

Finding Stability In An Unstable World

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[0 : 00] Well, anytime you visit somewhere, you've got to do a quick couple boxes to check off. So first of all, greetings from Crossway, Milwaukee. We've enjoyed whatever kind of level of fellowship we can have throughout the years.

In particular, since the last time I was here, I've been able to have lunch and coffee with Mike Salvati and Matt Sear. And it's been a great blessing of a time. Those men love this church. And it's a great encouragement to me to be here once again. Another box I need to check off is Eric Tully. Kirk Miller sends his greetings wherever you are.

If he's not here, send it to him, Eric. All right, very well. I feel like a little bit, you know, like when Paul sends a letter to show up at a church and he's like, greet this person and this person.

I'm assuming maybe they did some of that. So that's from Kirk in Milwaukee. And then my family, it's just a great pleasure to be here. So my wife over there, Dan, my name is Dan, and then Danica, Dan and Danica.

[1 : 01] And then our three kids are with us, Tally or Talatha and then Selah and Dupree. So it's great to be here. Let's jump into the word.

I'll tell you my goal right up front. My goal is that all of us here would be stirred up to pursue a life in the word of God.

It's very simple. So I'm not trying to convince you of the profitability of the word of God. Now, if you're not convinced of that, I hope that you will be convinced of that throughout this time.

But I'm not, my goal is not merely to convince you of a fact, but that God would stir up our hearts to pursue a life in the word. That we would see that as valuable and worth sacrificing other things in life to have a life in the word.

So I find one of the interesting things about the human race is that we like to be terrified sometimes, right?

[2 : 03] If it's for entertainment, we like instability. You know, that's why people go to, let's say, Great America, right? I mean, people pay exuberant amounts of money to feel totally out of control, right?

I mean, that's what you do on a roller coaster. You're terrified. That's why you're screaming. That's why you like to watch those things on YouTube as somebody is, like, passing out on the roller coaster.

Because they're terrified. And we enjoy that for whatever reason. We like tubing behind a boat because it makes us feel out of control. We like bungee jumping.

Or when you're a kid, you like, my four-year-old loves it if you come around the corner and just, bah! You know, first he jumps back and he lets out this huge scream and then he says, I love that.

You're like, what is wrong with us? Like, right? There's something about us that we like that. We enjoy it. But that's, of course, if it's for entertainment, right?

[3 : 02] I mean, if that actually comes into our home, like, in daily life, like a feeling of instability, that we don't want. But the reality is that that is life on this world.

That's life on this side of eternity. It is a roller coaster. And much of it is experiencing some of those quick down, you know, on a roller coaster.

And you're just terrified and you're waiting and it's going down. That's what life is like a lot of times. You know, you're struggling in a relationship or financial crisis. Or just fear of a doctor's appointment or fear of putting the kids in school over and over again.

I mean, we could come up with this long list of this just scary world. It's scary because you're limited. I'm limited. We can't control things. We don't like that. Now, our psalmist this morning gives us the solution of where to find stability in this unstable world.

And it's very simple. His claim to us in the text is that God's word gives God's people strength and stability. Both in this life and in the next.

[4 : 18] That's the way the psalm goes. God's word gives God's people strength and stability in this life and in the next. Now, this psalm, you may know, comes to us as the first chapter of psalms.

That was pretty simple, right? Psalms is a book, as you guys have been going through, this is a book of poems. It's a way of helping us to encounter our emotions.

What does it look like to worship God and come underneath his authority in heartfelt faith in this roller coaster of life?

And that's why you read so many psalms that there's ups and there's downs. There's times of confusion and chaos and defeat. And there's times of great victory and happiness. And it's all about how do we come underneath God's authority and worship him?

And isn't it interesting that he starts off, the book of psalms starts off with a focus on the very law of God. The worship of God through the book.

[5 : 30] So as a wisdom psalm, he's presenting two paths, two ways of life, as you will. There's the way of the wicked and there's the way of the blessed. This is a wisdom psalm, we would call it.

And he's not trying to get you to just see that there's two paths, but he's urging us and begging us to pursue the blessed way.

So he's going to paint a picture of what is the blessed way? How do we pursue it? And that's how I understand he would have us to leave the psalm.

