



Discernment-Part 6

Obsolete & Eternal Covenants

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I was sent a meme this week that depicted a young man on a park bench on one end of the park bench. And on the other end of the park bench there was Jesus appealing to the man with these words: “No,” Jesus said, “I’m not talking about Twitter. I literally want you to follow me.”

Was that too social-media savvy for this crowd? You all got that? “You lost me with the word meme.” Look it up. Yeah, after preaching to the high schoolers for a week, I came back with a whole new vocabulary. M-E-M-E—look it up.

It made me think, though—and I literally have to admit, I laughed out loud when I read that. I thought to myself, you know, it’s funny how we toss around the phrase “Follow me.” I get it. And we call ourselves followers of Christ because Jesus said some 20 times in the Gospels, he said, “Follow me.” And so I get the idea that we want to see ourselves as followers of Christ. But that meme notwithstanding, you can’t literally follow him. You can’t, right? You can’t leave the building today and follow Christ. He’s not walking the streets of South Orange County—you can’t do it.

“Now, Mike, come on. That’s not what we mean.” What we mean is we follow the teachings of Christ. That’s what we mean. Well, if that’s what you mean, then the question will eventually surface—you have to ask yourself—which teachings will you follow? Because if you are a careful reader of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—if you just stuck with the red letters of the Gospels—you’d end up recognizing there’s some teaching that is going to lead you this way if you follow him, and some teaching is going to lead you this way. And they’re incompatible. I mean, you can’t have them both ways.

For instance, look with me at Luke chapter 5. Now, I know we’re getting to the bottom of this—the last four verses we’ll cover today. But go back to a passage that we studied not long ago, beginning in verse 12. Luke chapter 5, verse number 12—that was the encounter, and we preached on this not too long ago, about the leper who gets healed by Christ.

Now note this, in verse 12: “While he was in one of the cities”—Christ was—“there was a man full of leprosy” (Luke 5:12). “And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face; he begged him, ‘Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.’” Verse 13: “Jesus stretched out his hand, he touched him, he said, ‘I will; be clean.’ And immediately the leprosy left him. And he”—that is Christ—“charged him”—



that's the leper—"said, 'Tell no one, but'"—quote, red letters now, right?—"Go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

Travel down to Jerusalem, go on the Temple Mount, take the prescribed sacrifice that you find in the Pentateuch, in the writings of Moses. You bring that under the submission of the Levitical priesthood; prove it to them; they'll take you through the ceremony and you'll be cleansed. So do it exactly as the law of Moses says. Well, you follow that teaching and it certainly will take you in one direction in your religion—your life before God.

But you might remember—you don't need to turn there—but back at Easter, I was taking you through John chapter 4, Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well—remember that? Here, the woman at the well, to try to, you know, kind of divert the conversation away from the probing and convicting personal conversation that was beginning with Jesus, she says, "Now I've got a theological question for you. Which mountain should we worship in?" Because she's a Samaritan. Of course, they're not welcome at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. So she, over her shoulder, is in the shadow of Mount Gerizim, and that's where the Samaritans worshiped. And she said, "You know, we say you worship here in this mountain, and you guys down there—the southern Jews in Judea—you guys say you should be worshiping on Mount Mariah in Jerusalem. Now, which is it?"

And I'm thinking, okay, I've read Luke chapter 5. I know what Jesus is gonna say. He's gonna say, "Well, what does the law of Moses say? What does the Old Testament say? Clearly, it's not Mount Gerizim. God has picked Jerusalem and Mount Mariah. His temple will be built there, and if you're going to offer sacrifices, you offer them there." That wasn't his answer, was it? What did he say? "Neither." That was his answer—neither mountain. When he talks about worshiping in spirit and in truth—apparently taking the whole Mosaic law as it relates to the worship forms—and he just pushed it away.

So which Jesus are we gonna follow? The one that tells us to keep those ceremonies of the Old Testament, or those teachings that say we disregard them? Now this is the problem we face. Even in that simple observation, in reading through the red letters of the Gospels, people say, "Well, there you go—your Bible's incoherent. Your Bible—you know, you're quoting to me all the things that I'm supposed to do, but it seems like you Christians conveniently pick and choose what you're going to obey." I mean, that's how it seems. You start talking about homosexuality and sexual ethics—"Enough with you jamming morality from the Bible down my throat, because you're not doing the rest of the stuff that the Bible says matters," right? That's a classic comeback on the issue. "Well, you know, what—are you not shaving the sides of your head? Are you bringing sacrifices? Do you not, you know, take clothing that is made of two materials and mix them?" You don't? I mean, is that prohibition still valid? "Or how about the two kinds of seeds in your fields—is that how you operate? So don't talk to me about sexual ethics from the Old Testament." You've heard that one, right?



And we Christians go, “Well, you know, it’s just—I just think these are still valid and those, I don’t know—we don’t do.” You’d better have an intelligent, biblical answer. Because if God says we shouldn’t be mixing fabrics in our clothing, do you think I’d be up here telling you it doesn’t matter what the tag says on your shirt? If we were supposed to not shave the sides of our head, and that was part of God’s command, do you think that I’d be up here with this haircut saying, “No, absolutely not”? I love God. I want to do exactly what God tells me to do.

Why is this so confusing—particularly with Christ? Why is it so confusing? I just gave you two examples there. Here’s the answer: because when it comes to Jesus Christ—his teaching, his ministry, his life and his death—these things were the apex of God’s plan. His biblical workings and dealings with humanity came to an apex in Christ, to where one whole side of this mountain, if you will, and all the directives and all the things that led up to Christ—they were all filled with all these directives and commands from God, that right at the summit—right at the peak, right at the apex of this—everything changed. And it wasn’t a matter of years before the other side of this mountain, if you will, looked completely different than this side.

And because Jesus is at the apex, you’ll see times when he gives a nod and clearly says, “Listen, if that’s what Moses’ law says, do it”—no matter if it’s a ceremony that involves sacrificing and cleansing of a skin disease, do exactly what Leviticus says. And other times, like in John 4, he’ll say, “That doesn’t matter.” Why? Well, because I didn’t quote the whole verse to you today. I mean, I hope that you would carefully read every passage of the Bible, and not let me get away with what I just did. Because when it came to Mount Gerizim or Mount Mariah, here’s what Jesus said: “A time is coming, and now is.” What’s the point? There’s a time when everything changes, and, you know what, you’re looking at the guy that changes everything. Jesus said, “I—my life, my ministry, my death, my resurrection—changes the whole thing.”

