

# God The Father's Witness About Jesus

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 18 March 2018

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would move in a mighty way in us as a congregation so that our heart and our plans and our thinking is to bring you glory, to do your will in your way as we bring you glory, knowing that as we bring glory to you that people are blessed.

And Father, make us a congregation that wants to lift Jesus high, not only in this city and to the ends of the earth. So Father, we ask that you make us ever more generous in our pursuit of that. And now as we, Father, spend time listening to your word, we ask that your Holy Spirit would work deeply within us that we might abide a Father in your love.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Amen.

So, I had a bit of an unusual education in that I actually never went to a sort of an I never went to an evangelical seminary.

I went to a secular university. I did secular graduate work. And then I went to a very, very, very liberal place to train to be a minister. And if you're a guest, you might not know what liberal means.

[ 1 : 18 ] It means that a lot of the sort of very standard or traditional doctrines that Christians believe would not have been believed by the faculty and my professors. And so in the Anglican Church of Canada, when I was part of that, and in that school where I did my training, they would have thought, well, if you said in a place like that that you believe that the Bible was God's word, that every word in it was a word that came from God, and that it was authoritative in your life.

If you said something like that in the school that I trained at, they would have said, at least in their mind, if not with their lips, that I was, well, I was some type of fool to believe something like that. I was obviously a fundamentalist and probably not very bright. And if I was bright, I obviously wasn't very well read to believe something like that.

And when I talked to non-Christians about different things about the Christian faith, they probably wouldn't call me a fundamentalist because it doesn't get to that.

But, well, it would be a little bit like one fellow who's seen me working on my sermon in a coffee shop on a regular basis. And he said to me one day, he said, George, I just don't get why it is that you guys are so fixated on the Bible.

[ 2 : 43 ] Like, what's up with this? Just being so fixated with the Bible. Like, you know, there's lots of good books in the world. And there's lots of places where you can find wisdom.

And there's lots of places where you can get insight. You know, it's a little bit, he said, because he knew me very well. He said, you know, when your kids are very young at a certain age, they might have one book that when you read the story to, you know, a book to your kids, there's one particular book that after you've read it, they say, could you read it again?

And then after you've read it, they say, can you read it again? And then the next day you read them a story, they want to hear that book. And, you know, like in one week, they might read that one book like 20 times. And we think it's cute when they're young, but like for an adult, it's a bit embarrassing, don't you think?

Just to be sort of fixated all the time on just one book. So what's up with you? Like, what's up with you guys? So the scripture text that we're going to look at right now is actually an answer to that. It explains why it is that we would be fixated in quotation marks with one book. So it'd be a great help to me if you would take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 5, beginning at verse 31.

[ 3 : 52 ] John chapter 5, beginning at verse 31. And the way the flow is, just so you know what the context is, right? Because this is a book. And just like if I was to come into a movie, you know, 10 or 15 minutes late, I might ask somebody what's going on before or something happens in the plot and I'm not sure why it happened.

I might pause and ask somebody who's been watching it from the beginning what went on before I came in. So what's going on just before this is at the beginning of chapter 5, we see Jesus doing a remarkable miracle.

At least this is what the ancient biography tells us, that Jesus does a remarkable miracle. There's a place where invalids and the sick gathered in the hope they had some cultural belief or superstitious belief or maybe it was a place where things are just, you know, where odd things happen, but it was a place where the invalids and the sick of the world of Jerusalem gathered.

And in that particular place, it's called the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus sees a man who's been an invalid for 38 years and merely by his will, Jesus heals the man. And he heals the man, not just like a teensy-weensy bit, but he heals the man so much that this man who's been an invalid for 38 years is able to stand up, pick up all of his possessions in his sleeping mat and walk away.

And what happens is that this healing takes place on the Sabbath and carrying all of your possessions in your sleeping mat broke a tradition of the particular Jewish leaders in Jerusalem at that time and they see the man.

[ 5 : 30 ] There ends up being a bit of a conversation about it. They end up finding out that it was Jesus who told this guy to break their traditions. They go to Jesus and Jesus, they say, Jesus, why did he do that? And the way that Jesus answers the question really upsets them even more because they say, Jesus is talking as if he's equal to God.

