

Choosing Good, Better, Or Best

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Back in 2009, my son was nine.

! His age always matches the year it is. Indian, Guardian fan, I know, take pity on me. But every once in a while, the Cleveland team would come in and play Detroit. And this particular year, in 2009, I took my son, Lucian.

Back then, we called him Davis. Lucian Davis is his name. And we went to see the Cleveland Indians. Even though it was at the Comerica Park in Detroit, we went to see the Indians, not the Tigers.

And I was, we went down, we got there early, and it was quite a remarkable thing. This was the second memorable thing that we did when he got to meet one of the guys that he liked from the Indians, their closer, Chris Jimenez, who I think the next year was busted for pot and was out of the game.

[1 : 27] That's how it goes. The first memorable thing was on our way to, from our parking spot to the ballpark, emergency crews pulling a dead body out of a rundown building.

It was quite a learning experience for the young man. But this is a picture. You can just see in his face the delight that he had from getting that signed baseball.

And then 12 years later, we got to go on a special trip, this time to Cleveland. We went all the way to Cleveland, and we did a trifecta.

In two days' time, we got to see an Indians game in the daytime. At night, we got to see a Cavs game, and the next day, we got to see the first round of the NFL draft at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

And so it was pretty cool. It was pretty wet and rainy that day, so it was a little miserable. But it's still a pretty cool experience. While we were at the Indians game, my son got another ball.

[2 : 36] This time, it was a home run ball. Someone hit a home run, and I forget what it was. But I thought those two pictures back to back. What happened was, this was in April of 2021.

And I looked at the calendar, and Easter in 2021 was early on. This was a little bit later in the month of April. And it was right in the middle of the week.

So I took three days off in the middle of the week to go to Cleveland with my son to watch baseball and basketball and just play.

And I was wondering, and I don't even remember, and I didn't necessarily want to remember what series of sermons I was preaching. But usually right after Easter is a pretty busy season for pastors. You know, building in through the spring to Easter time, big Sunday. And then between Easter and Mother's Day, big time, people are generally coming to church and that kind of thing.

[3 : 45] And I took three days off right in the middle of that. And I'm wondering what my sermon was like that following Sunday, if it was any good or not.

I don't remember, but I was willing to take that chance. I was willing to say, you know, this is kind of an important thing. Because as parents, it's what you do. You have to kind of decide between the responsibility part of you and then also the responsibility that you have with your children, the opportunities that you can have with your kids to build into them.

It was just a time between me and him. It was a time for us to just be together. Someone might ask, well, what was the outcome of that?

Wrong question. For me, it was just the time spent. It was just being together, building into his life, and sometimes just having fun and joking around.

That's kind of what we're talking about today. It's how to decide. How do you make those kinds of decisions? Between what's important, the things that will last, the things that will last for eternity, versus everyday responsibilities or things that you're accountable for, how do you make those kinds

of decisions?

[5 : 07] It comes down to a passage in the book of Philippians. Philippians chapter 1. It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment.

We're going to talk today about discernment. Being discerning is not something that we talk about in our culture or use that kind of word, that vocabulary word, discernment, a lot.

But it's something that, as a believer, we need to be familiar with that, and we need to be discerning. We need to know how to decide. What makes up those kinds of decisions?

What goes into that? So that, here's why you need to have knowledge and be discerning.

Discerning between two different things. How do I know? Good and bad, right and wrong, good, better, and best.

And that's what this passage is about. So that you may approve what is excellent. From the NIV, it says it this way, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

[6 : 10] And that's what we're called to do, to discern. Sometimes it's not between right and wrong. Sometimes it's I have to be able to discern between what might be a very good thing, but is it the best?

And there may even be stuff in between, so good, better, and best. How do I know what to do? And that's where we're at today in the book of Luke, in what is a very familiar story, passage of Scripture.

It's the story of Martha and Mary when Jesus comes to dinner. And it's a short story, and I think oftentimes the application of this story is misapplied.

It's misunderstood. And I want to once again remind us of something that I mentioned a few weeks ago, and it's already been kind of forgotten, I think, so I have to remind you, what are the drums for?

What are the congas for? The kingdom of God is at hand, right? Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem. He's on his way to Jerusalem at the end of his earthly ministry.

[7 : 28] He knows why he's going there, to go to the cross. And as he sets his face toward Jerusalem, literally preaching the gospel, the gospel message was the kingdom of God is at hand, or the kingdom of God is near.

