make them be better followers of Christ, to put their emphasis and their priorities in the right place?

And God says, I know how this works. He told those same Corinthians through the pen of the Apostle Paul, not only is he choosing you to affect the world outside the walls of the church, but within the church. He goes on to say in Chapter 12, I've manifested my spirit for the common good. I've invested in you and you have unique opportunities within your church to make an outstanding difference in people's lives. And that is something we just need to say, okay, that's where God has to turn me into a leader, even if I'm not on an org chart at the church or in my workplace. I'm affecting people and moving them forward into another level of understanding either about the gospel, about their state before a holy God, or about where they should be in terms of their daily Christian lives. And you should be the effect. You should be the influence. You should be someone, even if you're just like Peter and oftentimes you make mistakes in how you say things, you still are continuing as the aggregate of your life. You're moving people forward. And just like people said I'm sure at Peter's funeral, if there was such a thing, this guy changed my life. And that's what you and I need to say. We got to take that more seriously.

This whole series as we've reached the 20th Chapter of Acts as we're moving through the book. We've come to verse 17 because this is where Paul starts the discussion with the leaders of the church at Ephesus, and he says, hey, I need to tell you some things about my time with you. And all of this, as you'll see, is kind of a locker room discussion about you guys when you go back to Ephesus, as you see on your map there. I provided you with a map, as



we often do, and you'll see that he calls them down to Miletus to have this discussion because he's on his way you remember last time we were together to get back to Jerusalem. So he calls them down there. So they're away from their hometown. But he says, listen, when you guys go back, here are the things that I expect you to be about.

And while it's directed to the "Presbyteros," the elders of the church. Which by the way, is synonymous with "Poimen" and "Episkopos". What is he speaking in tongues? Those are the Greek words for the three categories that are discussed in terms of labels describing the leaders of the church. Poimen is "pastor." Right? Episkopos. Right? The "overseer" and presbyteros this word here, the elders. Those are not separate committees or boards or things like that. And I know everyone thinks that way, but that's not the way it is in Scripture. They're all synonymous terms in the New Testament for leaders in the church. Some think, "Oh good. I hope this series is about them and not about us." Well, that's the whole point. I'm saying everyone in the church is required to be leaders in the community, leaders in their neighborhood, leaders in their work.

And I'm not talking about the org chart. I'm not talking about a community service where you're on some kind of board in your neighborhood. Right? I hope you're not a part of that board, but... (light laughter) Those are things we edit out later. But I'm telling the truth. And who knows? There may be a ministry there somewhere. I kind of doubt it, but... What is that called? Homeowner's Association boards. We're not an interactive church, but no one's a part of that. Are you? Okay. Is there a hand going up? Oh, this is turning into a Saturday night service right here. Okay. It's Sunday morning Mike. Sunday morning. Okay. Org chart leader. Okay, you're called to be a leader.

So we're going to take the paradigm of Paul coming to this town, this coastal town, saying, "Hey, guys, come from the church, you leaders of the church, I'm going to tell you how to lead. And I want to say, okay, here are the principles that he shares. Starting with the beginning of this lecture, this monologue that he gives. And we're going to learn from that and say okay, I am called to lead. I am called to be salt and light out there outside the walls of the church and within the structure and programming of the church. I got a role here and I'm called to lead. Even if you're a brand-new Christian. Right? You know more than some of the brand new, brand new Christians or the people that are attending church and they're not yet Christians and all of us should be leading.

So that's the series. We're going to learn to lead better in the next six weeks in our study of Acts. And today we're going to start with verses 17 through 21 where Paul begins this discussion by some self-autobiographical reflections on how he lived among them. Okay? So let's take a look at this text. I'm going to read it for you from the English Standard Version. You follow along and we'll look at these verses 17 through 21 and see if we can't begin to understand what this looks like, to be good for something. The most important something that God has on your agenda. Your calling, not only to be salt and light out there and lead people to the gospel, to the truth of Christ, but also within the church to be iron sharpening iron, to edify, to as Paul said to the Romans at the end of the book of Romans. Right? I'm confident



that you are competent "to instruct one another." And you're not talking at a pastor's conference there. We all should be doing this.

So let's, with that in mind, without you having any kind of L-shaped amen that, you know, my small group leader needs this. All of us need to take this message and say, okay, what are the principles here? So let's start, verse 17. "Now, from Miletus," that's where he ended up and you see that on your map, "he sent to Ephesus and he called the elders," the presbyteros, "of the church to come to him." Verse 18, "And when they came to him, he said, 'You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public.'"

And again, I'll give you an asterisk there. Okay, maybe that's not your skill on a platform with a microphone. I get it. But look at the next line, "and from house to house." And we're talking about table conversations here. Whatever was profitable, he was sharing that. "Testifying to both Jews and Greeks." It didn't matter that he was a Jew of Jews, a Hebrew of Hebrews from the tribe of Benjamin, ascending into the, you know, the ranks of the Pharisees and headed to the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel. No, I don't care if it's just the common Greek in the marketplace. I was "testifying to both Jews and Greeks everywhere of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." That's a good start. Let's just deal with that chunk and let's figure out what Paul is saying and glean from that some of the basic ingredients of what it's going to take for you and I to get to the next level of saying, you're right, I need to be more of a leader in conversations about things that matter eternally out there and in here.

So let's deal with that and let's start with the first thing he says here, which is kind of hidden in our English translation, sadly, but let's look at the word that he uses. It's translated this way, "serving the Lord," right? He sets this up, Luke does geographically about Miletus and the elders, and he speaks to them. "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day I set foot in Asia." Now, here's the first substantive thing he says about his time there. He says, "You know, I was serving the Lord."