And then the very next bit, it's all part of the same thing, is Jesus understands what they're thinking. I mean, whether this is divine knowledge or not, it doesn't necessarily have to be divine knowledge in this particular case.

We've all been in a room where we know what everybody's thinking. I mean, it's not just crazy people who do that. I mean, we can be in a room and we just know that people, you can tell by their body language and other ways.

So however it is, Jesus knows what they're thinking. And how he answers the question is very interesting. If you've ever talked to a Jehovah Witness, they make a lot of hay out of Jesus's answer because Jesus doesn't answer in terms of him being equal to God.

In fact, a Jehovah Witness will point out to you that Jesus doesn't actually say that he's equal to God. He sort of dodges the question a little bit. That's what they'd say. But what they've missed is actually the very cleverness of Jesus's answer because what he does is he knows, if we're honest, he knows that the language of equality is problematic.

[ 6 : 53 ] We talked about this a little bit last week. Probably most of you don't remember. That's fine. But if we think about it, the language of equality always goes along with being able to do whatever you want, right?

If two people here are equal in the church, then one person can't tell the other person what to do. Like we say, one moment, I'm equal with you. You can't tell me what to do. That's how we tend to understand equality.

That equality means that we have power. We have power to do what we want. We have power to do something different than the other person. I think it was Oscar Wilde who said that if he asked somebody to bring him a glass of water and they brought him instead the most expensive wine, he would pour it out and not drink it and ask for the water purely for the pleasure of getting what he wanted.

That the other person couldn't, in a sense, impose their taste on him. And that's how we understand equality, isn't it? And so Jesus answers in a very, very subtle way. He answers in a way that's going to point to the deep intimacy between God the Father and God the Son.

And not only the deep intimacy, but a deep intimacy based on love that means that they always are of the same mind. And in the context of describing this deep intimacy between himself and his Father, an intimacy that always has them doing the same thing, you know, does God the Father have life in himself?

[ 8 : 24 ] Only God can have life in himself. Well, so does the Son. Does God the Father, is he the one who has authority, like a proper authority to say what is right and wrong? Well, so does the Son.

Does God the Father have the, is he going to rule over all things? Well, so does the Son. Does God the Father, the one who's going to bring all things to an end and at the end judge all things?

Well, so does the Son. So he describes himself as everything that's describing the Father also is describing of him, but it doesn't use the language of equality. Because he's trying to communicate

something greater than mere equality, which is based on this profound intimacy and profound love. You can see it in a small way. I didn't use this analogy last week, but every one of us who've had kids, or if we haven't had kids, we've been kids. And you know how kids, like when they reach a certain age, they like to try to play the father off against the mother or the mother off against the father.

They know that there's certain things that if they ask their dad this, the dad will say no. So they try the mom. You know, or if the mom says no, they won't tell the dad that the mom said no.

[ 9 : 29 ] They'll go and ask the dad for permission, hoping that the dad will say yes. And then, you know, and in a good marriage, of course, you don't get any difference in treatment between the mother and the father.

And that, in a very, very tiny way, is a bit of an image of this deep unity. Unity based on love and unity based on love and intimacy between the father and the son. So that's what's happening just before this, right?

So Jesus is making these most really outrageous claims in the world. And we talked about that a little bit last week. Like, crazy people say that they're God.

Crazy people say they're God. But Jesus is talking as if everything that describes God, the father describes him and describes them as if they have this profound unity and this profound intimacy.

And that at the heart of this is not just unity and intimacy. It's one based on the most, literally for us, beyond our imagination's love. And that brings us to where we are right now, verse 31.

[ 10 : 30 ] So it's John 5 to verse 31. And now Jesus says, if I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. Like, just pause there. Isn't that very refreshing to see that?

It's very, very refreshing. Because he acknowledges that, one moment, I've just said these amazing things. Like, don't believe me just because I said it, right?

That's what he wanted here. You know, he's very self-aware. And he says, listen, it's not just because I say it that you should believe it. Then, what does he go on? Verse 32, he says, there is another who bears witness about me.