So we're just going to walk through the psalm, most of it, so at least we see the claim. Who is this blessed man? How does he become blessed? It starts off right there, verse 1.

1 and 2 is kind of showing a negative relationship and a positive relationship with something, right? He starts off, blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor does he stand in the way of sinners, nor does he sit in the seat of scoffers.

[6 : 33] Now notice the progression there. He doesn't walk or stand or sit. There's a progression in what he's talking about. And you could summarize this as he doesn't kind of mingle with sin.

Now I don't think that doesn't mean he doesn't like hang around with sinners, otherwise Jesus would not qualify as the blessed man. But it's engaging in the activity. It's not only just standing with him, but sitting, and this is who I am.

He says the blessed man has a negative relationship with that. He resists it and turns from it. And then he throws in a contrast. Now before you read verse 2, you should ask yourself, well what's the opposite of that?

So blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. Instead, he what? I mean if I didn't go left, I went right.

If I didn't go up, I went down. If I don't walk in the counsel of the wicked, you would think you would say, I walk in the counsel of the righteous. That's the contrast.

[7 : 43] But he doesn't. He focuses on something else. He says, I don't, he doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked. But he delights in the law of the Lord.

Now he's going to get back to a way of the righteous. He gets to it at the end of the psalm. And I think it's because it's delighting in the law of the Lord that actually gets him on this path. But so verse 2, the contrast is the blessed man delights in the law of the Lord.

And on his law, he meditates day and night. So we should at least ask, what is the law? The Old Testament uses that term several different ways.

It could be referring to the Levitical code. These are some of the ceremonial things you're supposed to do, the law that's given in Leviticus. Or it could mean sometimes it's referring to all of Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Bible, as the law of Moses that God gave through Moses, the Pentateuch.

Or it's referring to the general instruction of God, the teachings of Yahweh, which eventually gets compiled into what the New Testament then calls the Scriptures.

[8 : 59] Now, I understand that to be the way, this last way, the general pursuing the law of the Lord, the instruction of the law.

When Yahweh speaks, he gives it to us and packages it in words, writing. Now, that in itself is a mind-blowing thing.

Because, I mean, if you've read your Bible, do you know what happens like on page 3? The people reject God. They don't want God to be king over them.

And yet God, he kicks them out of the garden, but he promises that one day he's going to restore this. By, like, page 6, God actually says that his heart is grieved because he created man. Because man's intention of his heart is evil all the time. So he destroys the whole world with a flood, save eight. And God would have been perfectly holy, perfectly just, if he just saved those eight and left them.

[10:08] And said, now, go figure this out yourself. I'll be over here. But that's not what Yahweh does. He pursues the sinner. And he gives them a writing.

And then he shows them, this is the way of relationship with me. This is the way of worship. This is who I am. This is who you are. This is the way the world works. I mean, this is mercy. The law of Yahweh. He has given it to us. So the blessed man is one who delights in the law, meditates on the law.

But let me just say here, there's an assumption going on that's not spoken. The assumption is he reads it, right? I mean, you can't meditate on the law of the Lord and delight in it if you don't have any kind of relationship with it, right?

He reads it or listens to it. Whatever it is, he's around it to consume the word of the Lord. Now, I realize for my own self, I need to be careful a little bit in my own heart as I talk on a topic like this.

[11:10] Because this has been my burden for the church since like day one of coming to faith in 2001 when I was 23 years old. So I actually was living in Racine at the time.

Started attending this church in Kenosha. And it was a very charismatic church. And I have no doubt that those people love Jesus. None whatsoever. They gave me my first Bible after I came to faith.

And I blessed the Lord for them. But I would sit there. My whole world was going tippy-turvy. I mean, it was radically changing. And I'm still living with some of the guys that I kind of run around with and partied with.

And through the years I've played ball with. And so I'm still living in this apartment. It was a total chaotic mess. And here I am is seeking to now follow Jesus.

Who I believe actually died in my place and rose from the dead. And he's raining on high. And he's coming again. Like I was believing this stuff. And I would show up to these services. And I don't remember exact timing.

[12:13] But let's say the service was an hour and 15 minutes. Roughly an hour and five minutes of that was singing. And running through the aisles and speaking in tongues and such.

John, I'm not even knocking that. My point is I would leave not having some emotional experience. And thirsting in my soul saying, I need to know this book.