Quite literally, the kingdom of God, Jesus is the kingdom of God, is right in front of you. It's right in front of your face.

So don't forget the drumbeat. The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. Don't forget that. Because if you forget that, a lot of these stories, including Martha and Mary, don't make sense.

But if you remember that Jesus has set his face to Jerusalem, the kingdom of God is at hand. In other words, here is the Messiah that they had been looking for for centuries, that had been promised to Israel.

And he is standing right in front of them, ready to establish his kingdom, if Jerusalem, if Israel, if the people of God would have accepted him as Lord of all.

[8 : 49] Of course, you know the end of the story. You know how it ends for Jesus in terms of his earthly ministry. He goes to the cross, but then he rises again from the dead. And he is the Messiah after all.

He needed to go to the cross to pay the penalty for my sin, for your sin, for the sins of the whole world. But here he is. He's at Martha's house.

And Martha invites him and the disciples to come in. Dinner is awaiting. And what happens? Let's take a look. This is Luke chapter 10, beginning in verse 38.

Now, as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. As they were going along from village to village, from city to city, from region to region, as Jesus is making his way from Galilee in the north to Jerusalem in the south, and he's not taking the direct route.

He's going all throughout that region, sharing this message of the gospel. The kingdom of God is at hand. And he stops at where Mary and Martha are at.

[9 : 58] And a woman named Martha here welcomed him into her house. Now, we don't know much about Martha, if she had ever been married before at all, but right now she is on her own.

And we know that she has a sister, Mary. And we also know that she has a brother named Lazarus. Now, Lazarus is the name that you might be familiar with, John chapter 11, that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

So that's her brother. We don't know if Lazarus is even here in this moment. His name is not brought up at all. He could have been part of the welcoming group there at Martha's home, but we don't know that.

His name is not mentioned. But there's at least, we're going to guess, 15 people could have been as many as 30 people that had come to Martha's home. Unusual for a woman in that day to be kind of recognized as the head of the household.

But because of her circumstances, whether she was single or whether she was widowed, we don't know. But here they are. Jesus and his group are now in Martha's home.

[11 : 11] And she had a sister called Mary. Now, for those of you who are familiar with the story, what's the kind of reputation between Martha and Mary? Martha is kind of the responsible one.

And Mary is the kind of free spirit, we'll say. Okay? Let's read on. Mary is sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to his teaching.

This is unusual. Unacceptable. Some would say unacceptable. Certainly not according to the culture of their day. Sitting at the feet of Jesus would not have been the normal place, not just for Mary, but for any woman.

The men would have gathered to listen to his teaching. This is a formal time now. Jesus has kind of taken his place in the home. All of the pleasantries are over with.

And it was time for Jesus to do some teaching. And when they taught, they would sit down and people would gather around for him to teach. Whether they would sit on the floor or chairs or whatever was available, they would gather there to sit.

[12 : 26] But not the women. The women would be kind of on the outskirts of it. Standing, perhaps, or if there were available seating, they could, but not right front and center.

But this was Mary. And Mary was there to learn from Jesus. Whether she had sensed what was coming, we know later on that she does sense, she does understand what's about to happen.

We'll see that toward the end of our message today. But here she is sitting at the feet of Jesus waiting to learn. Dinner had not been served yet.

dinner was still a part of the agenda. Martha was distracted.

Distracted from the teaching. Why? Was she doing something wrong? Was she no, she was distracted with much serving. Question.

[13 : 30] Serving. As in serving a meal. Getting together the meal. Preparing the meal. Serving the meal. That's a bad thing, right?

She was doing something inappropriate, right? Sometimes that's how this lesson is taught. Sometimes that's the message received from this.

She was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him as into Jesus. And she said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

Now, understand, she's having to interrupt Jesus and his teaching. And she starts off with, Lord, she's recognizing him as Lord of her life.

And Lord, do you not care? Ever been there? Ever felt like the Lord didn't care about your circumstances? Okay?

[14 : 35] This is where Martha is at. Lord, don't you care that my sister, look at what my sister is doing. Talk about siblings, strife, right?

Because she's picking on her sister. I'm guessing again. this probably wasn't the first time that she's upset with Mary.

Because after all, Martha's responsible, she's going to take care of what needs to be taken care of, and Mary is over here, flower child, wild child, whatever. That's kind of the idea here of what's happening.