And I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. Now, here's just another little pause in our reading. What you don't know, if you read all the way through this, you're going to see that what Jesus is about to do is he's going to say, I have three different, first of all, the he's that he's referring to, it's a big claim.

And we don't actually fully realize it for a few verses. But what he's just saying is the person who bears witness that everything that I've said is true is God the Father. Now, that's a big claim, isn't it?

[ 11 : 38 ] The person who's bearing witness that who I am and what I've done, all that who I am, that I'm going to be the one who gives eternal life, the one who bears witness to me is God the Father.

And God the Father has done this in three different ways. You see that if you read all the way through it, but right now you don't see it. He's entering into it. But that's what we need to understand, that he is referring to God the Father.

And he says, God the Father has provided three different ways for us to understand and know that Jesus is exactly who he says he is. So what's the first one?

Well, what Jesus does is he says, he basically says to everybody, the first one is weak, but it's still something for you to know. So what's the first one? Well, that continues on at verse 33.

He says, you sent to John, that means John the Baptist, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, that is from human beings, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

[ 12 : 45 ] He, that is John the Baptist, he was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. Now, just sort of pause there. That's the first witness.

And he says it's not really, it's actually God the Father bearing witness to John the Baptist. He's claiming that God the Father was the one who called John the Baptist to be a prophet and gave John some knowledge to make certain types of connections and identifications.

And John the Baptist is the one who said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John the Baptist is the one who said, I baptized you with water, but there is one, I've come to prepare the way for one who's far greater than me, that he doesn't just sort of pour water over you, he pours the Holy Spirit over you.

And he not only pours the Holy Spirit over you, he pours the Holy Spirit into you. He's far greater than me. And it's very interesting that Jesus says this, this is an important witness, but it's a weak one, right?

Because he says, I don't ultimately take, we know that witnesses from human beings don't really matter that much about these things because human beings can be wrong. But it's interesting in two ways before we go any further about this identification with John the Baptist.

[13:58] And the first one is this, John the Baptist is no historian of the ancient world doubts the existence of John the Baptist. Why?

Because an important Roman Jewish historian wrote extensively about John the Baptist. An important Roman Jewish historian who lived at the same time, whose writings are consulted about how the ancient world worked and who the emperors were and how just the empire worked and geography and all that, Josephus, he wrote about John the Baptist.

He was well known as being a very, very important figure in the Jewish world at this time. So it's interesting that Jesus is referring to somebody that even today, outside of the Bible, there is lots known about John the Baptist.

And John the Baptist did draw large, large crowds. And it is known that in fact that Herod did put John the Baptist to death. And so that's interesting that Jesus has chosen a weak example, but an example that historians would say, well, John the Baptist did exist.

But there's also one other thing which is interesting about this. In the ancient church fathers, and then at the time of the Reformation and with the Puritans, and those who are familiar with the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, you see it reflected in the different prayers in the Book of Common Prayer.

[15:25] John the Baptist is taken in some ways as to be the model minister. That all ministers are to aspire to be like John the Baptist, to bear witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, to have the courage, even in the face of political power, to bear witness to Jesus, to have the courage, even under threat of death, to bear witness to the person of Jesus.

So in some ways, this is actually telling us that you and I are to bear witness to Jesus. Like, if you live in cubicle land, you're to bear witness to Jesus.

Obviously in inappropriate ways, but God has put you in places where there will be doors that open, opportunities for you just to bear witness to Jesus in some way, where you live, that God has placed you there.

Because, you know, really, ultimately all Christians are called to be ministers. Jesus says, what does he say again? Look at verse 34.

Not that the testimony that I receive is from man or from human beings, but I say these things so that you may be saved. So what's the second witness that ultimately comes from God the Father?

[16:39] Well, that's in verse 36. He just spends one verse on it right here, and it's verse 36. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John, still the testimony from the Father, the greater testimony than that from John the Baptist.

What is it? For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I'm doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

Now, what's Jesus talking about here? And here what he's talking about are miracles, amongst other things. But miracles in particular. He's saying that the miracles that I'm doing bear witness that God has sent me.

