

# Worship, Words, Striving After Wind

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, well, it might be a little hard to see. On the screen behind me, you've got a photo that was taken last Saturday, and you might recognize a few of those beautiful faces if you get a little bit closer.

Those are some of us here at our church, and this photo was taken shortly after this group of eight people, myself included, hiked to the first peak of the Chief.

And so what happened is we got up there, then we changed out of our hiking clothes into our fancy evening wear, and we held sort of a wine and cheese gala as the sun set. And so it was a really nice time, had a wonderful time.

And if you examine this photo closely, you'll notice that a couple of the women went all out, and they wore high heels, which is very difficult to do. If you've ever been up on Top of the Chief, you know it's sort of a rough, uneven surface.

High heels are not really what you would normally wear up there. In fact, when I posted the photo on Facebook, at least one person was led to believe that these women had not only worn high heels on top of the Chief, but had hiked the entire way up in high heels.

[ 1 : 07 ] It's very impressive. Very impressive. I'm pretty sure that's not possible. I'm pretty sure it's not possible to do that. The pathway up the Chief, it's rough. It's uneven. It's, well, it was on Saturday, it was slippery.

Right? You have to carefully consider, when you're hiking the Chief, you have to carefully consider exactly where you're placing your feet. It's a hike that demands caution.

It demands extra care. It demands alertness. And it demands preparation. Now, let's keep that mental image in mind. That mental image of hiking the Chief, of being prepared, being alert, being cautious in mind.

Because what we're doing here this morning is we're going to learn about another situation in which you and I need to guard our steps. And the situation is when we enter the presence of God.

The situation is when we enter the presence of God. So, please take your Bible and turn with me to Ecclesiastes 5, verses 1-7. Ecclesiastes is a book from the Old Testament.

[ 2 : 11 ] It's about halfway through the Bible. If you've got a copy of the Bible that one of our ushers provided to you, it's on page 555, Ecclesiastes 5, verses 1-7.

And this book of Ecclesiastes, it was written several hundred years before Jesus Christ. And it was written by an Israelite man who identifies himself as, well, depending on your translation, he identifies himself as either the preacher or the teacher.

And we've learned over the past few weeks that the preacher, he's trying to learn whether there is any lasting gain to be found. Any lasting gain to be found from the people, from the places, from the things, from the experiences that surround us in the world that we can see.

And so far, everything has turned up empty. Over the last few weeks, we've found everything turning up empty. Everything in the created world, everything under the sun, has failed to produce anything of lasting value.

The good life, this life that can't fail you, this life that can't be taken away from you, it's nowhere to be found. So in Ecclesiastes 5, verse 1, the preacher is next turning his gaze.

[ 3 : 28 ] And he's been looking at the, he's been looking at things like money, work, pleasure, all these other areas of life, relationships, and so forth. And now he's turning his gaze to what we might call the practices of organized religion.

He's specifically turning to the religious practices of the Israelites who worship the one supreme God, who worship the creator God, who made heaven and earth and everything in them.

And we're going to find right away a warning about watching where we step. So we begin in verse 1. Guard your steps when you go to the house of God.

To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth.

Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much busyness, and a fool's voice with many words. When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. [ 4 : 39 ] Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake.

Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity, but God is the one you must fear.

These are the words of God, the Holy Spirit. They were true then and they are true today. And here's the big point that the preacher is making. It's this. The good life is not gained by empty rituals and words.

The good life is not gained by empty rituals and words. So all of the religious practice, all of the religious speech that you can muster, they aren't going to provide you with the lasting gain that you're seeking.

They won't offer you lasting significance. They won't provide you with any permanent good if there's no substance behind them. In fact, the empty rituals, the empty words that you and I may be prone to using may end up not only not helping us, they may end up harming us.

[ 5 : 49 ] That's why the preacher warns his Israelite readers, verse 1, guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Now, as he's writing this, his readers are going to know that he is talking about the temple of God in the city of Jerusalem.

This is where his readers would go to worship God. This is where they would go to offer animal sacrifices, where they would go to celebrate festivals, to sing praises to God, to make vows dedicating some of their harvest or possessions to God.

And the preacher is warning his readers, as you are walking up the temple mount, watch your step. Prepare for your encounter with the living God.

Approach him with caution. Stay alert. So just as you and I, we watch our step on our way up the chief, they also are told to approach the temple cautiously.