Now unless you got your Bible software out or your Greek New Testament in your lap, you can't see that the word "serving" here translates like the varsity word and not the junior varsity word. Because there are a couple of words in the Greek language that describe the word "service" or "servant." And one is the word that we get the word "deacon" from. You've heard the word deacon. Deacon is a transliteration of the word "Diakonos." Diakonos is the word "to serve." It's also translated into English "to minister." Okay, that's nice. And there's another word. "Doulos." Okay. This is the verbal form of the word doulos. Doulos is the word "slave." We don't like to use that in our culture, but that word's a very important word. And you can see where we've gone from a word that's like, "Yeah, I was serving" to like "I was a slave." And here's the word. I was slaving for the Lord, right? He says, You know, you saw it. You watched how I was serving the Lord, slaving for the Lord. Okay.



That's huge because the way he describes that is what I'd like you and I to model. But it really gets to the identity of how you see yourself both at work and in the church. So let's start with this. You and I need to say, okay, whatever Paul's modeling there and he says, follow me as I follow Christ. You've seen the pattern that you've seen in me in anyone else, you follow that. Okay. So we're going to follow his example. There's the biblical precedent for us doing what we're doing here this morning. What is he doing? He's slaving for the Lord. That's how he does everything that we just read about. It's all stemming from the way he views himself and how he views what he's doing. He's a doulos, a slave. Okay?

So let's jot this down. Number one, you need to "Model the Priority of Pleasing God." And this is put softly, I guess. I can't blame the English Standard Version translators because of "pleasing God." Pleasing God, and if you want to add to that, you can put underneath that "as a slave owned by God." Now, everything in creation, you know this, right? If God is the creator, it's like you creating a model airplane when you're a kid. You can smash it if you want and no one should be able to say anything if you bought it with your own allowance money. It's yours. You're in charge of it.

So all of us should be serving the Lord because as it says in Romans 11, what is it, verse 36? "All things are from him and through him and to him." What is the chief end of man? To glorify God because everything comes from him, we're made by him. Your lungs were designed by him, your brain and the synapse of the brain. He designed all that, your fingernails, your mouth, your eyeballs, all of that designed by God. You, of course, then should be to live for the glory of God, for the good of God, for the honor of God. All things should be FOR God because he sustains you. All things are from him, created. All things are through him, sustains. And all things are to him. I should live for that purpose.

So he's the boss of everyone. And yet we are Christians sitting here today, most of you I trust, and you're saying he's more than just my maker and therefore my master. Right? He's also now your, here's the key phrase, he's your redeemer and therefore he's doubly your master because he bought you. He bought you with a price to use more words to the Corinthians. Now let's camp in Colossae for a while. Go to Colossians with me. I want to show you several things in this book, we'll bounce around a little bit, but let's start in Chapter 1 and look at the way Paul likes to think about our identity. And this is even subtly said here, but if you want to look for ways that the redemption of the Israelites in the Old Testament is constantly echoed in the New Testament, here's one example at the bottom of Chapter 1 of Colossians.

That should help us identify who we are, and that is we're purchased, we're bought, We were enslaved like the Israelites in Egypt. And then we were brought out with the price. We were purchased, actually, if you want to think about it, by the death of the firstborn. We were purchased and now we have a leader and that leader as First Corinthians 10 says, we were baptized into that leader. And that means that God saw us like he saw that leader. And when God wanted to kill the Israelites, because once they got out into the wilderness at Kadesh Barnea they said, "We don't want to go in. I don't care what God said." They didn't believe him. God said, "I'm going to destroy them." And Moses goes, "Don't." And God says, "Okay, for you, I won't." And therefore, the grace of God in continuing to work with the Israelites was





all because of the favor God had with his friend. Moses is called the friend of God twice in the Bible.

So the friend of God, Moses, is now standing in as this leader. And we in the same way were brought out of slavery. And here's how it's put at the bottom of Colossians Chapter 1. That was a lot of setup. But here it comes. Are you ready? Verse 13. No, no, no, no. Let's start in verse 12. I know it's a long run-on sentence in the middle of the sentence, verse 12, "Giving thanks." This is Colossians 1:12. Anybody with me on this? Well yeah, some of you said, yeah, yeah. What do you think we're not? Yeah, we're here. Okay, that's good. All right, let's keep going. It's a snarky morning. I've offended all the homeowner's association committee members. Well, no one's the chairman at least. You're not like the head of it. (audience laughing) I can exchange that ministry post for you with something else. (Mockingly) "Get off my lawn."

All right, verse 12, "Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." They're going to Canaan. Think about this now. The land of milk and honey. This is going to be your provision. "Giving thanks to the Father, who's qualified you to share in the inheritance." Why are you qualified to enter into that? Right? Well, in that case, if you're Joshua or Caleb or any of the young people, because of God's grace and favor that he set on Moses. And here you go. "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness." Do you remember that phrase where it says God came down to see their moaning and their whining and their suffering in Egypt and all the harsh taskmasters, he sees it. And he comes and he delivers them from the slavery out of "the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have," here it is, the purchase, "the redemption" and what we need is, "the forgiveness of sins."

And so all of that we have and therefore, I just want us to think about our identity. We now have been made by God, we're his. We are now purchased by God. We're his. And therefore the whole focus of everything in your life has got to be, this is fundamental Christianity 101, to say I'm God's, I'm a slave of God. There's nothing wrong with us speaking in those terms. I know there's all this conditioning in our thinking about slavery, especially in a Greco-Roman world in the first century, you know, doctors and lawyers and all kinds of people all the way down to people working in the fields. We had all kinds of people who said, "I'm going to indenture myself, you're going to purchase me. You're going to not only pay half of my insurance plan, you're going to be my insurance plan. I'm going to be on retainer for you." And there were all kinds of professionals in the Greek and Roman world who were slaves.