Now, if you think about this for a second, this is absolutely correct. If miracles actually happen, if it is, and one of the things which is really interesting about the way that John wrote his biography of Jesus is he says in many times that if you want to understand why it is that important people like Nicodemus come to Jesus in the middle of the night and why it is that there's crowds that come and why it is that people who are 35 kilometers away go through a long walk uphill just to see Jesus. If you want to understand why this is going on, you have to understand it's because that Jesus is performing miracles all over the place, public miracles. But the way that John not only says this, but he also, in writing his biography, he thought it through and he says, I'm going to pick some significant miracles that really teach a lot about who Jesus is and who God is.

[18:10] And I'm going to spend some time explaining this smaller number of miracles. John's book has fewer miracles in it than it does in Matthew, Mark, and Luke because he's picked some that are significant. And already in this gospel, we've seen three significant miracles.

We've seen Jesus turn water into wine. And what does the story say? That merely by his will, not as a prayer that God would do something, but merely by his will, without touching anything, merely by his will, Jesus turns water into wine.

And then we see later on that merely by his will, a man who's traveled 35 kilometers to see Jesus so that Jesus would heal his son.

Jesus, 35 kilometers away, merely by his will, the son is healed. And then just before this, in a very, very public way, we see Jesus perform another very, very remarkable miracle.

And it's a very, very public miracle as well because this was a place you could just sort of, I mean, I, you know, I see certain street people all the time. If you go to certain places, you see certain street people and, and, and sometimes you see street people for years.

[ 19 : 23 ] And, and what we have here in Jerusalem is the pool of Bethesda. And for, for a variety of reasons, some of which are hinted in the Bible, this was a gathering place of the very sick. It was a gathering place of invalids.

And, and so there's this one fellow here, he's been here for 38 years and he's been an invalid for 38 years. And merely by the exercise of his will, he doesn't, you know, he doesn't do this.

He, he doesn't pray. He doesn't go through some ritual. Well, he doesn't do a whole pile of anointing just merely by his will. Jesus heals the man and heals the man in such a remarkable place that every single person in that place would know that the man had been healed because it all go, isn't that Joe?

Ain't that grumpy old Joe? That's always in the same spot with all of his, you know, unwashed crap. Did he just get up and walk out of here with all this crap?

Like what went on? And you could easily see that even those who didn't notice it right then, it would go on for weeks and weeks and weeks. They'd come in and they say, oh, what happened to Joe?

[ 20 : 25 ] Did he die? No. Well, why are you asking that? Well, his stuff's not here. Where's Joe? He's always here. And they said, didn't you hear he got healed? What do you mean he got healed? Well, this guy, Jesus, he just healed him.

Well, how do you know he got healed? But look, his stuff's not here. He just picked everything up and he walked out and he was an invalid. And it was a public miracle. Now, here's the thing.

If these miracles are true, the universe and reality itself is a very, very different place than most Canadians suspect or believe. And only God could work in his creation in such a way to create such a miracle.

And Jesus, by doing it merely by his will, well, he must be God or have some very special relationship with God. But it can't be because Jesus doesn't just ask God to do it the way you and I might have.

I mean, the Bible encourages us to pray for miracles, but he encourages us. The Bible encourages us to pray for a miracle.

[ 21 : 39 ] You know, Father, would you heal this person? Father, would you deliver this person? We pray, but Jesus just wills it. Now, Jesus just spends one verse on this here, but on one level, that's what the whole book is about.

The whole book of John is about. The book of John records a series of very, very significant miracles. In fact, right after this story, there's two of his most significant miracles. There's the miracle of Jesus walking on water and the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 men with a few loaves and fishes.

But at the end of the day, what really matters is that the whole book culminates in the great miracle, the grand miracle. And the great and grand miracle is Jesus dying upon the cross.

And after Jesus dies upon the cross, and there's no doubt about his death, even to the point of the spear going in his side to make sure that he's completely dead, and the blood and the water which comes out, that Jesus, who's put in a tomb, and nobody expects him to rise after he's dead.

