



Almost a Christian-Part 4 Making Absolutely Sure We Don't Miss It Pastor Mike Fabarez

For the past three weeks, we've been talking about the importance of Hebrews chapter 6, in particular verses 4 through 12, and how God had given us this sober passage to say, hey, you know what, you can get real close to being a Christian and end up in that Matthew chapter 7 problem, which is the biggest problem you could ever have. And that is standing there before Christ, thinking you're in and having him say to you, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Nothing could be more devastating than that. And Jesus said, there will be many on that day that find themselves in that situation.

So we said, God, teach us from Hebrews chapter 6, make it clear to us, we want to make sure that we are saved, that our faith in Christ is genuine. We don't want to almost be a Christian. We want to make sure that we are. And we've done a lot to try and help us. If you've opened up your text to that passage, I want you to look at the verses.

We've done a lot in these sections to help begin to clarify: what is the difference between genuine and phony? And we saw there in verses 4 and 5 that you can date Christ, as we put it, but never be a Christian. We looked at that list of all those things, and we say you can enjoy a lot of spiritual goosebumps, but never be spiritually married to Christ, if you will.

Then in verse 6 we took a whole morning just to deal with that and we said, if you seriously drink in God's truth, and then you seriously walk away from it, you will become a serious apostate and repentance will be shut out for you. And we said, wow, that is huge and we need to be so careful. And we need to look carefully at our faith to make sure it's real, not the kind that has the opportunity or the ability to walk away.

And then last week in verses 7 through 9 we said that God changes real Christians from a me-word perspective to a God-word focus. And you can do a lot of church stuff with a me-word attitude, but God is changing the hearts of real Christians to focus their orientation to Christ. It is focused on him, and it ultimately overcomes sin in an increasing measure so that there is a progress in sanctification. That has been helpful in trying to separate for us in our minds what's real and what's fake, what's genuine Christianity and what's almost a Christian.

And so today we have one section left where if you glance at this section, in the middle of it he makes that statement in verse 11. It says, "in order to make your hope sure." Whatever he's talking about now in verses 10 through 12, he wants it to be a kind of exhortation that leads us to say, I know now for sure, I have a sense as I do these things in this text that I am genuinely a Christian and not almost a Christian.

Now, here's one problem with addressing this, and I was ready just to jump into it. What does verse 10, 11, and 12 say? And let's preach this passage. What is it all about? And then I remembered that contextually, there is something that is undergirding this text that's already assumed that we haven't made crystal clear yet.

There is an assumption for this church that I assume also is true here, but we shouldn't preach this text without articulating it. And that is that if we're going to say, hey, are you a real Christian? Are



you almost a Christian? The assumption is that we all think that we have rightly responded to the right gospel. That's the assumption.

Everyone in this text who's being addressed, they're assuming that they have responded rightly to the right gospel. So before we even get into what verses 10 and 11 and 12 say, let's at least stop and say, put a bookmark here, and let's just go back and quickly address what's assumed in the text. And that is that the people there wondering whether or not they're genuine Christians or not, they can at least look back and say, well, I think I responded rightly to the gospel. Let's just deal with that.

So I don't know if you have any room for this. Most of you know this. You don't need to write it down, but let's just real quickly deal with the gospel. Can we do that?

What is the gospel that these people in the early church had received? The gospel that we assume that you have received and rightly responded to, or we think we've rightly responded to it. Because the assumption of the passage is, well, you think you've rightly responded to the gospel, but you know what? Maybe you haven't. Well, let's deal with that.

Because at the end of every sermon in the last three weeks, you know how we've ended. Let's make sure. And then quickly, Mike runs through the gospel. Well, you know what, to make sure, we've got to make sure we understand the gospel. But it becomes this tag at the end. Let's start with it today.

What is the gospel? It begins with one word. It begins with God. It doesn't begin with you. It begins with God.

And in the Bible, if you study what the New Testament gospel is, and you work your way through what's being taught in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the book of Acts, you start to see there is an assumption, even in the New Testament, that there is an understanding, a right understanding of God.

But then you see the gospel in the book of Acts move to places like Athens, where they don't understand the real God. Their city is full of idols. And so Paul has to stop and say, listen, let's make sure we understand the real God.