And then she says, tell her then to help me. Tell her. Jesus, come on. I can't tell her. She won't listen to me.

But Jesus, you can tell her. Because if you tell her, she's gonna. She's gonna fall in line. If you tell her. So Jesus, come on, you tell her.

[15 : 40] The Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. anxious. And the word anxious here is, we always assume that anxious and troubled, this is a bad thing.

But sometimes the context doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad thing. Sometimes it can be translated as just concerned. And she is. She's distracted.

She's trying to get the meal on the table. After all, the king of kings comes to your house, you're not serving him Spaghetti-Os. Right? You're not gonna do that. You're gonna get the best stuff, right, that you have.

You may not have the greatest, but whatever it is that you have, you're not pulling the fruit loops out of the cupboard. Maybe in your house that's what's best, I don't know, but you're gonna pull out, you know, the best cut of meat, you're gonna pull out because it's the Lord.

And so this is no small thing. This is not time for just a few little snacks, open a box of crackers and dump them out kind of a thing. And this is not the time, they didn't have warming ovens and microwaves and all of that kind of stuff, and so it's kind of important in terms of timing of everything. [17:08] So she's busy, she's distracted, she's got a lot on her plate. Literally. But one thing, Jesus says, is necessary.

Just the one, one thing. One thing is most important. I don't think that Jesus is saying the meal is not necessary.

I don't think that's what Jesus is after here. I don't think that what Jesus is saying that Martha all your preparations for this meal are just throw it away.

We don't need that. I don't think that's what he's saying. What he is saying is this, Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.

Mary gets it. Mary gets it. Whether she gets the moment, at this stage, we don't know if she understands the kingdom of God is at hand.

[18:20] He set his face to Jerusalem. This is one of the last few times they would ever see him before his rejection and crucifixion.

But she knows something is up. She knows it's important that it's time to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn.

So let's take a look at Martha's missed opportunity. By the way, that's the whole story. It's real quick. So Martha's missed opportunity or the right choice versus the wrong heart.

That's kind of where Martha was at. Martha was doing the good thing. Serving the meal was a good thing. Absolutely. And she was doing it at the standard time.

People have gathered for the meal. That's when you serve the meal. It's standard operating procedure. Right? That's what you're doing. But she did not recognize the moment at hand.

[19:24] And I chose the little phrase at hand on purpose to match up with the kingdom of God is at hand. She didn't understand the moment. She didn't get it. For her, it might have been just another time that Jesus was come to her house.

He had come to her house multiple times with his disciples. This was just another one. So a meal had to be put together. A meal had to be served.

There were no cell phones. There were no advanced warning. It was just, hey, Jesus and his crew is here. Time to get to work. Time to put this together.

Mary, on the other hand, was doing the best thing. You see the difference between good and best? This is not a right or wrong idea here.

It is good thing versus the best thing. She was doing the best thing at the opportune time, the right time, the best time.

[20:27] That's what Mary was doing. Whether she fully understood the moment at hand or not, she was focused on Jesus, learning from Jesus, making sure that she caught every word, or Martha was distracted.

But Mary, even though she was doing this, it was culturally unacceptable for her to be doing this. But Jesus doesn't scold her.

Jesus doesn't put her in her place. Jesus actually says, no, no, no, Mary's doing the best thing.

Mary's doing the thing that was necessary.

And again, sometimes this story gets a little bit misconstrued that Martha was kind of wrong to be serving.

I don't think that that's the right way to view this. I'm not saying that when you have a guest come to your house that you don't need to put anything together for them.

[21:37] You don't need to serve a meal. Ladies, just stop cleaning, stop cooking, stop, you know, I'm assuming guys aren't doing that anyway, but don't, just stop it.

and you got the day off. No, no, no, we all have responsibilities, right? We all have things that we must do.

Martha was doing them. Where did she go wrong? Well, again, look at, this is Luke verse, chapter 10, verse 40.

This is from the NIV, and I want you to notice the language that's used here, the NIV, but Martha was distracted by all the preparations, the highlighted portion. What does that say? That had to be made, right?

Stuff that had to be done. Now, maybe she could have set it aside for a moment because this was the time that Jesus was teaching. The meal could wait.

[22 : 43] But really where Martha went wrong, if we could say that, was in that she had to speak up about her sister.

She was doing the right thing, but with a wrong heart. What about the other person? Don't we often do that?

Especially with siblings. We get in trouble for something, and then we point at a sibling, and we say, but what about them? Right? And we have to be careful with that kind of mindset.

