

Six Disciplines to Endure in the Faith

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Messiah. I wish I was there with you in person, but I'm grateful to Andrew and Marie and the team that's found a way to be able to meet together in some capacity, spend time in the scriptures, even though there's a lockdown.

Christmas has just happened. New Year's is upon us. And as we turn our attention to New Year's, perhaps some are making New Year's resolutions. All of us should be assessing the health of our walk with God, looking at our behaviors and spiritual disciplines to see, are there any areas where we need to really emphasize some growth this next year?

If we don't take time to assess our walk with God, our habits and behaviors, if we don't do that every now and then, we will find that we're beginning to slip into just what is natural to us instead of what God's really calling us to.

And so I hope that in today's sermon that God will speak to you. I'm praying for God to speak to every one of us, including me, that he would help us to see where are there areas specific to each one of us that we need to pay more attention to this year.

So I'm going to be speaking on six disciplines for us to endure in the faith. And we're going to be in 2 Kings 9, and I'm going to share with you some of the key characters just before I read the scripture passage to you so that you're able to really track with where this true story is going.

[1 : 1 8] But first, the context of how this even came to mean so much to me. As a kid, like others of us, I was devastated when I heard of some pastors that were really, really, had made such an impact in my life, had actually fallen away from the faith.

And it seems if you follow Christian news that you'll hear of people, whether famous and far away or closer to home, following that same pattern of making such an impact in their lives and then falling away.

We're going to look at a passage that speaks directly into that, and not just directly to those who have a big platform, but to every one of us. So if each one of us doesn't take the time to be serious about our habits and behaviors, our disciplines, and our walk with God, then even if we don't fall away from the faith, at the very least, we're going to find ourselves not walking in the fullness of what we were made for as children of God.

So we're going to be in 2 Kings 9. If you have a Bible in print or on your phone, please turn to 2 Kings 9. As you do, let me introduce you to the main characters. We have Jezebel. She was the queen of the northern kingdom of Israel.

She had been the wife of Ahab before he had been removed by God's judgment. But Queen Jezebel was a woman that had brought into Israel these pagan, vile practices that often centered around the exploitation of the marginalized and the vulnerable.

[2 : 4 4] That included cult prostitution, where they would be using often underage girls and boys in the ritualistic pagan practices of worshiping the deities.

It was a form of human trafficking. She brought in the murdering of children through putting them in fire, putting children alive into fire, where these kids would be burned up as if that was a sacrifice to the gods, a sacrifice of worship, vile practices.

Her son Joram is the king. He's reigning with her. His name is Joram. He has an alliance with Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. And that king's name is Ahaziah.

You'll see that they're working together in the story. The main character we're going to look at is Jehu. He is an officer in Jezebel and Joram's army. And you're going to see that God calls him to stage a coup and overthrow this dark, evil kingdom.

You're also going to hear a couple shout-outs to Naboth. He was an innocent, godly man who had a vineyard that Ahab wanted. And Ahab wasn't sure how to get this land from him.

[3 : 47] So Jezebel had this innocent man put to death so that her husband Ahab can get the plot of ground. And I think that's all the characters you need to be able to follow the story. 2 Kings 9.

Let's pray as we dive into God's word. Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your scriptures. I pray that just as you have throughout time, that you would speak to us, your people, again, through your word.

In Jesus' name, amen. 2 Kings 9. The prophet Elisha summoned a man from the company of the prophets and said to him, Tuck your cloak into your belt.

Take this flask of oil with you. Go to Rameth Gilead. When you get there, look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. Call to him, get him away from his companions, and take him into an inner room.

Then take this flask of oil and pour the oil on his head and declare, This is what the Lord says. I anoint you king over Israel. And open the door and run. Do not delay. So the young man, the prophet, went to Rameth Gilead.

[4 : 46] When he arrived, he found the army officers sitting together. I have a message for you, commander, he said. For which one of us asked Jehu. For you, O commander, he replied. Jehu got up and went into the house.

