

# Mark 9:30-50

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Date: 09 February 2014

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[ 0 : 01 ] Chapter 9, starting at verse 30. If you are looking at one of the Pew Bibles, that is page 845. So, you can turn there if you want to follow along, or I think it will also be up on the screen.

Do whichever one works best for you. So, let me begin by reading the passage, and then I'll give some teaching on it, and then we'll have a song of reflection, and then there's going to be a time of open question and answer.

So, if you have questions along the way, feel free to jot those down or keep them in mind, because you'll have a chance to ask them, and we can interact over them at the end. All right, Mark chapter 9, beginning at verse 30.

It says, And they came to Capernaum.

And when he was in the house, he asked them, What were you discussing on the way? But they kept silent. For on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

[ 1 : 34 ] And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, If anyone would be first, he must be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child and put him in the midst of them.

And taking him in his arms, he said to them, Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. And whoever receives me receives not me, but him who sent me.

John said to him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us. But Jesus said, Do not stop him.

For no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us. For truly I say to you, Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin. It would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown in the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

[ 2 : 47 ] It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.

Let's pray together. Amen. Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, let me learn that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown.

Let me find your light in my darkness, your life in my death, your joy in my sorrow, your grace in my sin, your riches in my poverty, your glory in my valley.

[ 4 : 15 ] Amen. So how would you define your life purpose? If you go online, you can find several websites devoted to helping you craft your very own life purpose statement or personal mission statement in 20 minutes or less, summarizing what you're all about and what success looks like to you.

I won't ask you to raise your hand if you have one of these statements, but one website lists 15 questions that you should ask to craft one of these purpose statements or mission statements, including these.

Number one, what makes you smile? Number two, what makes you feel great about yourself?

Number three, what are you naturally good at? Number four, what do people ask you for help in?

Number five, what are your deepest values? Number six, imagine you're 90 years old looking back over your life. What memories or accomplishments will matter most to you.

I won't go through all 15, but you get the idea. Now, here are a few examples of personal mission statements that people have posted. Number one, my mission is to create, nurture, and maintain an environment of growth, challenge, and unlimited potential for all those around me.

[ 5 : 35 ] Second one, my purpose in life is to be a mom, to empower independence, self-reliance, and confidence in others through being a positive, supportive role model. Third, what matters most is my connection with myself, being present and feeling blissful.

Now, at the beginning of this passage, Jesus gives his disciples something like a personal mission statement in verse 31. And it goes like this.

He says, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days, he will rise.

Now, by almost any standard, that's a really weird personal mission statement or life purpose statement for two reasons, really.

First, Jesus defines himself in a very odd way. He refers to himself as the Son of Man. Not just a Son of Man, but the Son of Man. In other words, it's like somebody identified themselves and said, I am the human being.

[ 6 : 43 ] I am the perfect expression of true humanity as God always intended it to be. I am the perfect expression of bearing the image of God and ruling over the earth.

I am the human being. destined to rule over the world. And you think, boy, that's a little unusual way to describe yourself. But then he says, I'll be handed over to human beings and killed by them.

And my purpose in life will be achieved through my suffering and through my death. Now, this isn't the only time Jesus said something like this.

He already said this if you look back in chapter 8, verse 31 and 32. It says, He began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must suffer and be rejected and killed and after three days rise again.

In other words, this isn't just an accident, a bad accident that's going to happen to him. He says, I must do this. In other words, this is part of my divinely ordained destiny.

[ 8 : 01 ] This is the way I will fulfill my God-appointed mission through suffering and death and then rising again.

I mean, just think of it. How would you react if your best friend said to you, I'm the perfect expression of humanity and I'm going to fulfill my purpose in life by being handed over to people unjustly accused suffering and dying and only through that fulfilling my purpose in life.

Well, verse 32 says the disciples didn't get it either. Right? You sort of think, are you making a bad joke? Are you having a bad day? Like, what's going on?