And the first thing to understand about the real God is he's your creator. That's how Paul's sermon on the Areopagus in Acts 17 begins. Hey, he's the creator of heaven and earth. And the assumption here is that if he's the creator, you would understand that you are accountable to your creator.

Now, we don't like that very much. That's why we've got an adult Bible class going on right now as I speak that's helping us understand that when you concede the point of God being the creator, you've conceded a lot. You've conceded the first point of the gospel.

And in about three weeks, Dr. John Morris is going to come and preach on how important that one statement is. And he's an expert, a PhD in geology. He's going to help us say, hey, what does the Bible say, and is it a tenable position? So we'll deal with that.



But let's just state it clearly. The gospel begins with God, and it begins with the fact that he is the creator. That's how the whole Bible starts, isn't it? "In the beginning, God created heavens and the earth." Therefore, we are accountable to him.

Second point of the gospel here as it relates to God is that he's perfectly holy. If we look through the first five books of the Old Testament, as Pete's going to teach in the ABC next week, and it's next hour actually, the Pentateuch begins by not only saying God is in charge, but he is perfectly holy. That's what the holiness codes are all about in the Pentateuch. He's trying to establish that I am perfect, perfectly perfect.

And as a matter of fact, if I'm perfectly perfect, I can't have imperfect people around me. I can't have anything imperfect around me. I'm perfectly perfect. I'm holy, and my holiness requires that you be holy too. That passage from 1 Peter does not start in 1 Peter. It starts in the Pentateuch, in the first five books of the Bible. "Be holy, for I am holy."

God is a holy God, and he requires holiness. And you just understand it that way. If you've got a perfect person with a perfect house, he's not going to buy imperfect things for his perfect house. He's got to have perfection. And God is a holy God.

He is the creator. He's holy.

He's not only perfectly holy, he's perfectly just. He's perfectly just. Just like we hope that the judicial system in our country will execute justice with equity and righteousness, that's exactly what we find in God. He is perfectly just.

Actually, we find on earth a poor reflection of God's perfect justice. And that means that he's got to punish everyone who's not holy. If something's not holy, he's got to deal with that. If someone does an unholy thing, it has to be retributed. If there's something unholy in his universe, he's got to deal with that.

Now, the problem we all have is why doesn't he deal with it immediately? And because we have the ability to ask that question, proves that he is a God who detains his justice because we wouldn't be sitting around talking about why he doesn't punish imperfection because we are imperfect.

But the point is God delays justice, but he brings it in time.

God is perfectly just. He's also perfectly loving. And if you put those three together already and you say he's the creator and he expects holiness and he's got to punish everything that's not holy, then we got to say, wow, why are we still around talking about the problem? It's because God is incredibly loving.

And not only is he patient toward us in his love, but he has done a lot to save unholy people. He's gone to extremes to try and fix the unholiness problem in the universe.

God is creator. God is holy. God is just. God is loving. That's how the gospel begins.

And we assume that everybody in the book of Hebrews who's trying to figure out whether they're real Christians or not has thought at least that they've responded rightly to the first point of the gospel. They understand the right things about God.



The next part of the gospel is about you, but it's not about you in the way that a lot of the modern gospel is pitched. Here's what the gospel says about you: you're far from holy.

And all I can say about that is God is calling us to admit it. That's called confession. I'm not holy. I'm not living up to God's standard. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

That's why the gospel is anemic and weak and impotent and doesn't save in the modern church when people get up and simply want to affirm people with the gospel. You can't affirm people with the gospel until they deal with the facts that we are unholy people. And the gospel calls us to admit it.

Before we start reaching into the goody bag to find God's blessings, we've got to realize, wait a minute, the problem is God is perfect and we are not.

The gospel, of course, in the New Testament, predicated on the fact that God is holy, creator, just, and loving, and that we're not holy, then turns the attention toward Jesus. Four things about Christ that are just essential to the gospel. They're key. You can't have the gospel without them. *Synquinon* is what I was trying to say.

He is God. He is God.

Why is that important? Because there's only one holy one in the universe. That's why he was and is perfectly holy. If there's a holiness problem that needs to be fixed, we got to fix it not with an unholy person. We need to fix it with a holy person.

The problem is no one's holy. Everyone's unholy. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. How are we going to fix the problem? We need deity to put on human form. Jesus is God.

We also learn in the gospel that he lived a human life. God puts on human clothes and lives among us. That's called the incarnation. That's key to the gospel.