Don't these people realize where I'm coming from? I believe in Jesus, but I don't know what this book is talking about. I'm a fool. I need to know this book. They seemed more interested in pursuing some emotional experience than actually understanding what the book said.

And so then I started attending this conservative church. That would stand up right here and just say, this is the authoritative word of God.

We read the word of God. We love the word of God. And I would say, yes. And I remember the pastor preaching for 40 minutes. And I say, yes. I need this. And then I look around and people look bored out of their mind.

[13:16] And I couldn't figure out what's going on. And I would ask people in the church just very basic, basic questions about the Bible.

And they had no clue. And I could not figure out what was going on. I mean, here I am sitting at home. Instead of going out to the bar and getting drunk.

I mean, this is my early stages of walking with Jesus. I'm getting drunk at home and reading the Bible, right? This is really early, right? I'm telling you, there's a lot for God to work on me.

And I remember the nights of just several days in almost. I mean, I started in Matthew. And I got to a section. I don't know if it was Matthew or Mark. But I remember sitting there. I was so bitter towards my dad.

My dad left when I was nine. I hated the man. And I remember reading the words of Jesus when he said, when he talked about the forgiveness that we have received through his shed blood for all the sin that we've committed against God that I've received from God.

[14:16] And he turns to then his disciples and he said, if you don't forgive, then you will not be forgiven. And I remember a night sitting there where God took this 500-pound weight off my

shoulders so I didn't have to be so bitter towards my dad.

I mean, I'm reading the word, seeing God transforming my heart through the word of God. Now, the weight was 2,000 pounds at the time, so 500 came off.

But that was a glorious 500 pounds. And so I'm experiencing the word of God is changing me from within. And yet these people in the church, they seem to care less about the Bible.

And I could not figure that out. Now, that stirred up a lot of self-righteousness in me. So that's why I say I have to be careful with this in my own heart. But it also gave me a deep burden.

Brothers and sisters, the living God, the law of Yahweh, who redeemed you through Christ, has written a book about who he is and about how we can find life in him and live in this world.

[15:21] And we will study this book forever. So there's this basic assumption that the psalmist is making. We read the book. We need to be people of the book, to open the book.

But then he actually raises the stakes, actually. He doesn't say he just doesn't read the book. He says he meditates on the law of the Lord, verse 2. The word meditate, you know, other places it's translated as growl.

It's about the lines growling. It's the picture almost like of a man kind of, you know, working his vineyard. And he's kind of, blessed is the man.

He's not seeking. He's grumbling underneath his breath. And he's repeating the word of God. And he's thinking through it. And he's saying, his delight is in the law of the Lord.

God's word. He's grumbling. He's growling. So there's this meditation that he's consumed with it.

But what does the beginning of verse 2 say? He delights in it.

[16:27] There's a pleasure he finds in the word. In other words, he's not talking just about reading the Bible or being able to say a few facts of the Bible.

He's actually saying people that the blessed man loves the law of the Lord. There's a delight that happens. I eat broccoli.

I eat cauliflower. And my wife has actually found ways to cook it that I mostly like it. And she roasts it with some garlic and coconut oil.

I like it. I'll even eat it as leftovers. It's decent. But I don't delight in this stuff. I mean, I delight in pizza or lasagna or something. Those are the type of things.

Like, you tell me we're having pizza tonight, I'm going to be distracted for half the day. I'm going to think about it. Because it's coming up, right? I delight in it. It kind of savors the mouth. This is what he's talking about.

[17:25] There's this hunger for the word of God, the law of God, the instructions of Yahweh. So this, I mean, just a basic question.

Does that characterize you sitting here? Do you have a delight for this book? Now, my guess is all of us here on some level would say I don't.

I mean, if we're honest, at times. Right? I've met one person in my walk with the Lord that has told me they're never without a hunger for the word.

And I don't even know if she was telling the truth. Maybe she was. But I certainly don't all the time. Now, if you're here this morning and there's never been a delight, then that's good reason to question what's going on in your heart, actually.

Like, are you actually one of God's people? Because the blessed man who is one of God's people has some sort of a delight. Now, the more important question than whether or not you delight in the law of the Lord, because I think all of us would say, sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.