It's kind of like at the end of Jesus' ministry, he'd been resurrected, and he's meeting with the disciples at the seaside, and he's telling Peter, hey, do you love me?

Do you love me? Do you love me? I want you to serve me. And Peter, by the way, you're going to die a violent death. not too distant future. And Peter's thought was, what about him?

[23 : 49] Literally pointed to John. I said, well, what's going to happen to him? Jesus said, basically, if I put it in my words, none of your business. That's basically what Jesus said.

It's not your concern. You be concerned about you. Don't be concerned about the person next to you. Now, the sermon at this point is done.

So we can, you know, put our Bibles away and go home. But, since the sermon is done, and I still got some time with you, I thought we could have a conversation.

Because I think the rest of this message, if you will, is maybe a little bit less of a sermon, and more of a, if I could sit down with you one-on-one, maybe at a coffee shop, or at a restaurant somewhere over lunch, or breakfast, or whatever, and just talk with you about life.

That's kind of what I want to do with the rest of our time. I just want to have a conversation with you about making choices, about what's important, what is the things, what are the things that matter in life.

[25 : 21] So, this conversation we're talking about here is recognizing what's best, and not settling good enough. good enough just doesn't cut it.

There's a joke here, but I've gotten in trouble for making this joke before. Should I make it again? Should I get in trouble? Good enough for government work. work. I got in trouble over this statement over somebody who worked for the Ben is out in the foyer.

Ben, can you hear me? Oh, the volumes turned down. So Ben can't hear, so I'm safe. I made a joke about road commission guys.

Actually, Brian, I just saw, I turned, there's Brian, Brian, retired from the road coming, leaning on their shovels. And they don't, but sometimes there's that reputation, right?

Sometimes people like to have fun with that. But understand that we're going to push for what is best. We're going to look for, make decisions on what is best, what is good, what is right, and what is best.

[26 : 46] So, first thing we need to do is to renew our thinking. And this idea just comes from Romans 12, 2, to keep passage for us as believers, because once we become followers of Christ, this is what we need to do.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, and what is acceptable, and what is perfect. So, again, it starts with, if we're going to be able to discern what's best, and what is good, and what is right, we need to have the ability to discern that, to decide between the way of the world, between the way that maybe we were brought up, versus the way that God says, what God teaches is for us to do.

And here's the first thing that we need to renew our minds about, and it's this little statement here. Everything is spiritual. spiritual. Because sometimes we're taught that it's not.

Sometimes we have the idea that it's not spiritual, that everything is not, that everything that you're involved in, whether your work is ministry-related, like what I do, or whether your work is other-related, you do something completely other than ministry, whatever that might be, your work

is spiritual.

[28 : 12] Your driving to work is spiritual. Your relating to your family is spiritual. Your fixing the car is spiritual.

Everything about your life is spiritual, and we need to think in that way. We like to kind of compartmentalize our life.

It's the idea of kind of a checklist Christianity, that we put God first, right? Even as a Christian, we understand God's got to be first in my life, and sometimes we even order this around the clock. So the first thing that we do every day is we get up and we honor God. We put God first. So God, you know, we're going to open up our Bibles, or we're going to spend some time in prayer, and then we would say that family is number two, and so we're going to spend some time with family, maybe around a breakfast table.

And then we're going to go to work. And we're going to do our work, and it's really not kind of related. Matter of fact, maybe at work you might feel comfortable telling a joke that you wouldn't tell when you come to church.

[29 : 25] Ever been in that position before? You tell a joke that's funny at work, church, but come to church, and I can't say that now.

Or I, preacher can't hear me say that. That's not, no, that's not. That's an indication that you're compartmentalizing your life.

That you're saying that there's a part of your life that God is involved in, but then there are parts of your life where God doesn't exist. Well, you might say that he exists, and that he is the Lord of your life, but is he the Lord over that part of your life?

That's the question. So we kind of get it from here, what it means to put God first. You've heard this before, right? That God should come first.

I think I've said this before. I know I have. Because the Bible says this, right? Matthew 6.33, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, right?

[30 : 32] The idea of putting God first is Bible taught. It's real. But what does it mean? Because I don't think it means that we're putting God first in this compartment, and then these other parts of my life, God's not involved.

I've already took care of the God part. I went to church on Sunday, thank you very much. So now I've got the rest of the week, rest of the day, kind of do on my own.

