



Christians on Trial – Part 7

Remembering Your Purpose

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We have been trying to tackle this very sobering topic in this series of Christians on Trial. And of course, Paul is in a literal trial in Caesarea on the coast of the Mediterranean. And, we've started to think about the trials that we face, which I hope are not in a literal courtroom, but perhaps some of you have had those kind of trials. But we are in a situation where as Christians we know we're going to get these trials in our lives. And we've looked at a variety of things in the past six weeks where these can erupt in our lives, might even erupt in our health, in our relationships, in our home and our workplace. And we've talked about how to power through these. And, that's one category of trial. You think about the things that episodically arise where there's opposition to our Christianity, opposition to our lives. And, we've dealt with that. But I want to talk about a second category as we get into the 26th Chapter verses 12 through 23. And I want to talk about a whole different category. And the category I'm thinking of is the whole of the Christian life. I mean, there are times when we have a season of difficulty and we would call it a trial. It tests our faith and it's hard and it's painful, but, you know, that may only last a week or two or in some cases, you know, a month or two or perhaps even a year. But, I'm talking about the trial just in being a follower of Christ. I want to think just what it means from the time I put my trust in Christ and say I'm going to follow you until I meet him face to face.

That whole thing, the Bible would say, is a kind of trial. Because as Jesus said in John 15, "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own," but as it is, "I've chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you." That simple little verse sums up a lot of the problems of the Christian life that starts at the very beginning when you say, I'm a sinner, I need salvation, I know Christ has done it for me, I trust you, you're my savior, you're my king, I'm going to follow you. Or in the words that we've used often in this series from John Chapter 10, he's the good Shepherd, you hear his voice and you follow him. You're part of his flock. That's a great place to be because you know you're forgiven, you have the kingdom that is on the horizon guaranteed for you. You're fully qualified because you've trusted in Christ's finished work. But now, as you follow him, you follow him on a narrow road the Bible says. It's a road in which you're called to hear his voice and do what he says. That's a hard thing to do. It's a hard thing to do as it's put in the prayer that Jesus prayed yesterday if you're keeping up with your Daily Bible Reading that we follow here, the calendar. Yesterday we were in John 17 as Jesus was praying to the Father, and he said to the Father, we've got a bunch of people in this world who you've given to me. Not the totality of the world but some of these people that you've given to me they've been called out, they're mine, I have kept them while I was here. And I'm going to go to the Father. I'm going to return to you as the Spirit's now is going to get to pick up the task of guarding them and protecting them. But they're different because they have kept your word. Right? That's the idea. They've done what you've said.

So Jesus says I've been speaking your words. I've been reiterating your truth. And these people, this select group of people, this little flock, as Jesus called it, they are listening and they're following you. And that's really hard because the whole rest of the world is going in a



different direction. As Jesus put it in the Sermon on the Mount, there's a broad road "that's leading to destruction," right? It's a downhill coast. You just coast down into destruction. Or you can be on this narrow road "that leads to life." And though it's a smaller road, a harder road, it's a steep incline, right? We walk this path but it's not really in a separate place. Let's envision it this way. It's like a chalk, you know, outline in the middle of the whole pathway that's going the other direction. And in that sense think of yourself as a salmon here this morning. You're swimming upstream, right? And you're trying to go toward obeying the voice of God. And the reason it's different than the rest of the world is because the rest of the world is designed to go in the opposite direction, which, according to Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 15, is that they are living for themselves. "But you're called to live for him who died for you and rose again." And so you're concerned about his priorities. You're concerned about obeying him. You want to live out what he wants. You want to please him.

Most of the world wants to please themselves and that takes them in a whole different direction. And it's unlike really water, which is an inanimate object, right? It's not like you're just fighting, you know, something inanimate. It's more like you turning the wrong way down a one-way street. And I don't recommend that. But if you've ever done it, you know, interesting things happen, right? There are not only inanimate cars going at you but they're driven by people who fall into a lot of sign language at that particular point when you're driving. They honk, they yell, they scream, they get really angry. And so we, most of us, once we have that experience, we quickly turn around because it's terrible to have this hostile set of people opposing you. Right? "If you're of the world the world would love you as its own. But as it is I've chosen you out of the world." So if you're a real Christian here this morning you're not like everybody else, because your job is to no longer live for yourselves but to "live for him who died for you and rose again." So from the beginning, day one of your Christian life to the very end of your Christian life, that, in a sense, is a cross that you have to bear. That's a hard thing, you're denying yourself. You're taking up your cross and you're following him. That's a trial in and of itself.

The trials we've been looking at in the past may be races that we have to run, battles we need to fight. But the war, the marathon race, is just being out of place in this world. Living the Christian life in a non-Christian world. Trying to follow Christ when the rest of the world's not interested and everything about the world is moving in the opposite direction. And we got to live in the world but we're not going to be of the world as Jesus prayed yesterday in John 17 in the message that he was giving to his Father, the prayer that he was presenting. We're not like the rest of the world so we need to be kept, and we need to make sure that we're carefully on this path and kept by God's Spirit, walking in the right direction. That's going to need a key revisiting of something that Paul is going to revisit here as he's in a literal trial. He's in a literal trial before King Agrippa, and he's here after King Agrippa shows up with the entourage from Rome, he disembarks, has Paul there sent before him, and Paul is now going to go back to the very beginning of his Christian life which we need to do if we're ever going to make it with perseverance and strength in this life in the opposite direction of the world. We've got to do what Paul is doing here. We'll look at the many facets of that in a wonderfully crafted seven-point sermon this morning. Did that scare you when you saw that on the worksheet? Seven points?

All right, so let's embark on this after I read the passage to you. And we want to think through what Paul is going through and what you're going to see him do here is revisit his calling as the subtitle of our sermon this morning. He's trying to revisit what he's called to, what his purpose is in life. Okay, let's take a look at this. And this will definitely get us where we need to be as Christians if we're going to continue to persevere in the Christian faith. Verse 12, we'll read that again. I know we dealt with that last week, but here's the context in this connection with all he was doing to fight the Lord. Right? "I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests." So the Sanhedrin said, go for it, and he's going to go and persecute Christians in Damascus. Verse 13, "At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven," from the sky, "brighter than the sun." It's midday, so we assume the sun's out. It's up in the sky. But something way brighter than that knocks him to the ground, "that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had fallen to the ground," verse 14, "I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goad.'" I'm assuming you know what a goad is, a sharp, pointy object that sometimes the shepherd will use, or a rancher will use to poke and prod the cattle to move in a different direction. And you're kicking against it. Stop kicking against it.

