

Saul's preparation for ministry: Acts 9:20-31

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[0 : 00] Today we will have the opportunity to look back at last week's sermon.

We're in the middle of a sermon series through the book of Acts and today we find ourselves in Acts chapter 9. Last week Pastor Jay did a wonderful job of sharing the truths of God's Word where Saul was on the road to Damascus and he was blinded by that light and he met the Lord there.

And he said, Lord who are you? Is the question he asked. And today we will pick up the account and we're going to find that salvation is definitely by grace.

It's a free gift but the cost of discipleship is just that. It's very costly. And to take up one's cross and follow the Lord we're going to follow two gentlemen, Paul after he is saved at the road to Damascus and then we're going to see Peter in our text today.

And these two apostles of Christ we are going to see how they are matured and trained in righteousness in the Lord. And the Lord takes their understanding of their faith and grows them but it's often through hardship and we will see that today.

[1 : 31] If you have your Bible with you, if you turn to Acts chapter 9, Acts chapter 9 we will look shortly at verse 15b, the latter half of Acts chapter 9, we will look at, sorry, verse 19, the latter half b.

We're going to read through Acts 31, 931 through verse 31. If you would read with me this account.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus, verse 20. And immediately he, that is Saul, proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue saying, he is the Son of God.

And all who heard him were amazed and said, is not this man who made havoc in Jerusalem to those who called upon his name and has he not come here for the purpose to bring them bound before the chief priests?

But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

[2 : 44] When many days had passed the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul and they were watching the gates by day and night in order to kill him.

But the disciples took him by night and let him through the walls and opening in the wall and lowered him in a basket. We'll stop there for now. We were familiar with Paul's salvation.

He has already stood witness and he has given consent to the stoning of Stephen before the road to Damascus.

Saul was on his way to Damascus and he had letters of extradition to bring those Christians before the council to throw them in prison.

And on his way at noon when it was already bright, the Lord came in a bright light and blinded him and asked, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[3 : 44] And when the response is given and he gets saved there on the road to Damascus, the church surrounds Saul and his sight is regained and he was baptized.

We also saw that all last week in the message. And what does Saul immediately do? What does he proclaim? He has just met the Lord.

Jesus is the Son of God, we read in verse 20. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue saying, He is the Son of God.

We learn our first observation today that proclaiming the proclamation of Jesus is natural. It's one of the most, it's the thing that we should do when we come to know Christ.

For those of us who know the Lord to proclaim Christ, it is the natural thing to do. The church's response is amazed.

[4 : 43] Looked with me in verse 21 and all who heard him were amazed and said, Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem at the stoning of Stephen and those who called upon his name?

And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing us bound to the chief priests with letters of extradition?

The disciples there, the church there in Damascus had every right to be amazed by this. They were amazed.

And after preaching through the decapolis, this is Jesus, after he preached through the decapolis, Jesus healed the deaf man and one who struggled with a speech impediment.

And all who witnessed the miracle were amazed when Jesus did this. And Jesus said to them who were witnesses, Jesus charged them to tell no one. That's what he told those witnesses to his healing.

[5 : 45] But the more he charged them, the more zealous they were to proclaim it. That the more he discouraged, don't tell anyone, I just did this healing.

My time has not yet come. And the more he would encourage people not to say, the more they would go and tell all that they saw and heard Jesus do. It's the most natural thing to do is to proclaim and testify to that which we have heard and seen.

And you say, But Scott, it's been some time since the last time I have spoken the name of Christ to someone. It's been some time since I have proclaimed his name.

If we find ourselves in that position, we find ourselves silent. Perhaps I would say it's good for us to be reminded of what we have been saved from.

And it's good for us to be reminded of the gospel. The apostle Paul later will do this in Ephesians chapter two. He says this in Ephesians chapter two, and he reminds the church at Ephesus, this is who you were.

[6 : 52] Let me remind you. And it would be good for us to be reminded of this as well. He says this, and you were dead and trespasses in sin. You were spiritually dead.

We were found to be following the prince of the power of this air. We followed Satan in all of his ways. We were, by nature, children of wrath.

And so if we imagine ourselves as children of wrath following after Satan, the prince of the power of the air, we were spiritually dead. Nothing could resuscitate us.

And then Paul says, But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love for which he loved us, made us alive together in Christ.