[18:39] The more important question is to say, does that concern you? Because if you say, if you answer that question, you say, no, not really.

Actually, I don't really care that much. Yes, I don't delight in the Lord, or I don't delight in the word. I don't care. That's a problem. You probably aren't one of God's people.

But if there's even a flicker in you that says, you know what? I don't delight in the law of the Lord all the time. I don't like that. I wish I had a delight. But frankly, I'm distracted.

But man, I wish I did. I wish God would do that for me. That is a great sign. That's a miracle, right? I mean, we are all born dead in sin.

We don't want God. Even if God was standing there in a pillar of fire by day, or a pillar of fire by night, a pillar of cloud by day, even if a man rose from the dead, we would say, nah, I'm really not interested.

[19 : 40] If you have any sort of a desire for the, to have a delight in the law of the Lord, it's because God has put that there. We should bless the Lord for that. So this, as you read the psalm and question yourself, you're not supposed to feel condemned.

If you don't feel it, you're supposed to say, oh, there's something there. Bless the Lord. Give me more. Give me more. Well, then he gives you a wonderful picture of the result of this.

So Psalm 2, as I understand, is kind of the banner statement of the psalm. The blessed man delights in the law of the Lord, and let me show you what happens to him.

Gives us a word picture, verse 3. He says, the man that does that, this is the result for him. He, well, he's like a, how do I describe him?

He's like a tree. Not just any tree. Not, you know, not a tree planted out in the desert. That tree's going to fall down soon. A tree that's planted right by a stream of water, that yields its fruit in its season, its leaf does not wither, and all that he does, he prospers.

[20 : 50] So it's, you know, I don't know trees that much. This is a way that I've thought about it, though. This is about two months ago. I was sitting, Sunday afternoon, I'm sitting at our kitchen table doing some work or something, and I hear this screeching of tires.

I look out our front window, and I see a car coming kind of sideways on the road, and then it goes out of my view because the window's not big enough, and all of a sudden I heard a... I thought for sure this car just drove into my neighbor's house.

I don't like medical things or blood or anything like that, but I thought, man, I thought I was going out to pull bodies. I throw on my shoes, and I take off out the door to see what happened, and thankfully they didn't drive into the house, but they drove right into a pole, like a light pole.

So they're going 30 miles an hour, and the people were totally fine. Going 30 miles an hour, it hit the light pole, and, you know, it's one of those where it's kind of like cement and stone put together, the pole, right?

So what do you think happened to the pole when that car hit it going 30 miles per hour? I mean, didn't have a chance. I mean, it totally fell, right? Now contrast that with two years ago, I think it was, we were woken up in the middle of the night with sirens everywhere, and there was a high-speed chase going through the south side of Milwaukee and it ended in our neighborhood, tragically.

[22 : 13] So a car, it was actually a truck, going 70 miles per hour through our neighborhood, hits the tree so hard that the truck itself, the driver died on impact, the truck actually split in two, hitting that tree.

A truck going 70 miles per hour, and guess what happened to that tree? He said, did something just hit me?

Nah, I'm going back to bed. It's still standing there today. It lost a little bark, but that's it. 70 miles per hour, a truck barreling in it, and the truck stands because it has strong roots.

This is what the psalmist is trying to get us to think about. Trees, when they're planted by water, there is nothing going to take that thing down. You can go to Seven Bridges Park just south of Milwaukee along the lake, and if you go right by the lake through the trail, there's these trees that stand up on a high hill, not quite as high as the ceiling, but very steep to these trees, and there's steps all the way down.

And you know what the steps are? They're actually the roots of the tree. Because the roots go so far because it's trying to get down to the water, and the tree stands tall and strong.

[23 : 39] I mean, if you walk along the sidewalk, you'll see how many sidewalks you'll see like this. Because tree roots have lifted up sidewalks. They destroy foundations of houses.

I mean, this is a powerful picture that he's trying to give of a promise of the living God telling his people, look, if you meditate on my law, you are going to find stability and strength in this life that nothing else can give.

Nothing else will give it. You will be like a tree. That even if a truck hits it at 70 miles per hour, you will laugh at it. This is unbelievable.

Now, if you want a living example, you just got to read further in the Psalms. This is the way I understand they kind of organize the Psalms. The first one says, Blessed is the man who comes underneath the authority of God's word, who delights in the love of God.