And if you want to come down to a point where it changed—if you were here on Good Friday, we tried to depict it here on the screen—it was at the moment that the sacrifice on that cross was accepted by the Father. And at that point God destroyed the temple by doing what? Tearing the veil. That whole system, at that moment, was made completely obsolete in God’s economy.

Now, God is not a schoolyard kid making up rules to the game as he goes along. As a matter of fact, when you study this issue, what you need to do is be very careful in looking at the way God sets us up for this change and then initiates the change. And that thing—even in the ministry of Christ—that change, that radical shift and transformation is something that we reach.



Now, at the end of Luke 5—you still have Luke 5 open—we’re going to look at the last four verses, which unfortunately cannot be divorced from the context, which is all raised by a question about fasting. There are three mini-parables here—if you glanced at it, verse 36 is one; verses 37 and 38 is another; and verse 39 is a third. We have three little mini-parables. And in those mini-parables, they are an answer to what has just been brought up.

Now, Christ is going to unpack and expand on the issue at hand, but the issue at hand, verse 33, is: why in the world do your disciples not fast like the other disciples? Look at how it’s put—verse 33: “They said to him”—who said to them? The Pharisees and the scribes of the Pharisees; look at the context—“The disciples of John, they fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.” And Jesus said to them—listen, here’s the answer—“Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?”

As Jesus often does, he answers with an illustration. It’s not forthright, but we get the point. You can’t sit there and fast if you’re in the middle of the wedding reception; and the inauguration of the new thing that God is doing with the presence of the Messiah—it changes everything. “The days are coming, by the way, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.”

And as we—if you didn’t study this with us—go back and download it or stream it or whatever and get this. We made the distinction here, carefully, understanding prescribed fasts in the Bible and reactionary fasts in the Bible. And the prescribed fast—if you want to look at the law of Moses—we had one, and that was on the day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement; you had to abstain from eating food. Then the Levites and the priests and sometimes the kings—they would enforce other fasts; and if you were living under that authority, then you would fast on those days as well. None of that really is in view in verse 35. But the reactionary fasts that are all throughout the Bible—when people are hurting, when they’re pained, when they’re sorrowful and they abstain from food—well, that’s going to happen, and it’s going to happen when I leave them at the ascension. And we looked at all that last time.

But that difference—without any reference to allegiance to prescribed fasts after the ministry of Christ; the focus on just, “Yeah, they’re going to fast, but right now they’re not fasting”—and the whole old-and-new contrast, he then illustrates three ways. Verse 36—let’s look at these, verses 36 through 39:

“He also told them a parable”—a fitting parable to expand on what we just saw—the tension between “Do we do what the law says in fasting, or do we not?”



“No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he’ll tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.” Verse 37: “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.” Lastly, verse 39: “And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’”

These three little mini-parables tell the story of the idea that is on the table right now—and that is: old forms, new forms; the old way, the new thing; the inauguration of the other side of the mountain, if you will, after the apex of the ministry of Christ. What’s going to happen? Everything’s going to change.

And the first thing he says, in verse 36, he gives a sewing illustration, if you will. Not my wheelhouse—not sure of all of that—but I get the illustration. You’ve got a new piece of unshrunk garment here—a new garment. You don’t put it on an old garment because old garments shrink. I may be expanding, but I’m confident my old clothes keep shrinking. It’s not good. What’s the point? You know, if you put the new garment that’s unshrunk on the old garment—try to patch—it’s not going to work, because once in time those things get washed and dried, washed and dried—what happens? It’s going to tear. It doesn’t work. The piece will not match the old; it’s gonna tear it. It won’t work. What’s the point? Incompatibility. That’s the picture. Christ is this new thing, inaugurating a new dispensation, a new age, a new covenant, a new reality—God interacting with his people—and he’s at the head of it. The old fabric of religion—pardon the pun, but it was intentional—the old fabric of religion will not work with it. There’s got to be something different here. They will not work together. The old goes away because the new thing is incompatible with the old.

Now again, is this God just kind of changing the rules as he goes? No. As a matter of fact, six centuries before the coming of Christ, we had all kinds of detailed explanations from guys like Jeremiah and prophets like Ezekiel, talking all about the newness of the new covenant that is inaugurated here with the coming of Messiah. And when he comes, everything about the fabric of religion is going to change.

Let me give you an example of this—not by going to Jeremiah 31 (it’s where we’d find his explanation of the new covenant)—but let’s turn to Hebrews, please. Keep your finger in Luke 5; we’ll get back to that. But in Hebrews chapter 8—we’ll start there. And we could start at the beginning of the book because it’s all about the transition of this fabric of religion, if you will—the way it works, what you do to worship God, what is required of us. I mean, beginning at the beginning of the book and it goes through the Sabbath and the priesthoods and the sacrifices and the Levites and all the things that are required of you as an Old Testament Jew. And you can see—the name should give us a sense of the tension—and that is: this is the book to the Hebrews. They were growing up in Sabbath school; they were used to all of this; they were accustomed to the forms. Then Christ now is on the scene, and they had to change everything because the old form was



incompatible with the new covenant. Because of that there was tension; there were problems; they were tempted to—as chapter 10 says—shrink back to the old ways. And here’s the writer of Hebrews saying, “Don’t do it.” The new thing—it may be weird because it doesn’t fit the patterns you grew up with, the habits of your religion—but you’ve got to ditch those, because Christ is now here, fulfilling the very plan that God spelled out six centuries before he came.

Verse 13—you can glance through that—and what he’s doing is quoting sections of Jeremiah 31. He says then, in summary in verse 13 (you in Hebrews chapter 8, verse 13): “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one”—now here’s a word you’ve got to underline; I don’t care if you’ve never written in your Bible—this has to stand out on your iPad; please highlight this—“He makes the first one”—what’s the word in ESV?—“obsolete.” Obsolete. With the coming of Christ, the old covenant is—here’s a great word—obsolete.

If someone asks you why you can eat a BLT and be a Christian—“What? I thought you couldn’t eat pork; God was very clear about these dietary restrictions”—you can use the word “obsolete.” Those laws are obsolete; those rules are obsolete, because all of the things that related to that first covenant—they no longer invoke; they are no longer binding; they’ve been rescinded. Now that’s hard for people. It was hard for Peter, was it not? In Acts chapter 10—it’s the first question on the back of the discussion questions, and I’m going to give you—in the mind of Peter—how hard was it even for Peter? In the tenth chapter of Acts—think about this—Christ has been resurrected and ascended; he’s in the middle of the book; and when he’s asked, in his vision, to eat his first ham sandwich, he freaks out. “Never, Lord—I’ve never eaten anything unclean.” Now you tell me—after the time of Christ, he told you that there’s no way the new covenant is going to be compatible with the old covenant, which included things like dietary laws—and you’re still struggling by the tenth chapter of Acts. How hard it is sometimes for these old habits to really get passed away, we think. And for them it was—it was a struggle.