For by grace you have been saved. Perhaps it's important for us to remind ourselves just where we were, where we were once when God saved us by his grace.

[7 : 56] And dying and living a sinless life and dying a death for sin is resurrecting from the grave, overcoming sin and death. For the church at Damascus, they were astonished, we saw that in verse 21.

And while Paul or Saul at this time was still a novice in Christ, he had just come to faith in Christ, he was still a formidable foe to the Jews.

Look with me in verse 22. And Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

It is natural to testify to that which you've seen, heard and experienced. Until this last year recently, when the SWAT team came to my neighbor's house and arrested 13 people, and it's been a drug house.

And my wife and I have spent countless emails to crime check and countless 911 calls to the police for all the drug activity that is transpired next door.

[9 : 10] And we have cameras, and we ended up purchasing cameras because there were just things going on and we would type and write emails and crime check and reporting all that we had seen and heard.

It's just natural to communicate all that you see and hear. That's my point. And so when you come to faith in Christ, it's just natural to proclaim Jesus.

Look what He has done for me. I once was lost. And now I'm found. I once was dead in my sin. And now I'm alive into Christ. He did that for me. It's natural.

It's natural. Second, we see that Paul is prepared for service. We read in verse 23, and many days had passed, Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul, and they were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, but the disciples took him by night and led him down through an opening in the wall and lowered him in a basket.

Paul writes of this occasion in 2 Corinthians, in another letter that he will write to the church at Corinth. He writes this, and he says to shed a little more light on what's transpiring here.

[10 : 24] He says this, at Damascus, the governor under King Aritas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped their hands.

So there was a governor who was watching the gates under King Aritas, and he was watching the gates to kill Paul. He wanted to seize him, to kill him, and so the disciples put him in a basket, lowered him outside the window in the wall, and you say, Scott, your point says that preparation for service requires time with Jesus.

I think you've mislabeled this. I don't see how Paul is spending time with Jesus. I'm glad you noted that. This is turned to the top of verse 23, and it reads this, when many days had passed, that line I would write in your Bible, Galatians 1, 15 through 18.

Many theologians say that the events that Paul will write in these verses happen in between verses 22 and verse 23.

So let's look now at Galatians and to see what Paul writes concerning his time in Damascus. He says this, but when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace, that's the Lord, was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were the apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus, and after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit with Peter and remained with him for 15 days.

[12 : 26] What transpired in the book of Acts, it says, when many days had passed, you could just write three years in Arabia.

What was Paul doing? He was doing, takes time for service under the Lord, and it requires time with Jesus. I have a map here to just illustrate where he was.

There's Jerusalem at the southern end, and we have Damascus up in the top, and where is Arabia? It's the desert out there to the east.

That's where Paul went, or Saul went, after he was saved at Damascus, he went three years out into Arabia, and there's mystery surrounding, what took place in the, where was he, who did he stay with, was he with anyone, how did he eat, what did he drink, we don't know, none of these answers are provided for us, but what's interesting is this, in Acts chapter 22, Paul recites his account of his salvation, and he says this, of his account of salvation.

He asks two questions of the Lord. It says, he says, who are you, Lord? And then secondly, the Lord showed him what he must do.

[13 : 49] So we can surmise this, that while he was out in Arabia, in a, I call it the location of secluded discipleship. He was with the Lord, and we could ask this, we know this, that he was understanding who Jesus is, who Jesus is.

Saul was a Pharisee of Pharisee, he was trained by the great Gamiliel, he knew the Old Testament scriptures, but only until recently did he understand, did he understand Jesus Christ, that he is the Messiah, he is the Son of God.

He is the one that the law and the prophets pointed to in the Old Testament. Saul's understanding was growing, who Jesus is.

And when he prayed the high priestly prayer, when Jesus did this, he says, and this is eternal life, and this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, in whom you have sent.

And this is eternal life. Eternal life is not something that begins when we die and go to heaven. That is not when eternal life begins. It says this, that this is eternal life, that they may know you.

[15 : 07] At the moment of salvation, eternal life begins. The only true God, and Jesus Christ, in whom you have sent.

Eternal life is knowing Jesus, and that begins at the moment of salvation. So what was Paul doing, what was Saul doing out there in the desert?