Second Psalm ends with, Blessed is the man who takes, you know what it says? Refuge in the Son. So, blessed is the man who comes underneath the authority of God's word, who delights in the law

of the Lord.

[24 : 49] Blessed is the man who takes refuge in the Son. And then look at Psalm 3. Psalm 3 is about, written by a man who had an adulterous relationship, and it caused total havoc on his household.

His son kills one of his other sons, and David now is on the run. He's out in the wilderness, terrified. And yet, you read these words in verse 5.

I lay down and slept. I woke again, because the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

You think he'd be sleeping at a time like that? David is being hunted by thousands of people. I wouldn't be sleeping a wink. I can hardly sleep if I have a, you know, a hard conversation coming up tomorrow.

And here's a man, delighting so much in the law of the Lord, coming so much under the refuge of the Son, and he sleeps, like a baby, out in the wilderness.

[26 : 05] But, you know, this is not the only place that God promises this about his word. Let me show you a couple other places here. If you have your Bible, go to 1 Thessalonians 2.13.

1 Thessalonians 2.13.

So here, here's the Apostle Paul. He says, writing to the church in Thessalonica, he says, we also thank God constantly for this, that when you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it.

But you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is. It's the word of God. Here's the phrase, which is at work in you believers.

Now, theologically, this is a very important statement here. He says, he says, you receive the word of God, which is working in you, but not you as everybody.

[27 : 24] He says, you believers. He says, when you receive the word of God, intake it, it goes to work in you, who believe. You might think of it this way.

Maybe you want to, maybe no, I don't know. But think of, you give my four-year-old two dishes of ice cream, you're expecting a response, right? You're expecting that ice cream to go to work in him. It's going to change him, fundamentally, for the next couple hours, right? Here, he says, the word of God, when it goes in you, who believe, that word goes to work in you.

It's going to change you. Well, how is it going to change you? It's going to make you stable like a tree. Well, let's go to Psalm 19. We'll see some actual ways, promises, of what God says, this will do to you.

Psalm 19. Psalm 19. Verse 7.

[28 : 34] The law of the Lord, here we have this phrase again, the law of the Lord, the instruction of the Lord, is perfect. Here it is, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure.

Here's another one. Making wise. The simple. And he keeps going, and the precepts of the Lord are right. Here it is, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. Now, do you think there's a single person alive that wouldn't want those four aspects? Like, your soul revived? You want your heart to rejoice? You want to be wise? You want to have your eyes enlightened?

Is there anybody here that doesn't want that? No. We all want that. Here, God is promising to his people, the word of God will do that for you. You want wisdom?

In the word. You want to have your heart rejoicing? Open the book. This is what the psalmist is saying. There's no, I understand, that's why he says verse 10. More to be desired, are they, the scriptures, the words of God, the precepts of the Lord, than gold, even much fine gold.

[29 : 52] That's a stunning statement. The psalmist is saying, look, I'd rather have the word of God than a lot of gold.

In our day and age, we would say, man, I'd trade in my 401k for that. That's a stunning statement. I'll sell my house so I can have a Bible.

That's amazing. It's if we're convinced that that's what's going to give me wisdom, we will feel that. The problem is, we don't actually think the word of God will do that, right? Or take Romans 15, 4, you don't have to turn there.

It says, everything that was written in earlier days was written for instruction so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

There's another place. God claims all that was written in earlier times. He's talking, in particular, the Old Testament there. All of it. Genesis to Malachi was written so that you and I would have hope. [30 : 56] Every single piece, even the genealogies, once you learn why they're there, that is meant to instill hope that makes you like a tree. 2 Timothy 3.16, all scripture is breathed out by God.

It's the very breath of God. And it's profitable for us. It's useful. For what? Well, he tells us to teach us, to reprove us, to correct us, to train us in righteousness so that we're equipped for every good work.

Another promise, there again, he's talking about the Old Testament. The Old Testament is useful for you. It will train you. It will equip you for righteousness.

Ephesians 5.26, talking about Jesus sanctifying the church. I love this phrase. He says, having cleansed her by the washing of the word. I love the picture. It's a picture of Jesus taking the church that's all full of blemishes and he takes the word and he scrubs her.