Then the prophet poured the oil on Jehu's head and declared, This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says. I anoint you king over the Lord's people Israel. You are to destroy the house of Ahab, your master.

And I will avenge the blood of my servants, the prophets, and the blood of all the Lord's servants shed by Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab shall perish. I will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel, slave or free.

I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and like the house of Basha, the son of Ahijah. As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.

Then he opened the door and ran. When Jehu went out to his fellow officers, one of them asked him, Is everything all right? What did this madman come to you and say? You know the man and the sort of things he says, Jehu replied.

[5 : 47] That's not true, they said. Tell us now. Jehu said, Here is what he told me. This is what the Lord says. I anoint you king over Israel. They hurried and took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps.

Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, Jehu is king! Jehu! Jehu is king! So Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against King Joram. Now Joram and all Israel had been defending Ramath Gilead against Hazael, king of Aram.

But King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him in the battle with Hazael, king of Aram. Jehu said, If this is the way you feel, don't let anyone slip out of the city to go tell the news in Jezreel.

And he got into his chariot and rode to Jezreel because King Joram was resting there, and Nehaziah, king of Judah, had gone down to see him. When the lookout standing on the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu's troops approaching, he called out, I see some troops coming.

Get a horseman, Joram ordered. Send him to meet them and ask, Do you come in peace? The horseman rode off to meet Jehu and said, This is what the king asks. Do you come in peace? What do you have to do with peace? Jehu replied, Falling behind me.

[6 : 51] The lookout reported, The messenger reached him, but he's not coming back. So the king sent out a second horseman. When he came to them, he said, This is what the king asks. Do you come in peace? Jehu replied, What do you have to do with peace?

Falling behind me. The lookout reported, The messenger reached him, but he's not coming back either. The driving is like that of Jehu's son Nimshi, for he drives like a madman. Hitch up my chariot, Joram ordered.

Then it was hitched up, Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah rode out, each in his own chariot, to meet Jehu. They met him at the plot of ground that belonged to Naboth, the Jezreelite.

When Joram saw Jehu, he asked, Have you come in peace, Jehu? How can there be peace? Jehu replied, So long as the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound.

Joram turned about and fled, calling out to Ahaziah, Treachery, Ahaziah, treachery! Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow pierced his heart and he slumped down in his chariot.

[7 : 48] Jehu said to Bidkar, his aide, Pick him up and throw him on the field that belonged to Naboth, the Jezreelite. Remember how you and I were riding together in chariots behind Ahaziah, his father, when the Lord God made this prophecy about him?

Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, declares the Lord. And I will surely make you pay for it on this plot of ground, declares the Lord. Now then pick him up and throw him on that plot in accordance with the word of the Lord.

When Ahaziah king of Judah saw what had happened, he fled the road to Beth Hagen. Jehu chased him, shouting, Kill him too! They wounded him in his chariot on the way up to Ger near Ibalim, but he escaped to Megiddo and died there.

His servants took him in his chariot to Jerusalem and buried him with his fathers in the tomb in the city of David. In the eleventh year of Joram, son of Ahab, Ahaziah had become king of Judah. Then Jehu went to Jezreel.

When Jezebel heard about this, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair, and looked out of a window. As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master? Jehu looked up at the window and called out, Who's on my side?

[8 : 50] Who? Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. Throw her down, Jehu said. So they threw her down. And some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot. Jehu went in, ate, and drank.

Take care of that cursed woman, he said, and bury her, for she's a king's daughter. But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet, and her hands. They went back and told Jehu, who said, This is the word of the Lord, that he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite.

On the plot of ground of Jezreel, dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh. Jezebel's body will be like refuse on the ground on the plot of Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, This is Jezebel. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. It's a bloody passage. In many ways, it's a dark passage. But ultimately, it is a passage of God refusing to be okay with these things that are not okay.

Refusing to be okay with the reality of darkness and evil in Israel and his bringing Jehu to overthrow the darkness, to bring light and goodness into the kingdom.

[9 : 52] We're going to see six principles that you and I can learn in order to be people who walk with God through all the different seasons of time in these words. First, where is Jehu when he receives his call?