But when you're a slave, you're a slave. You do whatever the master says. A lot of talk about that even in Colossians. You need to know that you have not only a boss on earth that you should obey, but you've got an ultimate master. Let's just jump to that real quick, just so we can see what this is all about. Colossians, go to Chapter 3. Bottom of Chapter 3 and into Chapter 4. Scroll down there. Are you with me? Colossians 3:23. "Whatever you do." No, let's start in verse 22. "Bondservants..." I know, by 11 this will be like this perfect. Just like you guys. You go out there, you meet them there, you're having your donut and your coffee. You say, "We warmed him up. We got all the kinks worked out. The next service should be better."



You tell them that. Verse 22. Or you might want to come back if this one is so bad, you try it again in an hour or two and we'll try again.

Verse 22, "Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters." Now that's slave, right? Slaves. The same word that we see here in a verbal form in Acts 20. "Not by way of eye service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord." And even that concept, it's like not just as people-pleasers, but fear the Lord. You have a master. If you're a slave, you still have a master no matter what your level of freedom is. If you're a slave, the Lord is your master. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive," hear is this terminology from the bottom of Chapter 1 of Colossians, "receive the inheritance." We're going to go to the Promised Land. God has purchased our entrance into the kingdom. We're forgiven of our sins because Christ paid the penalty.

You are serving the boss, the Lord, the Boss, Christ the Messiah. "For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrongs done." I know you're going to see a lot of things that are unjust and things that don't work out. It's not fair, but "there's no partiality." God's going to deal with it all. Let's just talk to the management side. Chapter 4 verse 1, "Masters, treat" your slaves, "your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." It doesn't matter where you are in the pecking order at work or in the church, you have a master. So your identity needs to be I am a slave of God.

Now if you want to lead well, adopt that mindset and say whatever I do at work or whatever I do in church, whatever I do in my home, if you want to think about that, it's all because I am ultimately seeing my life as a slave of God. So when I think about leading others, I'm going to look over the shoulder of those I want to lead, and I want to say I ultimately want to please God. That's what I'd like to do. I want to please God. So let's first look over their shoulder and say, my master who owns me and purchased me and made me, that master needs to be pleased with my leadership. If I'm helping someone, if I'm pulling someone forward in the gospel or in the Christian life in their sanctification, I want to see the master over his shoulder, and I want to be able to say that's who I'm ultimately trying to please in this. And that's critically important.

And that starts to put everything in perspective because what do you want more than for that person to do the same thing? Right? I would like them to see God as the master. I'd like them to see themselves as a slave of the Lord. Because here's the deal. When Christ comes back, that's the way everything is going to be. All we're trying to do is just kind of adjust things in our lives now to be like it's going to be then, because one day "the kingdom of the world become the kingdom of our Lord," the boss, the Father in that case, "and of his Christ, and he's going to reign."

So there's nothing better than for me to think about as I lead other people in whatever it might be. And if leads to too strong a word for some of you, you're exempting yourself from that, don't exempt yourself from that. When you are doing things as we're going to talk about through the series, I just need you to say, "I am, by my identity, a slave of God. I'd like to



please him in this because ultimately that's what I want others to see themselves as. I have to model that I'm about pleasing God."

Because if you don't please God, you're going to try to please someone else or something else. You're going to end up serving someone else. Does that sound biblical almost? And that'd be a good verse if it wasn't in the Bible already. But you're going to either serve God or you're going to serve something else. And mammon was the broadest word that you could pick. Something that is in some way going to advance yourself or advance other people, advance your family. So you got to choose who you're going to serve. And I'm just saying, let's get that clear every morning before you go off to work, who am I serving?

Now in the passage we just read here. What is it? Verse 22. You've got to obey your boss insofar as you can still fear the Lord and look over your boss' shoulder and know that you're still pleasing God, right? They make widgets or they do whatever. You got to make the widgets and do whatever. But you got to know I ultimately come to work as... That's why you need time in the morning to recalibrate your thinking every single day. Who am I? When you go to church you should think that. I'm here as a servant of God. I'm here to try and please God. I'm here knowing who I am and I've got to please God in what I do. That's just this fundamental stuff. And it starts to sort out your priorities. And it will really sort out even your investments.

I just quote it for you. I don't know if I put this on the worksheet discussion questions for small groups or not. But Second Timothy Chapter 2 verses 3 and 4, you got to "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ," because, "no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." So now I'm even thinking about not just that I'm owned by God, created by God, but now I'm enlisted by God to make a difference. I said this is your calling to lead others. Everyone's calling is to lead others, right? Even whoever you are, you've got an influence you're supposed to have on non-Christians and Christians. And all I'm saying is he's enlisted you to that and you just need to see that your goal is to please him in this. That solves so many problems. I mean, really, it starts there. All right.

Okay. Let's get back to our passage. I want to say more on that. But there are some things developed in our small group questions that will help with this so I'll leave you to the homework. Ingredient number one: focus, purpose. Who am I? What am I here to do? I'm here to please God. Great. Now I want to make a difference in people's lives. And I'm not just shooting for better eulogies at my funeral. I really do want to make a difference in lives even if there's no funeral for me. I want them to say that he made a difference and affected me in eternal priorities for good, for godly, good, eternal things. Great. No matter what my job might be.