Why? Because it is a unique place where God is present in a uniquely powerful way. Now, you might be thinking, well, that's great, Dave, but I happen to know that there is no temple in Jerusalem anymore.

[ 7 : 08 ] What does this have to do with me? Well, it first might seem irrelevant. Since the last Jewish temple was destroyed in 70 AD by a Roman army, but really, even when that temple, that last temple still stood, it had become irrelevant because decades before that time, God had rendered that temple obsolete.

When the Son of God was born, God was present on earth in a unique way. He was present on earth in the form of a human being, Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus' disciple, John, he tells us about a time when Jesus was standing in the courtyards of that temple and he was arguing with the Jewish religious leaders.

And in John 2, verse 19, we read about it. We read, Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days?

But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

So in other words, what Jesus is saying is that there is no longer a need for a temple made out of stones fashioned by human hands because Jesus himself has come as the new temple.

[ 8 : 31 ] And in fact, his body is the new temple, not only the new temple, but a more real temple than anything that had come before. Because Jesus perfectly represents God to human beings like you and like me.

Jesus is 100% man and he is 100% God. And Jesus' followers, individuals like the apostles Peter and Paul, they would go on to explain as you read their writings in the New Testament that those

who believe in Jesus, they're united with him.

Those who believe that Jesus is the savior of the world, who died on the cross on their behalf, who paid the penalty for their sin, for their evil attitudes and behaviors, who rose again from the grave to give new life to his followers.

These people are now included in this temple, in this new temple. All those who believe are included. And they aren't just in the new temple.

As a community of believers, as a church collectively together, they are built up into the new temple. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 16, he says, Do you not know that you are God's temple?

[ 9 : 48 ] And he's speaking about the church as a whole, not just an individual. You collectively are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you. If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.

For God's temple is holy and you are that temple. So what this means is that when God's people get together as a church, as the church gathered, God is present among us in a unique and powerful way.

That means that God is right now, whether you feel it or not, God is right now present with you and me in a way that he isn't present when you're by yourself. God is present with you and me right now in a powerful way.

We are encountering the living God in a unique way this morning, right now. We together are the temple of God. We together are the house of God.

And the preacher of Ecclesiastes, he has told us this, guard your steps when you go to the house of God. So now we know that this is meant for you and for me today.

[ 11 : 01 ] Now we know that we are meant to watch our step, not only when we hike the chief, we are to watch our step every time we meet together on Sunday morning as the church gathered, as the body of Christ, as the temple of the living God.

We are to come through these doors well prepared, staying alert, thinking, speaking, moving with care. So let's talk about specific instructions.

How do we do that? How do we watch our steps when we meet together as a church? Well, the preacher is going to tell us three ways in which we should step.

Three things that we should be doing. So first of all, we read in Ecclesiastes chapter five, verse one. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.

So that's one thing that you and I should be doing as we meet together on Sunday mornings. We should draw near to listen. Now, first, let's break that down.

[ 12 : 09 ] If this means anything at all, if this means anything at all, this means first of all that we have to draw near. You can't draw near to listen unless you first draw near.

So we need to come. We need to show up. I understand the irony of saying that in the middle of summer on a morning when a lot of people are away for various reasons.

You know, and this is not about setting some sort of strict rule about you need to show up 50 Sundays out of the year at Squamish Baptist Church or otherwise you're pretty much a heathen. You know, we're not going there at all.

This is not about that. Otherwise, a lot of us are going to be disqualified. There's a lot of brothers and sisters in our church whom we love dearly who aren't able to make it.

Most, or even, some of them are hardly ever able to make it at all because of failing health or for various other reasons. This is less a question of exactly how many Sundays you're here and this is more of a question of where your heart is.

[ 13 : 13 ] because there are some people who seem, it's like they just drop in every once in a while. And it makes me wonder, makes me want to ask them, do you miss being here when you're away?

Are you longing to meet together? Are you longing to worship together on each Sunday morning? And whenever you're here, not here, you feel that longing. Or is church attendance a matter of convenience?

Is it something you do if you can't find anything better to occupy your weekend, anything better to occupy your time on a Sunday morning? If our church service were a Facebook event, would you forever be clicking maybe?

To draw near to listen, you first have to draw near. If you're not interested in drawing near, let me be frank with you, maybe you should reconsider whether you want to follow Jesus or not. If you don't like being among the people, the family of God, if you don't like being among the temple of the living God, maybe you should really rethink whether or not this God is the God that you want to follow.

