

# Student Driven Service Ethan Howeth Preaching

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Thank you for that, Santiago. If you don't mind coming back up onto the stage real quick, I'm going to need you in a second.

Alright, if you have your Bibles, go ahead and turn to Ephesians chapter 4, and I'll start reading in verse 17. Today we're going to have Santi represent a group of teenagers in today's society, and he's going to be the bad crowd.

And if you will, stand right here, and Santi, since you called me goofy, I had to use you. Santi's going to represent the people that do drugs, are drug addicts, sex addicts, people that go out and drink, like to party a lot, smoke, all that good stuff.

That's Santiago, and he's going to represent that group. And today you may look at your life and you say, hey, I'm not part of that group. That stuff, I don't do any of it. I'm a good kid. I go to church. Well, if that's you, I need Trent, if you'll come up here, you're going to represent another group.

You're going to be the Bible reading, daily devotion, God-serving, zealous man of God, and that's you right here. But you may look in your life and say, well, that's not me either. I really don't do my devotions daily.

[ 1 : 08 ] I'm not a zealous worker. That's not me. Well, that's where I come in. I'm going to stand right here, and I'm going to be in the middle. And I'm going to be the group that most teenagers are today, the group that does nothing.

And that's where I find myself often. You look over here at Santi, and you see that bad group. And you think, hey, I'm not doing bad, so I must be doing good. But the question isn't if you're doing bad.

The question is, is what you're doing good? And if you go with me to Ephesians 4, 17, I hope to show you some ideas that will help you grow in your Christian life as I pray. Dear Lord, I pray that you'd be with me as I bring the sermon before the people tonight, Lord, that you would just give me the peace to say what you want me to say, and that you would speak to their hearts and deliver the message you want them to get.

In your name, amen. You guys can take a seat. Thank you. So Ephesians 4, verse 17 says, This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feeling have given themselves over into lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But ye have not so learned Christ. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off concerning the former conversation of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

[ 2 : 33 ] So as I'm talking about growing in your Christian life, I want to point out that the first step is definitely salvation, because without salvation, there's no Christian walk in your life. You don't have Jesus in your heart, and you're not eternally secure. And that, by far, is the most valuable thing anyone can ever possess is salvation.

At the end of your life, how much money you made, what fancy car you drove, how hot your girlfriend or boyfriend was, none of that stuff's going to matter. What it comes down to is if you were saved or not. But a lot of people get stuck after getting saved.

They get in that, it's called the land of nothing, where they have no zeal to work for God, they have no desire to do anything great for God, they go to church, they leave, and that's it. Well, the first thing we see is, walk not as other Gentiles walk.

You've got to change your surroundings. And the first thing that comes to my mind is your friends, your peers, and who you surround yourself with. If you surround yourself with people who are not saved, or people that are involved in any of the crowd Santi was in, the bad crowd, there's no way you can move forward in your Christian life.

It's like having a ball and chain attached to you. You're not going to go anywhere. And I know how that feels, but you've got to separate yourself from that situation. It's hard being a teenager and trying to grow in the Christian walk because you want to fit in.

[ 3 : 48 ] You want to be accepted. And that's really at any point in your life. When you're at work around your co-workers, you want to fit in. You don't want to be the guy at work that no one wants to work with or no one wants to be around. You want to fit in and you want to be accepted.

But you've got to separate yourself from that position. You've got to remove yourself from that position. And the friends that you're around, they may not be bad influences such as drinking and partying and all that bad stuff.

They may just not encourage you to do anything for the Lord. And in my mind, if they're not encouraging you to do anything for the Lord, they might as well be taking you to parties and getting you drunk because you're getting the same result. You're not doing anything.

And you may be saying, Lord, I want my surroundings to change. And you might be saying, I need my surroundings to change. But you won't have the desire to change until you change your spirit.

And that's where my next point is. And we're going to read in Ephesians 4 and verse 25. It says, Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

[ 4 : 45 ] Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

So after you remove yourself from your old surroundings and all those influences that were not pushing you to go forward as a Christian, you've got to look at yourself. And that's where your spirit comes in.

You've got to change your spirit. All the things you did as that old man, when it said put off the old man, all those things that you used to do are now forbidden in your Christian life. Those things are abominations to God.

[ 5 : 41 ] And you've got to put them off. But your spirit is something that you have to deal with. At vision, y'all refer to it as the B level. And as you see on the triangle, that's the foundation. So in order for you to go up, you've got to start at your B level.

You've got to change your spirit. Changing how you've acted for so long, which is changing your spirit, changing how you've acted is a really hard thing to do. But in order for you to grow as a Christian, you must put off all the old things.

Because how can you expect to be an effective witness for the Lord if you continue doing all the things you did as an unsaved person? And by changing your spirit, you get all the new attributes that Christ has for you.

But back to witnessing and stuff, our testimonies are the strongest things that we have as Christians. And when you're saved, you start building your testimony. But the testimony being the strongest thing is also the easiest thing to lose.