Okay, one thing I need is to mimic Paul in what he's doing here because he's mimicking Christ as the next line says, I serve the Lord. Now he's going to show what he served the Lord with. And the first thing is humility. And "with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews." And then verse 20, "How I didn't shrink from declaring anything that was profitable." So three things I want to see, though there are many more than three words





here and three phrases, but look at it, humility and then the trials and the plots are what caused the tears. So there's all this suffering and difficulty. But he kept plowing through it, and then he didn't shrink from declaring what was profitable. So let's look at these one at a time, but let's give it a heading. Because all of these things that Paul's going to point out, which are three, three basic categories, are things that we see in the life of Christ in massive ways.

So I'm going to put it this way. Right? I'm going to follow Paul as he follows Christ and I'll put it down number two, work to mimic. That's the great Greek word "Mimetes." We get the word mimic obviously from that, we're going to mimic Christ's character. Now I want to make a difference. No one made a bigger difference in the world than Christ, even humanly speaking, right? We're still dating our contracts by his birth. The reality of Christ's influence on people was massive, and he wasn't winning accolades in a professional guild. He was someone who invested in people's lives and changed their lives. So Christ's character is one that Paul wants to emulate and Paul's character that he's pointing out to these leaders in the Ephesian church he wants them to emulate and we should emulate it because you're called to lead in some capacity.

So what's the second ingredient here? Your character in three things. What's the first thing? You want to be a leader. You want to make a difference, which you should, because that's your calling. The first word on the list won't be when you go to the airport seminar to kind of learn how to be a great leader, it won't be the word humility, but that's the one you need to write down. Letter "A," humility. You need humility. Humility is the word that you've got to have, because when you go to the airport seminar to learn how to be a great leader and the guy who's going to sell you this package for \$2,000 to learn how to be the best leader the world's ever seen, they're not going to talk about humility because really what they're going to try to get you to do at the airport seminar is have you really serve yourself. That's really what it's all about.

As Jesus said, people in the world, the Gentiles, they like to call themselves benefactors. They like to have people serve them because their leadership is about themselves. Here's the key. You really want to make a difference in people's lives for Christ. What you need is humility, because if you don't have humility, you will be serving yourself. Humility is required to really serve other people. Let me ask you this. Jesus comes to a dinner, there are no servants there. They're just normal guys traveling around in terms of their professions. They're roving itinerant evangelists. And no one's there to wash their feet. But that's the custom. You don't want to just lay down and have dinner unless someone washes your feet. So Jesus picks up the basin and girds himself with an apron and picks up a towel and starts washing between Peter's big toe and his surfer toe. He starts cleaning out his toes.

Question. Is he doing that with sincerity or is he saying, "Geez guys, I can't believe..." as he's doing it, "I cannot believe that no one does that. I can't believe I'm left to do this. I'm the leader, I think..." Which do you think? "A" or "B," is he resentful or is he sincerely serving, interactive crowd? Letter "A." Right? Pick "A." Pick "A." Letter "A." That's right. He's serving them sincerely. Because he said at the beginning of his ministry, "I didn't come to be served. I came to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many." Now I realize where this ends. It



ends with the exaltation of Christ where the whole world serves him. Daniel Chapter 7 reality. But here's how it works. We let God deal with the other side. We deal with this side, which is that we are going to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that he might exalt us at the proper time.

But our job is to serve and to serve sincerely. And what that takes is humility, which literally is a word about lowly of mind. It's like I'm not concerned about my rights and privileges. I'm not concerned about people serving me. And to quote the passage I started to quote there in Luke 22, when he says, think about the Gentiles and the way they lord their authority over people. And he says think about this. He says, "Who is greater, the one who sits at the table and is served or the one who is serving?" Well, duh. And he says it. He answers his own question. "The one who sits at the table, of course, is greater." Oh, but wait a minute. "I'm among you as one who serves." Oh, I didn't think about that. And they're going, wow, that is different.

And that means this: that your life, if it's going to make a difference for Christ, it needs to be the kind of life that says I have to have a character that truly has a humble perspective about it's not about me. My job's not about me. My ministry in the church is not about me. I have to say I'm going to be humble. Because you could be a leader in your industry and a leader in the church, and you will not be fulfilling God's calling in your life because God wants you not to be serving yourself with those opportunities to serve for the common good of society, to serve for the common good of the church. You've got to say it's not about me, and you have to have a humble perspective.

Let me just give you this tip about the Christian life if you don't already know it. The commands of Scripture are for you to humble yourself. Humble yourself. Because if you don't humble yourself and you're really a child of God, he will humble you. And which would you rather have? Let me just tell you. Don't pick Letter "B" because that's much harder. I would much rather humble myself than have God humble me. So we have to say every day I have to think about developing the character where I am humbling myself to say, really, I'm going to put their interests before mine, not out of spite, that I can't believe that they didn't do that. And I can't believe that they don't say thank you. And I can't believe that they don't, you know, return the favor. And I can't believe I keep doing this and no one's responding. Like, stop!

If you gave your whole life to serve and you fulfilled that calling because you're looking over the shoulder of the people you serve and you're seeing the king who owns you and you're saying, I'm serving to please him, and no one here cared or responded. Right? That's real leadership. That's real effectiveness. You now are released from all the things that most people care about. And will say, "Well, I'll do that if" and you'll say, "I'll do it because, I'll do it because of him." So you need humility.

And so he was a servant of the Lord. And the thing that they saw, the thing they bumped into was the virtue of humility. Well, that's the character of Christ. I mean, no one was more humble than Christ to come and say, "I've come to serve," and he laid aside the glory of heaven to quote Philippians 2. And he said, "I'm willing to empty myself and take the form of a



servant." I'll come and serve. That's key. I mean, is that old Sunday School 101? That is, I realize, but that is key. We've got to have that.