Jehu is with his friends and his fellow officers. We don't know if he's planning, looking at maps and doing what officers do, or if they're just playing cards and hanging out. But either way, there's noise. And into that noise, this prophet from God comes.

This young prophet comes and says, I have a message for you, O commander. For which one of us asks Jehu? For you, commander. And he brings Jehu into an inner room. And in that inner room, away from the noise, in the place of quiet, Jehu hears this message from God.

Jehu, this is who you are. You're king. And Jehu, this is what you're called to do. You're to overthrow the dark kingdom. You're to stage a coup. You and I find ourselves surrounded by noise and busyness.

And it's easy for us to find ourselves, even if we're spending time in the word, it's still amidst such busyness and noise. You'll find that if you look through the scriptures, that the women and men of God of faith, or if you just look through history and see the women and men of God who have endured in their faith, whatever the season is, are people who spend time alone, who make time for quiet with God.

[11 : 13] And this is a separate point from spending time in scripture. That's important too. I found there certain times in my life where I'm getting to spend time in scriptures and I'm spending time in prayer, but I'm not spending time quiet before God, alone with God.

Focus time with God. The first point for godly endurance is spend time alone with God. It's absolutely beautiful and ideal when you can spend some time, you know, first thing in the morning to spend a big, significant time before God in his presence.

But some might find, maybe you're a homeschool mom of like four kids, five kids, there's just so much going on that the moment, no matter how early you set your alarm, there's just busyness and chaos from the moment you wake up.

I want to encourage you not to hear this point as another burden to throw onto your already weary shoulders. But even if it's just a sliver, if all you can manage is a sliver, take that sliver.

For me, in times of great busyness, when I feel like I'm just not getting the time of God I want, I somehow still have time to scroll my phone. That time that you might just take a minute to just scroll, maybe that's time that one could stop and disorient their heart toward God.

[12 : 26] In that place of quiet, Jehu hears who he is and what he's called to. And that's the second point. It makes the busyness and noise of life. The men and women of God have been able to endure in their faith.

And not just endure in that they technically still believe all the true things about God and go to church, but people who really know their God are people who take time to be reoriented about who they are and what they're called to do.

And that's what happens to Jehu in that quiet place. So the second point is to know who you are, to be reminded of who you are and what you're called to do. Jehu is called to be king and he's called to go stage a coup.

You and I most likely won't be called by God to stage a coup. So what are we called to do? Who are we? Well, in Colossians chapter three, Paul writes to the church at Colossae, and this is significant. He writes to them, telling them to rid themselves of these sinful, toxic, very serious behaviors.

Before they've had a chance to change, to repent, to confess, he says, as God's holy and beloved and keeps writing. It's all in Colossians chapter three. That shows me that even if you and I are battling temptation and we're not doing very well in our fight against the flesh, that if we're in Jesus, if we're Christians, then we are holy and beloved.

[13 : 42] Because that's the language Paul uses for these Christians who are battling temptation. What does it mean to be holy and beloved? Holy means set apart for special use. The goblets in the temple, they're goblets, just like there's other goblets that were in Israel.

But the goblets in the temple were for the purpose of God, set apart for that. And so when the king of Babylon in the book of Daniel, when he comes in, invades the temple and removes those goblets to his own palace and lifts those chalices to his own lips and drinks of them, God strikes him down because God defends that which is holy to him.

You and I are holy to God. Perhaps because of sins that you've done, you feel like you're damaged goods. Perhaps because of harmful things people have done to you or just the pain that you've been through, you feel like damaged goods.

Hear this word from scripture today. You are holy and beloved. Holy. I know some here at Messiah are fans of the Marvel movies. I am. And you know that Thor's hammer.

That is not a hammer that he uses to just put a nail on the wall for his calendar. No, he uses that hammer to vanquish the enemy. And similarly, God has called us and made us to be part of his ushering in his kingdom into this world, vanquishing the darkness.