On three days, he rises. And he doesn't sort of rise with a limp or sort of walking around in pain, but he rises triumphantly. The stone is rolled away. Using modern language, the soldiers are slain in the spirit, because that's what happens.

[ 22 : 51 ] They're slain in the spirit. They fall down. The stone is rolled away. Jesus is alive. The tomb is empty. And there's no other explanation. All of these other ones. Can we have historical evidence that Jesus turned water into wine?

We have no historical evidence other than the four biographies of Jesus said that he does that. But when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, there are good historical reasons. A person can say, I am a reasonable person.

I am a scholarly person. I am a person who's looked at the sources. And I believe that Jesus rose from the dead. The tomb is empty and that Jesus rose from the dead. And those are not contradictory statements.

And if Jesus was able to rise from the dead, then he's able to do these other miracles. And Jesus says, there's human testimony that ultimately comes from God, because God called John the Baptist to do this.

But we all know that human testimony is weak. We all know that. But a far greater witness is miracles. Just one more thing before we move on.

[ 23 : 53 ] If miracles happened in Buddhism, it would prove that Buddhism is not true. If miracles happened in Hinduism, it would prove that Hinduism is not true.

And in Islam, and obviously if miracles happened in atheism, it would prove that atheism is not true. But in Islam, Muhammad doesn't do any miracles at all.

It's sort of completely separate from Islam. But for Jesus, and in the Christian faith, it's very important. And Jesus says, this is the Father's witness that Jesus is God, the Son of God, and the Savior.

But what has Jesus been the longest time on in terms of the third? Remember I said Jesus will end up saying there's three different witnesses. It's all the Father, God the Father.

But there's three important witnesses that God the Father has provided. The first is John the Baptist. We know that's weak because we disbelieve human beings, right? We can be skeptical about them. The second is miracles. He only spends one verse on it.

[ 25 : 07 ] But really the whole book is about the witness of miracles. What's the third? Believe it or not, the third is the Bible. The third is this.

You're saying, George, no, really? Yes, look. Verse 37. Verse 37. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.

Look at it. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. So, you know, just pause. Well, how has he done it? Has he done it through giving visions to people? Has he done it through a still small voice?

Has he done it through a theophany? Which is where there's something that happens which is really God making himself apparent in some type of way. Like, you know, a burning pillar at night or, you know, a huge storm.

Like, how has he done it? Is that what he's referring to? And Jesus says, no, no, no, no. I'm not talking about mystical experiences. I'm not talking about inner voices. I'm not talking about theophanies. I'm not talking about visions.

[ 26 : 12 ] Because he keeps on. We'll read verse 37 again. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard. His form you have never seen.

And then he makes a comment which we're going to return to a little bit later. But it's very important. And you do not have his word abiding in you. For you do not believe the one whom he has sent. In other words, it's... He's not talking about some type of private revelation. He's going to talk a little bit later about the fact of having his word abide in you. But that only matters after you've come to understand who Jesus is.

It's not a separate source of revelation. Verse 39. You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me.

Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. Now just sort of pause. Do you notice the three different ways he's put this?

[ 27 : 11 ] It's very subtle. But it's there. You look up in verse 37. The Father who has sent me has himself borne witness about me.

And then you look at verse 39. You search the scriptures because you think that in them that you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me. And then you see in verse 41.

I do not receive glory from people. If you could put up the first point to Andrew, that would be great. Jesus said that the Bible is God the Father's written testimony about who Jesus is and what he accomplished for you and me.

I'm going to say a couple more things about that because this is a very significant thing to say.

But let's see how it continues on. Verse 41. I do not receive glory from people, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you.

[ 28 : 19 ] I have come in my Father's name and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, in his own name, look at me. I'm special.

You know, if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How does that work? Like who's being rational here? How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you. Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? So some of you might say, I'm still standing by this. This is a very important text to understand the Bible.

It shows the double authorship of the Bible. Now, if you read the Koran, the Koran has just one literary form. And it's a series of sayings.

[ 29 : 24 ] And some of the sayings are quite short. Some of them take several pages to write. But it's one literary form. And in fact, you don't necessarily read one from the other.