See, the disciples, they were starting to get this idea that Jesus is the Messiah. Peter had said it back in chapter 8 in the last chapter and they liked that idea.

He was the king. He was going to rule the world and bring them with him to glory and bring them to victory. It's like getting a star player joining your team and you think, we're going to win the championship this year because we've got the star player.

[ 9 : 14 ] And then he says, I'm going to totally lose it. I'm going to lose it all. And you think, what?

The other thing Jesus says is not only is this his personal mission, but he says, if you follow me, my mission becomes yours.

Your mission or my mission shapes yours. That's really what this whole passage tonight is about. How Jesus' mission on earth, in particular, his mission to suffer and die and then rise again, how that shapes our mission and our lives if we follow him.

In other words, if we follow Jesus, our personal mission becomes replaced with his mission for us and his purpose for us.

And instead of being defined by what makes me smile or what I'm good at or what I like or what I envision for my future, we become defined by how Jesus sees us and what he has in store for us.

Instead of being self-centered and self-defined, we become self-sacrificially identified with Jesus.

That's the main theme that we'll see running through this passage is that the cross of Jesus makes us self-sacrificial instead of self-centered.

[ 10 : 41 ] And the passage fleshes out what that looks like in three specific areas. So first, verse 33 to 37. And in these verses, we see that instead of seeking to be the greatest, we seek to serve people who are the least.

You know, it's very natural for us to define ourselves by comparing ourselves to somebody else and by seeking to be great in comparison to others. Maybe that's what motivates you to study every day and to pull all-nighters is because you want to get a certain class rank so that when you graduate, you can have a certain GPA on your resume and then you'll have a better chance than others who have a lower GPA to get the job that you want.

Or maybe that's what motivates you to work because you want to advance to a certain level in your career field and you know that to get there, you're going to have to surpass everybody else. And so you work hard, you're motivated by this desire to excel compared to the norm, compared to everyone else around you.

Maybe that's why you play sports or play music or exercise or diet or all kinds of things. We want to feel better about ourselves because we pursue some kind of greatness and we define that greatness in comparison to others.

Now maybe you feel satisfied because you've achieved a certain level of excellence and you feel gratified by that. Maybe you feel discouraged. Maybe every day you wake up and you know you haven't made it and you look around at everybody else and everybody else seems really successful and you feel like a failure.

[ 12 : 30 ] See, both of those ways we're defining ourselves in comparison to other people around us. Now the disciples, they were the ambitious types.

They were arguing about who was the greatest. They were ashamed to admit it when Jesus asked them. Jesus says, what were you talking about? They all sort of look at one another. I'm not telling. I'm not telling. I'm not telling. But Jesus knows he had heard them. Right? So he says, if you want to be first, if you want to be the greatest, you have to be the last.

You have to be the servant of all. He says, if you want an example of what that looks like, think about what it means to receive a child. Now if you're a parent or if you've been around parents a lot, you know that receiving a child into your life does not make your life easier.

It will not help you advance faster along your career path. It will not give you more free time to pursue your hobbies and hang out with your friends.

[ 13 : 37 ] A child will slow you down and interrupt your plans and make your life a mess. And make your house a mess. And make your sleep patterns a mess.

There's no such thing as sleeping peacefully through the night with a baby in your house. Or sleeping in on a Saturday morning with toddlers. Right?

There's no such thing as a quiet, leisurely dinner. When you receive a child into your family, whether by birth or adoption, your life isn't your own anymore.

It's not just you and your spouse. Right? It's not just you. If your kid gets sick, you have to take care of them. And half the time you get sick too because you're around them so much.

Every winter you get sick a lot more than you used to. Right? If your kid grows up, if they need clothes, if they need school supplies, I could go on and on. Right? Children are helpless and needy and they make a mess all the time.

[ 14 : 44 ] And Jesus says true greatness looks like receiving someone into your life who's helpless and needy and makes a mess all the time. And not just serving them grudgingly from a distance, but welcoming them.