[14 : 58] You and I are holy to him. And even though we might not see God avenge us as quickly as he avenged those goblets, I promise you that you are more holy to God and precious to him as his children made in his image than those chalices ever were.

God will defend and avenge his own. Second, we're beloved. That's the word Paul chooses to use. He could have just written, you are loved by God.

But he says, we're beloved by God. Beloved means both love and liked. When, you know, like every parent should love their children. But sometimes when children are being very toxic and self-destructive and this absolutely miserable to be around, you may not necessarily feel like they're beloved to you, but you still love them.

God is having Paul use the word beloved because not only does he love us as a parent loves a wayward child, but the word beloved, it also includes that love, that light, that cherishing and delighting.

When you just, when you love to be around someone because you love their personality, you love who they are, you, they're so special to you. That's this word beloved. You and I, even as there's so much in our lives still to clean up, are holy and beloved by God.

[16 : 17] That's who we are in him. So that's who we are, holy and beloved children of God. Second is that, what are we called to? Well, Jesus, at the very start of his mission, at the start of his public ministry, he reaches out to the ancient prophecy of Isaiah 61 and he unfurls it and reads it as his mission statement.

So turn with me if you have a moment to Isaiah 61. This is Jesus' mission statement and Jesus calls us not just to believe in him, five times in the gospel Jesus calls us to believe in him, but 20 times Jesus calls us to follow him.

So if this is Jesus' mission statement and we're called to follow him, then this becomes our mission statement. This is your mission statement for life. The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. This is the mission statement of Jesus. John, in the first chapter, as he's introducing Jesus invading our world at Christmas, breaking into our brokenness, sums up Jesus' mission by saying light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

That's Jesus' mission, to be light in the darkness. It's an even more succinct summary than this Isaiah 61 verse 1. And that's you're my call. It's going to look different for different ones of us, for sure.

[17 : 38] But all of us are called to share in being light in the darkness, in the name and the power of Jesus. That's who we are. That's what we're called to do. So Jehu hears his call. He hears his identity.

He comes out dripping with oil, dripping down his face, down his beard. And his friends say, what did that man say to you? And Jehu says, well, you know the guy and the sort of things he says. You can see that he kind of shrugs it off. He doesn't embrace who he really is.

He has this epic word over his life, doesn't believe it. Maybe that's like you and I sometimes. God has called us. God has called us. God has called us to be his ambassadors, to be light in the darkness, in this broken world.

And yet we often can just live as if we're just trying to make it through the next day. And yet, so there's Jehu. He doesn't really embrace his call. His friends say, Jehu, what did he say? Jehu says, okay.

Vulnerably shares with them. This is the prophecy from God. He said, I'm king. He said, I'm called to destroy Jezebel and the whole house of Ahab. And his friends respond epically. Jehu is king. Jehu, Jehu is king.

[18 : 39] They're saying to Jehu, Jehu, this is who you are. Jehu, this is what you're called to do. And you see that as Jehu hears them. It's beautiful. You see that as Jehu hears them say this.

He kind of stands up a little tall. Shoulders back. He begins giving them his battle plan. Don't let anyone out of the city. I'm going to take the chariot. Some of us are going to ride to the capital in Jezreel. You're going to stay here.

You're not going to let anyone out. We're going to do this. If you and I are going to be people who endure in our faith, we need to be people who have Jehu's friends type friends. We need to have the kind of friends Jehu had.

Those friends who are able to hear us share vulnerably what we really believe God's calling us to. Every one of us is going to find, if we're giving ourselves to the work that God has called us to do, in whatever realm of life it is, we're going to find times where we just want to give up.

We need to have those kind of friends like Jehu's friends who help us be able to keep going when the going gets tough. We need to have friends who are able to call us out when we're starting to strain to toxic behaviors and thought patterns.

[19 : 42] Maybe here's an example. Earlier this year, I got to make some brief videos for our ZAM. I was really excited to see the way that they were making an impact.

They were getting a lot of views. I thought this was exciting. I was talking about it. Alexandra, my wife, challenged me, Daniel, is your heart for these videos that people get to hear the word of God?