Why is that so important? Because he's got to do in our humanness all the holy things we didn't do. Well, that's the problem. People are unholy. How many people are unholy? All people are unholy. Who's holy? Only God. But he needs somehow to gain a pool of righteousness that he can credit to others.

He's got to have Jesus, the perfect one. God incarnate. Live a holy life to do all the perfect and holy things that we didn't do.

Gospel also is very clear that he died a terrible death. Not only did he live a human life, he lived that life which culminated in a terrible, awesome, gross crucifixion. The most horrific of all deaths. And he died it.

Why? Well, to take our punishment for all the unholiness that we've committed. Not only does he have to credit us with all the stuff we didn't do, he's got to take all the things we did do that were unholy and he's got to pay for those. Because God is perfectly just. Therefore, he's going to go to the cross and pay that penalty.



Then, of course, the New Testament, because it is good news, it begins to focus on this last point that is so important in the New Testament gospel. It resides and it resounds with this great statement that he rose from the dead.

Why is that so important? Because all those other things were so key and so significant that we need some kind of affirmation to prove that he did pay for my sin and the penalty of my sin. And if the wages of sin is eternal death and also physical death, and he's saying your eternal death problem is taken care of, then I expect some kind of affirmation of that.

And the proof that he gives, according to Romans 1, verse 4, is that he was declared to be who he said he was by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

God's creator, holy, just, and loving. We're not holy. He's God. Who is God? Jesus is. He lived. He died. He rose again.

Now, you can say those words, but you've got to understand how they fit into the problem and the solution.

Then what do I do? Affirm them? No, demons affirm everything here. Take a scantron test in hell, and they all say, yep, yep, yep, yep. All true. I believe all that. We've got to respond to it.

And the response in the New Testament becomes two primary imperative verbs. And the first one is repent. You've got to repent. What does that mean? I've got to turn from sin to live for him. That's what repentance is.

We looked at it last week in that Godward life. It begins with that great statement in 2 Corinthians 5:15: we no longer live for ourselves and all of our idolatrous desires; we live for him who died for us and rose again. It's a turning from my life of saying what I think is important, what I think I should do, and how I'm all gratified, and now I'm going to turn to say, how can I live for God? We turn from, from, from all of our idols to live for God. That's what repentance is.

Second command of the gospel is to trust in Christ, to trust in Christ. The word is faith, sometimes translated believe, which is an unfortunate English translation, because then we start thinking all it means is affirming these facts. That's not what it means. It means something much deeper than that. It means to rely on his work to make me right before God.

To rely on his work, and if I had more room with that, I would put solely, solely on his work to make me right before God.

A lot of people think he's a nice add-in, he's a nice mix, he put in the powder, and he kind of makes it work. He's not an addition. He's not an augmentation to your personal righteousness. He is the only righteousness that God will accept because your righteousness is convoluted with selfishness and sin, and the scripture says you gotta rely on him.

Here's the gospel. God is creator, holy, just, and loving. You're far from it. Jesus came to fix your problem. He's God. He can live that perfect life. That's what he lived. He lived a life you couldn't live. He died, paying the penalty for your imperfection. He rose again to prove that all of this worked, and he says now you gotta repent.

What does that mean? Turn from your life of selfishness and sin. Turn to God and do what? Trust in Christ. That come judgment day, whether you die like the thief on the cross, only trusting in Christ for 10 minutes, or whether you live a life for 100 years as a Christian, you gotta trust him that when you get to the gates and he says, why should I let you in here? You're saying, because I'm trusting in what Christ did for me.

That's the gospel.

Now, the New Testament church had been confronted with that gospel, and I trust that you have been confronted with that gospel. And everybody sitting in the church in the first century who this letter was written to going, yeah, I think I got that thing figured out. Yeah, I'm all on board with that. That was the assumption.

But the problem is sometimes our hearts aren't right with God and we go through the motions of this, but we're not really there. And so it is that at least we need to say, here is the gospel. Have you responded to that rightly? Have you repented of your sins and put your trust in Christ?

And you said, well, I think I have. Okay, great. We all need to say that before the rest of the message ever makes any sense.

So if we're ready to say, yes, we understand the gospel, we've responded rightly to the gospel, great. How can I make sure, though? How do I know my heart wasn't deceived or my motives weren't mixed with some kind of wrong attitude or wrong?