Verse 15, "And I said, 'Who are you, Lord,'" sir. I don't know what he's thinking at this point. The word "Kurios," which translates "Lord," could be used as a deferential sense of someone above me, someone more powerful than me. It can be used of officials, Roman officials, Jewish officials. It could, of course, translate and mean the Lord, the King of heaven. But he says, who are you, sir? Or who are you, Lord? "And the Lord," the real Lord, the King of kings and Lord of lords, "says, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'" Paul is going to persecute and jail and perhaps even kill Christians in Damascus and Jesus says, you're persecuting me. The people there that you're opposing, you're really opposing me. "But," here it comes, verse 16, "rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness to the things in which you have seen me, and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people," the Jews, "and from the Gentiles -- to whom I am sending you." So I have to block for you the defense of people who are going to be there, they're going to try and stop you, but I'm sending you to them for their good. Verse 18, "To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan," that's heavy, "to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins," I want to do good for them, "and a place among those who are," set apart or "sanctified by faith in me."

Therefore, O, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," but I started right where I was. I was heading to Damascus. So at first I started and "I declared to those in Damascus, and then I went down to Jerusalem and throughout the whole region of Judea, and also" I went into Asia Minor "to the Gentiles." And I was telling them exactly what God told me to tell them. "They should repent and turn to God, and perform deeds in keeping with repentance." Now I'm just carrying out my duty, doing what God called me to do, living out my purpose here. "For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day," verse 22, "I've had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:



that the Christ must suffer and that by being the first to rise from the dead," at least in terms of the eternal resurrection of an impervious body that is not going to die ever again, he's the first to rise from the dead in that sense, "he would proclaim light both to our people," the Jews, "and to the Gentiles." I'm just doing what I've been told to do. I mean, that's in essence his response. He's going to go back to his calling that he is a Christian who was called for the purpose of being a missionary. And I've done the job and now they don't like it. They brought me here. I'm standing before you. Whether it's you or just the common guy in Judea, I'm just going to keep doing what God's called me to do, okay? That's what we need. We need to revisit our calling. Okay?

I got seven points, seven aspects of this passage that might help us to revisit our calling. So you might get in your car and leave the parking lot today being redoubled in your commitment, your effort, your perseverance, your encouragement to do what God has called you to do. But before I start talking about these seven things, I've got to think about what I mean. I use the word "calling," and people think of all kinds of things, and they think about, well, the specific task for which God called me. And of course, God did call you for a specific task. But we need to figure that out in three basic realms of our lives, which most of us can identify three distinctive realms of our lives. So let's think through those. First of all, we got to think about our families, our domestic life. Okay, let's just think this through it's all introductory, but let's think this through before we get to the first point. In your domestic life I'm going to figure out if should I be married. Does the Bible have any wisdom for us on that? If I'm going to start a family, have some kids, should I do that? Right? The Bible is very clear in First Corinthians Chapter 7, the motivation, the predication of that decision is on the fact ultimately, as Jesus said in the gospels, that I am not content to do otherwise. In other words, I want, to boil it down, to be very frank here, I desire romantic intimacy with someone of the opposite sex. Right? That's what God designed for most of us to want, to even crave as it says there in First Corinthians Chapter 7. And if that's what you want, well, then God has a sanctioned domain in which you can carry that out. He's got a place for you to carry it out. It's called the family. And it starts with a marriage. And you have to choose a marriage partner. And there are rules in the Scripture about that. You got to have someone who has the same commitment to Christ that you have, not to be unequally yoked, Second Corinthians Chapter 6.

So we know these ideas from the Bible that are very clear that if I'm going to have this desire then it is the will of God for me to find a spouse and it's the will of God for me to covenant in a relationship with them and then that spouse what God has joined together. I shouldn't let man separate. So nothing's going to come between that. And I'm going to go the distance in this relationship. And this is the context for that desire and the will of God. For me, then, as Malachi says, is in the normal course of life, at least with some rare exceptions, I'm supposed to have children, right? For godly offspring people have brought us together. The Bible says God has brought us together in the union covenant of marriage. And so I know if I'm a dad and I'm a husband, in my case, I know this is the will of God for me. This is the calling of God for me, which started with just as a young teenager figuring out that I wasn't going to be content as a kingdom single. So this is God's calling on my life to be a dad and to be a



husband. Okay? Domestic life, I don't know where you're at in relation to that but there's our domestic world and we got to look at the Bible how to live that out.

You've got a career, right? You got a job. You should at least. If you're a freeloader, stop it and get a job. You're supposed to get a job because the Bible says if you're not willing to work you shouldn't eat, right? Now if you're retired or whatever and you worked for a lot of years and you stored up your, you know, your silos and all that, great. Fine. You're supposed to live off of what you make. And so the Bible says, you've got to work and you work by figuring out what your aptitudes are, what your skills are. I think of Exodus 36. God endows certain people with certain skills to do certain jobs. And as you do those things you find something where there's a need in society, right? And you say, okay, I'm an exchange my skill and my labor and my hours for dollars so that I can buy my food and pay for the shelter over my head and put clothes on my body. And so we figure that out based on the needs and the aptitude and skills that I have. Right? And for most of us, we figure that out fairly young and we say, okay, this is it. It's honest work. I need to eat. I can't steal bread and I need to make money. I can't go rob banks. I know those are outside... There's a sanctioned means by which I'm supposed to get it. Labor and work and skill and effort and then I get money and that money then pays the bills and that's my job. Okay?