What a picture. The word of God is meant to purify us, to change us. 1 Peter 2, I love this picture. Verse 2, it says, he's just talked about the enduring word and it says, like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow in your salvation.

[32 : 16] This is this picture of this baby. If you've ever seen a baby who longs for milk it's quite the sight. I mean, they're trying for the milk, right? They're just doing anything they can to get the milk because why?

Somehow that little package understands that if it doesn't get milk it's going to die. Peter calls up this image that the Christians, that's what we should feel.

That's why God says to his people, man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That's why we need it because we need food if we are to live and we could go on but these are very clear promises that God says this is what my book will do for you. It will make you strong. It will make you wise. It will give you eyes to see rightly. It will give you hope in life. It will give you stability. It will keep you from sin. It will cause you to pursue holiness.

I mean, what a picture. And then verse 4 of Psalm 1, if you're back there, he contrasts it. It says, the wicked are not so but they're like the chaff that the wind drives away.

[33 : 26] So for us non-agricultural folks here, the chaff would be the part of the wheat as they're harvesting. You throw it up and the grain parts, the heavy parts, fall back down into the bucket or whatever and the chaff, it falls off the seed and the wind comes in and it blows the chaff away.

Or for city folks, you might say, the wicked are not like the righteous who are like a tree. The wicked are like that plastic bag that's floating around and it's going to be down the block in about 25 seconds.

That's what the wicked are like because they have no foundation. In this rollercoaster of life, they have nothing to actually stand on. And then he goes on and he talks about the judgment to come which is the very same thing.

The wicked will not stand in the judgment nor will sinners but those who are the righteous who I understand in verse 6, the righteous, as you read the Psalms, are not those who have made a righteousness of their own.

They have received the righteousness. I mean, this is the gospel here. This is all throughout Scripture. Man is made right by God through faith. He's received a righteousness not his own and then he lives it out.

[34 : 41] He walks in it. And the righteous shall stand. So what does this mean for us? I mean, I think the claim actually of the text is very simple.

God's word makes God's people strong and stable in this life. I hope we can all say, I mean, this is sort of obvious that one of the greatest gifts you could give yourself, your spouse, this church, your kids, is a life in the word of God.

It's one of the best things you could do for yourself. It's one of the best things you could do for your neighbor. It's have a life in the word of God. I'm talking about a functional life.

The word of God makes a definitive difference. You know, it's something that actually you think about. It comes up in conversation. And so let me just speak to different categories here.

If you're a youth here, if you're a kid, I'm telling you one of the greatest things you could possibly do is start reading your Bible.

[35 : 57] You don't have to understand it all the time. You don't have to have a powerful experience all the time. Just open the book and say, God, teach me about you. That is one of the

greatest habits you could possibly form in yourself.

kids, you do not want to be the next 55-year-old that I've talked to many that know nothing about the word of God. They have no stability.

Kids, do you want to be wise when you grow older? It's not from intellectualism. It's not just by going to a nice school.

It's not by having nice toys. It's the word of God. There have been many people who have gone to great schools who perish in the end and that are not wise.

And there have been many who starve to death, who have been persecuted, have been killed for the faith and are wise beyond our years. Kids, the greatest thing you can do is to pursue the scriptures and learn about our God.

[37 : 11] Young adults, which I think young for me now is like through ages 29 or 35, I don't know, I turned 41 this summer so this feels weird.

Young adults, maybe you don't feel young but to me, I guess you do. Through your 20s, you know, you're in your career or starting career and maybe you're getting married or thinking about it or maybe you're staying single, whatever it is, you feel like you're on a path and life is busy, life is crazy.

do not for a second assume that you'll put off the word of God now and you'll come back to it when life slows down because it's not slowing down.

It'll only get crazier and the greatest thing you can give yourself right now is to say, you know what, if that job is going to move me away from the word of God, the job goes.

That's what the psalmist says, Psalm 19, I prefer the word of God over all the gold and yet we live in a culture that tells us to consume, it tells us it's okay to put the things of the Lord on hold.

[38 : 16] That is so prevalent in the American church. We put career first and I don't think that would hold up in the scriptures.

Now parents of young kids, I mean what a gift you can give to your kids to raise them not just knowing about the Bible but demonstrating a life in the Bible.