Great. Here's the rest of the message.

Now he says this, verse number 10. Hebrews chapter 6, that was a long introduction, verse number 10. Just to make it a little bit longer, look at verse number 9. "Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we're confident of better things in your case, things that accompany salvation." Things that go with salvation, we said that's the Godward life increasing path of sanctification, right? I mean, those are the things we talked about early on.

And then he turns to some specifics of things that your life should look like. Here's what he says. He says in verse number 10, "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love that you have shown him as you've helped his people and continue to help them." "We want each of you to show the same diligence to the very end in order to make your hope sure." "We don't want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

We want you to hang in there. And the hanging in there we've seen in this series is proof as the confidence in that thing that we confessed at the beginning is carried on and augmented. And as we continue to grow in that, it's the thing that helps our hearts say, yeah, you know what, that's right. We are right before God.

But what are the specifics here? Look again at verse number 10. "He will not forget your work and the love you've shown him." Now underline this phrase: "as you've helped his people," now double underline this, "and continue to help them."

He is saying to them, if you want to be sure, if you want to make sure that you're not almost a Christian, if you want to make sure that you really aren't that land drinking in the rain and



producing thorns, and maybe that we saw the hypocritical thorns under the surface that no one can see, make sure that not only you check those things in your life, but you are like this first century people. You have things that accompany salvation, things like continuing to help God's people and making sure we're ongoing with that.

Three things this morning, real quick. You want to be more assured that you're a real Christian and not just say, well, you know, I'm just trusting on the fact that I got that whole gospel thing right. Yeah, you should trust in that, absolutely.

But the evidence you should look for are things like this. As you get involved in ministry and stay involved in it, number one, don't stop ministering to God's people. You want to see that God is working in you to do his work, as we saw last week, Philippians chapter 2, that I am, quote unquote, working out my salvation with fear and trembling, but it's God who's at work in me. It's gonna feel like this cooperative effort.

Then you'd better put some effort here because the effort you put here will assure your heart. It will help to make your confidence before God sure. Don't stop ministering to God's people. It's key.

You know that when God tells us in scripture you need to make sure you're a Christian or you need to test the authenticity of your faith, he almost always takes our attention and turns it vertically—or horizontally rather—and looking at each other, and he says, what are you doing for the people of God? What are you doing for them?

It's kind of like that relationship you might have with a really, really close friend who writes into his will or into her living trust that if anything happens to me, then I want you to take care of my children. You know that arrangement? I want you to do that. Now, you may not know the kids that well. You may think the kids are a bit spoiled. I don't know what you think about the kids. But if you say, you are my best friend, and if anything were to happen to you, I will take care of your children. See?

That's the exact kind of arrangement we see in the New Testament. He leaves behind his people, and Christ goes to the Father. And his prayer for the people was that through him and his Spirit in their lives, they would be ministering to one another.

And he says, listen, you should love one another because I first loved you. He says, you should be doing this as our text says. Look at it in verse number 10. It says, "He won't forget the work and the love you've shown who?" Him, God, "as you've helped his people and continue to help them."

You see that? Keep your finger here and turn with me to 1 John. 1 John chapter 3. 1 John chapter 3.

Love, ministry, service to God's people has always been an indicator of genuine faith and a real changed heart. And if you want to make sure, then make sure you're not sitting on the sideline not ministering to God's people.

Because if you're sitting on the sidelines not ministering to God's people and you got all these excuses why you're not ministering to people in the body of Christ, see, then I guess there's going to be times of doubting in your life. You're going to just get used to it. You're going to doubt the authenticity of your faith.

One thing that's going to help: get off the sidelines and start ministering to God's people and continue to minister to them.

1 John 3, look at verse 11. Are you there? 1 John 3, verse 11. "This is the message," he says, "you've heard from the beginning: We should love one another." "Don't be like Cain." That wouldn't be a good thing. "He belonged to the evil one and he murdered his brother." "Why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil, but his brothers were righteous." He was jealous.

Verse 13. "Don't be surprised, my brother, if the world hates you." "We know that we've passed from death to life because we love our brothers." How do we know we've passed from death to life? Because look at us. Look at us caring for each other. "Anyone who does not love remains in death." That's a big statement.

Verse 15. "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him." "This is how we know what love is: that Christ laid down his life for us, and we ought to, in turn"—look at this—"lay down our lives for our brothers."