Paul was a missionary but he wasn't going to pass the plate on the mission field. So he had to get a means of gaining money so he could feed himself. So he went out and started making tents. And he made tents and he was apparently good enough at it to spend, I'm just guessing now, 25% of his time making tents to make money so he could eat bread, and then 75% of his time doing what his calling was in ministry, which was to be a missionary and travel to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, and to be able to share the gospel. So he was a bi-vocational missionary, but he had a job making tents. Right? And if I said, okay, you probably got a job, I hope you do, or some role in society where you're exchanging your skill and your hours for dollars. Right? That's a biblical thing. And you're probably not a blacksmith, right? You're probably not an igloo builder. You know there's a lot of things you're not, because there's not a need for that. And there are a lot of things you're not because you don't have the aptitude for it. You're not a professional basketball player. You're maybe not a professional musician because God didn't endow you with that. So we figure out what we're decent at. We go get honest work, we exchange our work for dollars, and we find ourselves in a job. Right?

And I'm not saying that you're tied to your job the way you're tied to your marriage. Right? I said that very diplomatically. I was going to say stuck in your job the way you're covenantally, lovingly tied to your marriage. I don't know how to say that. But when you get married, you're there. You're stuck. If you want to call it that, this is it. This is the context for you to love and to function in your domestic life. But in your job you can change jobs. But let me just say this. Even though it's not a covenant that you make, I would say, and I would say this from experience and from biblical principles in the book of Proverbs and elsewhere. You'd probably do better to settle into honest work and be good at just serving in that role to make your money to pay your grocer and to buy your food and to pay your rent, right? Your mortgage or whatever you've got, and just settle in for the long haul. Do your honest work, do your job, be



faithful in it and stick with it. Right? That's probably a good thing. The people who are bouncing around, it's indicative of a lot of other problems, symptomatic of a lot of other problems, like Proverbs says, chasing after stuff. And you got to stop being the dreamer as it's put in Scripture and you've got to settle in and do your hard work labor and do whatever it is you're going to do in this society. When you look at it and it's making enough money for you to feed yourself, well, then guess what? You found your calling. There's your calling, your vocation. Which, by the way, that's what comes from the Latin word, which is "calling." Right? Talk about your vocation. We're talking about a calling. And that's at least how we used to see it in a kind of theistic mindset in society.

So I've got a domestic life that really starts with it's not that hard to figure out. It's a subjective desire and it leads to a sanctioned domain in which I live that out. I have some skills and I see needs in society and I meet those needs with my skills. I get exchanging my hours for dollars. That's my calling. Settle in, do it. Great. And then I've got, as a Christian, a third domain. And that's my church life. So I got my home life. I got my work life, I got my church life. I mean church life, if I'm a Christian, I'm a part of the body of Christ. I'm supposed to find an outpost of God's body in my community and I'm supposed to engage in that and become a functioning, highly committed part of that body. I know there may be a great church in Australia and a great church in New Zealand and a great church in New York State. But it's hard to get your kids there for the weeknight events because it's too far away. So when you find your job and you settle down with your domestic life and you now look for a church, you've instantly narrowed that much like I could say there's a great church in the 15th century you should be a part of. Well, you weren't born in the 15th century, so you got to pick a church now, in the present time, you have to do it within a reasonable traveling distance of where you're living. Right? And you've got to say, I'm going to find a church teaching the Bible and I'm going to get a part. I'm going to fall into this. I'm going to be a part of it. I'm going to choose to be a part of it and I'm going to function there. I'm going to give as the Bible says I must. I've got to serve as the Bible says I should and I'm going to be an active, highly committed participant in that church. Right? And that is your calling. You're part of the church.

And again, you're not stuck with the church the way you are lovingly bound in a covenant relationship with your spouse. Did you catch how well I did that? But you are I would say much more fruitful to settle into a church. Much like people bouncing around in careers or jobs, people who bounce around from church to church, it is indicative of some issues that generally are problematic. Now, if the church changes and no longer teaches the Word okay, it's time to change the church. But for most of us, we find a good Bible-teaching church that is functioning as a healthy church, and no church is perfect, we engage in that and stay in that. That's a good thing. I'm looking out the crowd right now. I see people in the church that I have been their pastor for 20 plus years, some of you 30 plus years. And I think those I would say are the kinds of people I see normally being very fruitful in that church. And I'm not saying you have to, but I am saying it's a wise thing. Even though your job may take you to another part of the country and you may have to find a new church. I get that. But in that realm, if you look at the church, you're a part of it, that's my calling. And you find the role, you find your participation in that church, your ministry outpost within that church, right? Then you say, I know what my calling is. And for most of us it's not mysterious. It's not cryptic. We can



probably look at our lives right now, for most of us at least, and say I know what my domestic calling is, I know what my career calling is, and I know what my church calling is.

But there are some things that aren't so clear in that. Some of you say, well, I'm not clear about that. You know, I think I should be married but I'm not doing anything to get married. Well, okay, we can talk about those things, but for most of us these are not like we have to wait for God to shine a bright light and kick us off of our horse. A lot of things in the book of Acts are not normative you understand. The idea of the book of Acts here doing this is to show us that God does care. And this is a unique, exemplary, supernatural directing of Paul into an appointment to do something that should at least remind us that God, that's the way he functions. And we'll look at principles throughout the sermon. And you're saying, when are you going to get to the seven points? Now.

Okay, so let's start with this. Verses 12 through 16. Right? Paul is going to tell his story and in telling his story he talks about the fact that he gets knocked off his horse, falls to the ground, he hears a voice saying, "You're persecuting me." And then this great line, bottom of verse 14, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads. And that is a self-evident statement. There's an axiom for you, of course, it's hard to kick against the goad. The goad is trying to push you in a direction and if you're pushing back, guess what? Here's what happens. When it starts to be a gentle poke and prod, it becomes a piercing, you know, jab. And the harder you kick against the goads, the harder it pushes you in the other direction. Now Paul's about to be converted and then appointed to something, right? And so even in his conversion, I don't know what the goads were, but there has to be, just this statement proves to me, there were goads that God was doing something maybe even in the passages that Saul of Tarsus at that time would unroll and read something in the prophets that would be like "na, na, na, na" and look, this is exactly what Jesus of Nazareth is claiming. Or the people he heard preached from The Way, from the Christian organization, like Stephen as he stood there listening to Stephen give his speech. Right? God was doing stuff that probably sent him home convicted, and yet he fought it, and he fought it, and he fought it. And God finally had to just knock him to the ground.