Or are you just feeling a little bit like the most smallest of many celebrities and you think that's kind of fun? Right away, my response, no, no. It's just about every view as another person.

I was trying to just portray myself. I just really cared about all the people. But Alexandra is a close enough friend to me that she can see that I was enjoying some of the aspects of fame more than I...

It's not even fame, but you know what I'm saying. And she was able to see through my facade, see through the way I wanted to present myself, not only to others, but even the way I wanted to present myself to myself. And she was able to help me see some brokenness and sin in my life, in my attitude and ego.

[20 : 48] It's such a gift to me to have a friend like that. You and I need friends like that. You can see through how we're doing. My friend Alonzo, he's someone classic who can say, how are you?

Oh, I'm doing well. Daniel, what's bothering you? You know, and I'm not even aware there's something bothering me. Surely I'm not the only one who sometimes presents himself to other than themselves in a way that is photoshopped.

We need to have friends like this. Please take a moment even now and assess who are your close friends. And are they Jehu friend type friends? I saw a quote.

This isn't from the Bible, but I think it resonates. We become like the five people we spend the most time with. Life is so much of life. The world, the flesh, and the devil are pulling us to minimal commitment to God, pulling us to lip service to God, pulling us to facade and pulling us to a shallow faith.

We need to have friends who themselves are friends whose heart are after God's own heart. Yeah, absolutely. We should also have friends who, and be interacting with people who need, who need to hear about Jesus.

[21 : 53] It's not good for us to try to make a life that's only in a very isolated Christian bubble. But at the same time, our most intimate friends, the people we're really living life with, entrusting our hopes and our fears and our dreams to, should be people who like Jehu, his friends are able to call us to God and to godliness.

Do you have those friends? If not, be prayerfully and proactively looking to cultivate those friendships. One last point on that. A few of us at Church Messiah used to be housemates together.

We loved God. We would spend time reading the scriptures. We're serious about our faith. And then one of the guys, I think it was Peter Mahaffey, he said, you know, although we all are serious about our faith, we never talk about it.

We all love God, but we never talk about him. We're far too satisfied to talk about sports or news or this, just the more shallow stuff. And he said, guys, if we're going to really be the man that God's called us to be, we need to be talking deeply about life, about God.

And so the first couple of weeks, and maybe it was a couple of days, I don't know, the first bit of trying to embrace Peter's exhortation felt a bit forced. It felt unnatural, at least for me.

[23 : 08] Some of you can relate. It just feels a little bit forced to try to take the conversation deep. So we'd be hanging out and someone would say, what are you guys reading the word today?

Or what have you learned from the Bible recently? And it felt like it was forced. But our souls need that. And if we're forcing deep and meaningful conversation, that's actually a really precious thing.

Another easy way to go deep is to say, hey, how can I be praying for you this week? And it takes a conversation both deeper, more vulnerable, and also turns our attention toward God. We need to be going deep.

In Hebrews 13, the author of Hebrew writes and tells us to be exhorting each other with the gospel. We need to be people who are preaching the gospel to each other in our conversation.

Some of you know Rich Crosby. He's a pastor of Grace City Church, I think it's called, in Ottawa. He's someone who whenever I would chat with him about anything, he always responds to my questions with, what does the gospel say about that?

[24 : 09] What is the good news about who Jesus is and what he's done say about that? And it's constant and it's good. I want to encourage us to use Rich's words and ask each other as we're sharing stuff, having conversations.

What does the gospel say about that? Try to reorient life through the good news of who Jesus is. As we do that, we will become for each other, Jehu friend type friends, which is absolutely necessary.

You will see that the women and men of faith throughout the Bible, throughout history, and to this day are the people who cultivate gospel-centered, godly friendships.

We need that. So after you have that encounter with Jehu's friends, he braces his calling. He rides out like a madman toward the capital city. And as he's writing out, you'll see that there's certain sentences that are reoccurring.

And the first of them is, this is the word of the Lord. You see that this soldier officer who drives like a madman, he knows the scriptures, that he can bring it to mind and apply it to various situations.