Middle of verse 13: “And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” Now, for them, it was already obsolete and it was gone from their lives; but down the street—to the Hebrews that he’s writing to—here are all these Jews still doing the very thing that all these people in his congregation grew up doing. And he says, “You know what though? It’s going away.” This is actually a prediction that would come true. Because in time, in 70 A.D., Titus, the future Roman emperor, would come through as a lieutenant there, and he would decimate the temple, and he would, for all intents and purposes, shut down the old system.

Even today, you can find Orthodox Jews in New York and, you know, in Burbank and all over the country and even in downtown Jerusalem—but they still—“You know, take me to the Levitical priest and let’s bring our goat for worship.” Can’t do it. Don’t have it. It’s not working. It has passed away. More on that another time.

Look to chapter 9 now. Look at verse number 8—just keep going; just going to survey a little bit of this book: “By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing.” See, until that veil was ripped, we had an old way; but now there’s a new way—which, by the way, it says (verse 9) “is symbolic for the present age.” “According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but they deal only with food and drink and various washings”—here’s another line to highlight—“regulations for the body imposed”—that means they were binding—“until the time of reformation.”

And this is not the sixteenth-century Reformation—get this straight. This is the coming of Christ—the reforming, the refreshing, if you will—as Peter put it—of the coming of Christ. This was the new dispensation, the new age. And all these regulations about food and drink and various washings and all the regulations of clean and unclean—they were imposed—and you’d better do them because God commanded—until the time of the reformation. And when Christ came, and when he did his work—and if you want to be really specific—at the moment of the acceptance of the sacrifice on the cross, after all the suffering—when that veil really ripped—you know what? Those impositions—gone. Didn’t have any of them; didn’t have to do them ever again.

Chapter 10—look at verse 1. You want a good contrast? Here’s a good set of words to contrast these two: “For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come”—that’s what they were all about; every sacrifice: shadow of the sacrifice of Christ; every washing about clean and unclean—all about the shadows of really being clean in my sin; having cleansed from my account—all of these things—they were just shadows of the good things to come—“instead of the true form of these realities.” You want to contrast? Shadows/realities. Shadows: reality priesthood of Christ; shadows in the sacrifice: reality, the death of Christ outside the gates of Jerusalem on that Good Friday. All of the things that related to all of the cleansings—all of the kinds of clean-and-unclean comparison—are all done the moment you put your trust in Christ and are cleansed of your sins. Those are the realities, and they spoke to the truth of what Christ was going to do. And once it hit—the training wheels, if you will; the contraption, the apparatus of the old covenant ceremonies—gone, obliterated. You want biblical words? Obsolete. No longer imposed. Shadows.

I know that’s not enough for some of you. And I’ve got, you know, people in the lobby—arguing about all kinds of things; from the Sabbath to all kinds of things. Now, here’s the deal: you need more than this; I recognize this. But instead of us talking in the patio for the next 15 hours, you can go to the back of the worksheet and you can look at all those sermons there that I’ve listed for you—you can download all of those for free. I walked through many of these chapters in the book of Hebrews—I really walked through them all—but I’ve highlighted a few that I think may be pertinent to this topic: Why don’t we have a temple? Why do we need a new covenant anyway? Why don’t we keep all the Old Testament ceremonies? What’s with all the animal sacrifices—why don’t we do them anymore? Should we be expecting—since God replaced the old one with a new one—should we be expecting a “new new covenant”? Maybe it’s going to keep shifting as we go along?



See, all of those are important—especially if someone’s telling you, “You’ve got to keep the Sabbath; you’ve got to keep regulations here; and you’ve got to go back to the way that God said.” Here’s the deal: I am all about keeping every rule God tells me to keep. And there is a set of rules, and I’m keeping it. “Well, why are they in the Bible? There’s a lot of things that God asked for his people to do.” Just like I asked my kid—when he went to a wedding and they asked him to be the ring bearer—we put a cummerbund on him and it was required. He hasn’t worn one since. And you could say, “Well, you know, you’ve got to wear it; Dad said you’ve got to wear it.” No—I said you had to wear it then, in that situation. Now, you know what I prefer? You never wear one again. I know I don’t like wearing them. So you’re done with that. So over.

Same thing with God. He said, “Don’t eat pork.” He said, “You can’t go here; you can’t do that.” All these ceremonies—“You’ve got a skin disease; to get it fixed, you’ve got to be authorized by a priest to clear you of your disease. Go do this. Take this...” But all of that—“Where to worship?”—“A time is coming; now is upon you—it’s here.” And when would it be absolutely complete and final? At the death of Christ.

“So we throw out the Old Testament? Great—I can carry my New Testament around; pocket New Testaments—less to carry; you don’t have to memorize and learn all the books of the Old Testament—fantastic.” Hmm—not what I said. Why? Because there’s more to the Old Testament than ceremonies.

Now let me help you with some of this. And I think this is helpful in returning to a lot of passages, but let me turn you to 1 Corinthians chapter 7. And I want you to be able to leave this building able—when someone says, “Don’t give me this part of the Old Testament and tell me you don’t keep that part”—I want you to be able to answer this with absolute clarity in your mind. You should be able to rightly handle the word of truth and know exactly what God is asking us to adhere to and obey and what is binding and what is not. God makes this clear throughout the Bible for New Testament Christians.

1 Corinthians 7—right under verse 18. This will help. Now, I still carry around an Old Testament and it’s still important—why? Well, give you an example—verse 18: “Was anyone at the time he was called already circumcised?” Now, how important was circumcision in the Old Testament? You’re an Old Testament Jew—did you have to do it? Absolutely—you had to do it. Why? Because the law of Moses commanded it. Was it a command in the law of God? Yes, it was commanded. “Yeah, yeah, got to do it.” Could not be a godly person and have that command and have opportunity to keep that command and tell God, “I ain’t keeping that command.” You’ve got to do it.



“Well, if you were circumcised”—this may sound weird—“Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision.” Don’t think about that one too long, by the way. But there was a practice in the Greco-Roman world that tried to repair circumcision. You pay a urologist enough today, I’m sure he’ll give, you know, give it a try too—but don’t think about it too long.