What's the next thing? Well, it's a series of words, "with all tears, with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews." Let's just take that phrase. Tears and trials. Trials cause tears. Right? And the things that were causing him problems, as we've seen in this chapter. Matter of fact, it's a great bookend. In the beginning of this chapter it talks about the plots of the Jews that made him have to leave the city. And when he was first converted back in Chapter 9, it speaks about immediately there were plots to kill him. So plots, plots. And so far in his ministry, from his conversion to the third missionary journey, we've got all of these plots to kill him, and they caused tears because it's hard to be the focused target of people's hostility and anger. And so this causes him pain.

And here's the deal. He's not giving this as an excuse for quitting. He's continuing on as he'll go on to say, and I don't want to preview too much of this, but he'll go..., you've read it, but he'll go on to say, I know that what awaits me is just more trials, more suffering, more problems. So let's just put all that together to pick one word of virtue that describes that. How do you get a guy who gets constantly opposed, he has people who are plotting to kill him and drive him out of regions and he cries about it and it hurts and yet keeps going? Do you know what we call that? Here's the word, "endurance." Letter "B." If you want to develop the character of Christ? You need endurance.

Because let me say this. If you don't have humility, you will serve yourself. You won't really serve people. You may go through the motions, but you'll become resentful really quick. And if you truly have humility and you serve people, you won't serve them for long unless you have endurance, because you will say, "this is too hard. I tried it. I was totally selfless. I put their interests before my own. I talked about Christianity when they wanted to talk about sports and the weather, and all they did was exclude me and revile me and call my name evil. I'm just done with it because I have no endurance."

Or in church. I tried to lead a small group, but it didn't go very well and people didn't like it. I got complaints and I can't believe it. I'm not getting paid for this. Why am I even doing this? I quit. And you will not last long without endurance. Great Greek word, I quote this one a lot. "Hupomone." "Hupo" is a compound word, the preposition "under." Then "Mone" is to remain," or "to stay," "Meno," the Greek word "to remain under" to stay under.

The picture, of course, as I often say of that, you go to Tijuana. I don't know if they still have them. It's been a long time since I've been to Tijuana. Maybe I need to go. The burrow sitting there with a big load of stuff on his back. Or I guess I can modernize this in California. You see the truck every now and then on the I-5 freeway that's got all the stuff piled up. You're thinking one of the axles on this little Ford, you know, this 1974 Ford is going to break. Great picture. So I've updated the picture now instantly before your eyes. This is the one I will use from now on. The truck with all the stuff piled up like 50 feet in the air and it's going groaning down the road. That truck, think hupomone. It continues to bear up under the load.



Now, humility was a character trait of Christ. Do you think endurance was a character trait of Christ? True or false question this morning? True. Hebrews Chapter 12. Please turn to this passage, it is so good because here the writer of Hebrews is saying, make the connection, make the connection. When you want to quit, make the connection. When you feel like you can't do it anymore, make the connection. Look to Christ's example. Hebrews Chapter 12. Start in verse 1, because this is where we live. We have people whose funerals were filled with eulogies that were like, amazing, because that's what he just recounted in Chapter 11. People who really did accomplish things for God, they changed people's lives. That's why we know their names, even though they were imperfect.

"We're surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses." They testified to the truth that faith is worth it, that serving God was worth it. "So let us just lay aside every weight," right? Not the weight of the ministry, not the weight of the struggle, not the weight of God, it's not the weight of leadership, but the weight of everything else that we would say is sinful, that's superfluous. Every weight or to use Second Timothy Chapter 2 verse 4's wording, let's take all the civilian affairs that we don't need to be involved in, and let's start to simplify things so we can take on the burden that God has for us, "the sin that clings so closely," which of course needs to be out "and let us run" with hupomone "with endurance." I know it's going to feel like a grind, but keep going. "The race that is set before us."

God has planted you in a church, he's planted you with an endowed gift set that he gave you. He's planted you in a career that you may not like that much, but you're there and you're salt and light. You have a race that set before you. Now, in this, when you want to give up, you need that endurance. You got to look to Jesus, "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith," that he's the one who's going to give us this. He's the one who has provided us a reason that we have a reasonable faith, right? "Who for the joy set before him, endured the cross." Now there's the most curious sentence ever. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." What was the joy of the cross? There was no joy in the cross.

So it's much like us looking over the shoulder of those who we serve to the king, he's looking in this scenario over the shadow of the cross to what was on the other side. And that is obedience to do what God has called us to do is always going to be worth it. So much so to put it in our analogy here or our paradigm, which is service that you cannot serve with a cup of cold water and lose your reward. Christ is going to keep track of that. In Hebrews 6 he said that, God is not so unjust to forget the work you've shown toward his name, toward his people. You are going to be rewarded. It is always worth it. So he knew on the other side of the cross was a crown and he looked beyond that.

So you got to look for the joy in our case of "well done, good and faithful servant," because it'll be a good day at my funeral, not because I'm dead, but because I'm alive on the other side and I'm getting my rest and I'm getting my reward from God. So that's what I want to look forward to. And I will serve and I will serve through the difficulties of ministry, the race that's set before me, that's what the Bible says, that Jesus looked to the joy on the other side of the cross and he "endured it," this is a great word here, too. It was a Greek morning this morning, "despising." Every time I quote this verse, I can't help but to give you the compound of this



"Kataphroneo." "Kata" is "down." "Phroneo" is "to think." I think less of it. I think down on it. I think like that doesn't really matter, that I'll think less of that, right?

"Despising the shame." So he looked to the joy on the other side of the cross. So he hupomone'd the cross, despising, kataphroneo, the shame. And now he got the payoff, seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Where do you think this is all heading? Where do you think your trying to share the gospel at your workplace is heading? Where do you think your ministry in the church is heading? And if you think, well, I hope salvation of the loss, then I hope a healthy church. Maybe not, maybe not. Maybe you'll share the gospel work the whole time of your work at that place and never will someone... Maybe you'll still go to a stinky church after all these years. Maybe you'll die saying, "and I wish I would have gone to a better church." Maybe. I don't know.