[25 : 12] And that's how he knows what to do with Joram regarding an innocent Naboth and his vineyard. You see that he's able to navigate life righteously because he knows the word of the Lord.

And then when he messes up and says, give her a royal burial regarding Jezebel, and that's not what they were supposed to do. He's able to respond to his mistake and correct his course as he recalls to mind the word of the Lord spoken to Elijah.

In Psalm 119 verse 9, the psalmist says, how can a young man keep his way pure? Pure. A life that is both devoid of defilement and sin, and that's filled with the righteousness of God.

How can a man keep his way pure? Or, then he answers that question by guarding his way according to your word, he says. He means by living our lives according to the Bible. And Jesus embodies this psalm when in the desert, he's facing temptation.

He defeats that temptation. He resists temptation by quoting Deuteronomy. He's guarding his way according to the word of the Bible. You and I need to be living our life in the same way as Jesus.

[26 : 17] In that way that if Jesus needed the strength that comes from Deuteronomy, the strength that comes from the Bible, you and I do too. And I don't know if I know enough of Deuteronomy that when I'm facing a decision, when I'm facing temptation, that I'd be able to quote Deuteronomy and do the righteous thing.

I don't know that I know Deuteronomy well enough for that. Do you? Do you know Obadiah? Do you know Philemon, 3 John? Enough to be able to use that in your arsenal against temptation in a life pursuing godliness and purity.

If Jesus needed these tough to read books of the Bible, so do we because we're not stronger than him and he needed that strength. I want to encourage you to be reading more than just the books of the Bible that are so easy to read.

The Gospels, some of the letters, Colossians, Philippians, some of the historical books, Psalms, those are the ones that the meaning easier jumps off the page. But we should be wrestling through all the Bible.

A great resource Daniel Avitan introduced me to some years ago is the Bible Project. Type in any book of the Bible, Leviticus Bible Project, type that into YouTube and it will give you a six minute, well illustrated, very helpful overview of the book that's going to help you read the book in a gospel centered, meaningful way that will help you apply it to your life.

[27 : 35] It's so helpful, this resource. YouTube, type in Bible Project, any book of the Bible. We need to be people who, like Jehu, can call the scriptures to mind and live according to them.

Now the next reoccurring phrase you may have noticed even more than this is the word of the Lord is this question Jehu was asked by first one messenger, then the next messenger, then the kings, and then finally Jezebel.

The question is, Jehu, do you come in peace? Notice what they're not asking him. They're not saying, Jehu, would you join us in the work of darkness? Jehu, would you help us offer some children in the fires as a pagan worship?

That's not what they say. They just say, Jehu, will you come in peace? Jehu, will you coexist with us? My friends, there's a lot of darkness in this world today. Peter writes in his letters that we have an enemy who is like a lion roaming around looking for whom he can devour.

You and I have an enemy that wants to take us down, that wants to neutralize us, that wants to make our lives make no impact, that wants to make our relationship with God hollow and surface.

[28 : 42] Not only does he want to do this to us, he wants to do this to our friends. The people beside you at church or six feet apart from you at church or online, the enemy is coming after them. There's a lot of darkness. It's real.

The reality of human trafficking, sexual abuse, abortion, just lostness, people who are living their life apart from God. There's so much darkness.

And the enemy is asking us, I think every day, will you come in peace? Will you just coexist with all this lostness and brokenness? You and I were called to be light in the darkness.

Do not make peace with the darkness. Do not make peace with the darkness. Just like there was so much riding on whether or not Jehu would respond to his call or not. So you and I engaging in being salt and light in this world makes a difference or not.

I want to encourage you starting today or for those of you already living this out, continuing today and each day. Declare war on the darkness in the name of Jesus. How do we do this?

[29 : 43] Well, we can do this by our prayers. Just today, even before you know how to do any other being and making a difference. Pray. Our intercession makes a difference. Pick a kind of a realm of the battle and strengthen that realm through our prayers.