That's what that word receives means. To welcome them, to embrace them self-sacrificially. To love them. Now maybe, you know, this could look like if you're married, having a child.

Or if you have a child seeking to be the parent, as much, as involved in your life, in their life as you can. And caring for them. And seeking to love them.

And making the sacrifices necessary in whatever situation you're in to seek to raise them as well as you can. Even if it holds you back in other ways.

Or if you're single, or if you're not at a point where you're having children, it might mean taking someone else into your home who needs a place to stay. Or meeting up with someone once a week who needs help.

[ 15 : 54 ] It could look all different ways. But Jesus, but when you think about it, this is why Jesus came into the world. He says, I came to be the servant of all.

I came to receive you as my children. As my brothers and sisters. As children of God the Father. Jesus was the greatest, but he didn't come into the world to gain greatness in comparison to others.

He came to humble himself to the point of death on a cross as a servant. So that he could welcome us into his family. I mean, think of it this way. Jesus had the Father and the Holy Spirit from all eternity.

He was the Son. He had the perfect family. If you want to think about it that way, nothing ever came between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

They were united in perfect love. They perfectly understood one another. They carried out their plans in perfect harmony. They ruled over the whole universe. Unlimited in power and glory.

[17:00] They were completely satisfied in one another. They didn't need anybody outside of them. They had everything that they could ever desire. All the glory was contained in them. But for some unfathomable reason that I still don't understand, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit chose to create beings outside themselves.

And then when they had created us, they saw us. They saw the human race after we had rebelled against God.

Creatures, right? What do you see when you look around at the human race? Creatures who are not only weak and helpless, but also rebellious and proud and jealous and divisive.

Compared to God, we have nothing to add to Him. We don't bring Him anything that He didn't have already. We don't add anything to His life, to His glory, to His satisfaction.

But the message of the Bible is that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, God Himself chose to reach out to us and bring us into His fellowship.

[18:20] And that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, said, I am going to share my glory and my righteousness and my status and my honor with these people so that they too can be called sons and daughters of God.

And I'll pay whatever price it takes to bring them in and adopt them and keep them all the way to the end, even if that price is me being rejected and killed by them.

You see, that's why Jesus had to come and suffer and die. is to pay the price to bring us home with Him. You see, Jesus is the greatest, but He displayed His greatness by becoming the last of all and the servant of all, by receiving and welcoming us when we had nothing to offer Him at great cost to Himself, at a great sacrifice to Himself.

But He did it with great, for He considered it a joy to receive us. So Jesus says, instead of seeking to be the greatest, if you follow Me, seek to love people who are the least, since I've loved you and welcomed you.

So that's the first contrast. The second one is in verse 38 through 41. And I'd summarize it this way. Instead of assuming that God's kingdom is centered around us, we seek to encourage anyone else who is centered around Jesus.

[20:00] So John says, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to stop him because he wasn't following us. Now, there are several ironic things about this statement.

First, if you were here last week, or if you look in verse 14 through 29 of this chapter, Jesus' disciples just failed to cast out a demon. So, they're trying to stop someone else from doing what they just failed to do.

Second, they want these people who are doing what they can't to follow them and get behind them.

Third, it says, we tried to stop him, which implies we tried and we failed.

They weren't able to stop him even though they tried. When you think of it, this is a very foolish statement. Now, why did they say, why did John say something so foolish?

Why do we say things that are sometimes very foolish? The problem was, the disciples saw doing mighty works in Jesus' name as a mark of their own greatness. And they didn't want to share their greatness with anybody else.

[21:15] They thought the kingdom of God revolves around us. And as a result, they ended up saying and doing some pretty foolish things.

And you know, we can fall into the same trap. Things like envy or jealousy or pride or divisiveness can be just as much of a problem for us.

We can fall into the trap of thinking the kingdom of God depends on me or it depends on my church and nobody else. Now, this can be a particular temptation for church leaders and ministry leaders.