There's a whole separate way of trying to figure out. You have to depend upon a tradition to understand the order in which the different, I think they're called sutras, are written. But what you find when you read the Bible is that God has worked in such a way that ordinary human beings, ordinary human beings wrote.

And they wrote the way they wrote. Just a bit of a insight. I've had an experience a couple of times now of writing a letter for Bishop Charlie. You know, I ask him if you write a letter for something and he says he doesn't have the time.

And I say, well, can I write the letter for you? I'll send it to you and you can edit it. And what I try to do when I've heard Charlie speak many, many times. We've been on the phone lots. I've heard him speak in public. And I try to write so that it sounds like Charlie.

And sometimes he'll send back to you and he'll say, well, I made a few changes. But he said, it's remarkable. Like it just sounds the way I speak. And if you heard Charlie speak and if you heard me speak, you'd be able to tell, even if for some reason our voices were, well, you'd just know that Charlie and I don't speak the same way.

[ 30 : 43 ] Our cadences are a little bit different. The way our minds work are a little bit different. And Charlie has Charlie-isms and I have George-isms. And you know what?

Bob has Bob-isms and Jonathan has Jonathan-isms and Leah has Leah-isms and Anton has Anton-isms and Renee has Renee-isms. And we all have them, right? And so what it is is that not everybody who was writing in the Bible knew that it wasn't always as if God just speaks through them in a sense overwhelming them.

But Moses wrote because there was a need for him to write. Like, and David wrote, and Moses writes these biographies, I mean these laws and these histories. And David writes his poetry. And historians who wrote Nehemiah and who wrote 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, they wrote like historians. And the prophets wrote like prophets. And they all have their Ezekiel-isms and their Isaiah-isms and whoever wrote the Chronicles, the Chronicle-isms.

And what Jesus is saying here is that there's a double authorship of Scripture. Which is why when we read the Bible, we have to try to read it. And God says, in a sense, these people write.

[ 31 : 52 ] But God oversaw the whole process so that the final product is exactly what God wanted to have written. So that what you hear isn't just Moses' testimony or Isaiah's testimony or John's testimony.

That ultimately God is the one who is giving testimony of Jesus. So when you read the Bible, you are hearing the Father speak.

You see, this is so wonderful, isn't it? What is it that many of us want? Many of us say, why couldn't God have just revealed himself through music?

Like, wouldn't that be so much better? You know how music can just so move you? And why couldn't God have revealed himself by music? Well, amongst other things, you know what?

You can't obey music, can you? You can't have a relationship with somebody if there's never anything to obey. And obey is a bit of a scary word, but I used the analogy last week.

[ 33 : 00 ] If Louise said, can you take the milk down for me? I've just come in from Costco. Can you take the milk down for me? Well, when I do it, I'm obeying, right? And if there's never an ask in a

relationship, you don't have a relationship.

You can't obey music, and you can't obey a painting. And why do we want secret knowledge, like just private knowledge in our soul? You know why people like secret knowledge?

For power and pride. I'm part of the Illuminati. I know things that ordinary human beings don't know. And isn't it just so wonderful?

God's revelation is open and public, and anybody who has ears to hear, who can understand language, a little two-and-a-half-year-old who can't read, you can read the Bible to them.

I, in my previous congregation, had several people who were illiterate. But they knew Jesus. They knew about the faith. They had ears. They could hear the Bible read.

[ 34 : 08 ] And God has revealed this witness about Jesus in a way which is open and public. It deconstructs power. It deconstructs arrogance. And it opens the door.

It opens the door to literacy. It opens the door to curiosity. It's saying, keep reading.

Keep being curious. And write that poetry. And write those laws. And write those judgments. And be curious. And read.

And write. And paint. And dance. And sing. And build. And have a life. And be fully human. And be fully alive.

But in all the trillions of words that have ever been written. Why is it that we read this over and over and over again? Because there's trillions of words. And some of it's amusing. Lots of it's fun.

[ 35 : 07 ] Some of it's wise. But only these words are words that ultimately God the Father wrote. God the Father. To tell us about Jesus. And so we want to read his word.