And all I'm telling you about God is that if you have a particular calling and you're supposed to do something in your domestic life, maybe you start your domestic life, or a job, right? And you're not in the right job. And you know God's trying to get you over here. He's going to goad you until you get to the right place. You're a child of God. God cares, those he loves he disciplines. And so I'm going to tell you that I'll give you this great advice that Paul would just definitely say Amen to. Here it comes, number one, "Don't Fight Your Calling." Whatever your calling is, don't fight your calling. Right? I know, like think about domestic calling. My domestic calling. I have a calling. I have a covenant relationship. This is my calling. I'm not going to fight that calling. This is my calling. I'm going to lean into that. This is what I do. This is what I have. I'm a father. I'm a husband. That's what I do. And in my church, I know what my role is and this is what I do. I'm not going to fight that calling. Right? And if I happen to be in a situation where I'm not where God wants me to be, I can expect him to goad me.

How does he do that? I'm glad you asked. Haggai Chapter 1. Let's look at one example of a generation of people who followed Yahweh and they weren't doing what God wanted them to do. God sent them back after the Babylonian captivity under Zerubbabel. Right? And Ezra, Nehemiah, you might remember this post-exilic period we call it. And God was having this first generation go back to Israel and they were supposed to rebuild the temple. That was priority one, rebuild the temple. And they were going back, they had a lot to rebuild. Right? And they started looking at their personal interests and they started looking at God's calling on their lives. And when they neglected God's calling on their lives, the goad came out. Okay? Let's take a look at this passage, start in verse 3, Haggai Chapter 1 verse 3, and we'll read a little bit about how this works and maybe some of you will say I know this feeling. Verse 3, "The word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet." Verse 4, Haggai Chapter 1 verse 4. Here's what God says. "Is it a time for yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house," the temple, "lies in ruins?" Hmhm. "Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts," the Lord of heaven, the Lord of the armies, the Lord of hosts. "Consider your ways." Let's just think about what you're doing and let's think about what's happening in your life.

What are you talking about? Verse 6, well, you go out in your yard there in your property and you start sowing and you put a lot out there. But you know what, it seems like a lot of the crop didn't work out. Seems like a lot of birds came and ate it. Sounds like a lot of stuff going on out there that didn't yield fruit. "You harvested a little. You eat," you think, okay, I'm going to eat, but you're never full, "you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill "and never quench your thirst. "You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. He who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes." Right? There's a vivid way to talk about the fact that at the end of the month they were looking at all that they were doing, saying, I don't even have enough money. I'm running out of money every month. That's how we would say it. I'm running out of money all the time. So I'm not content. Nothing seems to be working out. This is always bringing frustration to me and all my money it just doesn't last.

"Thus says the Lord of hosts," verse 7, "consider your ways." Let's think about this. "Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord." Well, I'd like some of that good wood that I went up to the mountains to find, it would really be good. My wife says it would be really nice if we paneled the den with this. And so they're coming down with opportunities and they're saying, well, I can put my priorities, my interests in front of God's interest, and I can do that. But in doing that they were getting the goad of God. And the goad of God was discontentment, money wasn't lasting, stuff wasn't working out, projects weren't happening. Frustration. Discontent. Verse 9, "You looked for much," and after all your laboring for much, "but behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home," here's what God did, "I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors." Right? Even your cattle aren't working out. They're not even having healthy babies, right? Because you are neglecting your calling. Your purpose and your calling are to do this.



This is just an example, a macro example from a generation of people in the post-exilic period. But God is saying, if you're not doing what I want you to do, I am going to discipline you. You're my people. Those I love, I discipline, and I'm going to goad you until you get where I need you to be. So I just need you to consider your ways. Some of you right now, domestically, career-wise or ministry-wise, you are not doing what God wants you to do. And I'm speaking to you. I don't know your situation. I don't know the details. I'm not speaking to any one person in the room. But some of you know that you are kicking against the goads in your calling. Even some non-Christians here today. You're not even repentant. You don't even trust Christ. You don't want to submit your will to his and you're kicking against the goad. And just like Paul talking about his conversion, he's fighting God. You just can't win, man. That's not smart. Do not fight your calling, first to become a Christian and then to take your proper place in the domestic situation, in the career and workplace, and in the church. Don't fight God. Get to where you need to be. And it's easy for us to look at how God goads us. And he does it by making things not work out. If you feel like you're hitting your head against the wall in some area of your life, you got to ask yourself the question, am I neglecting the calling of God domestically, work wise or in the church? Good place for us to start. Don't fight the calling. If you do it'll be painful.

Verse 17, back now to Acts 26 verse 17. He's appearing to him for this reason, I'm going to make him a missionary. And I just want to dive into verse 17. To do what? Well, first he's going to block for you, right? I'm going to "deliver you from the people and from the Gentiles," because the Jews and the Gentiles are going to want to kill you. But I'm sending you to those very people in those very towns, in those cities "to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified in me." I just want you to do this. This will be so good. Look at the good you're going to accomplish there. That'd be great. Now, here's what he didn't say. Hey, Paul, I got a job for you. This job, it pays so well. You are going to be a famous spokesman. You're going to write some books, man. You're going to be famous. Dude this is going to be awesome for you. You'll be able to supply. I know you don't have a family, but for all your friends you'll be buying meals for everybody. It'll be awesome. This will be so good for you. That's not how God works, right? Not how God works because that's not how God works. It's not how God himself works.

I can prove this to you. Philippians Chapter 2. What I'm saying is this: that there is a default perspective on the world that's going the opposite direction, downhill toward destruction. They are wired to live for themselves. You're called to no longer live for yourself, Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 15, and you're supposed to live for him, the opposite direction. The Shepherd is calling us upstream. You're walking uphill on a narrow path and that is something that is very hard to do. And you have to turn from your thinking about your aspirations and what you would like to do. You're "denying yourself and taking up your cross and following him." And so therefore, you have to think about what it is that God has called you to do, not for your own self-aggrandizement, not for your own benefit, but for the benefit of others. That's what callings are all about. The callings of Christ are Christlike and that couldn't be spelled out any better than it is right here in Philippians Chapter 2 starting in verse 3. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit," selfish ambition or conceit. Now let me just



start with this. Even in the church I'll see a man get on one knee and look at a kid introducing the family and this kid, and might even say, maybe the kid's precocious, seems a little bit too bright, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I just want to tell you that statement is demonic. How's that for a tweetable line? That's a demonic question. In a church I don't want to hear that. I don't want to hear it.