"If anyone has," and here's an example, "material possessions and sees his brother in need and has no pity on him, how could the love of God be in him?" "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth."

"This then is how we know we belong to the truth and how we set"—underline this—"set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us." "For God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything."

What does he know? He knows our work. He won't forget our work. He sees our work. He sees our love.

How do we set our hearts at rest? Because we're loving people. Not just with, yeah, I love the body of Christ. I love God's people. But you're getting involved, not just with your mouth, but you're getting involved in serving and loving God's people. It's so key.

And you know, you wanna be sure about your Christian life? Get involved in ministry, stay involved in ministry, don't ever stop ministering to God's people. And I trust that the text of scripture is true, verse 19: it will help us set our hearts at rest whenever our heart decides to condemn us and say, you're not really a Christian.

Yeah, you know what, I am. Look at God producing this love in my heart for the body of Christ.

Three things to note about our text. Verse 10. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 10. Look at the three things here.

The first one is the word that the writer chooses to describe this. I mean, those are great words at the end of the verse: helped his people. That's the word we get the word deacon from. It's the word to serve. That's great. But the word he starts with is not the word we get deacon from, to serve. It's the word work. Look at it.

Verse number 10: "He will not forget your work."



Three things to note. The first thing is it's going to be hard. It's going to be costly. If you're going to minister to God's people, it's going to be a sacrificial kind of thing. It's going to cost another night out. It's going to cost some time. It's going to cost some money. It's going to cost some hours of your life.

You can't say, I'm going to minister to God's people. It's going to help assure my faith. I'm going to know that I'm a genuine Christian because I'm going to look at my life of ministry and that ministry not cost you. It will be work. I mean, it is the classic word in the New Testament for labor, some kind of difficult enterprise or undertaking. I mean, it's translated well, work.

As my dad used to say, work is work. And you just got to get used to that.

And of course, if you remember John 3, the message we've heard is that Christ laid down his life for us, therefore we lay down our lives for others. Was that an inconvenience for Christ to love us? "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," and that sounds so simple, but it wasn't just, hey, I got a few loose coins in my pocket here. He gave his life for this, a sacrifice, a genuine costly sacrifice. So it's going to be work.

Secondly, it's going to be prompted by love for God. If you look at this, it's not for these people's sake that I'm loving them. It's for God's sake. It's the scenario. I'm taking care of your kids, though they're bratty at times, but I'm taking care of them because I love you.

It's not that God's people are so wonderful to serve. I don't want to say anything else about that statement. But that's not the reason that there's such a joy to serve. It's that you need to be serving them because you love God. We love them for God's sake.

Literally, the Greek text says, for his name's sake. We do it for his name. We love people in Christ's name in the body of Christ.

And ultimately, that word, *diakoneo*, we get the word deacon from. We translate it in ministry sometimes. It's translated in this text, help. It really is a ministry. It is a help to someone. It benefits them.

Some people get into ministry because it benefits themselves. That's not what ministry is about. Though it will have the payoff of assuring your heart before God because you can say, man, look at my Christian life. I've been serving God's people faithfully. I've worked and helped them and continue to help them for God's sake.

Just remember this. It's going to be something that is going to be for their good. That's the primary thing. It needs to be for their good.

Because I know some people say, and it breaks my heart, they say, well, I'm not going to get involved in that. I mean, I don't get much out of that. You know, if that's the way you treat ministries or programs in the church, then you know what, there's got to be more than that.

God is asking us to get involved because there are people there, opportunities for me to express love to God by loving his people. We're asking the wrong question when we say, I don't know if I'm going to get involved in that because I don't get much out of it.



So let me ask you, do you have a ministry? Do you do something? Are you engaged in something? Do you continue to be engaged in something for the good of the body of Christ? Do you love them because God first loved us?

Don't stop ministering to God's people. This will help set your heart at rest. Whenever your heart decides to say, hey, you're not a Christian, look at your life, you can say, yeah, look at this. Look at this evidence of my love for God. I've been serving faithfully God's people.

Number two, verse number 11. "We want you to show the same"—oh, here's a word. Circle it. What is it? "Diligence to the very end." "In order to make your hope sure."

And then look, this connects with it thematically. Verse 12, first part: "We don't want you to become..." What's the opposite of diligence? Laziness. Hmm.

