

## Church Weekend - Session 2

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Date: 09 June 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please, just throw money. So, yeah, people often say to me, you know, are you nervous before speaking?

And you're always a bit nervous. Well, I am always a bit nervous. And I say, but I'm always more nervous before the second one. Because that's, you know, so thank you for coming back. So, probably some of you have discovered urgent errands you've got to do. And, you know, they're not here. They've suddenly discovered an urgent sort of gardening job that they felt they'd be called to.

Anyway, so here we are. So we looked in the first session about Jesus' invitation to abundant life. About looking at where we are at the moment. Being honest about that. And trying to get into our heads the idea of moving to follow Jesus.

There is things that we do as Christians. And discipleship is part of that. So, you know, I think in terms of our spiritual life, you know, there are practices that really help.

[ 1 : 11 ] And one of the things that we can do as a church, and I would urge you to do. I don't really have time today to sort of do this. But it's to share the things that work for us.

So people, I talked about prayer. People have different ways of praying. One of the things that we don't do so well, I think, within the church is teach people ways to pray.

We present them with ways to pray. And then when people don't feel that that's something they respond to, I feel like I'm a failure at prayer. Do you know what I mean? I can't. So there hasn't been, be honest, there has never been a day in my life when I have skipped down the road to a prayer meeting.

When, you know, when the vicar says we're going to hold a prayer meeting, there is no upsurge of joy in my heart at that moment. And it's partly to do with my inbuilt sinfulness, but it's partly to do with, you know, that that's not, in fact, where I get my energy from in prayer.

That's not how I like to pray. And I do it because it's great to pray with one another and to be with. But, you know, there are other methods of prayer. One of the methods of prayer that I've used a lot that stayed with me is something called the Jesus prayer, which is simply, it's a very ancient way of praying, which is to pray scripture.

[ 2 : 27 ] In this case, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. That's the traditional. Jesus Christ, the full traditional version is Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I normally truncate it because I don't think Jesus needs any more reminding that I'm a sinner.

You know, I think he's kind of tweaked that now. You know, I don't think he's up there going, and I go, I'm a Nick Page, you know, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Oh, you're a sinner. No, I think he knows that. You know, so there's a simple repetition of Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, Son of God, have mercy on me.

And when you kind of just pray that, you can pray that any time, anywhere you are during the day. And it's a very useful kind of thing to get into that.

Another way of praying is, that I love doing, is those very quick arrow prayers. Does anybody do this? It's where you just, often, pray on buses, if you ever go on buses, right, and I just like to pray for everybody on the bus.

I don't know who they are, I haven't got a clue. But I just, oh, pray for that person with all those tattoos. That's good. They're going to expand badly when he's older, but you know, they're there.

[ 3 : 35 ] You know, actually, the other thing is, the best place, can I just say, the best place to sit on a bus is upstairs about two-thirds to the back. Because all the teenagers sit at the back, and you can hear every detail of their lives.

It's very interesting. It's entirely on broadcast mode. And you hear these amazing things. I was, this, how have we got into this, actually? I don't know where I am. So I was going down to a bus once. I was just getting on. These two teenagers were getting off. And as you go off, she just said, and that's when the lamb exploded. And I was going, what? Come back.

Tell me the story. Tell me the story. So, yeah, you know, just little prayers for people you meet. Can you fill an hour with praying for people that you meet every time you meet them?

So there are lots of ways to pray. Reading the Bible. I talked about that in terms of discipleship. Studying scriptures. These are things, the point about these things are they are things that Jesus did. That's what we're focusing on. They're things that Jesus did.

[ 4 : 35 ] If we're learning from the master, we are learning from things that Jesus did. Jesus knew scripture. I'd encourage you to learn a bit of scripture. I talked about my work with Open Doors.

I was in a safe house in an African country. What they do is they have this, if you become a Christian, some African countries, if you become a Christian and you're from a Muslim background, your life is in danger.