But here's what it really means. It means that we're going to put him, put the Lord in the middle of everything. That's what it's talking about when he tells us to seek first his kingdom.

Put him in the middle of everything, every part of your life. God is there. God is first, if you will, in the middle of everything. It comes from a passage like this.

And there are other passages, but this is the one that I have. So whatever you do, Colossians chapter 3, whatever you do in word or deed, that kind of covers it all, right?

[31 : 43] Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything. No, let's just do some of the things. No, it's everything. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

So do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, a lot of times people wonder what that means, to do something in the name of.

We kind of even close our prayers with that, right? I do. Not all the time, but in the name of Jesus, we pray, amen. And like for many people that in the name, in Jesus' name, send button, right?

That's how God hears my prayers. As soon as I say in the name of Jesus, boom, he gets my prayer request. Ooh, I'm good. Because I prayed in the name of Jesus. That's not what it means. It's not some magical send button.

It is basically you are representing the name of Jesus. I'm praying in such a way that Jesus would put his stamp of approval on.

[32 : 59] As I represent Jesus, it's as I am his ambassador in my life. To the people around me, I am representing his name.

That's what an ambassador does. He doesn't represent himself. He represents whoever it is that's sending him. And that's what we are. As his ambassadors, we represent the name of Jesus Christ so that everything we do, everywhere we go, we are representing Jesus as we go, as we speak, the things that we do, the things that we say, in word or deed.

Do everything as you represent him. So that's every aspect of your life. You represent him and you are bringing him with you into every part of your life.

So when I was, you know, back in 2021, when I was deciding whether to take three days off of work and go to a ball game with my son, there's a decision to be made there, right?

Am I going to invest all that time and energy into my sermon for those three days? Or am I going to blow that off so I can go gallivanting with my son?

[34 : 27] Which is the right thing? I view all of it as a part of serving the Lord. my responsibilities as a pastor, my opportunities that I have with my children, responsibilities that I have with them, all of it, all of it, I'm serving the Lord in doing that.

So that's a part of what goes into making those decisions. Understand that every aspect of our life, we represent Christ. So everything is spiritual.

Everything that you do. Taking out the trash is spiritual. Why? Because you're taking Christ with you.

You're carrying his name as you go to the curb with your trash can. Everything that you do, every conversation that you have, even if it's about what kind of butter do you use?

You are, it's a spiritual conversation in the sense that you're representing Jesus in this conversation and you're, you're, you're carrying his name with you.

[35 : 47] If you go bowling, if you go hunting, whatever it is that you do, do it all. Understanding that you're representing him and you want to do it to his glory and to his honor.

Some more discernment here and, and discerning, learn to discern this. We see this in the conversation between Jesus and, and Martha.

The Lord answering Martha, you're anxious, you're troubled about many things, but only one thing is necessary. Martha, you didn't discern what was the most important thing here.

Martha, you missed it. And, and I got to wonder how many times Jesus could say to me, Rich, you've missed it. I, I imagine it's, there's a bunch of times where I missed out on what was best and settled for something that was better or good, but not necessarily best.

That happens to all of us, right? We, we all do that and it's not necessarily, well, you know, choosing between something that was sinful and evil and something that was righteous and good and, and that's not what we're, we're talking about here.

[37 : 13] Of course, that circumstance, you always want to choose what is good and right. But sometimes the choices are a little bit more difficult and this is a part of Christian maturity.

As a, as a new believer, a lot of our energy and time is, is spent in deciding between right and wrong and good and evil. I need to shed the evil.

I need to get, but then as we grow in our relationship with the Lord, it's less and less about that and more and more about deciding between good, better, and best.

Am I willing to settle for the average? It's not wrong. Am I, am I willing to settle for the good? It's, it's still good.

But is there something that's even better? Is there something that's best of all? And how do I, how am I able to discern those types of moments?

[38 : 23] Mary has chosen the good portion and it's not going to be taken away from her. So, the question here is, what is it that really matters? What is it that really matters?

Give you a couple of for instances. how often do we choose image over reality? You ever, you ever think about buying something to impress someone you don't even like?

are we influenced by that? In our day, do you ever think about posting something?

Concerned about impressing a bunch of people that you may not even know? You kind of know their face, know their name kind of a thing and so you accepted a friend request or you popped it in there and now I'm posting things and hoping I get a bunch of likes from people I don't even know? Image versus reality. Same thing with social media. We post all of our victories and all of our good things and all of that kind of stuff, but what about the junk?