So, if you're thinking of going into full-time Christian ministry or becoming a leader in the church, beware. Because I can guarantee you, you will face this temptation. Sometimes we want to judge

our success by how much our church or our ministry is growing.

And we don't think about how are we contributing to the work of God's kingdom more broadly. So, example. You hear through the grapevine that someone is starting a new church in town.

[ 22 : 27 ] What is our, what is the immediate reaction? Suspicion. Right? They must be trying to compete with us. They must not recognize the good ministry that we're already doing.

They must be naive and foolish outsiders. Maybe their ministry will fail. Maybe it should fail. They didn't bother to reach out to us, so we shouldn't bother to reach out to them.

Or maybe, on the other hand, maybe you're the one wanting to start a new ministry or plant a new church or go to a new area and you think, God is going to use me to save this city, to change the world.

But, do you take the time to do research beforehand to see, what is God already doing? Who are the people that God's already using?

What are the ministries or churches that are already here that are teaching the truth about Jesus? How can we work together and come alongside one another?

[ 23 : 30 ] You see, whichever side you're on, we can fall into this trap or on an individual level. Sometimes we can be very focused on how is God using me? I want to use my gifts.

We think, if I'm not using all my gifts, then my church must be wrong because they're not using all the gifts that I know I have.

But sometimes we need to, sometimes God allows us to take a back seat and play the role of encouraging other people in using their gifts.

So, I had an experience after my freshman year in college. I was a camp counselor for one week at a Christian camp on Martha's Vineyard. And I felt like a total misfit the whole week.

I felt like all the other counselors, it was my first time there, I'd never been there before, it seemed like all the other counselors had been there before and knew the students who were there and the campers and they were all more talented, all the other counselors seemed more talented, more exciting to be around, had better speaking skills, connected more deeply with the kids, and I felt like God was doing some really neat things in people's lives during that week.

[ 24 : 45 ] but I felt like none of it was going through me. I felt like I was relatively useless. And it forced me to ask, do I compare myself with other people and feel frustrated or can I rejoice in what God's doing through the other people around me and think, how can I encourage them or just pray for them and just get behind them?

You see, we often get it upside down. Jesus says, the kingdom of God is not centered around us, it's centered around Jesus. Jesus is the king and his kingdom is bigger than us.

It's bigger than any one church or any one denomination or any one network. And so we should never do anything to hinder someone else who's doing ministry in Jesus' name.

Now what does that mean in Jesus' name? That doesn't just mean anybody who says the name of Jesus, but in Jesus' name means doing things under the authority of Jesus and according to the word of Jesus and in line with the character of Jesus.

So when we see someone serving other people or even doing powerful things that maybe you've never, maybe we've never experienced ourselves, we shouldn't become jealous or envious, Jesus, but we should come behind them as long as it's proclaiming the truth about Jesus and bringing glory to Jesus.

[ 26 : 21 ] Now Jesus tells us in other places that we should exercise discernment because he warns that some people will go around, he says some people are false prophets. In other words, they're preaching a false message or a confused message that doesn't clearly reflect the biblical picture of Jesus.

And so Jesus says be careful, be discerning, don't just support anyone and everyone who's a religious teacher. But he says it's not about, in this passage his emphasis is it's not about you. We should rejoice whenever someone else does a mighty work in Jesus' name and to encourage them. Verse 41 says whoever gives you a cup of cold water because you belong to Christ will by no means lose their reward.

In other words, doing something as small as bringing someone a glass of water to quench their thirst because they love Jesus and because you want to support them in what they're doing to love others in Jesus' name, Jesus says you won't lose your reward.

That's an important ministry in itself. Sometimes God will put you up front and sometimes he'll have you sitting back. And you know what? It's all the same in God's eyes.

[ 27 : 38 ] if you're focused on him. When my wife Jane was in Boston in seminary she went to a little church in Boston called South End Neighborhood Church and it was a it's a really neat church.