They will kill you or they'll drive you out or do something. So we have people who become Christians in part of this country and we get them out there quickly to come to a safe house in the city.

And there they're trained in what it means to be a Christian in active practical discipleship. And part of what they do is learn the scriptures. I was there and the guys leading it said, right, and now should we just recite to Nick what we've been learning today?

And they started. And five minutes later, they were still going. I mean, they don't just learn the scriptures. They learn masses of the scriptures. In North Korea, for example, when people come out of North Korea.

[ 5 : 41 ] So often they'll escape from North Korea, across the dangerous river, into China because they're starving. And they'll take any number of risks. They'll go as a refugee, economic migrant, into China. For a long time, the North Korean government was tacitly allowing this to happen because they had no money.

People would send money back or bring it back in. And often they become Christians in China. And many go back into North Korea. And they go back often having learned a book of the Bible or a particular piece of Bible teaching.

And they'll take it back with them. Learning scripture, carrying it with us, turning it into prayer. We turn scripture into a kind of chore or into a kind of challenge.

I don't know if you've done those. Has anyone here done through the Bible in one year? Have you done that? Yeah. Now, it can be great. It can be brilliant. I've done it a couple of times. You know, through the Bible in one year. But it can also be a will.

My wife was doing it a lot long back. And I said, we'd got to about February. I said, how are you getting on? She said, I've got Levitical exhaustion. You know, it's just like.

[ 6 : 54 ] What about if instead of trying to get through the whole Bible in one year, you spent the next one year thinking about one chapter, one verse? Or dwelling in the Gospels. It was Dallas Willard, from whom I've learned a lot.

He, the great theologian and philosopher. John Altberg, the guy called John Altberg, when he joined his big church, he went to Dallas Willard for advice. And Dallas Willard said two things to him.

He said, one, ruthlessly eliminate rush. Which is easier said than done. It's not that easy to say either. Ruthlessly eliminate rush. And two, spend the next 20 years reading the Gospels.

Dwell with the Gospels. You know, if the rest of the Bible is something that you find difficult, well, you know, the Gospels are a great place to spend a lot of time. It is very hard to be Christ-like if we don't know what Christ was like.

And that's where you find out what Christ was like, is in the Gospels. And you can read, it's one of the good exercises we did. I did it with my youth group at home.

[ 7 : 55 ] We got them together for bacon sandwiches. We were baking sandwich breakfast and we read the whole Book of Mark. It's a great thing to do as a church or as a group. Because it's quite, it's not that long.

It's 15 chapters and a bit on that's probably written by somebody else. But, you know, it's there. And so it's 15, 16 chapters. You read the whole Gospel of Mark. And they know then what the shape of Christ's life was like, what happened.

So there's lots of ways to read Scripture. Other things that we can do that Jesus did, and, you know, ordinarily I'd brainstorm these things with you, but we've got something else I want to talk about later on. I'd really urge you to do silence and solitude.

One of the ways that Jesus refreshed himself was to spend time alone. We're not alone, with God. But you know what I mean. We are so connected in our lives.

It's astonishing. My daughters are never without headphones in. And I'm sure we're the same, that, you know, we are always connected to social media.

[ 9 : 00 ] The first thing I do in the morning is pick up my tablet or whatever, my iPad, and look at Twitter. Why would I do that? No wonder I'm flipping anxious. This is stupid. You just go swimming in that sea of fear.

You know, fear of missing out. FOMO. You know, what don't I know that people know? And then, you know, you're connected the whole time. There's noise coming in the whole time.

Disconnect. Have a day without your phone. Look at this place around you. You've got wonderful places. I'm sure many of you do go walking and, you know, get out there.

Learn to look. Somebody, we're talking down here, I think, and over there about sort of being in the moment. Yeah? Being in the moment. One of the best, it is a little tip. One of the best ways you can be in the moment, really consider it, is go and draw something.

Sounds really... Now, immediately, some of you will go, no, yeah. Oh, no, drawing. I can't draw. It doesn't matter. You're not going to... I'm not asking you to exhibit. You know what I mean?