[ 14 : 34 ] The preacher tells us that if at all possible, we should be showing up. And not just showing up, he tells us to draw near to listen. So what this means is that it's not enough just simply to show up, check off that list.

Yep, I did it. I showed up. It means that when you and I walk in the door, we walk in ready to receive God's word to us. We walk in ready to listen to the words of the Bible.

We walk in receptive to the messages of these songs that our fellow believers, our brothers and sisters, are singing in our ears. We walk in eagerly listening to the sermon with a teachable heart. This means that we are mentally present. We are here in the moment. Now, have you ever come to church with your mind already churning through your plans for lunch, your plans for the afternoon, your plans for the evening?

Guilty as charged. I've done that. Have you ever come to church, and maybe are you coming to church this morning just getting through it so that you can move on to the part of the day that you're actually looking forward to?

[ 15 : 54 ] Guilty. I've drawn near to God's house with no intention of listening, not really paying attention to where I am, where God has put me right here, right now.

And this is dangerous. This is dangerous. Because if we come unwilling to receive God's word, if we come unwilling to be mentally present among God's people, then what has happened is that being here this morning has become a mere formality, a show of religion without the heart.

We're distracted, absent-minded, not aware of what we're doing. The preacher says that we are offering what he calls the sacrifice of fools, that we don't know we're doing evil.

Why do we do that? What's our motivation behind that? I think we need to consider that, especially in the context of Ecclesiastes, where people are searching for, where people are running about under the sun, looking for, looking for lasting gain somewhere, trying to get ahead in this world, trying to extract gain out of this world.

Why do we show up as an empty ritual? I think it's because we want to curry favor with God, because we want to win the approval of other people. They're going to see how faithful we are, they're going to see how religious we are, but worship is not a means to an end.

[ 17 : 24 ] Worship is not a means to lasting gain. It is not a means to personal significance, to getting ahead in this world. It is not a tool to extract financial gain or to extract influence and power out of this life.

This is not the good life. If you were hiking the chief, if you were following behind a string of hikers, and you notice that they, the entire way up, they're glued to their cell phones.

It's like they're not even ever looking away from their cell phones for the entire hike up, the entire time they're at the summit, and then the entire hike back down. Wouldn't you just laugh at them? It's ridiculous.

Why are you even here? They're not watching their step. What they're doing is not only absurd, it's dangerous. They're not present in the moment. They're not receptive to the beautiful views around them.

And that's you, and that's me. We laugh at them, but maybe we should be looking at ourselves. We do the same thing. When we draw near to God on Sunday mornings but fail to listen, let me be frank, there is no lasting gain to be had from these empty rituals.

[ 18 : 41 ] If you show up on a Sunday morning and you're not paying attention to it and you're not present, you've gotten all the gain that you're ever going to get out of that. That's one thing that you and I should be doing to watch our step.

We've got two more. And these two have to do with our words. Now, if you haven't noticed, we're a church of people that loves to use words.

We're a church of talkers. If you don't believe me, wait for about five minutes after the service is out then go out into the foyer. We really need soundproofing out there, don't we? It's loud.

We love to talk. Talking's a good thing. I enjoy that about our church. I enjoy that about our church family, how friendly everybody is. Talking is also a dangerous thing. In the presence of God, we

would be wise to watch our words and we would be wise to say less.

Verses two through three, the preacher writes this. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth.

[ 19 : 50 ] Therefore, let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business and a fool's voice with many words. So there are two problems here with the way that we talk to God, with the way that we talk about God, the way that we talk to other people, the way that we talk about other people in all our areas of talk, whether we're talking to God in prayer, whether we're talking to one another, whether we're talking about God, whether we're talking about other people, and especially as a church gathered.

Two problems. First is this. We tend to be rash. We tend to be hasty to utter a word. So what that means is we can be impulsive.

I say whatever is on my mind comes out of my mouth. And I don't stop to evaluate whether my words are wise, whether what I'm saying is going to be helpful and constructive and encouraging to the people around me, whether it's going to be useful to them, whether it's going to make them feel at home and at ease, whether it's going to point them towards Jesus Christ, or whether it's going to tear them down, or draw them away from Christ, or possibly tempt them towards sin.

Or maybe it's not even my place to be speaking in this situation. Maybe I'm better off keeping my mouth shut. The way that we speak as often, it makes me think back to my college philosophy classes, and it's kind of like writing a paper for one of those classes the morning it's due, turning in that rough draft without even rethinking and without even reviewing it.