Number two, if you want to make sure that you're a Christian, you want things that will help assure you of your faith, okay, then you need to, number two, always fight spiritual laziness. Wouldn't help to fight physical laziness either, but there is a difference. Thank God there is a difference.

Paul said to Timothy, he said, physical training is of little value, but godliness has value for all things. There's a difference. There's a difference.

And you may say, I go to the gym, man, every day, and I eat my broccoli and my celery, and I'm totally healthy. Great. Do you get word every day? Do you spend time in prayer? Do you have a prayer list? Do you work systematically through things that you know God wants you to be? Those are spiritual disciplines.

You can be great at the gym, but never have a prayer list or a prayer time or do any kind of personal Bible study, and I'm going to say you're spiritually lazy. See? So there is a difference here. So I'm talking about spiritual laziness. Always fight spiritual laziness.

Remember that passage in Philippians 2? We quoted it last week. I quoted it in the introduction this morning. He says that we are going to have to work out our salvation because God's at work in us. It's going to feel like this cooperative effort, but we're going to feel the work, and we're going to get involved in this as an effort.

We've got to show diligence to the end. It's a marathon. You pace yourself, and you go, because we're in it for the long haul.

Jot this passage down. We don't have time to look at it, but Galatians chapter 6, maybe you know it, verses 9 and 10, it says, do not become weary of doing what is good. Don't get weary of that. Keep doing it.

When you get tired of doing the good thing and the right thing and spiritual disciplines and serving God's people, don't stop. Keep going. And I find so often people do exactly the wrong thing.

When they're in trial or crisis or pain or doubt or uncertainty, they pull back from doing what God wants them to do. They stop their spiritual disciplines. They give less effort to it because they say, well, right now I'm just hurting.



One of the things God wants you to do is not wane in doing what is good and what is right. And in that, he says, you will reap a harvest if you don't give up. You'll reap a harvest if you don't give up.

Then he says next statement, which connects with the first verse. This is Galatians 6:10. He says, "as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of the believers." Goes back to verse 1.

Don't give up on the first part. Well, I used to serve, and I was in Awana, and I led a group, but, you know, I'm just so tired. I was getting burned out. So, you know what, I just needed to figure, just kind of just relax for a while.

Great, that's going to be a period where you're vulnerable to spiritual doubting, to spiritual uncertainty. I'm not saying that one ministry is the ministry you've got to stay with your whole life, but jump back in and get involved in it. Don't grow weary of doing what's right.

I was thinking of spiritual lethargy or spiritual laziness, and I went into Proverbs this week because I thought, you know what, there's so much in Proverbs about laziness. And I know we don't have time for this, but let me give you five things that I find in the book of Proverbs that will give you some diagnostics as to whether or not you're spiritually lazy.

So these are diagnostics on laziness. These are all from Proverbs. I'll just give you a chapter and verse so you can jot it down.

First one is, you are generally lethargic. Chapter 6, verse 9. You are generally lethargic. When you think about ministry, when you think about life, when you think about doing something for God, when you think about evangelism, it's like, I don't know. I'm tired. I don't have time. I'm getting old, you know. Don't have the energy. Okay, lethargy.

Chapter 13, verse 4. We're generally dissatisfied. There's a dissatisfaction in our life about all kinds of things.

Number three, we're good with excuses. Chapter 22, verse 13. We are good with excuses. And there are so many Proverbs. I just picked one for each of these, but you could find throughout the Proverbs.

It's always the sluggard, the lazy man who says, there's a lion outside, I'll be murdered in the streets, I can't go to work today. That's what he says. Great with excuses. And maybe you find yourself, man, I got out of that pretty well.

Maybe your ability to make excuses that work not only with others, but maybe they work with yourself, but you find yourself making them, is a diagnostic indicator that you are in the lazy camp.

Thirdly—fourthly—letter D, I think I'm pretty smart. 26:16. The sluggard, the lazy man, is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer discreetly.

Oh, you know, you are just, you know, man. Everybody else, stupid. Everybody else is a buffoon, but you, you got it figured out. Lazy people have that perspective. Did you know that? Goes hand in hand.

When you start seeing yourself able to criticize everyone except yourself, just know it's probably an indicator that you have a lazy heart. Lazy people get good not only with excuses, but they start pumping up their own sense that they've got the answers and they know how to do everything better than everybody else.