[ 10 : 05 ] You go out and you draw a leaf and you really have to look at that leaf. And all you can do in that moment is concentrate on that leaf. And you see what an amazing job. Some minor angel went and designed that leaf.

You know, all of a sudden, how did God do that? That is incredible. To learn to look intently and to be in the moment is great. Journaling is a really good thing that you can do. I would urge you to do that.

Now, by journaling, again, a lot of people go, eh, eh, eh. You know, I don't want to do a diary every day. No. Journaling is about just recording your thoughts. It can be a bullet point.

Recording what your experience is of that day. You cannot be a disciple of Christ unless you learn to reflect on your own behaviour. And you can't reflect on your own behaviour if you don't record it. If you don't remember what it was. What were you feeling at that moment? I find journaling incredibly important for me just to record the ups and downs of my life. Because then I start to see patterns.

[ 11 : 01 ] Then I start to see that that day, I know, like, I am terrible. Okay? I've been a writer for a ridiculously long amount of time. And I still hate criticism.

Isn't that stupid? There has never been a single moment in my life where I've said, thank you for your feedback and meant it. Never. It's not quite true.

But I know. So that's the point. When I've submitted a piece of work and somebody else is going to comment on it, that's a point of vulnerability. And I've learnt to identify that by reflecting on my own behaviour.

And therefore, I know now, on days when that's going to happen, I have to start that day by inviting God in. I have to say, this is going to happen today, God, and you're going to have to help me through that moment, because otherwise I will kill somebody with a stapler.

Right? Because I've, I was telling somebody, I've gone back on the staff, I've gone to, I'm on the staff of Open Doors, actually, as well. They actually employ me.

[ 12 : 00 ] And I haven't been employed by anybody for, since 1996. And here's the funny thing, okay? When I was last employed by somebody having to go into an office every day, it was awful, because everybody else was an idiot.

And now I go into an office every day, and nothing has changed. In over 20, they're all still idiots. It's almost like it's me. But, you know, our workplaces are the most wonderful furnaces of transformation, spiritual transformation of Christ-likeness. That's where you have to be like Christ. In those places. And journaling can help you with that, reflecting on your behaviour, helping each other to reflect on our behaviour can really help for that. So just a few things. Listening to people. One of the greatest gifts you can give people is to listen to them. Just not to, I am, a lot of blokes have this, that we're programmed to fix. That's our upbringing.

[13:00] We're supposed to be people who can fix things. You know what I mean? Whether it's a sink or a car or, you know, somebody's life. My job is to charge in on the white charger and fix it, and then I can be all heroic and march around with a banner.

You know? And most of the problems we have in life, they don't succumb to easy fixes. We need in our country and our culture to get the value of just sitting and listening to people.

In African cultures and other cultures, when they're dealing with grief, people will just go and sit with them. They won't try and repair it. There's no repair in that. You can't fix that moment.

You have to listen to people. And we can listen people into wholeness. We can listen to them into, you know, because a lot of the time they know what the answers are, actually. They're not stupid. They know. But they just want to share that experience. So to support people who are listening, who are professional listeners, as it were, counselors and all that kind of stuff, but also to learn that experience ourselves. I've been really challenged on this in times past, and I went on a retreat thing, and then I came back and I thought, I'm going to really listen.

[14:10] And I went back to my wife, and she'd not had a great weekend. And I sat there, and I was saying, how was your weekend? I was doing it all right, you know, head on. And she said, oh, this is happening, this happened.

And then she stopped and she said, oh, no. She said, now you're doing that listening thing, aren't you? So sometimes you can't win, but, you know, just listening to people and giving them those gifts.

So there's a few things. I'm sure there's loads more things that you could think of that Jesus did, and the things that Jesus is calling you to do, to bring into your life, to make part of a pattern of behavior, a rule of life that you live by and that helps you.