Bad things happen when you do that. worse things happen when we speak that way. Because unlike your college philosophy paper, people actually take your words seriously in real life.

[ 21 : 52 ] People actually pay attention. That's the problem with speaking impulsively. Second problem, we use many words when we don't need to. Let your words be few.

We tend to ramble. We throw in a whole bunch of filler. I think back to, once again, to those philosophy courses.

And I'll always be grateful to one of my professors. She told our class this. She told us, you know, don't pad out your paper to meet the length requirements. So what she meant by that is if this assignment demands a paper that's supposed to be eight to ten pages long and you go out and you write your paper and it comes out to seven pages.

Don't do what a lot of college students do, which is, okay, I need to find an extra, I need to, like, insert words and sentences here and there randomly and pad out that content and fill it up so I can get to that eight-page requirement. Her attitude was, turn in that seven pages.

Come up short. Turn in what you've got. Don't pad it out. I tested her on that. I think it was around a ten-page, ten to twelve-page assignment.

[ 23 : 04 ] It came out to, I think, like, around eight and a half. I turned it in. I got back a good grade. She didn't penalize me for it. That's what the preacher is telling us.

When it comes to your words, edit them. Don't pad them out. Edit your paper. Don't pad it out. Consider the value of your words before speaking on a subject and please don't ramble on endlessly.

Why not? Why not ramble on endlessly? Well, the preacher illustrates his point with a proverb. A dream comes with much business and a fool's voice with many words. I feel like every commentator had a different idea of what that meant.

So here's what, here's kind of one of my best stabs at it. This is one of those analogies, I think, that you, you know, analogies, did you ever run into those in high school English or anything like that if you ever took it?

An analogy is, this and this are like this and this. And it's always really complicated and everybody finds it really hard. So I think what he's saying here is this. He's talking about dreams.

[ 24 : 13 ] Sometimes in the Bible, a dream might carry a message from God. It might carry a warning about what is to come. That occurs in several places in the Bible. Let's take a poll.

Raise your hand if you remembered any of your dreams from this past week. Am I the only one? Come on. Raise your hand if you remembered any of your dreams from this past week, okay? Now, keep your hand raised if your dream contained valuable insights about your life and your future. Oh, where did all those hands go? That doesn't happen very often. It does not happen very often, does it? I mean, most dreams are nonsense. They're dreams about like the one I had last night

where I'm watching a magic show from backstage at a football stadium for some reason. And backstage, the magician's hatchback car is parked and I'm wondering why his skis are not properly secured to the roof of his car. You know, why? Why was that there? What did that have to do with anything? I don't know. It's nonsense. And the preacher says, with much business, a dream comes with much business.

[ 25 : 20 ] In other words, especially when you're stressed out, when your life is filled with busyness, your life is filled with frantic energy, when you can get sleep, you might end up having a lot more crazy dreams. And before you think, oh man, you know, what's the, you know, everybody knows, like, it's just a bunch of nonsense.

Don't attach a lot of significance to it. Not only is it nonsense, it tends to fade away almost right away. Have you ever, do you, have you ever felt that feeling of you wake up, you remember what you dreamed about and you can feel that memory disappearing?

It's a horrible feeling. It just disappears. So it is with our words. Oftentimes our words are meaningless, disposable, quickly forgotten, full of futile energy.

A lot of my words are like that. When you fill your life with busyness, you get foolish dreams. When you fill the room with words, you get foolish nonsense. I don't want this to turn into sort of this really awkward thing after church service here today where everyone just is afraid to even open their mouths.

That's not what we're going for here. What we're going for here is this. Let's pay closer attention to what we say. Because a lot of times there's a reason that we let words rush out of our mouths and fill the room.

[ 26 : 36 ] And I think it's the same reason that college students use filler in their paper. It's to hide the fact that we just don't have a lot to say. It's because we're trying to meet the expectations of other people.

We don't want to be judged. We want other people to think we're looking good. We use words, many words.

We use impulsive words because we're trying to gain some sort of advantage. Because we're trying to look good in front of other people. Because we're trying to get lasting gain and significance out of the conversations we had.

We're trying to get a leg up on the people around us. Make them like us. Maybe I'll win the praise of other people. Maybe I'll win their admiration and approval and that'll give me that lasting gain.

That'll give me the good that I want. No. It's not going to last us and in fact can do a lot of harm. The preacher says let your words be few.

[ 27 : 31 ] Why? Because God is in heaven and you are on earth. God is in heaven.