Because James Chapter 3 and right here makes it very clear, your selfish ambition is not something on the table for people who claim the name of Christ, right? It's not about you. It's not about what you want. Here's a good biblical question. "Hey, Johnny, what do you think God wants you to do when you grow up?" That'd be a much better question because that's what Christianity is all about. What does God want me to do? And selfish ambition and conceit, not interested in that, right? Because they've got all kinds of answers to that. "But in humility count others as more significant than yourselves." What do you mean? Like I got to serve them? Well, yeah. Verse 4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interest," now of course you got to feed your own face, you got to put shelter over your head, I get that, "but also the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." You can see it in quadrasonic sound. It's right there. Christ in all four gospels is showing us what kind of person he is. "He didn't come to be served, he came to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." That mindset needs to be your mindset. Verse 6, "Who, though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant." A what? A servant, a servant. Really? Yeah. "Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself."

There it is. You told me to be humble in verse 3. That's what Jesus did. "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." For what purpose? Why did he die on a cross? To take our sins off of our resume, to serve us. He sacrificed for us even death on a cross. "Therefore." guess what? "God highly exalted him, bestowed on him the name that is above every name." If you say to a kid, what do you think God wants you to do with your life, right? You really start getting people to think that the countercultural expectation of people within the church is we live for Christ, we want to do what he says. It doesn't mean we become doormats. It doesn't mean that. As a matter of fact, you want to be great. Here's what you got to do. Jesus does it, "becoming a servant of all." Okay, that's the perspective. And so often we're trying to put a coat of godliness on the top of selfish ambition and selfish aspirations. And I tell you, don't do that.

Number two, "Don't Try to Sanctify Selfish Aspirations." And we do that in our family. Right? What kind of spouse we're going to find or what kind of kids we're supposed to have, or we do it in our workplace, right? What kind of job I will take, what kind of pay I need, what kind of opportunities for upward mobility I need? And we do that in church. I will only do this church if they'll let me do this. And I got to be on the stage and I got to do that, or I got to sing or got to whatever. Listen, you need to say, how can I serve? Because you may be, as I said in First Corinthians 7, drawn into knowing you're supposed to be a husband and a father because you have a desire for romantic intimacy. Right? I'm clear. I get it, right? God uses that to make it clear to me that God's calling in my life is marriage. But guess what? As soon as I step into



marriage, guess what I find out -- the rules for marriage. And what am I supposed to be? Laying down my life for my spouse. It's about service, right? It's about service. Listen to people talk about relationships who don't know God. It's about getting. And for us it's supposed to be about giving. Even in my job, right? I know they've got to exchange some dollars for my time and my effort and my skill. I get that. They got to exchange some dollars for that. I'm not working for free. I understand that's how that works.

But once I'm there and I unpack my boxes in my office. Right? What is my job? And I'm not just talking about ministry work. I'm talking about career work. Plumber. Right? Administrative assistant. Right? Financial planner. EMT. Fireman. Cop. Nurse. Whatever your job is, I'm there to serve. That's the job. It doesn't matter what your job is, what your task is. Middle manager, CEO, trustee. It doesn't matter. My job is to serve. And Jesus says that's the path of greatness. God will take care of everything else if you just take care of what the calling is. Every Christian calling is going to be a Christlike calling and Christlike callings, either in the church or in your career or in your family, are about serving. And we just got to change our mindset, because if you want to try to sanctify and whitewash the worldly way of thinking, they always want to promote themselves. They always want the best. They always want the easiest work for the biggest paycheck. That's not how this works, right? I'm there to serve. I'm there to labor. I'm there to wholeheartedly work in my job, wholeheartedly serve in my family, and wholeheartedly give myself as a highly committed person in my church. Those are the things that God calls me to do. Do not think if you have a selfish aspiration, do not think that's God's will for your life. Just don't because it's not I can absolutely, 100% assure you of that. Selfishness is not a part of Christian callings.

Back to our passage. Acts Chapter 26. Look at verse 19 now. "Therefore, King Agrippa," simple statement, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," but I just went at it, right? The city I was in first, "Damascus, then I went to Jerusalem, Judea," I even went into Asia Minor of those Gentiles. I was doing exactly what God told me to do. Tell them to "repent and turn to God" out of the power of Satan, out of the darkness, into the light. Do what's right. Heed the "deeds that are in keeping with your repentance." So he is now saying I didn't prove disobedient, I did it. I not only leaned into it, I jumped into this. Okay? And I would just say this to you and me, whatever our callings are, number three, you need to "Decisively Accept Your Calling." Accept it. Accept it. And you can't constantly be sitting there thinking, well, I can always have the greener grass over there. Think about that. It doesn't work in marriage, in domestic life. Sorry. Right? And I don't mean this in some unromantic way, but you're stuck. You're stuck, man. You're stuck. You're stuck. Okay? That is unromantic Pastor Mike. Well, I'm sorry. My wife was in the first service so I can say this stuff. (audience laughing) Yeah, but it's just the way it's going to be, right? You're in this relationship and that's it. So what do I do? I accept it, I accept it no matter what it is. If it's blissful or mediocre or hard, this is it.

And even in my job, you understand that I can chase the job to greener grass, constantly. But again, I would tell you there are principles in Scripture. It's not a covenant relationship like it is in marriage. I understand that. But I do want to tell you that wisdom would dictate, find honest work and do it and just stick with it. Life is short, man. You're not going to be doing this for 3,000 years. Just settle in and just do it and let it be like the tent making. Make enough money



to be able to feed your family and be able to put a roof over their heads and raise your families and then great. Right? Then you have all whatever's left over to be able to do this for the Lord in his church. And I understand we need to maybe more like us as opposed to Paul. It may be 75% in our career and 25% of our effort and time and resources in our church. I understand that. But we got to do whatever we can do to earn that money. And in doing that, I'm just saying needs, aptitudes, skill versus need in society and I'm going to get involved in that and I'm going to stick with it and I'm just going to decide to accept it. I just think the people who are so unsettled, so discontented, they're always bouncing around to new places, new careers, new jobs, they want new positions. We've got to rethink all that. In our church I'm not saying God's not going to advance you. He may advance you, he may move you from Judea to Asia Minor. I understand that. But I think it's that sense of trying to fight our calling. Once we accept it and embrace it, that was the first point, I just need to lean into it and decisively say, I'm going to obey my appointment, my calling, my purpose.