But here's the deal. On the other end is the Christ who says, "Hey, you can't imagine the things that have been prepared for you." And even down to every single cup of cold water, when you put that stuff out there on your counter and had people over for a small group, all of that service, all of it's going to be rewarded. I mean, this is the best investment ever. It's called storing up for ourselves treasure in heaven. And we need to realize nothing is more important than that. The payoff.

So back to thinking and considering, verse 3, "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself." Well, who was against him? Well the Romans and the Pharisees. But you know who else was against him? Judas. Do you know who else was against him? The one he said, "Get behind me, Satan." Who was that Sunday school grads? Who was that? Peter. Oh, he was a good guy. He was a pastor of the church of Jerusalem after it all. Well, he was, but it wasn't easy. It's kind of like that old adage that pastors share at the pastor's conference. "Ministry would be great if it weren't for the people." You've heard that, right? Right? That's kind of snarky to let you in on what we say behind your back. (audience laughing) And sometimes you say, "Well, church would be great if it weren't for the pastor." I understand. It works both ways.

But here's the reality of it all. The problems with us trying to make a difference in people's lives is people. And it's always going to be difficult. But I think about the sinners, which are everyone who Jesus dealt with, all the way from the people who chanted to have him killed to the people who ran when the pressure was on. The people who said, "Oh, you're never going to the cross." He had problems with everyone. You're going to have problems at work with people who want to fire you because you stand with Christ. And you'll have people who disappoint you. They're sinners and it'll be sin who do the wrong thing in your Partners relationship, in your discipleship relationships. And all I'm saying is we endure it. We got to have that character because if we don't, we'll quit." So that you may not," bottom of verse 3, "grow weary or fainthearted."

So let me say this. You'll make a difference in people's lives. Here's the primary fundamental ingredient, who you see yourself as and what you're called to do. And that is pleasing God, not pleasing the people, pleasing God. Then you building a character, starting with humility





and then endurance. And then one more thing. Go back to our passage now. It starts here in the next verse, verse 20. He says in verse 20 going back to our passage if you found your way back there, it's on your worksheet. "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable." I did not shrink. Let's look at that verb. I didn't shrink. I didn't back down. I didn't say, "Oh, I won't share that." I didn't shrink from declaring anything that was profitable. Okay.

So here's what you need to get it into words. Humility. Endurance. Let's just call it this third one this. What you're going to need is boldness, because there are going to be times when you think, "If I say this, if I do this, if I try to correct this, it is not going to go well." And what you'll need is courage and boldness to say, "I need to say it anyway. I need to do it anyway. I need to call them anyway." I mean, this is like the fifth Sunday in a row they haven't been in church. Well, I want to be iron sharpening iron. "If I call them, I don't know, that won't go well, I should just be quiet about this." No, no, no. You're going to need some boldness, right?

Boldness to declare whatever is profitable. That word boldness. That's what some of you lack. Some of you are "peace at any price" kind of people. "I just want peace with people at my church. I just want peace at work. I just want to do my job. I don't want any trouble in the workroom when they start talking..., I just take my lunch and I'll just leave."

And I'm just saying you're going to need boldness if at ever you're going to be the person, and I just don't want to weigh this just by the eulogies at your funeral, but at your funeral they said this guy changed lives. I just wonder if anyone will be at your funeral who was led to Christ by you in your workplace. I've done a lot of funerals. I've seen a lot of that. And you know what? That's good. That's the whole point. That's the calling of salt and light. That's letting people see the glory of God and the face of Christ and saying, look, look, look, look, look. Those are people who are the fragrance of Christ wherever they go. And you know what that takes? Boldness

So you and I need to say, okay, I need humility. I need endurance. I need boldness. Was Jesus bold, by the way? "Oh, I don't know. He seemed pretty humble, gentle Jesus, meek and mild. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey instead of a horse. And everyone's going, "Yay!" Well, yeah, but when he got there, what happened? When he got there. Do you know the sequence of events on Palm Sunday? I know we don't share this one, nor do we act it out with our kids in the kid's program. But he goes into the temple and he starts tipping tables over. Now I get it. That's unique. It's unique in the fact that he's the Son of God and the Son of God, he's the embodiment of the deity of heaven, and that is his temple. So he's got the right to tip things over there. But what's instructive to us when he tips tables over is he quotes Scripture, right? "My father's house will be a house of prayer." He quotes the Old Testament minor prophets, and he's saying, here's what the Scripture says, here's what you're doing. Hey, I need to boldly say this is wrong.

Now, he did it in a way that was bold. And I'm just saying you're going to need boldness. Not that you have the right to tip over tables at your work. You don't. But it'll feel that way when you say, "I don't think you should say that. I don't think that's the truth. I don't think you're



accurately characterizing the position here of what God has revealed in his word." And when you start speaking in that way, you're going to feel like, you know, when you go home to tell your wife about it and you're going to feel like I tip some tables over today, and you're going to need boldness. Christ was bold.

I love this line from Mark Chapter 12 when the Pharisees came and I know the Pharisees were his enemies, I get that. But they were utilizing something true about who he was to then trap him with a question about taxes. Right? Should we pay taxes? Because the Jews are going to think, well, if he's a Jewish leader we're not going to pay taxes to Rome, that doesn't make sense. So but what they say about him. They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you are true," or truthful, "you do not care about anyone's opinion and you are not swayed by appearances," about the way people respond. Literally in Greek, you don't even look at people's faces. In other words, if they curl their brow it doesn't stop you. "But truly you teach the way of God." I just like that to be said about you and I. And ultimately, it's not that we don't care about opinions. It's that that's not our supreme concern.