[39 : 54] We don't ever post the stuff that we're not proud of. We don't ever post the stuff that would make people think less of us.

How about any parents in the room? What's more important? Grades? How well they do in school? Or character? Their character. which one are we asking questions about?

Which ones are we more concerned about? Where is the time and energy around that? Here's another one. Spiritual development or athletic development?

which one matter? Which is more important? Which one matter? Now, I'm not talking that you have to have just the one and not the other.

[41 : 01] Nothing wrong with athletic development or grades or all of those kinds of things. Absolutely participate in that. We certainly did. But where's the balance?

are we helping our children understand the things that matter? Like in character. How well do your kids get along with others?

Do they play well with others in a sandbox? Another thing is how do they respond to authority? That's a big one.

It's a big one in our day and age. A lot of parents are MIA on that particular issue. But are we are we concerned about are we teaching our children to respond correctly to authority?

To show that kind of honor that kind of respect in those circumstances? You know when when I was 32 I imagine when you were 32 did it really matter whether or not you got the varsity letter?

[42 : 11] where I went to school it was a much bigger school system than anything we have here and so whether or not you made the varsity team was a huge deal and I really wanted to get a varsity jacket jacket.

And I didn't get one until spring semester of my senior year. So do you think I was buying a varsity jacket at that point? No.

Because once you get out of high school are you still concerned about showing off your varsity letter after that? When was the last time somebody asked you your GPA?

GPA? Do you kids about do you care about your kids GPA? Do you care about what your kids are learning? I got when I came to be the pastor here nobody asked me what my GPA was.

And I was like that's the bullet there. So what we care about are they learning enough to move on to the next level to do and accomplish what it is that they want to do?

[43 : 36] That's what matters. That's what matters. Now again I'm not saying that if your kids are getting grades and and you know you ought not to have those conversations you ought not to help them do their best.

Absolutely. But you have to put it in balance with who they are as a person. To lay hold of what is best we often we have to let go of what is second best.

Sometimes second best is hard hard to give up. I remember as a parent how difficult this was for me because you know I cared about my kids academic achievements I wanted them to do well certainly better than I did.

I cared about their athletic achievements and accomplishments or their acting or their singing whatever it was that they were interested in. The question is again are they getting along with others?

Are they responding to authority in the correct way? And here's the question that I after it's all done and they're all gone and out of the house here's the thing I'm wondering was I pushing on my kids my dreams for them?

[45 : 13] Or was I helping them to understand what it was that God was calling them to do? And I would have to say I'm guilty of some of that.

I had visions of my son playing for the Cleveland Indians. But now that he's grown and all those dreams have gone by the wayside I'm watching him live out what it is that God had created him to be and do.

That's what was important. Kind of a verse. Remember we're just having coffee now. Colossians 3:21. Fathers do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.

This is from the NIV. Here's the word here. Do not embitter your children. How do you do that? So that they don't become discouraged.

What is it that would embitter your children? might I suggest a big one is pushing too hard. Right?

[46 : 38] As a parent pushing your children too hard. You do want what's best for your kids, right? That's the reason why you push so hard. You know, I've never been in counseling with someone and asked them, why are you pushing so hard?

Why is this an issue for you? And I've never heard them say, well, I'm trying to break them. I've never heard that from a parent. I've never heard, well, I'm just a bad parent.

The answer is because I want what's best for them. But sometimes you can push so hard that you end up pushing them right out of your life.

And so again, balance is key here. What is it that you want them to learn? What is it that is important? What is it that you're pushing them toward? And does there come a time where the push is too much?

Best of intentions. But is this what's happening? They're becoming discouraged. And the first thing they want to do as soon as they're old enough is to get out.

[47 : 54] And the kind of relationship that you have going forward is damaged. Because you just pushed and pushed and pushed. But my kid needs to succeed.

That's what I care about. My kids represent me after all. They have my last name. I want them to maximize their potential. potential. And we push and we push and we push.

Number three. Learn to ask what does God want me to do today? What is it that God wants me to do today?

I would suggest that we find our assignment in the same way that Jesus found his assignment. He followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. After his baptism, the Holy Spirit led him into the desert where he was confronted by Satan himself.

[49 : 11] And how did he engage in that battle by going to scripture? So following the Holy Spirit, engaging with the scriptures, reading and studying, understanding his word. That's how we begin to understand what it is our assignment is.