Moses struggled with that, did he not? I'll do this in the small groups. It's there on the back of your worksheet for the small group discussions. But in Exodus Chapter 4, do you remember when God says to him, he says, hey, Moses, you got to go there and be the spokesman for the Israelites and go address Pharaoh, and then you'll lead the people out of their slavery. Remember what Moses said? Oh, I can't wait. That's awesome. When do I start? Is that what he said if you know the Bible? Chapter 4. He said, I don't want to do it. Here's what he said, "Send someone else." Okay. And again, I would just say accept your calling and obediently follow your calling. Because in that passage, by the way, when Moses argues with God, here's what it says, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." That's not where you want to be. Right? So I would just tell you this: don't make God mad. Accept your calling. Right? You're in this domestic situation. You're in this career. You're in this church, right? Just you need to be totally about it. Consciously, purposefully saying I'm in it. I'll do it. Accept you're calling.

Verse 21. Do you still have that passage opened? Acts 26 verse 21. "For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me." For what reason? That demonstrative pronoun points back to him carrying out his calling. He went to Damascus and Jerusalem, Judea, Asia Minor. He's just doing what he was told to do. "And they tried to kill me." Now, I hope that there are not a lot of people trying to kill you. But I will tell you there will be plenty of people who aren't excited about you doing what you know is God's calling in your life domestically, in your career and in your church. So I just put it this way. Number four, you need to prepare for some people disputing your calling. "Prepare for Some to Dispute Your Calling." That's how I put it. Prepare for some to dispute your calling. And I certainly had my share of that even in just becoming a Christian. Right? I remember even becoming a Christian. But let's just think about my career. Right? Which overlaps with the church, obviously, because I'm a pastor. But when I started, it started with I think I need to go and continue this education and learn the Bible because I think God has me to be a teacher. And the only way I knew that was the desire was there. First Timothy Chapter 3 verse 1. The desire was there and there was some fruitfulness and affirmation. Right?



So it has to be a lot of things in place, about five things in place to know that you're called to do the kind of work I'm doing. But in this process I had 100 junior highers every Thursday night who were listening, I was teaching, they seemed to get it, light bulbs were coming on. And then there was an opportunity. There was an actual call. And the call came from a pastor in Tucson, Arizona who said, hey, Mike Fabarez would you like to come and work for us? So the first time I exchanged my hours in ministry for dollars and I went to do this, there were a lot of people who didn't like that. Number one, I was doing things with my old crowd in high school to pursue a different career, which I think I've talked about in this series. And then God brought me over here to this and God opened the doors for this. And people were saying, that's not a smart thing. One were my future in-laws. There's a... my wife's not in the service. (audience laughing) My future in-laws. Right? Her mom was a nurse. Her dad was a physician, a big-time physician, president of the American Medical Association here in L.A. And their plans for their daughter. Right? She was a 4.0. Right? And she was heading to Stanford to be a surgeon. And then I come along. (audience laughs) Right? And her life just changed. And so I had my funky career that I was heading toward. And then God takes me to Bible school and then I'm thinking about being clergy, a man of the cloth I think they called me. Right? Whatever that means. You're going to work in a church. Now, all they could envision was if you married my daughter she'll be broke. That's what they thought, right? This is going to be terrible. This is dumb.

So a lot of people disputed my calling, and a lot of people probably dispute your callings. A lot of people will be negative. I hope not many people are trying to kill you because of your calling, but just expect that. I don't need to drill down on this. It's everywhere in our series already. We know there's going to be opposition and I'll just summarize with one verse. You can jot down Second Timothy Chapter 3. Might as well get the whole context verses 10 through 12. And it ends in verse 12. "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." You're going to be opposed. People are going to dismiss that this is wrong. If you start investing your time even in ministry at church they're going to go, why are you doing that? Right? You're given money to that? We got this promotion for you. And the only problem is you got to travel a lot. But you're saying you don't want to leave your ministry post at your church for that? You're going to turn down money, you're going to leave money on the table because you need to do this church thing that you're doing. They won't understand it. They won't get it. You'll have friends, maybe family members, who will say this is dumb, and so you just got to be ready for that.

If it's the calling of God, they may oppose you, but oh well. Why? Because take a look at the next verse, verse 22. "To this day I have had the help that comes from God." Now I got naysayers. In his case, he's got Jews and Gentiles who want to kill him. I don't want him to carry out his calling. But guess who does want him to carry out his calling? Here comes G-O-D, God, God. And guess what? He's kind of important. He's like the most important being in all of the universe. So he's FOR me carrying out my calling. People are AGAINST me carrying out my calling. I just want to put it this way. God plus one is the majority, right? Do you remember that old phrase? God is a majority. If you're into majority rule, you and God know what your calling is, then do your calling. Do what God has called you to do. Right? And I understand there's some subjectivity in that, circumstantial, providential, counsel. All the rest



we could go through deciphering the will of God. But when you know you're in the right job, you know you're in the right church and you know you're in the right domestic situation, then you say, I know this: God will empower me to fulfill it. I put it this way. Number five, "Expect God to Empower You in Your Calling." He will see you through.

And here's another reason. Some of the people who knew me as a kid thought you should never be a preacher. Number one, don't they have to study a lot? You've never read a book. You've never written a paper that anyone could read. And, you ditch school when there's an oral report. We know you're a pretty good, kid. You don't normally ditch school, but you'll ditch school if you have to talk in front of people. So we don't think you have what it takes to be a preacher. Well, here I was teaching junior highers, I had 100 of them, and they were all paying attention. I thought, wow, this is weird. God seems to be doing something through my teaching. Well, all I knew was I understood. I met a lot of people early in college who seemed like they read a lot of books, they wrote a lot of good papers, and they seemed to love talking. And I didn't do any of those well at the beginning. And I realized this: God will see you through. He will empower you to do whatever he calls you to do. So whatever God's called you to do, you don't have to be the best of the best. All you have to do is say, God, please let me do this fruitfully in my domestic life, in my career, and in my church.