One slip up at work or at church or anywhere, and the respect that anyone ever had for you as a Christian is gone because they see no change in you. And your friends, the ones that you had separated yourself from, they're not going to see any change in you.

[ 6 : 46 ] So why would they want what you have? But how do you grow in the spirit as a Christian? How do you further yourself as a good Christian? We see that in Ephesians 5 and verse 1. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as become a saint. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Be ye not partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light. For whatsoever doeth make manifest is light.

[ 7 : 58 ] Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. So the first step into changing your spirit is you've got to put yourself in new surroundings.

You've got to change the influences in your life. You remember how it can be really easy when you surround yourself with unbelievers and people of that sort. It's really easy to fall into sin.

It almost comes naturally. And not only just falling into sin, but how it becomes natural to just do nothing. You get into that monotonous routine of going to church, doing the motions, going home, and nothing's changed.

Well that also works in reverse. If you surround yourself with Christian influences that are going to give you a drive and a motivation to do something great for God, then it's going to rub off on you and you're going to get that same motivation.

And the new influences that you bring into your life, once you've separated yourself from the old influences, they're there to make sure you don't lose sight of what God really wants for your life. They're there to keep that fire burning deep inside you if you surround yourself with the right people.

[ 8 : 59 ] And they're there to keep you from ever digressing back into what you used to be. So you've got to surround yourself with influences that will push you harder and further than you ever thought you could go.

And having these new influences not only gives you a new desire, but it also helps with your accountability. The new influences will be able to help you to reject those opportunities to fall back into your old self.

And they're also there to make sure you don't stray from the path that you're on, that you keep going straight with the Lord. And they also keep you accountable in your spirit. Because your spirit is who you are when no one's around.

But when you surround yourself with new influences, you're not going to want to be that old man that you used to be. You're not going to want to curse and drink and go out and party and stuff. They're there to keep you accountable on your B level.

And they're also there to help you with one of the most important things in your Christian life. And that's keeping you accountable in your daily walk. Because in verse 8 of chapter 5, it says, walk as children of light, because we are the light in the Lord.

[ 9 : 59 ] And the light is the Bible. It's the lamp to our feet. It's the light to our path. And it's going to guide you in the will of God. And those new influences you bring into your life are going to make sure that you keep you accountable in your daily readings and stuff.

These new surroundings will create new outcomes for you. And they'll help you grow spiritually. So you've got to surround yourself with men at this church that are going to help you grow spiritually. And for women, girls, and stuff.

But men like Austin Gardner and Trent Cornwell, Robert Canfield, and Stephen Cofield. The list goes on of the great men here. But these men stay strong in the faith because they surround themselves with positive influences.

They stay motivated because they motivate each other. And that's what we've got to do as teenagers. We've got to surround ourselves with people that are going to motivate us. And it's kind of like a snowball effect. It just keeps going and going and going.

After you change your new surroundings, then comes your new spirit. Your new spirit is what's going to be your testimony to people in your life. It's what everybody sees when they come into contact with you.

[ 10 : 59 ] That's where you decide that your B-level is going to be what it has to be. That's where you set aside time daily where you're going to read your Bible. That's where you set aside times where you're going to devote yourself to go to the church and do what needs to be done to make sure you're at visitation, to make sure you're there anytime Pastor Austin or Trent need anything.

That's your B-level. And that's where you've got to get your new spirit. That's where you've got to motivate yourself to get going for God. And it's where you decide it's time to grow up. It's time to leave the nothing zone and move forward in your Christian walk.

Because so many teenagers nowadays get stuck in this zone where they don't want to do anything. They just come to church. They play Candy Crush while the preacher's preaching. And then they leave. And it's all over the place.

So we've got to remember that we've got to remove ourselves from our old surroundings and put ourselves around the right influences. And as many of you know, I had a hunting accident back in 2009.

And one of the repercussions of that accident was that the growth plates in my left leg stopped working. And my leg wouldn't grow on its own. It needed help. And this thing right here, this is called the Elizaroth.

[ 12 : 06 ] And it's just four halo rings. And it has about, I think it was 18 pins that they had drilled into my bone. And the crazy thing about this thing is that it's designed to break the bone in order for it to grow.

And that's how our spiritual life is. Many of us, our spiritual growth plates, they're dead. And we can't grow on our own. And like my bone had to be broken, our old ties to our old man had to be broken.

We have to be broken in order to grow as Christians. And if you bow your head and close your eyes with me, I'm going to ask the pianist to come. I want to ask you this.

Who will say that, Lord, I need help tonight? Who will come forward and say that they're tired of this nothing life? They're tired of doing nothing. They're tired of this dull zone they're in right now where they do nothing for the Lord at all.

They just sit and come to church and that's it. Who wants help tonight? Who wants to be able to surround themselves with people that will help them grow spiritually? Dear Lord, I pray that you would be with the service tonight.

[ 13 : 10 ] I pray that you'd just let the people take home, Lord, what you had for them. And I pray that you would bless the services at Bo's Church tonight. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia.

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