Fifthly, chapter 26, verse 14, you don't really enjoy rest. You don't enjoy your time off. You don't enjoy the breaks. As a matter of fact, there is so many Proverbs on this about the sluggard who buries his hand in the dish and he's just too tired to lift it to his mouth. Or 26:14, you know, you can't sleep. The lazy man turns back and forth on his bed.

You can't enjoy the time off. And that's the problem sometimes when we get into a pattern of laziness. The hard worker loves his sleep, the scripture says, and it's sweet to him. It's refreshing to him. Time off is great because he's worked hard.

Spiritual laziness is much the same. A lot of lethargy in your life, generally dissatisfied, good with excuses. You think you're pretty smart, can't enjoy your time off. Those are bad signs.

So what do we do? Let's declare war on spiritual laziness. Let us recognize that it is something we have to work at, Philippians 2. Let us also at the same time, Colossians chapter 1, know it's something we need to depend on God for. We need to depend on God for it. We need to cry out to God, God, strengthen me.

I love this prayer that Paul prays for the Colossians in verse 11. I'm praying that you would be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you can have great endurance and patience. That's a great statement.

Pray to God. Have you prayed to God lately for diligence and the ability to show that diligence into next month and next year and the year after? Pray for it. Ask God for it. It's a cooperative effort. It's really all God's credit, but it's going to feel like a cooperative effort.

The next verse is telling as well. Actually, it's the last word of verse 11 and the whole sentence in verse 12 of Colossians 1, and it turns immediately to worship. Learning to joyfully give thanks to the Father who's qualified you to share in the inheritance.

Let me just throw this in. You may not see the connection, but I think learning to be good at worship is key. When I can learn to be thankful, rejoice, say thank you, pray with thanksgiving, worship with joy and thanksgiving, you know what? It's a great, it's a great, a great safeguard against spiritual laziness.

And maybe you're busy listening to who knows what in your car and you need to get to learning to praise God on your commute to work. You know what that'll do for you? I think that will make you spiritually strong, help you fight and declare war on spiritual laziness.

Don't stop ministering to God's people. Show diligence to the end. Don't become lazy.

Last thing, verse 12. This will be hard for us. I know this is difficult for a lot of people. Number three. Look at verse number 12, bottom half. "Don't become lazy. Instead," he gives a very practical exhortation to them, "but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

He says, now put your sights on people that persevere to the end. Put your sights on people that do work hard, who are people who have faith in God and patience and endurance and all of that.

This one's a tough one. But if you want to be more assured that you're a Christian, don't stop ministering to God's people. Fight laziness. And then thirdly, very practically, adopt some hard working role models. Make them your spiritual templates. This is critical.

As a matter of fact, this word here in verse number 12, imitate, is the word—and it's connected. You can see the connection to the Greek word. The Greek word is *mimetai*, *mimetai*, *mimetai*. What do we get an English word of? Mimic. Do mimic. Mimic them. Set them up, learn of them, watch them, and mimic what they do.

And they're the kinds of people that have great trust in God and patience, and they continue on to inherit what God has promised.

Are you in Hebrews 6? Turn to Hebrews chapter 13. Same word, same Greek word, same English translation. He says this in verse 7 of chapter 13. Hebrews 13:7. "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you." "Consider the outcome of their way of life." Look at how their life is going. Look at how it bore fruit. And do what? "Imitate their faith."

Paul said it this way. This is an easy verse to remember. 1 Corinthians 11:1. 1 Corinthians 11:1. He says, "follow me as I follow Christ."

Nothing unbiblical about that. As a matter of fact, your pride will keep you from it. We should all have spiritual templates, spiritual role models. I've got mine, you should have yours. And you should say, there they are, and I follow and imitate their faith.

Now, three levels of pride that will keep us from this. All-out flagrant pride, okay? And those people don't have any role models. Why? Because everybody's a buffoon. They're the only person that knows what time it is, okay? That's spiritually prideful people.

They are so full of pride, everybody's stupid and they're the only smart person. And if you took their face and you say, tell me one Christian you respect. Tell me one Christian you admire. Tell me one Christian you are imitating and following after. And they're going to go, nobody, I follow Christ. That's what they're going to say.

Then slap them and quote Hebrews chapter 6. And say, that's stupid, man. Not only is that stupid, you are unbiblical. You are disobeying God's word. It's all over the place.