As we go to him to do that. Philippians 2.12 Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Notice this is not work for your salvation.

You can't work for it. You can't earn it. You can't be good enough to get it. It only comes through a relationship with him. All of grace, he's done all the work.

We just trust him with our lives. But once you've been given this salvation, we're told in the sense to work it out like you do your physical body. Right? You work out your body.

You didn't have to earn your body. You didn't work for it. You just got one when you were born. And spiritually speaking, you didn't work for it, but what you got, you work it out, work out that salvation that you've been given with fear and trembling.

[50 : 18] For it is God who works in you. Yes, God works in you. Both to will and to work for his good pleasure. He will lead you. If you're doing the things, if you're getting to know him, if you're studying his word, if you're spending time with him in that way, if you're willing to through your obedience, then be willing to be led by the Holy Spirit into what you're going He's not going to leave you stranded.

He's going to give you direction. He will do that. Here's another thing. Never confuse your calling with your potential. Never confuse your calling with your potential.

Right? But we're told, be all you can be. Right? I have to tell you, I cannot be all I can be.

How many of you are married? This is kind of a silly question here. If you're married, raise your hand. Okay? If you're married, you cannot be all you can be. Just can't.

Sorry. That message, null and void for you. Rich, what in the world are you talking about? You cannot be all you can be if you're married.

[51 : 46] 1 Corinthians 7 verse 8. To the unmarried and to the widows, I say that it's good for them to remain single as I am. This is Paul's counsel to single people. Just stay single if you can do it.

Now, some people just can't do it. So, I'm married, so guess what? I figured out I can't do it.

And don't want to do it. So, here's the reality for the single versus the married person. I would like for you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs and how he can please the Lord.

That's all he's got. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world, how he can please his wife.

And I do so well at that, don't I, Sherry? she just laughed at me.

[52 : 56] And if you have children, that's a part of the equation as well. So, you just, you just, because you have concerns in this world, I cannot serve in such a wholehearted way that I can ignore my wife and ignore my kids.

That would not be right. It would not be good. So, I cannot, in that sense, live up to my potential. You might say, well, Rich, maybe the potential has changed.

Maybe it's your potential as a married man. Well, okay. Maybe so. another way that this kind of gets communicated among Christians.

How many of you would classify yourself as a prayer warrior? Prayer warriors.

Okay. Maybe one hand I've seen that has gone up. Because it's like I don't know if I want to call myself that.

[54 : 05] Right? I mean, that's, but that's kind of how we talk about with prayer, right? You're like, all right, I need all my prayer warriors out there to pray for me. Well, that means I got one person praying for me out of the whole group.

I read a book this week, it's an ongoing book, a pastor's discussion group that I'm a part of. It's called The Unhurried Pastor by Brian Croft. And he had an illustration of how sometimes prayer warriors might not be the best way to kind of picture what as believers what we're called to do, what we need to do in terms of prayer.

I might ask the same question, how many of you are satisfied with your prayer life? I'm not going to ask you to do that, but I don't think a whole lot of hands would go up with that either. But he changed the image.

And Jeff, I'm coming for you, man, because he changed the image to a mail carrier. That's what Jeff is a mail carrier.

So you get the good illustration of the day thing here for you. A mail carrier is responsible for what? Delivering mail, right?

[55 : 16] How often does he have to do this job? Can a mail carrier deliver the mail at the beginning of the week for the whole week and then just let it go?

No, the mail carrier delivers mail on Monday and on Tuesday, and he's got to bring it again on Wednesday, and he's showing up Thursday and Friday and Saturday, and he gets Sunday off, but he's right back at it.

A prayer warrior. I mean, that's someone who's highly skilled and trained, right? Our warriors are highly skilled and trained and battle-tested, and they're ready for the battle, and it's a skirmish, and it's fight, life, or death.

Is it constant? Not really. matter of fact, our soldiers in our military, they often are not in the middle of a battle.

They might be doing some training, and they might be doing some preparation, but they're not in the middle of the battle all the time. the mail carrier's just there, delivering the mail, and that's the picture of what we ought to be in our prayer lives.

[56 : 50] The potential versus the calling or the reality. Would I say that there's a bunch of prayer warriors or potentially a bunch of prayer warriors out there?

Maybe. But we've got a room full of people. Every one of us can be a mail carrier. Matter of fact, Jeff, I don't mean to offend you.