If you have young kids, this is what you could do tonight. You could ask them today. It's like, son, daughter, whatever, I want your honest thoughts. What do you think mommy and daddy think about the Bible?

Like, show us what we think. Do you think mommy and daddy love the Bible? You know what?

They'll probably say yes because we train our kids to kind of think in these terms, right?

And then you say, how? I mean, I hope you are demonstrating to your kids that the word is good, that they see it, that when life is confusing, the word of God comes into the conversation.

[39 : 36] Here's something I learned early on too in the faith. You know, a lot of discussion goes on, the question like, why are so many kids walking away from the faith when they get to college? They leave in mass numbers.

They leave the church when they go to college. And so the big discussion is why does that happen, right? And you have these different answers. Well, maybe it's because we sheltered them too much. We didn't help them experience the world enough.

Or maybe we didn't teach them enough about, you know, science and, you know, they go off to the education and they kind of lose sight of, you know, up and down. We didn't train them enough in that sense.

And, you know, that all might be right and good. I don't know. But here's the question I never ask, or I don't hear. It's like, what did the home look like? I can tell you the ones that I know in general, I wouldn't look at the parents that say they had a growing, vibrant life in the Word of God.

They loved the church. They gave themselves to the work of the Lord. And yet, this is a basic principle of life, right? Kids will love what parents love.

[40 : 42] Right? I love softball. I go out and hit softballs. I go out all the time and hit softballs. I play a lot of softball. I have a YouTube channel and I do softball stuff on. I have a station out in my garage where I go out and I'll hit 400 swings in the winter.

I did 350 yesterday, right? I just love to hit off the tee. So I go out earlier in the week and my son comes out with me. He hits for a half an hour off the tee. He's four. Like, why does he do that?

He wouldn't do that if I wasn't out there doing it. He does it because dad's out there. Kids love what their parents love. And so I'm speaking in generalities here, but so we ask, like, why do kids go off into school and they don't walk with the Lord?

Well, duh. We've trained them that you go to church, you act something, but at home, the Bible never shows up. Now, if you're here and you're not bringing the Bible in, again, this is not meant to guilt us.

This is to stir us up that it's worth it. It's worth sacrificing time if you have to sacrifice career, if you have to downsize your home, if you have to sell one of your cars.

[41 : 58] It's better to have your kids leave the home walking with Jesus, reading the scriptures, delighting in the law of God so that they will be strong and stable in this life and in the next. And God says it's in his word.

It's not in nice clothes or education. It's in his word. Or if you're married here, I think one of the greatest things you can do is figure out as husband and wife, how do you commune with God in his word together?

I think that would be a worthwhile pursuit and sacrifice to figure it out. It's going to look different across couples. So there's not like a prescription here that it has to look like.

But I think personally, experientially, for our own marriage and for others that I know, this will transform your marriage more than anything I know. In fact, it will transform your intimacy more than anything I know.

Because suddenly where you're going to find is that the couple communes with God through the word that they're finding their deepest joy in God together. They don't have to find it in their spouse anymore. And suddenly a lot of the tension kind of falls to the side.

[43 : 09] And those are the places where real conversation can happen. Is your community with God through the word. Now if you're older here, I do want to say a word. Especially, whether or not you are in a place where you know the scriptures, you're six years old and older, or you don't, now is the day to pursue it.

And now is the day to find some younger folks in the church and gather them around and say, let's pursue this together. I want to walk with you. And if you don't know anything, fine. Just help them see why they don't want to go that path.

And say, look, I made a lot of mistakes. If I could go back, I wouldn't do that anymore. But by the grace of God, he's going to change me. He is changing me. I'm not who I was and I'm not who I'm going to be. But let's pursue it together.

This is the day. Find some young folks and equip them in the word together. So let me end here with just a couple quick pointers of things that I think could be helpful for how do you pursue a life in the word.

Not all the, I mean, there's a lot of practical things you can do for sure and that's a worthwhile discussion. But here's a couple things. One, I think, learn the promises of God about his word.

[44 : 31] And I don't mean just know them but functionally try to internalize them and say, God, you say your word will give me hope. Would you convince me of that?