This is easier to think about, though also uncomfortable: “Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised?” Okay—you become a Christian uncircumcised; you’re living in Corinth—“Let him not seek circumcision.” Now think about that. That’s a directive from an apostle to disregard a direct command of Scripture. The command of Scripture is: if you’re a person of God, the covenant people of God, you get circumcised. If you’re a proselyte into Judaism in the Old Testament, you must be circumcised. That is a requirement of God, a command of God. He says, “Don’t do it.” “You’re telling me to disregard the Old Testament.” Not all of it.

Verse 19: “For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision”—now this should be obvious that that is an external form of some kind of expression of religion—“but keeping the commandments of God.” What doesn’t matter is circumcision; what does matter is keeping the commandments of God.

Now your head is going to spin—“What do you mean? Isn’t that a command of God?” It’s a certain kind of command of God. Did God command other things? Absolutely. And he does not insult your intelligence here. He assumes that you can clearly differentiate between commands that are invoked from Testament to Testament and those that are not, because Jesus made it clear, the apostles made it clear, the Bible makes it clear that the ceremonies are only for a time. No longer priesthoods, no longer sacrifices, no longer any of those things.

But what about lying, cheating, stealing, being faithful to your wife? Well, absolutely. Why? Because those are the moral laws of God. You want to make the distinction that’s being made right here: moral law/ceremonial law. Moral law—always in vogue, eternal and always binding. Ceremonial law—foods, washings, ceremonies, dietary laws, what day we worship—they are all forms, shadows, and they are now obsolete. That’s what the Bible teaches.

Even the Sabbath—that’s the one I get argued about a lot. Absolutely. If you haven’t heard my sermon from Hebrews 4—not that I’m the end-all and all this—but if I’m your pastor, it’d be good to hear your pastor on these things—all about the Sabbath. And in that passage there’s so much about the Sabbath and what it was intended for and what it fulfills and the symbolism and how, in Christ, we are living in the Sabbath. And I can’t believe that Christian radio, Christian broadcasts, and Christian books are still propagating this. And they do—giving in to people that think we should be constrained by the forms.

Turn to chapter 9 in 1 Corinthians, if you would—there's more to this. An example—another good example. Okay, so he's telling me to disregard part of the commands of God—what kinds? Well, in this case (chapter 7), circumcision. Well, in chapter 9—watch the logic and what goes on here—verse 8. If you glance through verses 1 through 7, he's talking about paid clergy, paid ministers, paid pastors; and he's basically saying, "You need to pay your pastors." Makes sense, right? Shouldn't feel bad about that—should feel good about that.

Verse 8: "Do I say these things on human authority? Is it just me saying this?" Keep reading: "Does not the Law say the same thing?" "Now, you told me not to listen to the Law anymore." No—no, certain parts of the Law. Then he quotes the Law—verse 9: "For it is written in the Law of Moses"—"Well wait a minute, I thought you said we don't keep the Law?" And he quotes one of them: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain."

"What? Okay, okay—I know my pastor is a little overweight, and I want to call him an ox—I don't. What does this have to do with anything? Muzzle an ox?" You do know what that's all about: you put the yoke on the ox—this big, you know, beam—and then you had this long thing—looked like a giant donut. And then you had this trough, and you put the grain; and he'd walk around in circles and tread out the grain—this big, strong animal. And the Bible says, "Oh, by the way, Israelites, when you're doing that, don't put a muzzle on your ox so that he can eat while he's doing that. Let him eat—he's working for you; let him eat." That's the picture.

And he's now quoting this to talk about the fact that when you give an offering, you need to know that's going to support the income of your pastors—and that's biblical. And he's quoting Old Testament Mosaic Law. And he asks us the question in verse 9, "Do you think the Law is just so two-dimensional that that's all it's about?" He says, "Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Is it really just about the fact that God is in heaven going, 'Oh, don't let your big fat ox be hungry when he's working'?" That's not it. There's more than that.

Matter of fact, you've got to highlight this line—verse 10: "Does he not certainly speak for our sake?" Now he's including his audience—and who's his audience? A bunch of Jews in Jerusalem? No—they are this Greco-Roman society in Corinth, which I've said many times is the Orange County of the ancient world. Modern-day Turkey—this city here is—now think about this—so non-Jewish in many ways (though there were Jews there, I get that). You've got people in this church being constrained and bound by the Mosaic Law. What part of the Mosaic Law? Circumcision—chapter 7 makes that clear. I'm not talking about ceremonial law—we're talking about the moral law, the principle of the moral laws of the Old Testament.



Now, I don't get, you know, a lot of things out of the New Testament that round out my morality and ethics. I've got to go to the Old Testament. And even when I read something about how God says I ought to function in treading out grain and not muzzling my ox, I learn something there about—(as he goes on to say)—that the plowman—if it's written for our sake, we add another: "the plowman should plow in hope, and the thresher should thresh in hope of sharing in the crop." And he says—now make the application, verse 11: "If we've sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?" That's how it works. And you can go to the Law of Moses to figure that out.

You see the distinction here? Paul expects us to be grownups when we read the Old Testament and be able to recognize that when we're talking about clean and unclean, purification rites, and all the rest—those were the training wheels, if you will, to keep my mind on track to Christ. But when it talks about morality—sexual ethics, how I treat people, kindness, generosity, fidelity, faithfulness, all the rest—these are moral laws, and I'm bound to keep those. And that's the pattern of the New Testament: moral law—eternally binding; ceremonial law—temporary. As a matter of fact, stop with "temporary"—obsolete. That's the biblical word—only a shadow; only to serve us until Christ came.

That's super important for us to get: realize that Christ changes everything. And only—just a sidebar, real quick, as I wrap up the first point—you do understand how hard it was for people like Peter and every other Jew to grow up sacrificing animals, going home on Sunday and feeling like we worship God and going through all the rigmarole, and now in Christ we're saying, "Don't need to sacrifice anything. Matter of fact, Levitical priesthood—doesn't matter. Matter of fact, don't even go up to the Temple Mount anymore—it doesn't even matter. As a matter of fact, we could worship on a Thursday—fantastic." Doesn't matter—ceremonial laws, dietary laws—doesn't matter. That's hard.