1 Corinthians 4. He says in 1 Corinthians 4, he talks to these people and he says, I urge you, imitate me. And he says, why? Because I'm your pastor. In this case, that's what Paul's saying to the Corinthians, *mimetai*, follow them.

Flagrant pride will keep you from having any spiritual role models.

Okay. There's another level. It's a little, it's the moderate pride that no one really sees. Check this out now. It's the people that only have spiritual role models who've been dead for a long time. Okay? Be careful of that.



Are there a lot of great Christian role models that have been dead for a long time? Absolutely. I've got some. You should have some. But if that's all you've got, because everybody alive now is a buffoon, but there were some great Christians back in the olden days. Stop it with that.

As a matter of fact, I think Ecclesiastes 7 is good. Stop saying, hey, those old days were better than these. It's not wise to say that, the writer of Proverbs says.

Oh, the good old days. And I know that we talk about that in pop culture, but what about spiritual pride that says, it was great back then, but now, you know what, whatever. I'm the only righteous person around now. I had some real compadres, but they all died in the 17th century, so it's just me now. So I don't have any role models that are alive.

Shut up. You're prideful.

Flagrant pride, it doesn't respect anybody. Moderate pride, we respect dead people.

Then there's those that just struggle with just bouts of pride, okay? And I think this one's easy too. They have role models but they've got to live at least 50 miles away. They can be alive. There are some great Christians. They just don't live around here. So don't know anything around here, but there are some. I got some great Christian people that I just think are the best but they live out in the east coast.

If your role models are pushed back into history or they're at least 50 miles away, I think pride is in the way. We struggle with that.

I love Proverbs 27:10. It says better is a neighbor that's nearby than a brother far away. And when it comes to spiritual templates, same way. Better for you to have a guy or a gal that you think, this is a godly person, I want to imitate their perseverance and hard-working faith—better to have one that's nearby than one who's a brother, you know, a really godly one far away.

Get one nearby. Have some nearby. I have some spiritual heroes and they're near. I have some spiritual heroes and templates that are far, and I've got some dead ones too. But I gotta have some close by.

Problem is you get any spiritual template too close and you start to say, wow, they're not perfect. If you're living in a fantasy world that your templates have to be perfect, can't help you. They're not. None of them.

Find one in the scripture that you go, there's the perfect person in the Bible. There's only one. See, that's the problem. Everyone else is unholy. Don't let pride get in the way of this.

Adopt some hardworking role models. "We don't want you to become lazy. We want you to imitate those who, through faith and patience, inherit what's been promised."

And we could go on and on about how important it is for us to have some people. We say, I just want to be more like that person. Because that person right there seems to be bearing fruit for the long haul and look at the outcome of their faith, look at their life. I want to be more like that.



Oh, you're so sinful, man. It's not sinful. You were sinful to cast that text away and say that you're not going to obey it because you're smarter than that. Stop it.

Adopt some hardworking role models. We all need them.

I know this series has been tough because we've looked at the fact that some of us can sit through all of this church stuff, including myself, because I did it for years and missed the point. I understand this can be hard and it can be unsettling.

But the upshot of this text is we'll continue to see in verses 13 and following is that we have confidence in the fact that God is true to his word. And if we continue to see evidence in our lives and we put a few things in place, like we continue to minister, we continually fight laziness, and we continue to follow good templates and spiritual models, God says your heart will be assured.

And then where we go next is, and don't you ever doubt God, because that's where we start in verse 13. If God makes a promise and says, you respond rightly to the gospel, and you start to see evidence of that in your life, you can know that that gospel and his promise saves you.

The goal of this series has not been to make us always and perpetually uncertain our faith. It's to lead us back to 2 Corinthians 13 to say, let's test ourselves. But then like Paul says, if you examine us closely, he says, you'll see we passed the test. And he wanted them to pass the test.

And the point is, I want us to spend these four weeks and the month that we've had in this text saying, I know I've spent some time and I've been humble enough to examine my heart, but when it comes down to it, I see that I am a Christian. Great. That's where I want to leave you. And that's where we need to be.

And just know that there is a humility about that. And that may sound prideful, but there's a humility in that. Because as we said, last point of the gospel is that when I trust in Christ, I recognize it's all based on his work, not mine.