That is abundant life. It is a life of discipleship. Now, but here's the thing. Here's what I want to talk about today. It's because, actually, in order to spend more time with God, you have to want to be with him.

You have to like him. And you have to believe that he likes you. You have to, and sometimes we have a view of God that is unhelpful.

[15:19] I wonder what your picture of God is. How do you picture him? What is your picture of God and Jesus and the Trinity? How do you picture them? Because our beliefs, our beliefs about this shape our lives.

I nearly went head over heels there. This is a quote from, I think he's a Jesuit, called Pedro Arupi. He says this, Nothing is more practical than finding God.

That is, than falling in love in a quite absolute final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning and what you do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything. What you're in love with decides everything. And the problem we have so often is that our pictures of God, the pictures that we have, are such that they make an intimate and rich relationship with him almost impossible.

Because we just have the wrong picture of God. I'd like to think about this a bit. Oh, I left my Bible over there, I'm going.

[16:38] So, let's have a look. In Mark chapter 8, Jesus is with his disciples, and he asks them this question.

Beginning at verse 27. Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am?

And they answered him, John the Baptist, and others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets, and he asked them, but who do you say that I am? And Peter answered him, you're the Messiah. And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone around him. And then he goes on immediately after that to teach them about that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering. So, it was what I was talking about earlier. Who do you say that I am?

Caesarea Philippi is the place mentioned in the text. It's an interesting place. It's across the border. So, when Herod the Great died, the sort of big dictator, he bequeathed, he split up his kingdom between, well, three of his sons, and then made another part sort of independent.

[17:52] So, the independent part was called the Decapolis, which means ten cities, and that's a sort of federation of ten cities. That's sort of over there. And then he made Jerusalem and Samaria,

Judea and Samaria.

He gave to one of his sons called Archelaus. And then up north, he gave Galilee to a son called Herod Antipas. And then sort of top right was the territory of Herod Philip, another of his sons, all by different mothers.

Herod Archelaus was so awful that the Romans deposed him, which is really going some. You know, you've really got to be absolutely inept, corrupt, and brutal for the Romans to think, that's a bit too much even for us, all right?

You know, you're bespeaking in the name of the mighty Roman Empire. So, they deposed him, and they handed over the running of bottom left area, Judea and Samaria, really to a procurator.

They got to put a governor in place. That's Pilate later on, but others before him. And Jerusalem and that close area was run by the high priests. Basically, they did all the taxing, and they organized that.

[19:01] So, Jesus here is in, as it were, top right. He's gone across the border from the territory of Herod Antipas, Herod Antipas, yes, to, that's an Italian starter, isn't it?

Anyway. I think. Anyway, into the territory of Herod Philip. Okay, from Galilee across into Herod Philip's territory. That is Gentile territory.

That's not Jewish territory. It's very mixed. There were some Jews there, but it's very mixed. Herod Philip was not particularly Jewish in any respect, and he, the name indicates that. It's called Caesarea Philippi.

So, Philippi after Philip, and Caesarea after Caesar. It's named in his honor. And it's full of temples to other gods. Caesarea Philippi has temples to other gods. It has temples to Augustus, who was the emperor of Rome before, a few, a couple of decades before.

And it has temples to Baal, or it did have in the past. It has temples to Pan, the god of Dionysius, is the Greek version. So, god of revelry, and, you know, it's probably an enormous pub, I don't know.

[20:06] But it was a god of drinking, and those kind of festivities. In fact, its Arabic name was Banias, which is from that name, from the temple of Pan that was there in ancient times.

It had lots of different temples, lots of different gods. So you have to see it as that context. In that context, Jesus is turning to his disciples and saying, who do you say I am? Who do people say I am?

Look at all these gods around you. Who do you say I am? And it's an interesting question. Our temples are always sort of barometers of values.

And we make a mistake nowadays, because we, you know, idolatry is the big sin, in a sense, in the Old Testament. It's the one thing that keeps running through, idolatry, you know, false gods, worshipping other gods.