We want to read it daily. We want to have his word come into our lives. And we want to memorize his word. Because it's the Father speaking. God the Father bearing witness and testimony about Jesus.

Can you put up the next point please? God the Father caused the Bible to be written. So that we might believe in Jesus. And receive eternal life.

It's not just that he wants to give us some information. But he wants to give us eternal. He wants. It's Jesus who gives us eternal life. And the Father wants us to know him.

But there's two problems that we have with reading. We all know that. Well with more than two problems. By the way just as a bit of an aside. A couple of chapters later.

[ 36 : 08 ] There's an important fourth witness to Jesus. That's the Holy Spirit. And in a couple of chapters. Jesus is going to go on at quite a bit of length. Of the importance of the Holy Spirit.

Of this singular witness to Jesus. The singular witness of John the Baptist. And through that ministers in a sense by extension. The singular witness of miracles. The singular witness of the Bible.

And the singular witness of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately all coming from God. And all desperately important for us understanding who Jesus is. That we might have eternal life. But Jesus points out two reasons why we have problems reading the Bible.

I don't know if you noticed them. And if you could put up the first one. And then I'll show you where it is. It's point number three Andrew. Your problem is not that your sins are too many. Or too foul.

Your problem is that you refuse to come to Jesus that you may have life. This is really important. Do you think your sins are really foul?

[ 37 : 07 ] Well, they're probably actually fouler than you think. They're fouler than I think in my own case. And you think there are too many that God could ever love you? Well, you know what?

You probably only know a tiny fraction of your sins. And they're even more than you think. But you know what? The problem is never that anybody's sins are too foul. Or too many. The problem is that even when we start to feel Jesus closing in.

Even when we read the Bible. And I remember when I came to faith. You know, it took me a year of refusing to come to Jesus before I finally succumbed.

Because I just refused. Did you see where Jesus talks about that? I wrote it down here somewhere. Yes, verse 40. This is what Jesus says.

We're beginning at verse 39. You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me. Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

[ 38 : 13 ] Now, here's a really important thing. Why does Jesus say this to us? It's not to make us feel guilty and ashamed. Jesus confronts us to connect with us.

That's why he confronts us. He doesn't confront it. He doesn't say this so as we just feel, oh, I hate you, Jesus, that you said that. He says that. You know what our response should be?

Jesus, you've just described me. Really help me. Help me, Jesus. Help me. It's so good that you know me and still you love me.

Help me. Have mercy on me. Pour out your Holy Spirit. Help me to no longer refuse you. And what's the second thing? The second thing is very, very powerful and very, very subtle as well.

If you could put up point number four, Andrew. The more I am a glory from people seeker, the less I will be a seek God's glory person.

[ 39 : 14 ] And the less I will understand the Bible. The more I am a glory from people seeker. I want people to like me.

I want to get praise. I want to be well thought of. I want people to say, gosh, he's a smart guy. Gosh, he's well read. Gosh, he's kind. Gosh, he's nice.

I want to be a Canadian and get along with people and be well received. I want to come into a room and people say, oh, there's George.

And the more I seek that, the less I will be a seek God's glory person. And because I'm less a seek God's glory person, I will understand the Bible. Just a couple of years ago, sorry, I don't want to raise wounds with this, but I was having a conversation with somebody.

And they were a Christian. They were part of a church. Their denomination had made a decision that believing that God calls Christians to bless same-sex marriages, they knew that we had taken a stand on this.

[ 40 : 16 ] I had taken a stand on it, that the Bible doesn't teach this. And she said to me, George, it's just so complicated. And I said to her, no, it's not. The problem is it's really simple.

But very unpopular. The problem is it's very simple and clear. But very unpopular. And it's just a very, very, you know, the more you want to be well-liked by everybody around you, and you read the Bible and you go, Jesus is the only way?

Well, only, there's different senses of only. And there's different senses of the. And let me tell you, one of the really wonderful things about our society becoming actually very post-Christian, one of the very wonderful things about it, is that if they hear you trying to do all these mental gymnastics about it, they'll just not respect you.