I don't have time for this, but if you jot this down—Ephesians chapter 4, verses 17 through 24—here's a great little sidebar applicational encouragement to you to at least identify with the difficulty of the scribes and the Pharisees—the Pharisees that say, "It's going to be really hard for us to give up the old forms." It's hard for us even as Christians in our lives to give up the old forms of our pre-Christian days, is it not? That's what Ephesians 4 is all about. In the words of 2 Corinthians 5 (as you'll look at in the discussion questions this week), you need to recognize that "if any person is in Christ, he's a new creation; old things [are] gone, new things [have] come." That's as hard for us as, you know, Western Americans as it was for downtown Jerusalem Jewish converts—hard. The values, the priorities, the way you spend your money, what you laugh at, what you entertain yourself with—all of that changes.

Just remember the first point of the message: if it's not changing, something's wrong—which is what Ephesians 4 is all about. Christ changes everything—changes everything in biblical history (that's the macrocosm), and it should change everything—just a little pastoral devotional now—it



should change everything in the microcosm of your own life. And if you don't have a testimony that's clearly pre-Christian and after-Christ—radically different—then you've got to question (as Ephesians 4 does) whether or not God's even invaded your life or not.

Number two—Luke 5 (it's printed there on your worksheet, or you can turn back there if your finger's still in that part of the Bible). Jesus tells the second little parable—that mini-parable—and he says, in verses 37 and 38, sounds a lot like the first one; different illustration, but the same idea, it looks like; but he goes a step further: “No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it'll be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.”

Now, sewing wasn't in my wheelhouse. Wine—certainly not in my wheelhouse, I can tell you. But I've studied, so let me explain this to you because most of you don't put wine in wineskins, I'm assuming.

First of all, wineskins—what in the world is that? Wineskins are like the modern day—I hate to put it this way, but—the Hydrapaks. You ever seen those guys carry them on their bikes when they go mountain biking or whatever? It's a backpack full of water. Wineskins were the same thing—only they were made of—you know, not nylon and plastic and all that—they were made of animal skins. They would take a goat, for instance, chop his head off (it's gross, it is to think about, but that's how they fed themselves), they would skin it, they would take all the hair and all the stuff off of it, they'd have a wineskin; they'd sew up all the parts where the legs go, and then they would have something that would be watertight. And it would be this big, you know, Hydrapak, if you will—a flask for wine. And you washed it; you partially tanned it; you got it able to hold the liquid. Then they would put new wine in there, and it would take some time for that wine to ferment. And as it did—as it was sealed up at the top of that wineskin; you'd take the neck, which was the top of the neck of the flask—you would tie that up, and then that wine would expand. And like taking a, you know, a soda and shaking it or whatever, you would have that expansion through the process of fermentation.

Now, that works for a while, and you could go through a few batches. But in time, that skin—if it's old—will become brittle, and the elasticity of that skin will no longer work the way it did when it was new. So if you want to put brand-new wine into an old wineskin, the point is, you tie that up and hang it on the side of your tent or whatever—you put it out on the patio or whatever you were doing—and in the process of storing that wine (if you didn't do it in stone pots like they did in John 2), you would have that wineskin—if it's old and brittle—you'd have it break because of the expansion of the fermentation process in the wine.



So he's saying—and here's the point of the second parable, verse 38—if you've got some new wine (like the new patch), then you're going to have to change the container. You'd better put it in a new wineskin. What's the old wineskin? The ceremonial Judaistic laws. Not the moral laws—those are eternal—but the ceremonial laws have to be displaced. And now the focus, in the second point of this message, needs to turn to the new arrangement, the new forms. The new form—and I'm thinking, "Well, there is no new form; we're free." Great—no, there are forms. They're just pared down and simplified. And I guess the pastoral urgency in this point is simply that you—sounds a lot like last week's message—fully participate in them.

Number two—put it that way—we need to fully participate in God's new arrangement. And that begs the question: What is the new wineskin of the new covenant? We don't have priesthood; we don't have sacrifices; we don't have, you know, all the cleansing and the ceremonies of the clean and unclean. What do we have?

Maybe the four quick examples—maybe take a chunk of giant, complex Old Testament ceremonial regulations and put them into the containers that Christ left us with.

Turn to Hebrews 13, if you would—(I know we're turning to a lot of passages, but stay with me here)—Hebrews 13. Which, by the way, I'm going to take the sacrificial system right now—which, if you think it was just picking out, you know, goat number 22 before you head to church on Saturday, it wasn't that simple. Matter of fact, there were all kinds of offerings: guilt offering, sin offering, peace offering, meal offerings; you had thank offerings; you had tribute offerings. You had all these different offerings, and you had to go to the Law of Moses and figure out which ones you were supposed to bring in what situations. So a lot of complex sacrifices. And it all came to the center—talk about the center of worship, we often think of the Holy of Holies and the box of the covenant and all that—but that's all behind the veil—not only for the priests and the seminary grads and the high priest once a year. If you really want to know the center point that you saw and heard and smelled, it was the giant barbecue in the middle of the courtyard: the altar, right? The big hibachi that sat there. If you came to worship—it's why it smelled so good, like going out back of church, you know? It was like, "Ahh"—why?—because you're barbecuing animal meat on the altar. And people brought their sacrifices, and unless it was a burnt offering—which had to go outside the camp to be burnt—if you had the offering that was going to be roasted, if you will, on the altar, you had that happen right there in the courtyard of the temple or back in the tabernacle when it was a tent.

Verse 10—he's going to compare our altar with their altar—which, remember, down the street when Hebrews was written, in Jerusalem, they were still functioning. It was passing away; it was going to go away; but they still had their altar and they were still sacrificing. Verse 10 (Hebrews 13:10): "We have an altar"—now that should be in quotes, by the way. Why? Because they're not talking literally here. We have a metaphorical altar. They've got a real one. "We have an altar from which those who serve the tent"—right, the tabernacle, or in this case the temple—"have no right to



eat.” You see the feeling of this verse, right? They have their altar; we’ve got our altar—great. Their altar was complex, filled with all kinds of regulations. What is our altar? Keep reading—talks about the old one a little bit more:

Verse 11: “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin—they’re burned outside the camp”—if it’s a burnt offering. Verse 12: “So Jesus”—he makes the parallel—now that’s our one-time, once-for-all offering—“also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people”—set them apart, make them holy—“through his blood.” We’ve got a sacrifice, but it’s once for all—it’s not repeated. It’s Christ on that Good Friday—sacrifice and judicially accepted as a substitute for our sinful state—that was done for us once; it’s over.

He makes the parallel about “outside the camp”: “Therefore”—now he says, you know, “Suck it up; be tough; man up. Go outside the camp with him and bear the reproach that he endured.” See, what’s the problem? They’re tempted to shrink back; everybody else is still going to Sabbath school; everybody else still goes to the temple. “I’m a Christian. I’m saying I don’t need—” They’re tempted. He says, “Come on—bear the reproach. We don’t do that. We are people of Yahweh. We are followers of Yeshua. We are Christians. So we don’t need all that. We’ve got our own altar; they’ve got theirs.”