Okay, let me give you one passage on this that's worth looking at. I think I'll turn to you again to this passage in your small groups. But go to Jeremiah Chapter 1 and just remember this. This is a mindblowing passage and a very helpful passage, and it's not unique to the prophet. I think we can see in Psalm 139 and other places this is true of you. I think we can get this principle from Acts 17 as well, Paul in Athens talking about God's sovereign plan for each of us. But here, look at the statements here in Jeremiah Chapter 1, starting in verse 5. Here's what God says in Jeremiah. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." Okay, well, I wasn't around and God already knew me. This God, this timeless God, this powerful, omniscient God he knew, and fill in the blank, your name. He knew you. He knew you. "And before you were born I," this a great word, set you apart, "I consecrated you." You were going to be mine. You were mine. And not only that I gave you a job. "I appointed you a prophet to the nations." You're going to be an international spokesman for me. Can you imagine the mindblowing reality of this? And I'm just thinking this is true for all of you. Psalm 139, Acts 17. God put you on the timeline, had you born. He knew when you should be born. He knew where you should be born. He knew what parents you should have and then he set you apart. If you're here as a Christian today, you were consecrated by him in eternity past, and now he's appointed you to a particular set of callings in your home, in your work and in the church.

And you need to know this: God's got this figured out. And what we're going to do is make sure we don't fight it. Make sure we don't try to selfishly paint a God label on our selfish ambition. Right? That we're not ruffled when people dispute it and that we expect God to empower us and we're going to do it and we're going to know God's going to get us through this. And so he says in verse 6, O, Lord, that's awesome. I can't wait to start. No, he's just like Moses. "Ah, Lord! Behold, I don't know how to speak," I'm just a teenager, "I'm just a youth," I'm just a kid. But the Lord responded to me, that's a good point. I hadn't thought of that. No, the Lord said, stop it. "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall



go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them." That's usually what derails us. Leaning into our callings we're afraid. Don't be afraid. "I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord."

This is the truth of your calling. If God has called you to be a husband or a mother, God has called you to be an adult caregiver for your aging parents. If God has called you to whatever it is in your domestic life, God's going to empower you to do it, right? God's called you to a job, assuming it's the right job, the job that makes sense with your proclivities and your skill set and your training and aptitudes and there's a need for that. Then guess what? God's going to provide. God's going to give you what you need, right? You may not be employee of the month every month but you're going to do the job. You're going to do it the way God told you to do it, and you can do it, okay? You're going to do it well enough for you to make a living. God's going to call you to the church, he's going to call you to have a ministry post, to invest heavily in your church, to be a part of your church, to not forsake the assembly. God's going to give you all that you need to do that, right? Your secular job is not going to take up 80 hours a week. If it does, it's the wrong job. The reality of your life is going to be as God sees it rightly all allotted, right? Your domestic life, your work life, the church life, and the callings that God will provide for you have to trust him and not be afraid.

Paul's testimony I've referred to it so many times in this series in Second Timothy Chapter 4, the last extant book of Paul, saying, "I finished the race," right? Do you remember that? "I kept the faith. Fought the good fight," all of that. And then he's basically saying as he recalls his ministry, God got me through everything, every trial, every problem. He's brought me to this place. I know my head is going to end up in a basket, and they're going to cut my head off here in Rome. But I'm telling you what, God's got me through the whole thing. At the end of your life, when we come and gather for your funeral here's the idea. God's going to get you through. The callings will be fulfilled. You have to trust him to empower you and the strong support of God will be there. "I have the help that comes from God." Yeah you do. And God is going to accomplish his will through you. You got to believe that. Trust him.

Now, an interesting statement is in the middle of verse 22. "I've got the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying to both small and great." Now, it may have been coming on the heels of the beginning of verse 22 that he gets help from God that he can sit here and say to King Agrippa, the highest ranking person he's talked to so far in his ministry, he can do it with the same kind of confidence that he does when he's just talking to a guy on the road as he's traveling through the Roman roads of Asia Minor. Right? Perhaps. But we certainly get a good picture here of Paul, much like Christ, willing to talk to anyone, willing to talk to anyone in his ministry. Jesus can sit there before Pilate or Herod or whoever it is, and they can also go to the fishermen on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or a Samaritan woman who's drawing water out of a well. Great and small. He does not have a discriminating set of gifts where he says he only uses these gifts on the top elite of society.

So you need to know this: you're calling, if it's God's calling, will never limit your calling to the elites. That's the way I put it. Number six, "Never Limit Your Calling" to the elites. And some of you may be in a job where your job is limited to the elites. Okay, that's fine, but whatever you



use in your job, I hope that you know that even when you're not being paid for it you can use those skills, it doesn't matter if they're the elite or not. I find people, even in the spiritual realm, saying I'm only going to do ministry to the elites. I hold the job to the starlets in Hollywood, right? Or I'm all about the missionary to the NBA or whatever. Be careful if you have this kind of discriminating eye. You know, I'm only going to preach to this kind of people or this kind of group, that kind of discrimination. Right? The Bible would say in James Chapter 2 is making distinctions in my mind with evil motives, the way it's put the English Standard Version evil thoughts, because you know that those people who only want to use their gifts or only want to marry the best and only want to have the job that's going to be that upper crust. And my church has got to be the best church. I got to have the best ministry in that church. And it's only to the elite. However that translates in those three spheres, right? The evil motive goes back to the second point on the outline. There's some kind of selfish ambition in that.

The guy says in James Chapter 2. Right? James, the half-brother of Christ, if you see a guy coming in rich with a gold ring and you treat him differently, that preferential treatment shows the evil motive in your heart. So I'm just saying this: Paul would share with anyone, right? You should take your skills that God has endowed you with and be willing to utilize those with anyone. And your investments that God has made in your life spiritually you got to be willing to disciple anyone, right? We're not going to be discriminating. We're not going to be making those distinctions based on people's wealth or their class. Right? We're ALL made in the image of God as Romans Chapter 10 verse 12 says, "No distinctions." And as he says in Chapter 12 verse 16, you should be willing to associate with the lowly, right? You should be willing to associate with the lowly. It doesn't matter, right? "Don't be haughty." Don't be arrogant. No distinction, because God is building his Church, by the way, First Corinthians 1 says, with all types of people, "not many noble" by the way. So stop with this aspiration to only use your skills in this world to the upper crust. Never limit your calling to the elites.