And sometimes we just put it outside, because we think of idolatry as, yeah, having a big statue in which someone kills a goat in front of it. We don't do that anymore. But it's really easy to make a false god out of anything.

[21:03] All you do is put something on a pedestal and expect miracles out of it. That's all you do. You just worship it. You make sacrifices to it and expect it to give back to your life. And we do this all the time.

We do it with our work. We do it with sex. We do it with power. We do it with money. We do it with security. You know, we do it with youth.

The god of youth. We put on the lycra, you know, and off we go up the hill on the bike. You know, we do all this. And we expect it to turn our life around, to deliver miracles.

So Jesus is always calling us back, saying, who do you say I am? Am I first in your life? What's more important here? It's always good to kind of work out who our gods are.

But Jesus challenges us to turn back to him. Because these false gods that we have, they have two things in common. Or two, yeah. Two things.

[22:01] The false gods will always fail you. They will always let you down. In the end. And the false gods do not love you. Your work does not love you.

I mean, so many men, particularly, who have sacrificed so much for their careers. And they get to the top of the corporate ladder only to find that it's leaning against the wrong wall.

That it doesn't deliver what they want. I met a guy once. He's a judge. And he said to me, it was actually a church weekend, and he said to me, I spent all my whole life trying to get to this point to be a judge.

And he said, I finally got there, I was made a judge. And he said, and it was the next day that I started drinking. Because it just didn't deliver what he thought it was going to deliver.

We have to turn. If we're going to be disciples, we have to understand that we have a God who absolutely loves us. Who really loves us. I have three basic points to make in this session.

[ 23 : 09 ] That's the first point. God loves you. And my second point. God really loves you.

I don't know if you can guess what my third point is. God really, really loves you. God really, really loves you.

We have a God who loves us. God is love. When we say God is love, that means that love is a characteristic of God. It is not his job description. It's not something he has to do.

It's not on his task list. He's not kind of working through the day thinking, oh, I've got to love people today. We'll do that early. We'll get it over with. You know, he is love.

He is love. And, you know, in 1 John, it has these wonderful verses. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. We love because he first loved us.

[ 24 : 09 ] He first loved us. Why do you exist, I wonder? I mean, I'm looking out. It's a very real question for me right now, looking out. Why? Why?

Why do you exist? Because actually, when you think about it, why do you exist? There's no reason for you to exist. I mean, the world would carry on if perfectly right, if I didn't exist.

It would be, you know, and one day it will. It would be fine. And it will just go on. And whilst I can do some things in the world, you know, there's a lot I can't do. And why do I, why am I here? I think as Christians, we believe a very fundamental point is we exist because God loved us into existence, because God wanted us to exist.

There is no other reason. Sometimes you hear, you know, we exist to worship God as if God really couldn't, couldn't bear not to have people worshipping him.

As if his life wouldn't be complete unless he invented lots of people to worship him. That's not, that's, that's, that's not God. That's a narcissist. That's, that's the president of, no, that's somebody else.

[ 25 : 14 ] Do you know? That's a dictator. That's God, you know, I want, I'm going to create lots of people to say lovely things about me. What will we think about? No, no, we exist because God loves us. Because he thought somehow that the world would be a brilliant place with Nick Page in it.

And he's got this whole experiment going on. He's got this amazing experiment going on in the universe to see what does the world look like with a Nick Page in it? You know, what does it look like with a Matt in it?

What does it, what does it look like, you know, what does it look like with you in it, with you in it?

You exist because God loves you, because God wanted you to exist. That is something we so need to hold on to.

Because we look around us the whole time and we don't think much of ourselves. And I'll be talking about that this afternoon. You know, we think badly of ourselves about first and foremost, God loves you.

God really, really loves you. The problem is, I think a lot of people don't think that God is full of that kind of emotion. They don't really believe that.

[ 26 : 15 ] So I'd like you just for a few minutes to answer that question, really. I want you to answer two things, actually. I want you to talk about two things. Firstly, that question that Jesus has asked, who do people say that I am?