Verse 14: “For here we have no lasting city.” On planet earth—this isn’t our home. “But we seek the city that is to come.” The new covenant—the inaugural new covenant—is not fully realized (that is, as theologians like to say, it’s “already,” in some sense, but it’s “not yet”). It’s coming, and we seek the fulfillment—the eschaton—the realization of it all one day.

“Through him, then, let us continually offer up a”—now tie verse 10 to this and put “sacrifice” in quotes—“a sacrifice of praise to God; that is”—to be real specific—“the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”

You want to take the whole complex mass—if you’re building a chart here on your outline—of all the sacrifices; you can put it through the apex of biblical history—which is Christ—and now on the other side, what do we have in the New Covenant age, the New Testament age? We have—let’s just put it this way—lyrical worship. We have singing—songs that acknowledge his name. We have praise. Now, did they have that in the Old Testament? They had that plus all those sacrifices. We don’t have any of the sacrifices because the sacrifice has been slain. But we have lyrical worship.



Now, much—much—happier to live in the fifth century A.D. than the fifth century B.C., because it was a lot harder to worship then, with all the contraption and apparatus of the old covenant. But all I'm saying now—as a New Covenant Christian—I need to fully participate in this act of lyrical worship. When we come here together, that's what we're doing—we're fulfilling the entirety of our requirement to worship God, not with sacrifices of animals, but sacrifices of praise.

How about this one—jot it down; we won't take time to turn there—2 Corinthians 9:6–11. I know today people still use the word "tithe" in church contexts, but we really shouldn't because we don't have a New Testament tithe. The tithe—by the way, that word means "tenth"—we had tithes (plural) all throughout the Old Testament, which is not as simple as you think. You think, "Tithe—great. What did I make? Gross income? Net income? I've got to figure that out. Oh, the Bible says 'gross'—great, I take 10%. I've done my tithe." That's not how it worked in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, you had the national tithe; you had the Levitical tithe; you had the "Social Security," or the, you know, the "poor" tithe; you had, by the time of Christ, the temple tax. You had all kinds of things that were then given to you—not as complex as the IRS tax code, I get it—but it wasn't simple. And you'd better figure out what you owed God based on what the Law of Moses said. "What do I owe him? Did I pay this tax? Did I pay that tax?" I mean, that's what it was. "Do I give it with the right heart?" Well sure, I'm supposed to. But it was a complicated tithing system.

New Covenant—he addresses it in 2 Corinthians 9:6–11 and he says this: all that's gone. It's replaced with what? With you, before God, giving of your means as a gift to him however you purpose in your heart. "Well, I know—that'll be nothing." Well, it would be nothing—if you didn't have the contraption of the Old Testament law gone. And you know why the training wheels are off? Because there's one huge difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant—it's called the indwelling Holy Spirit. It's the thing they didn't have. Oh, the Spirit convicted them from the outside—the Bible says, "He's with you"—to his disciples; but he says, in the New Covenant, "He'll be in you." That's the whole point of Ezekiel and Jeremiah 31—that we have a new relationship with the Spirit. And you know what? That will not allow you to not worship God. You will worship him with lyrical praise and worship. It will not allow you to keep everything you make. It will purposely drive you to be generous—which is what this passage is about. You will give as a redeemed Christian. The Spirit is going to drive you to put something in the plate—or work it out online, or whatever—to where you give to the ministry—the church. That's what God requires. And he does it not through the contraption of tithing like the IRS; he does it through the Spirit working in you to do what this passage says, and that is to fulfill the form of New Covenant worship through generous gifts. How generous? Well, "Sow sparingly, reap sparingly; sow generously"—God reaps generous provision in your life so that you can be (this text says) "generous in every situation; you may abound in every good work; sufficiency in all things."

Sacrifices—gone. Now I have sacrifice of worship. Tithing—gone. Now I have the free-will offerings of being prompted in my heart to give.

How about this one: all those requirements of clean and unclean (Luke 5:12 was an example of that), where if I was going to be considered unworthy to worship in the temple because I'm unclean—whatever the reason was; there was a million different reasons—some you couldn't avoid; some you could; some, like skin diseases like leprosy. And to be cleansed of those, you had to go through the rigmarole of the ceremony so that I could be declared by the Levitical priests "clean." None of that anymore. It's been replaced with one. You want to take all the clean-and-unclean regulations—which is a lot of ink spilled in Leviticus on it—it's all come down to one form in the New Covenant: it's called baptism. It's an external, symbolic picture of me being cleansed. That's the picture of the washing, the sprinkling clean—being able to be immersed in Christ and being cleansed in new life—that picture. It's all there is. Not complicated. And you're not going to have to do that every time—every week, every month, every year. Do it once: "Make disciples"—if you want a verse for that, Matthew 28:19—"and baptize those disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit." If you've ever been to our worship service that we have on Sunday afternoons where we baptize people, you've seen that and you've heard that line quoted every time we baptize someone: "This is in keeping with the commandment of Christ." We're fulfilling the New Testament form. And again—remember the point I had you write down—fully participate in these. And I guess it's time for you to feel guilty—if you've never been baptized post-conversion. You need to be baptized. Fully participate in the forms. Are they required? Absolutely—they're required. God requires that you attend and assemble and worship; he requires that you give; he requires that you be baptized. Does any of that save us? It doesn't save you any more than the sacrificial system or the clean-and-unclean regulations of the Old Testament saved. Of course they don't save you. But what's the point? The simplified, pared-down forms of religion, if you will—worship in the New Testament—they do involve some things that point to and at least fulfill, in the experience of them, all the Old Testament forms. And God has called you to be baptized.

Lastly, just to round this out: if you were to look at the feasts in the Old Testament—where you had to stop what you were doing and you had to go and participate, whether it's the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Pentecost—I mean, whatever it is—Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement—doesn't matter—they're all taken down and truncated into one simple form in the New Covenant. It's called the Lord's Supper. And by the way (and I should have put this on the back of the worksheet—I meant to; it was a mistake), there are three passages that should have been read before you address the third question on the discussion questions. So please add this third one. You've got Proverbs; you've got 1 Corinthians; then you should have 1 Corinthians 11:20–31. So if you're in a home fellowship group or you go through these questions with your family, you've got to read that before you answer the question, because I talked about Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper with the Corinthians and I didn't give you that passage—sorry. Mistake. So jot it down—1 Corinthians chapter 11. This is on discussion question three—verses 20 through 31. Be sure and read that before you answer the question or it may not make full sense to you.