For me, some years ago, I decided I wanted to fight against human trafficking. That was going to be part of the darkness I wanted to be a light against. And so I went and Googled, what are the charities? What are the ministries? Who are the people who are engaged in this fight?

And I began praying, actively praying for them that God would strengthen and bless and resource them. I believe it makes a difference. Whatever the interests or burdens on your heart, be actively praying there.

I love Ian just wrote a book, published a book, Ian at Messiah, about God and video games. And what a brilliant and imaginative way to be light in the darkness and the whole global world of video games, to be shining light there.

If you're passionate about video games, find who, Ian, is actively making a difference there and be praying and interceding for that work. So think of what are your areas of interest and be actively praying for the light there.

[30 : 53] We have our prayers. Second, we have some of us have money. We should be using our money to help strengthen the light in the darkness. So look at what charities and people are making a difference and give.

Let's see if we can get even more of our money to resourcing being a light in the darkness. Give our time, whether it's volunteer work or there's ways through our jobs that we can be engaging in Isaiah 61 verse 1 mission of God that can look like so many different areas.

I know people who are truck drivers and they went and were Googling what's relevant to truck drivers and found that there's a lot of victims of human trafficking that are trafficked on the 401.

And so they went and took some training and became equipped to be able to recognize where there's some trafficking happening. And they were able to found a ministry that works with truck drivers to help rescue victims of human trafficking.

And the same is true for flight attendants and various things. So whatever area of life you are in, be prayerfully and imaginatively looking for how you can be light in the darkness. And ultimately, regardless of all the various interests and areas of being light in the darkness, we're all called to be people who are witnesses to the gospel, introducing people to Jesus.

[32 : 05] And so through our prayers, through time, through money, through relationships, let us be doing the work of evangelism. That is light in the darkness. Let us refuse to make peace with the darkness out in the world and also the darkness within.

For our whole lives, we have a battle of temptation, of toxic behaviors and patterns that we crave. Engage in the fight, actively engage in the fight of putting to death those toxic behaviors and embracing the works of righteousness, the works of godliness.

We cannot make peace with the darkness. Now, I heard all this being preached for the first time when I was 13 years old. It was at a youth rally of a couple thousand students on the West Coast in BC.

The preacher was an MMA fighter. He has an epic voice. And as he's preaching, that epic, raspy voice, he called out to all the thousands of students, I'm looking for Jehu's tonight. And everybody was standing up.

I want to be Jehu. I want to be Jehu. I did not want to be Jehu. I refused to stand. Why is that? Well, just like some of you, I got bored of all he was preaching. And I flipped the page.

[33 : 08] Maybe this is some of you who got bored of all I'm speaking. He flipped the page. And I read the rest of Jehu's life in 2 Kings 10. We're in 2 Kings 9. Read 2 Kings 10. And I found to my horror that Jehu is the statistic.

That Jehu, this man who throws over the darkness and leads the people in this great and glorious coup in response to God's call, goes on to lead the people into other pagan practices.

He finishes his life far from God. It's haunting. So while everyone else is standing, I want to be Jehu. I'm not. I don't want to be Jehu. There's enough Jehus in this world. I want to be faithful.

I want to walk with God to the end of my life. I want to finish my race. Don't you? So after that experience, I spent time as a teen, reading through 2 Kings 9 and 10, trying to find what did Jehu, what was missing?

And much of what I've shared with you comes from those years of just trying to read through this and find what is it. And you'll notice in 2 Kings 10, that the five principles we've looked at are in 2 Kings 10.

[34 : 15] You can see that as Jehu falls away from God, that he's not spending time in that quiet place, just focused hearing God's word away from the noise. You see that the word of the Lord is no longer on his lips.

His Jehu friends, his friends aren't there to call him to his true identity in God and his call. You'll see that those five principles are missing.

He has made peace with the darkness. But there's one more thing on this will end. To see this, I had to go look at other Kings, Saul and David. Saul, David, you, me, all of us, Jehu, struggle with sin.