If we take the I to refer to God rather than Jesus in this context. If you go out on the streets or if you ask people who are not followers of Jesus, who do they say God is?

What answers would they give you? What would they say? So perhaps just talk to the person next to you for a moment. What would they say about God? Where you going? Okay.

Sorry to rush you through this. We're going to, but I'd like to hear, so who's going to, who's going to start us off with saying some things that people say about God? Who do people say that he is?

Yeah. Yeah, it's fine.

Right. So he's, he's non-existent. Okay. On your side.

[ 27 : 17 ] Okay, that he's always in favour of, yeah, God with us, that kind of thing. Yeah, yeah, yeah. He's on our side, as it were. Yeah. Brilliant. Thank you very much. Oh, the smell of Sharpies.



That really, what he wanted for me was to be somebody else. That actually, to be acceptable to God, I had to be somebody else. You know, my brother, who's a holy man of God or the Pope or something.

You know, Mother Teresa, I had to be a monk. Basically, I would have to be a monk. Now, in some respects, I already had an advantage here because the hairstyle had been granted to me by nature. My career helped me to fulfil the vow of poverty and the wife was really keen on the whole celibacy thing. And she would just be like giving me pamphlets about it and everything.

Anyway, but I really thought that, you know, that in order to be acceptable to God, I had to stop being Nick and be somebody else entirely. But no, I realised with the help of some great teachers, God created a Nick page.

[ 33 : 56 ] we may question his wisdom, but my job is to become the best Nick page, the one that he always imagined into existence, the one that he, you know, the most Nick page of all the Nick pages with all the best qualities and also the one that looks the most like Jesus.

The one, the Christ-like Nick page, you know, that's the other thing, that we're moving in two directions that are actually the same direction. We are moving into Christ-likeness and at the same time we are becoming more ourselves and we are not ashamed of that and I'll talk about that this afternoon.

We often just, I mean, part of the problem with social media is that we spend all our time comparing our interiors to other people's exteriors. We look at that and we look around in church and we go, well, they've got it sorted.

They've got it sorted. You know, and we think God wants me, God does not, God, your calling is to become more Christ-like and that's a life of discipleship and in doing so become more truly yourself. Why? Because God loves you. You cannot be a disciple of Christ until you realise that God really, really loves you because it's only in the strength of that love that we have the understanding to actually come before him in all our honesty and all our vulnerability and with who we are and do that because we won't be letting him down.

[ 35 : 17 ] There is nothing you can do, nothing you have done, nothing you can do in the future. That will ever make God love you more or less than he does at this point. He loves you.

We were made by love, for love and we need to understand that and really that's what gives us the strength. I have just a few minutes left but I want to challenge you on that to say that some days, there are some days when we, you know, we forget that God loves us and we think that actually God has gone off us, that we've done something wrong, that we will be punished.

I'm not saying that God is not a judge, I think that's true but I don't think it happens in the way that people think it happens. I don't think it's like that and God wants us to do the right thing, of course he does but equally he just loves us.

He loves us and we must always be aware of that and that's very crucial. Right, just to close, I want to talk about something called the cycle of grace. Some of you may have heard this. This was developed by a man called Frank Lake.

Frank Lake was a clinical psychologist and he was asked to look into why missionaries in India were burning out, why they were burning out and he developed something called the cycle of grace and he looked at Jesus' life and he said, well let's start with Jesus' life.

[ 36 : 41 ] He worked with a theologian called Emil Brunner and he said, let's start with Jesus' life and see how that was lived because that must be the best model. As being a disciple we've already talked about abundant life. Abundant life is discipleship.

The best model of life that we copy therefore is Jesus. Let's look at that. How did it work? It starts, according to Frank Lake's model, with acceptance. Jesus knew that he was accepted and loved by God.

This is my son in whom I am well pleased in this baptism. He knew who he was and he knew that God loved him.