He was knowing the Lord. This is our heart song at fourth. We come together to worship the Lord. We come together to know Him all the more.

And what is it that we do when we gather together? We sing songs. I'm so grateful for Pastor Josh and his choosing of songs. And he is careful to choose songs to declare that which is true of the Lord.

And we get to declare that to one another. In our discipleship groups, I'm grateful for Pastor Jay's leadership in organizing these.

[16:08] And in our groups, what are we seeking to do? We're seeking to know Jesus and apply God's word to our lives. We have a marriage class, applying God's word, the truth about marriage, and the principles found there and how the gospel applies to our marriages.

Teaching a Daniel class, and a theology class, an Old Testament survey class, seeking to know who this Lord is.

I'm grateful for Heather overseeing our children's ministry, teaching our children who is Jesus.

We preach Christ in our sermons to learn, to convict, to repent, to leave changed.

And our greater understanding of who Jesus is. And that's what we do in our midweek services, in our midweek times when we gather together in smaller groups in Bible studies.

[17:14] Listen to what Paul writes in Philippians. Did he learn who Jesus is? He writes this, for his sake I have suffered loss of all things, for I know, I may, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and that I might share in his sufferings becoming like him in his death.

Saul was beginning to learn just who Jesus is. Second, by the very nature of understanding who the Lord is, we understand who we are.

What's amazing is in the book of Isaiah, when Isaiah declares what he sees, this is what Isaiah the prophet sees in the Old Testament.

He says this, in the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon the throne high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Did Isaiah see who the Lord was? Oh yes. And above him, in case there was any confusion, above him there stood Seraphim. Each had six wings, two, they covered their face, two, they covered their feet and with two they flew.

[18:27] And one of the Seraphim called to the other and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God. And the whole earth is full of his glory.

And then this is what Isaiah says, he saw the Lord clearly. And how did that understand, help him understand who he is? This is when we experience the Lord for who he is, we better understand ourselves, we have a better understanding of ourselves.

And this is what Isaiah says, woe is me. I am lost or I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

When we know who the Lord is, we have a better understanding of just who we are. And so is Saul. Saul needed to do this. Saul needed to get over Saul. And so too do we. Saul was prepared for effective service through the time spent with the Lord alone, preparing him for service for a lifetime of service.

[19:55] And we see that Saul learned what God wanted him to do. We read this, we know this because of Acts 22:10, this is what the Lord told him.

And in fact, before he goes out to the Arabian desert, Ananias knows more about what God wanted Saul to do than Saul did.

He says this, the Lord speaking to Ananias to say, go get him. Go get Paul, he's blind, he can't see right now. Go get him. He says, go for he, Saul is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name to the Gentiles, to the kings and to the children of Israel, for I will show him how much he will suffer in my name.

Go, go get him. This is what I want him to do. I want him to testify. He's going to be a witness to me before Gentiles, to kings and Jews, and I want to show him how much he will suffer for my name. But was it that God wanted him to do? What was taking place out in Arabia? The Lord needed some time with him to share with him what he wanted him to do. We can surmise that much, but probably not much else.

[21:10] Next, Saul was shaped by believers. So how is it that Saul was prepared for service? It requires time with Jesus, that was in Arabia.

And next we see him shaped by other believers, and so too it is with us. Read with me in verse 26 through 31. And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples, and they were afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple, but Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road that he had seen the Lord, and he spoke to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

And so he, that is Saul, went in and out among them in Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord, and he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists, but they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Galatians, Samaria had peace, and it was being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and comforted in the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

How is it that Paul was prepared for ministry service? He had a good friend whose name was Barnabas. He escapes Damascus through this window in the wall, he's lowered, and he goes down to Jerusalem, the very site that not too many years ago, three years in Arabia, it was fresh on their mind though, this is the guy that killed our deacon Stephen.

[22 : 53] This is the guy who gave consent to the stoning of Stephen. He wasn't the one who threw the rocks, but he stood there holding everyone's garments who did.

Everyone has reason to be skeptical of this guy. Is he really changed? Barnabas spent some time with him. Barnabas' name is the son of encouragement.

Barnabas sought Saul out, he heard him, and he was convinced his salvation is real. And he takes Saul to the rest of the apostles.