If you have time to kill this afternoon, so okay, let's start making some afternoon plans after all. Forget what I said before. Afternoon plans. If you've got nothing else to do, look through the Psalms and you can cheat and use some sort of search engine or something to search through the Psalms. Find all the places where heaven or heavens are mentioned. Look through those verses. See when it's mentioned that God is in heaven or God is in the heavens. And what you'll find is that in almost every single case the picture being given is this.

Heaven, the heavens are the throne room of God from where God reigns as sovereign king. From where God looks down and God surveys the earth.

God answers those who are crying out to him for help. It made a lot of sense for the Hebrew writers to talk about the heavens, to use that image of the skies and the heavens as the place where God is.

[ 28 : 37 ] Because no, God is not literally like floating up there in the skies. but it's an apt description and understanding of God's perspective. He is high, lifted up, exalted.

He sees things clearly. When you hike up the chief, when you get to the top of the chief and you look out over Squamish, you see things from an angle, from a perspective that you couldn't see down below.

You see things clearly. And God's house, the temple, it's the place where heaven, where God is, intersects with earth.

Where God is present on earth in a unique way. And so it is with the church gathered. God is present among us in a unique way. Our king is among us.

He is the one who is free to speak. He is the one who speaks to us. You and I should be quick to listen and careful to watch our tongues.

[ 29 : 48 ] There is no lasting gain to be had from rushing words. There is no lasting gain to be had from multiplying words. The good life is not gained by empty rituals and words.

So one thing that we need to be doing, we need to draw near to listen. A second thing we need to do is to say less. And third, you and I need to do what we say.

We shouldn't let our words mean nothing. The preacher writes in verses 4-6, when you vow a vow to God. Do not delay paying it. For he has no pleasure in fools.

Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

So in the preacher's day, this was a common practice. It was common for Israelite worshippers to make a request of God. And in that request, they would include a vow, a devotion, to give up something that they value, to give up something and dedicate it to God.

[ 30 : 56 ] You can read several examples of this in the Bible. In 1 Samuel 1, you can read about a woman named Hannah. She has no children. She prays to God for a son.

And she vows that this son is going to be dedicated to the Lord to serve him for the rest of his life. And she fulfills her vow when the Lord gives her a son. She follows through with her vow. And I think that's important to remember because we might be tempted to think, oh, this sounds like we're just trying to make a deal with God.

Well, rightly understood, the vow was a way that you would express dependence on the Lord was an act of worship when done from the right heart. The problem is that many people weren't doing it from the right heart.

They weren't following through. And I guess the preacher has witnessed some people who are delaying, some people who are making excuses, some people who are straight up neglecting to do what they said they would do.

And so these vows, they weren't expressions of genuine worship and dependence on God. They weren't coming out of a person's desire for a relationship with God. They were an attempt to manipulate God.

[ 32 : 14 ] You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Oh, thanks for scratching my back. Nah, forget it. I'm not going to scratch yours. Too much work. I'm trying to get God to do me a favor.

And now that God has done it for me, let's see if I can't worm my way out of my side of the deal. I like my religion as long as it doesn't cost me anything.

As long as it gives me what I need and doesn't cost me anything. And I'm trying to use this religious ritual in order to extract advantage, in order to extract gain out of my relationship with God.

I'm trying to get ahead in the world and use God to do it. And the preacher warns us that God has no pleasure in fools. That's sort of a nice way of saying that God is angry with people who think that they can toy with him.

They think that they can manipulate him for profit. They think that they can come before him and take and take and take and refuse to follow through with their commitments.

[ 33 : 22 ] The preacher asks, why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? God bless you. That good thing that God has given you.

Sometimes we have this mindset, I've got it now. I've got this good thing. I'm all set. We forget that what God has given, God can easily take away. And that's been a huge theme in Ecclesiastes.

Is that we are always looking for lasting gain. We're looking for something that we can hold on to. Something that is going to give significance to our life. Something that we can, that can last us forever.

We want the good life. We want something that will never be taken from us. And the reality is everything is taken from us. We're going to run into that directly, face to face, next, next, as we look into the rest of chapter five.

If you finance a car, if you purchase a car from a dealership, and you take out a loan, but you don't make the payments, and if your attitude is, I got the car, what a bunch of suckers.

[ 34 : 32 ] I don't have to pay for this thing. What's going to happen to you? The repo man is going to show up. You're going to wake up one morning and your car is gone. And the preacher is warning, God has the power to do the same.