Whole lot of training involved, whole lot of talent there. He'll get me later. He'll get me later.

It doesn't. It is a simple job. You read the address, you put it in the box at that address.

And for the prayer mail carrier, that doesn't roll off the tongue, does it? The prayer mail carrier, you're just delivering the mail every day, day in and day out.

[58 : 02] And that's what we're called to do. It's the difference between sometimes the picture that we paint that, oh, this is what we all ought to aspire to be. And I'm saying, no, let's just be faithful day in and day out.

let's just do what it is that God has called us to do. And you know what? When the battle comes, you know, the mail carrier is going to be ready.

The mail carrier, God will empower them to be a warrior when it's necessary. But it's the Lord who fights the battle, not the person. So let's be good mail carriers.

So if you hear me talk about that, how's your mail carrying going? And finally, don't assume that your mission is everyone else's.

I want to show you something. This is John chapter 12. John chapter 12 follows John chapter 11.

[59 : 25] Are you amazed by that? The pastor is brilliant today. John chapter 11, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Beginning of John chapter 12, guess where Jesus is. He's back at Martha's house for a meal. Very close to the time he's going to the cross.

A week. Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany where Lazarus was whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

So they gave another dinner for him. Notice Notice something. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table.

Imagine that conversation. So Lazarus, what was it like to be dead? What was heaven like? Actually, paradise, Old Testament paradise.

[60 : 40] Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. It goes on and on from there. I took these couple of verses here and broke them down for you to just include the parts that pertain to what we're talking about today.

Martha served, Mary was at the feet of Jesus. Sound familiar? here. What's the difference? Was Martha doing something different than what she was doing in our passage in Luke chapter 10? No, she was still serving. Was that the right thing for her to do?

And Mary, there she is again. and this time she knows. She's anointing the feet of Jesus for burial. She knows what Jesus is about to do. But there she is. The feet of Jesus. The difference here?

[61 : 56] Mary kept her mouth shut. No, Martha. Martha kept her mouth shut. She wasn't concerned about Mary. She was only concerned about what God's calling on her life was in that moment.

And it still was to serve. The problem wasn't with Martha's serving. The problem was her attitude toward her sister.

the problem was she didn't recognize the moment. May God give us the discernment to recognize those moments that we have with our families, with coworkers, with people in church.

May God lead us into making the decisions that would matter for eternity. the things that will impact those relationships that matter the most to us.

Let's continue to serve, absolutely. Let's also continue to be at the feet of Jesus, to recognize those moments where that is what we're called to do.

[63 : 19] So, again, the Lord would lead us to fulfill our calling from him and we all are called to live as Christians.

Whether you have a job as a pastor or you have a job as a person who's a street cleaner, whatever that job is, it is still spiritual.

Everything that we do, all of us, we all do things that are spiritual. Let's remember that. And our calling doesn't come from culture, doesn't come from social media.

It doesn't even come from our parents. That leading, that calling does not come from our parents, does not come from our friend group.

And parents, if that statement bothered you a little bit, our calling as parents is to help our children find out what it is that God is calling them to do, not me, not mom, what it is that God has for them.

[64 : 30] That's our responsibility as parents. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Lord, you have given us so much, and oftentimes we don't, we don't remember, we, life happens, we, we forget, we take for granted our own relationships that mean so much to us.

Lord, I pray that we would take the opportunities that we have to slow down and to look to you in all of this, that we would trust your leading, that we would lean into it, that we would seek after you, yes, first, in every area of our life.

Whatever jobs that we have, whatever responsibilities that we have, the opportunities that we have with the relationships around us. Help us to remember that people are eternal.

Those people that we love, they are eternal. And we would do well to build into their lives, to be an encouragement, to point them to Jesus, to live it out as an example for how to be a follower of Jesus.

Give us your heart in that. Lord, we won't always make the right decisions, the best choices, but Lord, I pray that we would be faithful, that we would pursue you, to have the heart of a Mary that says I want to be at the feet of Jesus, and yet still also has the heart of a Martha, a servant to meet the needs of others.

[67 : 00] Just give us the discernment to know when is the right time for each. to be willing to follow your lead. Help us to be attuned to what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives, to live a life of obedience so that we can be in a place where we can sense what the Holy Spirit is leading us to do.

Lord, we thank you, we love you, you are so good to us. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, representing the name of Jesus, praying in the way that Jesus would pray, we pray all of this, and all God's people said, Amen.