If you go to Boston if you have a Sunday and you have to visit somewhere it's a neat place to visit. It's been around for about 40 years. it meets in a rented building space that about three other churches use and it's never grown more than 100 people.

But it has all kinds of people there. There's homeless people, there's people with drug addictions and recovering from drug addictions, there's Harvard students and MIT students, there's couples and families who have been doing ministry in Boston all their lives.

There's the whole range, young, old, any racial group you can think of, rich, poor, but it's never grown to be a large church.

But in 40 years they have planted six other churches. They've started six other churches. One of them is a Spanish-speaking church that now has several hundred people.

[ 28 : 50 ] So almost all the other churches they've planted are bigger than them. But they've sent people out, they've supported pastors, they've encouraged other people to go into other parts of the city to be doing ministry in Jesus' name.

Now their annual church budget is less than a hundred thousand dollars. It's a, it's not a power, you know, if you look up, if you look them up on the website, they have a very simple website, they're not part of any of the flashy networks, you won't see the pastor speaking at a big conference that thousands of people go to, but he's a faithful pastor, and he loves the people, and he teaches them God's word every week, and he spends time in their lives, and God's used him, he's been there for thirty years, he and his wife have ministered together to people in that church, and raised their kids in that church, and it's been hard, but God's used them, because they have this kind of humble attitude, saying we want to be about Jesus, and not about us.

So that's the second thing, instead of assuming that God's kingdom is centered around us, seek to encourage anyone else who's centered around Jesus. Third, the third contrast is in verse 42 through 50, instead of doing whatever feels good to us, we make sacrifices to fight against sin in our lives.

Now if you read verse 42 through 50, it sounds sort of harsh at first, and there are strong words, if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off, if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off, if your eye causes you to sin, cut it off.

And you think, what does that mean? Now obviously, Jesus isn't speaking literally, okay, so don't go home and amputate yourself. There's been a couple people in church history who've gone a little overboard on this verse.

[ 30 : 46 ] I won't go into details. But what he's saying here is, kill sin, or sin will be killing you. Sin is like a deadly virus or an infection, and unless you deal with it, it will spread and infect the rest of your body and your relationships, and so deal with it seriously.

You know, in order to, just like a doctor, might have to amputate a leg to save a life if you have a terrible infection or gangrene in your leg.

And so Jesus is saying it's better to be alive with one leg instead of dead with two. So what might, now what might this look like? Well, some examples.

You might need to cut off an unhealthy dating relationship if it's leading you into emotional codependence and sexual compromise. Or you might need to cancel your Facebook account, account, or your internet access if it's, if the web is sucking up all your free time in vain pursuits. You might need to cut up your credit cards and throw them away if you're spending money unwisely and getting yourself into a hole of debt. You might need to go to someone else and say, I'm struggling in this area, I need you to help keep me accountable because I can't fight this battle on my own.

[ 32 : 21 ] Now all those things are painful to do at first. But in the long run, it's the only way that you can be truly free.

The alternative is far worse. It's painful now or it's much more painful later. You know, Jesus' words may sound harsh, but he says, sin is destined for hell.

Now the word Jesus used for hell was Gehenna. And that was the name of the garbage dump outside the city of Jerusalem. It was a place where the fire was perpetually burning, where worms

and maggots fed on decaying flesh, and where the stench was horrible.

It's not a pleasant image. But Jesus is saying this is a reality to be avoided at all costs. It's much better to suffer terribly in this life than have a pain-free life on earth and suffer for all eternity. And Jesus spoke more than any other biblical author about hell. It's a hard teaching. You may have questions about it. We may need to grapple with that.

[ 33 : 41 ] But Jesus said these things very seriously. And he said them because he doesn't want this to happen to us. And Jesus also said this because he knew better than anyone else what he was talking about.

Because you know what? When Jesus came to earth, he didn't just come to suffer by having his leg amputated or having his hand cut off. He didn't just have his eye gouged out.