Like, in a sense, many people are so far from the Christian faith, they have no pony in this race.

They have no dog in this race. They have, they just go, like, in fact, they'd say, like, well, why, like, why don't you just explain it?

Like, it doesn't impress them if you try to say, well, there's different senses of only, and way can mean, you know, this.

[ 42 : 07 ] Maybe you're hoping they'll think that it's spelled W-H-E-Y, a byproduct of the cheese process or something like that, and not know that it means the way. But in fact, it's just very true.

The more we want to fit in with people, the more harder it is to understand the Bible. And why does Jesus say this to us? Because he knows your heart and mine. And so it's an invitation for us to say to Jesus, Jesus, help me.

This tug of wanting to fit in with other people, that's really strong in me. Like, I don't mind offending this group, but I really want to fit in with this group. I really like them.

I admire them. I like the food they eat. I like the way they dress. I just want to fit in. And help me, Jesus.

That's why he says this. Could you put up the fifth point? Lord, please help me to daily search the scriptures so that your word and your love abides in me.

[ 43 : 09 ] That's, in a sense, what we are to pray. Lord, please help me to daily search the scriptures so that your word and your love abides in me.

I'm just going to say one final thing in closing. And this just, and this is, this is, yeah, just, I know I've gone on a while. In this text is the word saved.

So here's the thing. When I'm, when I'm talking about Jesus with non-Christians, I never say to them, are you saved?

Or you need to be saved. Why do I never say that? Well, because if I use the word saved with them, they'll do this. If I use the word saved to them, it turns their brain off.

So I don't use it. But here's the thing. It's an important word for us to grasp. One of the things that we need to pray about ourselves as a church is that we once again rediscover the lostness of the

lost and the importance of being saved.

[ 44 : 15 ] It's a wonderful Christian word. It's a word that's a Bible word that Jesus uses, that God the Father bears testimony about Jesus, that Jesus came to save us.

Friends, if you are here and if you put your faith and trust in Jesus, you are saved. You are saved. You are saved from an eternity of separation from the Father.

You are saved from eternal perishing. When you put your faith and trust in Jesus, you who are dying and are separate from God, you are saved. And the Bible says that he has put his eternal life in you.

Some of us have bodies that have lots of pain. And some of us might be even now struggling with a diagnosis that isn't very positive and very hopeful.

But for every person, an ordinary person who puts their faith and trust in Jesus, you are saved. And when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, his eternal life comes into you.

[ 45 : 20 ] And it means that when you die, it's just a beginning of being in the new heaven and the new earth to walk in the garden in the cool of the day with the Father God who created you and to feel his arm around you and to know his smile.

You are saved. And if you are here today and you have not yet prayed that prayer, I urge you, there is no better time than today to say, Jesus, be my Savior, save me, and be my Lord forever.

Please stand. Father, you know how each of us at different times in our life and maybe even now, we know the Bible and we know what it says, but we refuse to come to you that we might have life.

Father, may your Holy Spirit come and move in our lives and move in the lives of everyone who is here, those who we know, that they will no longer refuse, that we will no longer refuse, but that we will say, Jesus, I come to you for life.

I come to you that you will save me and be my Savior and my Lord forever. Father, may your Holy Spirit do what our will is having a hard time doing.

[ 46 : 48 ] May your Holy Spirit help our will to come to Jesus to be saved and have eternal life. And Father, you know how powerful the opinions of others are in how we think and how we read and how we live.

Father, we ask that you would help us. We ask that you would grip us with the gospel. We ask that your Holy Spirit would come into our lives so that we know what people think. Father, we don't want to be sociopaths.

We don't want to be clueless. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would so grip us with the gospel that we know what people think, but that we have, Father, that freedom and that peace and that sense of love from you that grants us a freedom as we live and as we walk and as we bear witness to you in the midst of how people think of us.

Father, grant us that peace that comes in you, that love that comes from you, that abiding that comes from you in the midst of how people think, that we might be like John the Baptist and bear witness to Jesus.

Father, we ask that you do this work in our lives, and we ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.