It was that that sustained him and that allowed him to do the practices that sustained him, the prayer and the things like that because they were all done knowing that God loved him and that helped to sustain him.

It was that that gave him significance. Why was he able to keep saying, no, don't tell people about me in terms of the Messiah because he didn't want to be their kind of Messiah. He's not the guy who's going to ride in on a horse and beat the Romans up.

[ 37 : 46 ] He doesn't need that kind of power. He rejects it all the time. At one point in John's Gospel it says they wanted to make him king and he literally runs away. It just flees, gets out of there. He doesn't need that kind of significance.

Why would you need that kind of significance when you know you are loved and you're the son of God? You don't need that kind of. How much more significance do you want in your life? You know? But it's out of that that comes the fruitfulness.

So in other words all the service that Jesus does all the healing and all the expending himself the giving totally of himself to humanity comes out of that cycle.

That's what gives him the strength. It starts with the acceptance of God. Is this making sense as a kind of model? This is how Lake developed it and he went on to use it very well in treating patients with depression all kinds of self-image problems.

Starts with acceptance. Acceptance leads to sustenance and significance and out of that comes all the fruitfulness. Out of that you can serve and do all that kind of stuff. And the problem they identified was quite simple.

[ 38 : 52 ] The missionaries were living life the other way around. They were starting with the fruitfulness. In other words they were starting with all the activities the hospital the schools the tasks the things that they had to do the ways that they were going to serve the prayer meetings the church gatherings all the stuff there.

And they thought that would give them significance. That would make that they mattered. If I can establish this that would sustain them.

And then finally God would have to accept them. And that is so often how we live our lives. I live my life like this so much. I think if I go here and speak here if I can write this book if I can do this if I can put more prayer into my day if I could you know if I could just behave in this way then people would know and you know and I'm a sucker for status.

Status and writers are key things. And always God is doing great things to kind of build humility into my life. I once did an event it was the Christian Resources Exhibition in London I was on in the last speaking slot of the last day.

It's held at a race course for some reason that I've never fathomed and you would have needed a horse to reach the venue where I was in. And I thought this is not going to go well. And I went in to do the talk and there were six people in there three of whom were from the publishers.

[ 40 : 18 ] Anyway two more people came in and I got really excited. I don't know why but just two seemed to make the difference. And I'm not kidding they looked around and he went oh there it is and he walked over picked up a plastic bag from the previous seminar and walked out again.

My friend Trevor Hudson talks about the humiliations of the false self. Because I think that if I can do all this work if I can go to this event if I can sell this amount of copies if I can be oh you know what a great quote from Nick if I can do that will give me significance.

Look at me. Look at me I'm a man of God and the significance will sustain me and then God will have to accept me because I finally made it as a Christian and I've ticked all the sheets and it's like some heavily MOT and I go oh yes you're through.

Absolute rubbish. God loves me and the way of life works this way around and we have to learn that we live in a cycle of grace. We are loved by God.

We are loved by God. There is nothing you can do now you will do in the future that will make him love you more than he does at this present moment or less. and it's out of that that the prayer and the Bible reading and the things do you see how this makes sense?

[ 41 : 29 ] Why I've been talking about it is I don't want you to think that the things we do as disciples are what we do to get into heaven or wherever it is we're going. They are not that. God is not opposed to effort.

He likes effort but he's opposed to earning. Doesn't do earning. You are already loved and accepted by God. We're going to have a little moment of quiet to just dwell on this verse.

We love because he first loved us. And I'm going to invite the band to come up and we're going to sing a couple of songs. But I want you to understand that the call to discipleship is a call of love.

It's a call to move more into the love of God. This afternoon we're going to look at perhaps the most difficult part of that which is coming before God truly as we are.

but for the moment let's just accept this. God loves us. We love because he first loved us. Let's have a moment of quiet. Let's do it for him. So let's go to the bottom line of God and look after the

band and see how are you going to fulfill the Mumbai and see how are you going to move within through.