So, the character of Christ, I could go on, but we got humility, we've got endurance, tears and trials but we keep going. And then we're not shrinking back. We've got some boldness or courage is a good word as well. All right. Back to our text. I don't think I turned you from it. Did I? Verse 20. What didn't he shrink from? "Declaring," what is that? Is that acting? Is that pantomime? Is that dancing? No, it's speaking. "Declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching." What is that? Is that artwork? Is that fireworks? No. That's speaking. "Teaching you in public and from house to house, and testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." What did he do? Did he act it out? No, no, he spoke. He testified. He said it verbally.

All of these are verbal words, "declaring," "teaching" and "testifying." And so I just want to focus on that, though it starts with your character and your mindset. But now when I think about how am I going to be any good in my workplace, how am I going to be any good in the church? We often get back to this because it's the number one way it happens -- through your words. And your words, you go somewhere, you go to some event, you go to some program, you go to some small group, you go to church, you talk on the patio. We sometimes just want to get through it without any trouble. We just talk about the sports, weather, our last vacation, whatever. And we just blah, blah, blah. Okay.

And there's time for that. Right? There's obviously a place for that. But what we need more of if we're going to really be the leaders in people's lives, changing people's lives, impacting them with eternal things, we need to, letter three, "Aim Your Words at Godly Goals." You've got to think and say, I'm going to take these words. I'm going to aim them at Godly goals. What is the goal here? Well, that's the first sub-point, because look what he says. "I didn't shrink from declaring to you anything that was," what's the next word? "Profitable." How would I know if this is profitable? He didn't even tell us what it is. He's going to go later to talk about the whole council of God, but some kind of correction, some kind of instruction, some kind of encouragement that related to what was needed. I know this will profit if I just say it right now. Do you follow that logic? Profitable.



So I just think what do I need? If Mike Fabarez is going to say I'm going to try to have conversations where my words are accomplishing some godly thing, some eternal goal, something that's more important than just, you know, how did the Dodgers do this weekend? Well, what we need is we need some discernment to figure this out. That'd be a good word to jot down. I need discernment. I need wisdom. I need to know is this profitable or is this not profitable. When is this profitable? Is this the right time to say this?

A good verse for us to think about the aiming of our words, Ephesians Chapter 4 verse 29. "Let no corrupting talk," "Sapros," no stinky talk, no bad talking, no talk that's bad come, "out of your mouths, but only such as is good for the building up," that's a godly goal, for the building up for the spiritual health, right? "As fits the occasion." Is this the right time to bring this up? Is this the right place for it? Is this the right context for it? "That it may give grace," the favor of God, that it might bring them to another level of spiritual growth, "to those who hear." Right? But "no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for the for building up, as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear."

So aiming our words starts with how do I know if it's good right now? And that means we're going to think. Now, here's a man who had a lot of flaws. But when God said, "here's the credit card, what do you want to buy with it? Here's my genie out of the bottle. I'll give you whatever you asked for. What do you want?" I'm talking about Solomon, and he's in the shadow of really a godly father with his flaws, still godly on the whole. And he's asked by God what do you want? And the answer was, "Give me wisdom." And how did God respond to that? Man, you could have had anything and you took that? No, he said. You could have had anything and you took that. You've chosen well, Grasshopper. I mean, here was this wise decision that you've made to ask for wisdom.

Well, that's just for kings in the Old Testament. Is there any passage you can think of Sunday school grads where God is saying, "Hey, ask for wisdom and I'll give it"? Yeah. Ask for it. I'm just saying we don't ask for it enough. So when you're pulling into work you should be asking God, give me wisdom and insight and discernment to know what I might say today to some coworker, my boss, my employees that might give them something that moves them in the right direction. Right? That edifies, that builds up, that moves them toward a godly goal. In this case with non-Christians, obviously repentance and faith. But you got to diagnose the need. You got to diagnose the spiritual reality. You need discernment.

Letter "B" teaching publicly and from house to house. Teaching. Teaching. That's the word that's often used in Scripture to talk about someone who is moving a Christian into the next level of spiritual growth. So let me just say that for the sake of time, we need to think about how can I help a Christian grow. How can I help Christians be stronger? How can I, in our last series, encourage and strengthen their resolve to keep going, to be strong, to do what God has asked them to do? I need to think through that. I want to help Christians take the next steps. That's what leadership is. And you don't have to be in a formal leadership position to say, "When I go to church, I want to think about how my words can help Christians grow." It needs to be part of our reflexive vocabulary.

Romans 15. I've already just alluded to it, but let me read it carefully. "I myself," Paul says in Romans 15:14, "am satisfied about you, my brothers," not pastors, not elders, not pastors, "that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another." "Noutheteo" that's a great word too, that you're able to correct one another, that you're able to sharpen one another, you're able to move someone forward with some kind of statement that's going to help them. He says, "On some points I've written to you really boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace of God given to me to be a minister of Christ." So I've got a platform ministry. But everyone in the pew, you should be thinking about how can I help Christians grow with my words. Teaching.

Thirdly, and this is oft repeated, and we quote this passage all the time back in Acts Chapter 20 verse 21. It doesn't matter who it is, Jews or Greeks. Even the people I think would be unlikely converts. This is how I'm trying to interpret it for us. It doesn't matter who they are, anyone and everyone. I'm ready to give them the truth about "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." That needs to be our evangelistic concern. And that kind of takes us in the church and out of the church, although we might have some Christians at work who you can help move forward.