And in that passage, by the way, we have a great depiction of Christ's command for us to engage in the Lord's Supper. Is it a ritual? Well, yeah. Is it a ceremony? Well, sure. Is it an external form? It is an external form. But isn't it better than all those kinds of pilgrimage feasts? Well, why? Because God wants to take it easy on New Covenant Christians? No, that's not it at all. Because with the indwelling Holy Spirit we are driven to even see and experience and think about and enjoy all the benefits that all those ceremonies—the whole complex of ceremonies—would have done in the



mind of an Old Testament saint. Simple—glad to live in the 21st century of the church age than the 10th century B.C., because it is, sure, a freeing thing in many ways.

Am I ever free from the moral law of God? Of course not—God expects me to keep the moral law of God. Do I fail with that? Absolutely—and I celebrate forgiveness. And I do it through the forms of assembled lyrical worship (and even individual lyrical worship), of giving, of being baptized, of celebrating the Lord's Supper as we do here periodically at Compass Bible Church. I hope you're participating and have participated in all those things.

But here's the problem: verse 39 of Luke 5 shows us that there is a human problem that we all can fall into—that the Pharisees and the scribes of the Pharisees had fallen into. It's simply put this way (it's a third mini-parable, if you will): he says, "No one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'" Now, of course that's not true for everyone, but the point is: when you get accustomed to something, and you're used to something, and you like something, you don't want to shift to something else. That's just the way it is. And that was an indictment on the Pharisees who, by the way, if you really want to diagnose the problem—it wasn't just that they were going through the old forms (because it was required to go through the old forms); it was that—here's the diagnosis—they had fallen in love with the old forms. They were attracted to the old forms. They loved the old forms, and not the old realities. Do you see the distinction there?

And that's the human problem I want to address for us—21 centuries after the coming of Christ. We need to sit back and recognize, you know what? Our forms are much simpler. But can we fall in love with the forms instead of the realities? Yeah, we can. It's easy. Jot it down first, then I'll explain it—number three on your outline: we need to love the realities, not the forms.

Should you go to church and worship? Yes. I want you to love the reality of what you're doing there, not the forms of what it feels like or what we experience or what we see. Should we go to preaching? Yes, we should. That's part of the form of the proclamation of the Word of God—it has its correspondence in the Old Covenant. It's very simple: we come here; I yak at you for an hour; and you receive the exposition of God's Word. But don't fall in love with the form of that—fall in love with the reality of that.

Should you get baptized? Well, sure—you should get baptized. But you should do it falling in love with what's really happening—and that is, you're making a declaration of solidarity with Christ. Not the clapping and the applause and "Isn't it great?" and all the hugs on the patio—that's not what we fall in love with.



Giving—some people give and they really love the feeling of giving. That’s not the point. The point is not your feeling; it’s not about feeling like “I have a part in the church” or that “I’m really helping it along”—especially the big givers thinking, “I’m underwriting that thing.” That’s not the point. Sharing with others that “you’re faithful to give at least 10%”—stop. That’s not the point. Jesus talks about this. This is something that is supposed to engage my heart with God. It’s a point of something that—even—I’m not even interested in discussing it with other people. “Don’t even let your right hand know what your left [is doing].” What’s the point? You could fall in love with the act of it.

Let’s go back to worship for a second—I passed that one over quickly. But how many people have fallen in love with a form of worship when, in reality, they’re not in love with worship itself? Think about that. What God has given us as an expression of our New Covenant religion, if you will—of our relationship with God—is us bringing lyrical praise to God; that we are mouthing words that confess his name. Now, I’ve been to a lot of places around the world and a lot of different countries—even in jungles—worshiping with other Christians. And I can guarantee you there are forms that I just did not appreciate at all in how they do it. It’s not what I’m accustomed to. I don’t want to be like the Pharisees that just love the old forms because they don’t see past the forms. I want to be able to recognize that if what I’m doing here on a weekend—even though it’s part of the context of my culture—I should be able to stretch in another context and say, “What I really love is declaring praise to God,” whether the music’s louder than I want it to be or more traditional than I want it to be or whatever it is.

And how often does that war go on in the churches? You know how hard it is for Ben to do what he’s doing up here? It’s not that he can’t do it because, you know, he’s not trained to do it; it’s that every week someone’s not happy with how it was done. And I guarantee you—if you think everybody in the church agrees with you—I guarantee you they don’t. “It’s too loud.” Great—I get as many people that say, “It’s not loud enough.” “It’s too contemporary.” I’ve got a lot of people think it’s too traditional. “It’s too fast.” “It’s too slow.” It’s too whatever. Listen—stop being so enamored with the form. Doesn’t matter. I’ve been to places where they’re knocking sticks together in the jungles—dressed in grass skirts—praising God. And I’m thinking to myself, “I’d rather wear slacks to church.” But you know what? I can look past all of that. I’ve been in inner-city churches in downtown Chicago where I don’t—(you know, thinking)—there’s no way I can fit in here. But, you know, if I can get past that and stretch and realize it’s not about the form, it’s not about the experience, it’s not about the mood, it’s not about the feeling it creates—it’s about me declaring praise to God with the fruit of my lips.

Same with preaching: “I don’t like that—too fast, too slow, too loud; I don’t like his style; I wish we did it this way.” Doesn’t matter. That’d be why you’re here—because you like the style of preaching? Really? Stop liking the style of my preaching. You should love the reception of the truth—whether I’m talking like a 90-year-old man in whisper tones or up there marching around, sweating, tapping my forehead with a handkerchief—it doesn’t matter. What matters is that you hear the truth and you incorporate that. There are so many things in the New Testament that drive us to get past the forms to the realities.

So a good way for us to wrap this sermon up: we need to be so focused on what we're doing that how we're doing it—and the how, and what it makes me feel—is so less important. Now, is it required that we go to church and worship? Yes. Is it required that we give? Yes. Is it required that we listen to preaching? Yes. Is it required that we get baptized? Yes. But let's always keep our minds focused on it.

Now, this is nothing new, by the way. The forms of New Covenant Christianity and the call for us to not be enamored with the forms is no different than the Old Testament, right? That's what's happening here—in this passage the Pharisees are being rebuked for loving the old way and not wanting anything new. Well, it's not about the way or the form.