We think that we've got a secure hold on the things in our life. We think that we can come to God and God is going to give us this and God's going to give me that and God's going to give me this and that and this and that. And we forget.

There's no lasting gain to be found there. What we think we have a secure hold on slips through our fingers. It's striving after wind. You think you've got it. There's nothing there.

There's no lasting gain to be found in using religious rituals and words to our advantage to get ahead in life. The good life is not gained by empty rituals and words. Instead, the preacher tells us how we can find the good life.

How we can find lasting gain. He writes in verse 7. For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity. but God is the one you must fear.

[ 35 : 37 ] God is the one you must fear. It's common practice in our world to use religion, to use rituals, to use words, to get ahead, to get the sense of significance, to give myself a feeling of security.

and we increase all of these words. We occupy our time with things. We occupy our time with empty things. We use words to fill silences in the room.

We use activities to fill the void of despair that people naturally feel when they know that they have no lasting gain to get out of life. We fill our lives with frantic busyness in a desperate attempt to recover this good life that we are meant to live.

But the good life is not gained by all of that emptiness, by all of that frantic activity, by all of that striving after wind. It is not gained by empty rituals. It is not gained by empty words. The good life is found in fearing God.

The good life is found in fearing God. Now, we instinctively associate fear with bad things.

[ 36 : 38 ] We think fear, you know, fear bad, right? With things, why? Because most of the things I'm afraid of are going to harm me. Most of the things I'm afraid of are going to harm me.

But there is a sort of fear that we have. We have a sort of fear for things that actually are really and truly good. If I hike the Chief and I reach one of the peaks of the Chief, let me tell you what I do personally.

I don't get very close to the edge. I'm kind of afraid of heights. I once tried to explain to some friends of mine, I'm not afraid of heights, I'm afraid of falling from heights.

And they just laughed at me, right? That was, you know, it's like, oh yeah, that's the whole point.

That's why people are afraid of heights. But even if I know I'm safe, there's still that, ooh, that sort of, that sense of fear.

And you'd think, well Dave, if you're afraid of heights, what are you doing going up the Chief? What am I doing going up the Chief? It's beautiful and it's good up there.

[ 37 : 51 ] It is a good thing. And the closer that I stand to the edge when I can make myself do it, the more my fear rises, but the more beauty I see, the more the beauty fills my vision.

Unobstructed. Drawing near to God is like that. Drawing near to God is like that. The more you look into his goodness, the more you let his goodness, his beauty, his very character fill your vision.

The more you see his unimaginable power, the more you see his dangerous holiness, the more you see his overwhelming love. The less you're worrying about your futile attempts to find lasting, significance and gain under the sun.

When I stand right at the edge of the Chief, boy, I'm sure not worrying about my financial situation at that moment. I'm not worrying about a lot of the relationships in my life that aren't exactly the way I want them to be.

I'm not worrying about how I'm going to get ahead in a world in which it's proven very difficult a lot of times to get ahead because it puts everything into perspective.

[ 39 : 06 ] Your insignificance, your failures, your attempts to get ahead, they just don't matter anymore because all of a sudden you see how small you are and you see how great God is and all that matters is that God is good, that God is great, that God is glorious and you not only want to see this for yourself, you want other people to see that view too.

This is the sort of fear, this is the sort of awe that we need. As we look face to face, as we look at who God is in the words of scripture and especially as we look at God is in the person of Jesus Christ and see him face to face, the more we are living the good life.

What we need is genuine worship. What we need is to draw near to listen. What we need is to talk, you know, let's talk about ourselves, let's talk about all the stuff we're craving, all the stuff we're

obsessing about, more talk about God, more talk about his goodness, more talk about his goodness to us.

There's a short but popular song, it's been sung for decades in many churches, turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face. What happens? And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

And that is absolutely true. We live in a town we're surrounded on all sides by wonder and glory and people are desperately craving it.

[ 40 : 45 ] Every weekend, people take off into the mountains, desperately looking for the wonder and glory, desperately looking for the sense of adventure. The thing is, they're stopping short, they're not going far enough, they're satisfied with something lesser, their desires aren't strong enough.

That wonder and glory are meant to us to draw, to draw us past them to the good life, to the life of true wonder and glory as we fear God.

That's what we're doing here this morning. We're here as the temple of God to experience the presence of God together, to draw near, to listen. The good life is not gained by empty rituals and words.

The good life is found in fearing God.