He had his hands and feet nailed to a cross. And his head was bleeding from a crown of thorns pressed into his head. His back was scourged by a whip containing pieces of bone and metal. He was mocked by the crowds and abandoned by his friends. And on the cross he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

When Jesus was hanging on the cross, he literally went through hell to save us from it. When he was on the cross, he offered himself as a sacrifice on our behalf so that we might be cleansed and forgiven and made whole and made complete in him.

[ 35 : 07 ] You see, Jesus knows what he's talking about when he speaks about hell because he actually went through that. He went through that to pay the penalty that we could not pay.

He went through that so that we might become part of his family and be with him forever. You see, when that hits home, when we realize that that is the extent, that is how far Jesus has gone to love us and serve us and rescue us and bring us into his family, you see, then we start to look at life in a whole new way and this passage starts to make sense and we realize that when Jesus calls us to sacrifice, it's not because he wants to take away our joy or our happiness but because he wants us to have true and pure and eternal joy and happiness in him.

And when we see the great promise that he has for us, then we're set free to become self-sacrificial instead of self-centered. Because it's not just about getting as much as we can in this life or becoming the greatest or being better than someone else.

But it's about living for him who loved us so much and who promises that just as he died and rose again, that whatever we have to suffer or die to for his sake, he'll restore it many times over either in this life or in the life to come.

He promises that at the end of the next chapter. We'll get there in two weeks. He says, whatever you give up for my sake, I'll restore it many times over. You won't lose it forever.

[ 37 : 15 ] That's how we can become self-sacrificial instead of self-centered. And that's what the last two verses are about. Verse 49 and 50 talk about fire and salt. You might think, what in the world is that?

Well, it's about a sacrifice. Because all the sacrifices in the temple were burnt on the altar, on the fire, and all of them had salt sprinkled on them.

Leviticus 2.13 says that. With all your offerings, you shall offer salt. So the point about these verses about salt and fire is about offering our lives as a sacrifice that is pleasing to God through Jesus in response to the unique sacrifice that he made for us.

So instead of pursuing greatness for ourselves, we love those who are the least because Jesus came as a servant of all. Instead of assuming that God's kingdom is centered around us, we seek to encourage anyone else who's centered around Jesus because it's about him and not about us. And instead of doing what feels good to us, we're willing to make sacrifices to fight sin in our lives because Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice to free us from sin and its consequences.

[ 38 : 33 ] So let me close with a verse from Romans that I think captures the message of this passage. And the apostle Paul says this, he says, therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, for this is your reasonable service.

Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for the price you paid to reclaim us, to adopt us, and to take us in as your children with all the mess and all the sin and all the weakness and all the neediness that we bring with us.

We thank you for the love and joy that you have in bringing us near to you and in welcoming us into your family. We thank you for the great sacrifice you made for us.

Lord, we pray that what you have done for us would shape us and change us. For your sake. Amen. Amen. Mindy.

Yes. Yes.

[ 40 : 12 ] So the word translated hell here is a Greek word Gehenna, which is from the, it's a word that referred, that was used to refer to the garbage dump outside the city of Jerusalem in what's called the Valley of Ben-Hinnom.

So the Hebrew Hinnom and Gehenna, that sort of came, the words are related. It was an image that was common in Jesus' day for hell as a place of punishment and separation from God's presence. So he was using a familiar image that would have brought up these images in people's minds of a stinky, rotting, burning, dump.

So. Should we take him literally? Is that what hell was going to be like? Should we take him literally? Yeah. Yeah, that's a good question. No, that's a good question. I think, so I think there's several, there's a few different images that come up in scripture for hell.

Some are related to fire. some are related to darkness, being the outer darkness. Some are related to anguish and frustration that's never resolved.

[ 41 : 40 ] And hell is described as a place where there's, where things are never made right with God. where people continue in their rebellious attitude toward God and don't.