Let me wrap it up with this—Psalm 50 and 51. Turn there if you would, and this will close. Psalm 50 and 51. If you look throughout the Bible, you'll see when God is frustrated with his people, he's often frustrated with his people that are still doing everything God asked them to do externally. And oftentimes there are some scathing indictments—like in Malachi 1, when he says, "I'm hearing your songs, and I hate them." "But are they out of tune? Is it too fast?" No—"I am done with the noise of your songs. I'm done with all your sacrifices; they weary me. I wish that someone would shut the gates of the temple. I don't even want to hear it anymore." Why? It wasn't because they weren't doing what God asked them to do in the externals. I mean, God could say that about our church, could he not? "I wish someone would shut the doors; I don't want them assembling for worship and preaching. I don't want them giving another dime." Why not? Because we're not doing what God asked us to do? It's because your heart and my heart may be somewhere else. And if that's the case—problem.

Psalm 50—this is a real tough psalm—but in the middle of it, verse 8: you've got people with bad hearts; they're wicked; they're doing wrong things—and yet they're going through the motions of sacrifices. And he says, "Listen—it's not for your sacrifices (Psalm 50:8) that I rebuke you—not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you." They're getting a rebuke, but it's not because they're not going to church and putting money in the offering plate. "Your burnt offerings are continually before me." I mean, you're checking the box; you're going through the motions. "I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. By the way, every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills; I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry"—as though God got hungry—"I certainly wouldn't tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Come on—you think you're feeding me with this? You really think this is about what God needs? No—offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving"—what's the assumption here? You're bringing sacrifices; you're even sacrificially giving of your herds, but you're not sacrificing in your heart. You're not bringing thanksgiving to God; you're not even focused in your mind—"and perform your vows to the Most High"—be committed from Sunday to Sunday. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; and I will deliver you"—when you're in a jam, you're calling everybody but me; you're doing everything but pray—"then I'll deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

Speaking of trouble—Psalm 51. David had found himself in a lot of trouble, did he not, when he sinned and committed adultery with Bathsheba? Here's the passage. The psalm of David after he was confronted by Nathan (as the superscription of this psalm indicates). Drop down to verse 15—after all this talk of contrition and repentance, he says, “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.” Now, that's exactly what Psalm 50 said—that's what we need to do: our hearts need to be right with God, for “You will not delight in sacrifice.” Now the context here is “unless, of course, your heart is where it needs to be.” If it's all about just bringing a sacrifice, well then, “I would do it.” “But that's not going to do it for you, God. If it were sacrifice, and it was all about that, I'd give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering.”

“For the sacrifices of God”—aren't these external forms (although he requires them of Israelites, and he requires of us all the forms that he's called us to participate in—though they are truncated and pared down as they are)—“the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” I mean, if you sin—it's that brokenness inside. “A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

When you sing a worship song, it's not about you mouthing the words—it's about what's going on in your heart. “Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then you will delight in right sacrifices.” Oh yeah—he'll delight in our worship songs when our heart is in tune. And if we're all confessed up and if we're soft before him in our spirit, “then burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings” (then bulls will be offered on your altar)—and everything will be good with the world.

I know we're not accustomed to the old paradigm of the Old Covenant worship, but you are accustomed—most of you, at least, unless you're brand new—to the New Covenant paradigm. You go to church; you give your money; you sing your songs; you check the boxes; you've been baptized; you celebrate the Lord's Supper; you do all that. The question is: Where's your heart? Don't be like the Pharisees—be like Nathanael. Remember Nathanael? Nathanael was one of Jesus' twelve—right? One of the disciples. He describes him in this way—remember Philip found him, and he said, “Listen, I found the Messiah—from Nazareth.” And he says, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” And Jesus sees him coming toward him, and he says, “Here's a true Israelite, in whom there is”—(the old translations) “no guile”; ESV: “no deceit.” You want an antonym for that? No hypocrisy. I mean, the other side of it were the hypocritical Pharisees. He was a man that was honest—true. I mean, I think the implication at the very least is: here's a guy that, when he's going through the forms of his Judaism, he's focused on the real thing. Guess what? He's a guy that could quickly transform from Old Covenant to New Covenant. And the trappings of religion weren't the important thing—the reality of it was. There was no hypocrisy.

The problem with the scribes of the Pharisees, and the Pharisees themselves, was they loved the forms. It's all about “You're loving church.” I just don't want you to love church because you love



church. I want you to love church because you love God. I want you to love singing because you love confessing his name and praising him. I want you to love preaching because you love the reception of the truth. I want you to love baptismal services and the Lord's Supper and everything else God calls us to do—and giving—because it's an expression of your heart of love for God. Don't go through the motions. Everybody—so many people (not everybody, but so many people)—go through the motions of religion in America today. They're in churches all over the country—checking a box. Don't let that happen.

I started with a reference to John 4—when the woman at the well was talking about Mount Gerizim and Mount Mariah. There was one more thing that Jesus said when he said, “A time is coming, and now is, when they're not going to worship in this mountain or that mountain,” but “true worshipers are going to worship in spirit and truth.” He added this phrase: “For such people the Lord desires to be his worshipers.” It's an amazing statement. If you can get past a love for the forms and put your heart—with a true desire—to do the core realities of these things, which is trusting in the sacrifice of Christ, expressing your praise—then he desires—(it's like an ad in the paper)—“looking for sincere worshipers,” God says. I mean, if God put an ad in the paper like that, I'd want to respond—man, I want to be that person.

Check your heart. I'll give you one more chance as we sing one last song here. Let's pray, and then let's make sure our hearts are engaged.

God, we do want to sing with a heart of sincerity. Much rather be like Nathanael—with all the problems and prejudices he may have had—he certainly, according to the description of Christ, had no duplicity, no hypocrisy, no guile in his heart. And God, because of that, he could look at the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament ceremonial law standing before him—the Messiah from Nazareth—and he could cast off the Old Covenant without any trouble and embrace the new forms.

God, we don't want to fall in love with the forms of our New Testament church experience. I mean, as complimentary as that may be to some church leaders across the country—where people love their sermons and love their music and love their assemblies and love their programs—it's not about loving programs, assemblies, sermons, or songs. It's about learning to love you and just seeing these things as vehicles to express our love to you. So, God, help us in that. We want to be sincere, without any deceit in our own hearts. Thanks so much for this primer on Old Covenant/New Covenant transition. Thanks so much for the chance that we have, even now in the next two or three minutes, to sing with our hearts engaged—with our lips. Make that a reality that not only pleases you—because we know you desire those kinds of worshipers—but let it transform our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.