Convince me that it's true. Convince me that that will give me more hope than having more money or having a relationship or having whatever. That your word promises that. I gave you a few before. Let me rattle off them again. So there's Psalm 19, 7 through 10. Great place to go. Romans 15, 4, 2 Timothy 3, 16 through 17.

Ephesians 5, 26, 1 Peter 2, 2. And even if you just grab those, those are great places to go to just memorize them, learn them, say, God, teach me these, convince me of these.

Second, learn to push yourself with grace, not legalism. So the last thing right now that anybody should go home is just like try to like just barrel through it and think they can just push through it and pull up their bootstraps and check off boxes and just keep reading.

[45 : 37] This is where I think the promises come in. So you and I, most of us are going to have days where we don't want to read the Bible. In fact, I don't want to want to read the Bible. I just want to go about my day.

that's when you have to grab the promises and learn how to pursue this by grace. You say, you grab one of the promises of God and you say, Psalm 19, you say, God, I don't want to read your word right now.

Frankly, I don't understand it half the time I read it and I don't think it's going to be worth my time. But yet, God, you're much wiser than I am.

I mean, you created the world. You're the one that spoke me into being. And you say that your word will make me wise. I'm going to read this paragraph for the next three, four minutes trusting that

promise.

Would you do that for me? And you read it. You read it not because you're just trying to be some good Christian but you say, God, I need you now. Let your promises stand true.

[46 : 41] So that's a second thing to do. And then third is to lower your expectation. In general, lower your expectation both for time and experience.

So if you're not reading the word of God at all, what I would say to you is pick it up five days a week for four minutes.

That's it. Or something. Just do more than you were doing yesterday, which was nothing. So do it for two minutes tomorrow. Whatever. Do something. Just move.

Move one foot in front of the other. Lower your expectations. I don't think we just stay there. We want to grow in that. But lower the expectations but especially then in experience. I would say most of the time I read the Bible, nothing big happens.

And this is actually one of the biggest things that as Danica and I grew to read together, helped. So Danica grew up in the church and she kind of had this feeling like she should be reading all the time and there was for whatever, whether it was from somebody else or from her own self, there's this kind of thought process that she should understand everything and have this powerful experience unless she's doing something wrong.

[47 : 58] Right? And so here we are, we're married. I have a lot of passion for the Lord. I have a great passion for the word of God. I've gone through seminary. I'm pastoring and we're still trying to figure out how do we read the word of God together and so finally we started getting in a groove and this happened day after day after day.

We would get to the end of our reading time and then she'd be like, that's it? I'd be like, well yeah, we gotta go, time's up. You know, we got things to do.

And then the next day she'd be like, well what do you think this means? I'm not sure, it could mean this, it could mean that. I don't know. It's a good thought. That's it?

And this happened over and over and over again. What happened, it lowered her expectations to see, oh here's this pastor, he's not having these powerful times every day.

I mean, I might have a handful every year of times where I read the word and I'm just like, I've never seen that in my life. I just heard the voice of God piercing me like nothing I've ever felt.

[49 : 05] It happens every once in a while. But most of the time it's like the drip of a faucet. Drip, drip, drip. And you know what happens? Tree roots lift up cement blocks day after day after day after day after day.

That's what a life in the word looks like. So let me close here by reminding us this is not about guilt. If you are feeling any kind of guilt about not reading the word of God, then I certainly have not done a good job and you're hearing wrongly.

If you don't read the word, if you're slothful towards it, this is a time for us to repent. We confess to the Lord. We are dull to your voice, God.

And then we grab hold of the gospel and we trust it and say, even for that, even for my slothfulness, Christ has died for me. And the fact that I have a desire to even want to desire to read the word has been planted there by you.

And so by golly, God, give me the grace to pursue it. Give me the grace to pursue it. This is not about guilt. This is about asking God to shape us within.

[50 : 18] Let me pray or let us pray together. God, I ask that you would convince us all more deeply about who you are and what the word of God is, the very breath of God.

Maybe we would see the benefits of it but that it would stir us up to read it. God, what would you do in this church?

I mean, thinking about a church full of homes that are pursuing you in the word. What would a church do in a community that is enjoying the scriptures together?

So let it be in this church. So let it be at Crossway Milwaukee and Crossway Bristol and other churches in this city. God, give your people in Kenosha a desire for your word.

In Christ's name, amen. Amen.