That there's sort of a point of no return. How literally should we take those things? I think if if they're not literal, they're meant to point to something if, so if it's a metaphor, the reason why we have metaphors is because it's a reality that's greater than we can literally describe.

And so, if it's metaphorical, I think it's basically saying, it's not saying it's not that bad, it's saying it's worse. So, the point is, I think in all the descriptions of hell, the point is not to figure out exactly what hell is like.

It's to realize you don't want to be there. And thank God that Jesus has been willing to go through that to provide a way out. And I think it puts some of our sufferings in this life in perspective where Jesus is saying, you know, consider the alternative.

Yeah, is it hard to follow me? Yes. Does it require sacrifices to follow me of things that feel like giving up a lot? Yes. But when we think in light of eternity, both in light of hell, but also in light of what he promises in heaven.

[ 43 : 13 ] And I think we'd see our lives differently and be free to sacrifice some things now for a good purpose instead of holding on to them because we feel like this is all we've got and this is what we're living for in this life.

more questions. Yes. Yes. That's a very good question.

How do you know what to take literally versus figuratively in the Bible? And what are the criteria that we would use to, you know, responsibly determine that?

That's a great question. So it's a big question. So some parts of the Bible, so if you take one of the Psalms, the Psalms are poetry.

And in other parts of the Bible, some of the prophetic literature is poetic literature. And so when you're reading poetry, you look for symbols. You look for metaphors.

[ 44 : 43 ] You look for things that are describing things, not in a scientifically precise way, but in an evocative way, in a way that engages your emotions and conveys some of the reality of what they're talking about.

When you're reading some of the narratives, say some of the gospel narratives about Jesus, they're written in a very historical narrative format. And, you know, if you can compare them to other literature, they're not written in the same way as, you know, myths about Greek gods or something like that.

It's a different form of literature that's rooted in history. So I think some of it is the kind of literature sort of looking at what kind of book are we reading.

So that's why it's always helpful when you face a particular verse or a paragraph or passage and you're thinking, how do I interpret this? We have to step back and say, well, what book am I reading this in?

And what's the main point of this book and how does this passage fit into the larger point of this book? So, and then also comparing it to other passages that are teaching similar things here.

[ 46 : 01 ] So I think whenever the Bible is describing things that haven't happened yet or that are in the future in our experience.

So in the Old Testament, when there are prophecies about the Messiah, there were descriptions, but a lot of it is, it's something that people hadn't yet experienced and so they couldn't fully put it into words.

So in the same way in the New Testament, when there's descriptions of heaven or descriptions of hell, they are metaphorical because we haven't yet experienced them fully and so we can't fully put them into words, which is different than writings about things that have happened, like writings about what happened in Jesus' life.

Well, that had already happened, they'd experienced it, so they're putting it into words in a historical way. Looking towards something in the future, I think God is giving us a picture of what it's going to be like, but it's, but it is, there's a metaphor involved in that we haven't yet been there.

But he's giving us a description of what it's going to be like so that we can live our life in light of that. It's, how would I put it?

[ 47 : 17 ] It's, I mean, it's like if you're trying, I mean, it's like if you're trying to tell someone, you know, where you're going on a road trip, and they've never been, it's like if you're trying to tell someone about the Grand Canyon, and they've never been there, and let's say you don't have any photographs, you know, and you have to describe it, and you're trying to describe this amazing thing.

If you've been there, if you've seen it, or if you've been to any sort of natural wonder, it's almost beyond what you can describe in words. Even if you, like, draw a little diagram, that doesn't quite do it.

And so you're trying to describe this great reality so that, so the person will be like, yeah, like, it's worth the road trip to get there. It's worth driving all the way across the country through the desert for days and days, and hiking down to the bottom of it, or something.

Whatever you want, you know, you get the idea. But this is a very good question. We could talk more about that, but maybe that's a beginning to it.

All right, well, if you have more questions, stick around. Talk with one another. Talk with me if you want. But there's snacks in the back. Get a bulletin as you go out.