Bottom of verse 22. Acts Chapter 26, "Saying nothing," both to the great and the small, "saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass." That the Messiah would come, the Christ would come, and he would "suffer and be the first to rise from the dead," to conquer death and "he proclaimed both light," the truth, "both to our people," the Jews, "and to the Gentiles." Just know I'm just doing what the Bible says. Here's the thing about the Bible. The Bible, God's communication to us, God's revelation to us, God's truth and principles and precepts to us, and nothing about God's calling will ever contradict that. Your calling will always be fleshing that out in real life. You will only lead or do whatever you're doing in your marriage that is going to reflect the truthfulness. You're called as it says in Psalm 119 to "run in the way of God's commands," right? The boundaries and the guardrails on your ministry in your home are within the boundaries of God's truth. The same at your work. If you're being asked to lie by your boss you got to say no, I can't. My calling at work will only be to flesh out the truth and principles of God. Right?

Go back to the Sermon on the Mount. All the things that God says that's your character at work. That's your integrity at work, right? And you're not going to do any different. As a matter of fact, you're also called to be an ambassador at work, salt and light, as he goes on to say in the Sermon on the Mount. And that's just it. You can't shut up about Christ. It doesn't mean



your job is church. I understand that. You're not holding worship service, unless they allow you to in the lunchroom at lunch. I get that. But you're there to do whatever you're called to do in your work. But you're called to represent Christ and you're called to do it in a godly way. You can't do it in an ungodly way. Your job cannot be promoting things that God is against. You just can't. You got to say my job is not just for a paycheck. I'm living out my Christian commitment. I'm living out the Christian virtues in my work and of course in the church. Right? We should only do what God asks us to do in the church. That ought to be the purest form of ministry that I'm actually driving as hard as I can to disciple people, to see people won to Christ. It's when all of the restraints are off for us to do the good that God calls us to do. I understand I can't do everything I want to do with the people at work in terms of my secular career, right? If I were a tent maker, I can only do what I can do. Paul wasn't demanding that, you know, verses are in every tent that he sells. A lot of people taking those tents and doing other things with them. But tents are a good thing in and of themselves. It's for human flourishing to have a tent. And your job, I hope, is in a career that's doing some good for society. So live out God's Word in your calling.

I was just ministered to this week by John Chapter 8 verse 29. I thought about the way that Jesus says this. It's so convicting. It says this in verse 29 of John 8. Jesus said, "And he who sent me is with me," I love that, "he has not left me alone." I love that. I want closeness with the Father. He says, "For I always do the things that are pleasing to him." Now, none of us can put the superlative in that sentence because we're not the Son of God, right? But I want to do what's pleasing to God. I want to do what's pleasing to him in my home. I want to do what's pleasing to him at my work. I want to do what's pleasing to him in the church. And that should be my conviction in all those areas. And while Colossians, let's go to Colossians Chapter 3. At the end of Chapter 3, look at verse 23. I think I may have put this on your questions on the back of the worksheet, but Colossians 3:23. This works not only for the work, your vocation, your secular work, it works for the home and it works for the church. It's so good. Whatever your role is, as it says, as Peter said, right? If you speak, "Speak as though you're speaking the oracles of God; if you're going to serve, serve with the strength that God supplies." This same idea here. It's talking about your work. Verse 23, "Whatever you do, work heartily," right? Whether you're a mom, right? Whether you're a Sunday school teacher or whether you're a secretary, whatever your job is. "As for the Lord and not for men." We're doing it ultimately for God, right? You're faithful in your home, you're faithful in your job, and you're faithful at church for the Lord, "Knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the inheritance as your reward." I love this, "You are serving the Lord," the boss, "Christ" the Messiah.

I want you to view your life that way. That is the ultimate calling that you have. That's the broadest calling. Then you got three spheres that most of us live within, right? Do that well, know that you're in the right place domestically, know that you're in the right place vocationally, your secular job, and that you're doing what you should be doing in your church. You've got to balance those, I understand that, but in that balance we got to make sure that we're saying I'm doing this and I'm doing it for the Lord, I'm doing it because it's God's calling in my life and I know that ultimately this is the challenge of the Christian life to do all of this pleasing him. Not living for myself, everyone else and their family and their work and



whatever social things they do outside of work are all for themselves, even if they're serving other people, because I feel good serving other people, right? There may be a lot that God splashes into our life as a blessing in doing all three of these things, but all of them need to be purposed and focused and aimed at serving. Serve, God will then exalt you at the proper time, right? He will give you a name that is great, right? And be great among you. Who is going to be great? Servantable. That's our call.

Let's pray. God, I pray for our church. Filled with stay-at-home moms, sales associates, CEOs, CFOs, restaurant servers, receptionists, teachers, project managers, ministry people, plumbers, architects. All kinds of different jobs are represented here. But that's only one facet of our lives. We also go home to a particular domestic situation. It could be single people living, you know, sharing a room here. You know, some gals in our church thinking about their domestic life, maybe heading into another season, maybe the guys who are thinking in our college or young people's groups where they'll be in terms of their domestic life, coming home from their jobs, and then, of course, serving at the church, all these three areas of our lives, whether we're going back to homes that are filled with kids or a small condo, just me and my wife or whatever the situation might be. God, you want us to have enough awareness and clarity that we know we're serving you in the calling that you brought to our lives. Help us not to make that so much of a mystery that we're always hunting and searching and questioning, let us settle into honest work, a good church, a family that you've called us to and do all of those with the excellence that you deserve. So we give ourselves afresh to you, motivate us in this long trial of swimming upstream against the culture as we find the great joy, the blessedness of giving rather than receiving, because we know we will receive. You'll be good to us to reward those who are like Christ. So we pray God you might motivate us and encourage us today.

In Jesus name. Amen.