I mean this is Peter, this is Andrew, this is James and John, the sons of Zebedee, this is Philip, this is the Bartholomew, these are the guys who spent three and a half years with Jesus.

This is Matthew, this is Thomas, this is James, the son of Alpheus, this is Thaddeus, this is Simon the zealot, and this is Matthias.

[23 : 49] And they have, and Barnabas brings Saul before them and he says, let me tell you what happened on the road to Damascus with this guy.

See Barnabas is sharing on Saul's behalf before the apostles, you need to receive this guy. He preached powerfully, he met the Lord.

Why do we shy away from being Barnabas' from encouraging others to advocating on others' behalf?

I would argue that I have shyed away from doing this because of a preoccupation with self. Let me illustrate, you know me well enough, I encourage all of us, would you please find someone in this room when we are dismissed, and would you befriend someone, engage them in conversation, would you welcome them next week to the discipleship class that you go to?

And understand where their children need to go, where their youth can go to be discipled, would you invite someone over to your home?

[25 : 06] And why would I not do that? Because I'm preoccupied with myself, because these kinds of questions go through my mind. I might have to risk my reputation to talk to that person.

I might risk being misunderstood. I might get hurt. That person may say something to me. I might get hurt. I might hurt the other person. Let me just spare them of that.

I might not know what to say or how to act. It might cost me more than I'm willing to pay. I might discover a need and want to have to meet that need.

I might end up going over to their home and that would cost me the investment of that time or invite them over to my home. I might have to get into a friendship and that emotional investment.

I'm just not ready for. Do you hear a preoccupation with self? Throughout my life, there have been people who have played the role of Barnabas, for which and for whom I am very grateful.

[26 : 12] Our former senior pastor, Keith Crell, in 2013, invited me to come on staff here. In many ways, I was underqualified. I had not yet finished my formal theological degree.

I had zero, in fact. And yet, Pastor Keith was desired for me to serve in that capacity.

And I'm so grateful that he had confidence in me and put before me and before you. Sorry about that.

To say, please receive this man. He may be underqualified at that time, but I'm convinced he's the man. I'm grateful for the Barnabas's in my life.

And I desire to be that for others. And so ought we all. I think of what Barnabas did. There is no preoccupation with self in Barnabas.

[27 : 09] Listen to what he did. He did six things that I noticed. He gave a word of encouragement. He confirmed and affirmed the gifts in Saul. He reconciled believers with other believers.

He took risks for Christ in human relationships. He was promoting the ministry of others, and he rejoiced in others' ministry success.

Saul will soon outshine Barnabas in the story of the church history. And yet Barnabas, I'm sure, was just so excited.

Look how the Lord is using this man. May the tribe of Barnabas's increase. And may we be in encouragement to others.

Before being sent to Tarsus, let's look at what the environment, though, is in Jerusalem.

[28 : 07] In verse 29, he spoke and disputed with the Hellenists. That is the Greek-speaking Jews who were conforming, if you will, who had values of the Romans around them.

Greek-speaking, but they were, and they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus. And so in a map form, if you want to see where Caesarea is, Caesarea was about 40 years prior to this time.

Herod the Great had built a port city, Caesarea. He had brought down a, you can go and see it today. There's a hippodrome there. My wife and I had the privilege of seeing it.

There's a horse race track. There's a, the, the cove where a port was built by the Romans. There's an aqueduct, that brought fresh, fresh water to this coastal city.

It's amazing. It's still there to this day. But because it's a port city, likely Paul was sent there to catch a ship to go north to Turkey on the southern border of Turkey.

[29 : 06] There's a Tarsus is where he was sent. So that's where Paul now is. But look in verse 31. Now Paul is out of sight or Saul is out of sight.

He's no longer, he's in Tarsus. And so then verse 31 it says, so the church throughout all Judea, Galatians, Samaria had peace and was being built up and was walking in the fear of the Lord and had comfort in the Holy spirit and the church multiplied and the church multiplied.

I find this interesting that the church is growing, Judea, Samaria, Galilee, it's being built up, it's being strengthened, they're walking in the fear of the Lord, the church is walking in the comfort of the Holy spirit.

The church wasn't just growing, it's multiplying. And notice it's doing that also without Saul.

Just a side note, none of us are necessary, none of us are too important. Saul would become the apostle Paul.