But non-Christians, what do they need? They need to know repentance and faith, repentance and faith. Those are the two verbs on the tail end of a discussion regarding the gospel that is the difference between heaven and hell to put it in linguistic terms. What's the portal? Repentance and faith. Turning from sin to God and trusting in the finished work of Christ. Which, by the way, hearkens back to there's got to be more than you just saying, "repent, repent, repent, believe, believe, trust, trust." There's got to be more than that. Repentance and faith aren't just words we parrot. But it's built on a foundation of everything that the gospel is all about.

Which is why it would be a good time for us to remember all of that and even declare it in some formalized way the death of Christ. Because that's the foundation for me having an inheritance of the saints in life. I'm going to ask the ushers to come forward. We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper. And by that I mean celebrate. We're going to remember and memorialize the core of the gospel, which comes before calling someone to repent and trust in Christ. Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ necessitates that people are hearing from us what we're about to encapsulate in a ceremony, the ordinance that Christ has given us.

And so they're going to start passing. If you're a Christian, take hold of that piece of bread and that plastic little cup. And this will represent for us, represent for us, the blood of Christ and the body of Christ. Which just like being baptized into Moses, I cannot be right before God without God somehow accepting someone on my behalf. And Moses was an imperfect picture typology of this but what I need is the perfect human one, right? And the only way to be a perfect human one is to not be fully human. I need to be fully human. But I'm not just human. I'm also fully God. So fully man, fully God. I need that person to stand in for me and absorb the penalty that I deserve.



So this is the message. That's why Christ is important. It's not just Jesus loves you. The message we're giving to our world is declaring the Lord's death until he comes, that he had to die as the perfect substitute of our lives. So you spend some time talking to God about what we have been just in the last 30 seconds talking about that you need the forgiveness of God and the payment of your sins paid for by someone else. And that's a good time, as the Bible says, to examine yourself and look carefully. If something needs to be confessed, confess it. If there's something that needs to be appreciated about the redemptive work of Christ, appreciate it. You just need to spend some time privately with God. And in that we will come back together. And the Bible says as we come together and take this meal we declare the Lord's death and we keep doing it until Christ comes back.

And the point is, we're saying this is what our theology is all about, that we're sinners, that the sinless one had to pay the penalty of our sin, and therefore we're telling people, hey, the payment's been paid. What's your response? Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus. I'll come back up in a few minutes and we'll take these elements together at the same time.

Near the end of the book of Exodus in an oft-overlooked moment Moses takes the leaders of the people up on the mountain after a large series of sacrifices brings up that sacrificial meal and they ratify, they confirm the covenant with God by eating that meal together. Of course, the Passover is usually the thing we look to as the archetype or the prototype of the Lord's Supper. But it is interesting there that the Mosaic covenant was confirmed by that meal that they ate together and that leaders represented all the people in that.

Jesus talks about this being the cup of the New Covenant which is so much better than the old cup. When you look at what the book of Hebrews says, it becomes obsolete in the sense that the wages of sin is death. If you break these rules, you die. You do these immoral things and you are excluded. Well, the law of the Spirit and life it overrules all of that and says, okay, you've now got a great clear picture that you can't do this in your fallen state. So I'm going to have this new law, this new commitment, this new covenant ratified over and over again with this meal that we take to say here are the new rules. And the new rules are that we trust in Christ. He is the one we're baptized into. We now are seen in him.

We're not talking about water baptism, we're placed into him and that we are accepted in the beloved. God loves his beloved Son and we're accepted as though we're in him. Now, again, the accusation of the Jews toward the Jew who taught this, Paul, clearly in the book of Romans was, well, then you can just do whatever you want. And he says, well, now you're understanding the gospel, even though that's not the right response. The law of God reflects the path we're to walk in, the moral law of God. But the truth of you understanding that this is all about grace, you're right.

And so we affirm the grace of God by taking this meal. It's almost like we're there when they have that meal and we think, "Oh, you have no idea when you ratify that covenant with that meal with Moses, it's one that's going to fail." But in that failure the law leads us to Christ





saying we need the "Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world." We need the grace of God to be provided. And what's great is that God says, now you continue to drink this cup, eat this bread, and I'm not going to do it again until we do it afresh in the kingdom. But you keep doing that and you'll continue to proclaim the means of grace the way that God gets us right until I come.

That's just a great picture. And we need to understand it, not that it's super complex and there's a lot of history to it, but understand it so that we can represent it in our world. Then we can help each other move forward in living that out in our church, inside the walls, outside the walls. It's about making a difference, but it starts with understanding even the profundity what these represent. So let us, with deference to Christ and trust in Christ, eat this bread and drink this cup.

Pray with me. God, we, even just thinking briefly about that historical sketch, are so grateful to have in our era a clarity about how you take sinful people and wash them, as the old hymn writers say, in the Blood of Christ. That because of that death we are accepted. Because of that life, we're made righteous. And so, God, we're grateful even though we know that every person in the Old Testament was a beneficiary of that transaction if they trusted in you and they repented of their sins, we just know they didn't have the privilege of seeing it with the clarity that we get to see it. Things in which angels longed to look into that we have the benefit now having spelled out for us in the New Testament.

How grateful we are for the book of Romans, for the book of Hebrews, for the book of Galatians, for so many other passages in your own Son's teaching that make clear that we're justified as we beat our chests and say we're sinners. We don't even deserve, as that parable puts it so well, we don't deserve to be a part of your family. But then you kill the fattened calf and you put robes on us, put a ring on our finger, and you call us your own. And we're grateful for that. We want to celebrate grace, the grace of forgiveness. And we want to get up in honor of your wonderful transaction of salvation and live for you this week. So make us good leaders as lofty of a word that is, and let us make a difference in people's lives for Christ.

In Jesus name, Amen.