You'll notice that when Saul's confronted by his Jehu's friend type friend, Samuel, with his sin, Saul's response is, don't leave me, Samuel. Samuel, stay with me. Why does he say that?

Samuel validates Saul's kingship. Samuel is someone who kind of, he's a validation for Saul. And Saul loves his job.

[35 : 12] Saul loves his call to be the king, protector, defender of Israel. And he doesn't want it to be taken away. That's his response when he's confronted with sin. David pens this song, this song of confession when he's confronted by his Jehu friend type friend, Nathan.

And in that Psalm, Psalm 51, he says, do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Saul says, Samuel, stay with me. David says, God, would you stay with me? Look what David doesn't say.

David doesn't say, God, don't take away my kingship. Don't take away my throne. Don't take away my call. He says, don't take away your spirit from me. Don't take away your presence. Saul's heart was after his call.

David's heart was after the one who called him. And it looks to me that Jehu is someone who relished in his call. Shy at first, but embraced it for all that he's worth. But you don't ever see anywhere here.

For all his loving the word of the Lord, you never see that he loves the Lord. I find that I can be quite like this myself. Anyone who is preaching the scriptures might be able to relate to this.

[36 : 19] I find sometimes I can see myself really drifting into loving my call more than the one who called me. When my daily Bible reading is more real sermon prep than actually is letting God speak to me for me.

There's all the different ways I can see that I'm filling my life with the stuff of God, but not really treasuring God. And when that begins to be the case, it's our relationship with God that is being eroded.

David writes in Psalm 63, expressing that same heartbeat we see in Psalm 51, where he says, Your steadfast love is better than life. That means God's steadfast love is better than all the stuff of life.

Any of the good stuff, any of the bad temptation, anything. He's saying, God, your steadfast love is better than life. For us to be people who endure through the various seasons of life, that needs to be the anthem of our lives.

Our very heartbeat to know God. And that way, when we do find ourselves sinning, and we have and we will, we don't try to do our own PR. Do we try to cover up and make sure that we still come across as good as we can.

[37 : 23] But as we're able to rest in our belovedness in God, as we're able to rest in our being holy because of what Jesus has done, not because of our own righteousness. Then when we're confronted with sin, whether it's Holy Spirit conviction or it's friends like my wife talking to me about my ego.

We don't need to be defensive. We don't need to be fragile like that because we know our belovedness. And in our resting in our belovedness, resting in our holiness to God, we're able to say, you know what, you're right.

And we're able to confess it to our friend. We can confess it to God in prayer. And we're able to look to him to change. I think the most frustrating thing about all of this, at least for me, is that I want to have a heart that's after God's own heart.

I want to be a man of God. And yet, I don't have the strength to make it happen. I want my heart to be like David's, a heart after God's own heart. But I try and I can't ever try hard enough.

My heart is so still, though I'm redeemed, so prone to wander from God. And your heart is probably like my own.

[38 : 27] And this brings us back to the gospel. This brings us back to the gift of God's presence in our lives. That we need God in order to desire God. We need God in order to receive God into our lives.

We need his grace. And so here, as we wrap this up, I want to encourage you to look at these six principles I've shared with you. And to see, and there's more spiritual disciplines than this. But to look here at the cusp of a new year and see how are you doing in your cultivating a deep and personal relationship with God.

How are you living out your call to be light in the darkness? And see where you might need to emphasize more time and energy to live out what it really means to cultivate a deep, personal, and vibrant walk with God.

We need to be intentional about this. But more than anything, would you join me in praying that God would cultivate, that God would cultivate within us a heart that beats for him. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for my friends at Church of Messiah. Those who I've known and walked with and those who are new and I haven't met yet. God, I pray for your blessing on every one of us.

[39 : 36] That we would know you, our God. Not just know about you, but that we would know you and that our hearts would beat to know you still more. That every one of us would be people who endure in our faith.

That not only would we believe in you, but that we would follow you by your grace. Would you cultivate within us a hunger and a thirst to know you more?

Would you help us to love you with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength? In Jesus' name, amen.