[30 : 14] He would write 13 letters in the New Testament of 27 letters in total. He's an amazing man. This guy, it would seem that the church just can't do without.

And yet the church grows, expands and multiplies and is strengthened without him. The church of Jesus Christ is not built on a human personality. The church of Jesus Christ is built only upon Jesus.

And let us keep the chief cornerstone, the head of the church Jesus Christ in his rightful place. The church is not built on a personality, it is built upon Christ.

Last, preparation for service requires time, it is shaped by other believers and it insists upon repenting of any biases or prejudices.

What's unique is the next two accounts that we're going to read. So the story now shifts away from Paul, he's up in Tarsus, we won't really hear or see of him recorded much for another eight years.

[31 : 19] He's going to happen in two chapters later, but that's going to be about eight years later. So Saul is out of the picture and Peter becomes the point of narrative beginning now throughout the chapter of 10, the latter part of 9 and into 10.

Peter becomes this figurehead and we know in chapter 10, we know what happens, that Peter is going to be confronted of his prejudice. But before we get to chapter 10 with him being really confronted with his prejudice, he has to be softened.

And so we're going to read two different accounts where you're going to say, Scott, I don't really see how this relates to any bias or prejudice. I know, but here's what I want you to see.

In the next two stories of Peter, we're going to see him ministering in largely Gentile areas. Yes, he's ministering to the church, but he is surrounded by Gentiles and he's going to have to be confronted with some things that would confront his old Judaism that may be still in him.

So please would you read with me now in these two accounts, picking up the first one in 32. Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down to the saints who lived at Lidda.

[32 : 42] He found a man, Ananias, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. Peter said to him, Ananias, Jesus Christ heals you, arise, make your bed.

And immediately he arose and all the residents of Lidda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord. Lidda is, if you will, we're going to go back here, if you see the J in Jerusalem, it's over on the

coast.

If you go Jerusalem, due west and you go a little bit north, inland a few miles you have Lidda. So that's where we're at. I say it this way, you can't read your Bible without a good map.

Just I can't do that. So that's where Lidda is, just to have in your mind, where is Peter? He's farther away from Jerusalem. He's over by the Mediterranean Sea, just a few miles inland you have this little town Lidda.

And what do we see here? Lidda is the Old Testament city of Lod, which is today, if you land in Israel in the Tel Aviv airport, you're landing over the ancient site of Lidda.

[33 : 56] It is predominantly a Gentile and Hellenistic city. Many who, he meets this man whose name is Anais, who has been bedridden for eight years.

This man knows what it is to be physically discomforted, socially restricted. He has hygiene difficulties and emotionally probably depressed.

And this man has been here for eight years. And Peter goes to him and he heals him and he says, a rise, Jesus Christ heals you, rise and make your bed.

I don't know what was a demonstration of greater power, the fact that he was healed or that he made his bed. Many of you for years have been asking your children to do this, to no avail.

But I actually think it's a tender moment that this instrument, his bed, that has represented a prison, he now has the ability to take responsibility over.

[34 : 59] So the real story and the real point of that story is that Christ has power over disease. But second, Christ has the power over death, let's look at this next account with Peter.

Now there was in Joppa, now we're on the coast, right on the Mediterranean Sea, just due west of Lidda. There was Joppa, a disciple named Tabitha, which translated means Dorcas, who is full of good works and acts of charity.

In those days she became ill and died and when they had washed her, they laid her in the upper room. Since Lidda was near Joppa, the disciples hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him urging him, please come without delay.

So Peter rose and went to them and when he arrived they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made while she was with them.

But Peter put them all aside, all out aside, and knelt down and prayed and turned to the body and he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes and when she saw Peter she sat up and he gave her his hand and she rose up.

[36 : 18] Then calling the saints and the widows he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all of Joppa and many believed in the Lord.

We meet Tabitha. She said, it said of her in verse 36 that she's full of good works and acts of charity. Look down in verse 39. It says, all the widows beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas, that is Tabitha, made while she was with them.

It's just like Tabitha. The wording suggests that, possibly suggests that even they were wearing some of the garments that Tabitha had made for them.

And how isn't it like someone who is full of good works and full of acts of charity to be making garments for widows?

And they are there with Peter and they say, go. So he puts them out and he raises her from the dead. God raises her from the dead through his prayer.

[37 : 20] Peter had a wonderful positive ministry and these are experienced back to back and they have significant shaping factors and his attitude toward the world because these great successes happened in Gentile territory.

There's one verse that I left off and we're going to conclude with this today. And this will help us understand why I said it insists upon repenting of any biases and prejudices because remember next week we're going to get the whole story of Peter's biases and prejudices are going to be confronted in a real big way but before that he has to be softened a little bit and so we read this. And he, that is Peter, stayed in Joppa for many days with Simon the Tanner. Simon the Tanner. This is significant. A Tanner's place of business was an anathema to a fastidious Jew. It was an unpleasant, it was a smelly where animals were slain and their skins and their hides were taken from them.

You wouldn't catch a Jew staying in a Tanner's house. In fact, Tanners were ostracized about 50 cubits outside of town.

[38 : 40] Rabbinical law stated that if a betrothed woman discovered that her fiancé was involved in tanning of hides she could break off the engagement. This was something that you just didn't do as a good Jew.

And so for Peter, Simon Peter to stay with Simon the Tanner in his place of residence already shows that Peter understands there's some part that the law of God that he was so familiar with is being broken down in the person of Jesus.

And so we will see next week that preparation for service we see in Paul that it requires time with Jesus. It is shaped by other believers and it insists upon repenting of biases and prejudices.

When I come to application points I'm going to state them in principle form and I pray that the Lord would apply these things in our lives. In the service of Jesus no one is indispensable.

No one is indispensable. God sent Saul to Arabia and then to Tarsus. We may think we are the only ones who can fill a certain hole pastoring a particular church or teaching an adult discipleship class or directing the kids program or training others in evangelism, organizing a certain ministry or whatever.

[40 : 11] But that's simply not the case. I heard someone say to me once that if you think that your impact will be felt too deeply, Scott, you need to do yourself a favor. Go fill a bucket of water, put your hand in it and take it out and see what impact it made.

Thank you. Appreciate that. The church will go on with or without anyone of you or anyone of me. There's only one. God sometimes lets us know that by putting us on the shelf for a while and he prepares us for further service.

Second, time is required to build a life that is eminently usable in the program of God. Do not undervalue times out of the mainstream, times to recharge, time to rest, and become further trained in such time God is preparing us for further service.

Continue to walk in an abiding relationship with Jesus no matter what season you're in. Thirdly, all forms of favoritism, biases, and prejudices are contrary to the gospel.

[41 : 26] Mahatma Gandhi, born in the mid-1800s, lived to the mid-1900s, spent three years in London, England, studying to be a lawyer.

While he was there, he read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and he thought Christianity may have something to offer the caste system that he came out of in India.

He wanted to reform the caste system because he thought there's something that Christianity must have to offer because I see truths and principles that seem contrary to the caste and I think it has solutions to offer the caste system.

On Sunday, he attended a church service and he decided to ask the minister for some time to explain salvation to him and to explain some other doctrines pertaining to the Christian faith.

And so upon entering the worship center, though, one of the ushers refused him to give him a seat and suggested that he go elsewhere and worship with his own people because he wasn't dressed in traditional Indian garb.

[42 : 40] He left and he never came back. And in his autobiography, he writes this sentence, If Christians have a caste system also, I might as well remain a Hindu.

Christ died for the Native American, for the homeless, for the Hispanic, for the homosexual, for the African, for the lesbian, for the poor, for the tattooed, for the sick, for the pierced, for the doctor and abortion clinic, for the Californian, for the...

There's a reason why I stated it. For the obese, for the bodybuilder, for the Muslim.

Just as Simon Peter spent time with Simon the Tanner, enjoyed rich fellowship with Christ, let us repent of all forms of favoritism, biases and prejudices for the contrary to the gospel.

I wonder what would have become of Mahatma Gandhi if he ran in, if he didn't run into that usher.

Do not ever think that your role in the church is too insignificant to affect other people and all of your biases and all of your prejudices and all of our forms of favoritism show.

[44 : 24] Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for this day. Lord, I pray that we would increase as disciples of Jesus, that we would spend time with you, we would walk with you, we would consider no role insignificant.

But forgive us for any and all forms of biases and prejudices.

May we apply the gospel to our lives in every way. We love you, Lord, and you have our attention.
And it's in your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.