

Dangers In Serving God

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alpharetta, Georgia. This is the next message in our series on the book of John entitled, Jesus is God.

All right, take your Bibles if you would and go with me to John. And we'll be in John chapter 7. It's exciting to know that Jesus has come. Can you imagine what it must have been like for over 4,000 years?

Man had sinned against the Holy God. He needed a Savior. All he had was the death and the sacrifice of a lamb. Always looking for the real lamb to come. And then one day, John the Baptist signaled him out and said, Behold, the Lamb of God.

And the lamb was here. Christmas is the time we celebrate the arrival of that lamb. And that's an exciting thought to have in our hearts and our minds. Let's bow our heads for the prayer.

We'll ask God to work in this message and in your life. Father God, I love you and I thank you for the privilege of serving you. I pray God that as we open your word, that your people would open the Bible and get their ink pen and paper and their heart ready.

[1 : 07] God, that we would hear from you. And God, that we would be used of you this week because of what you teach us from your word. And we'll magnify you and praise you and thank you. Lord, I ask you to be with the baby Olivia Carr.

I was born last week at 25 weeks and not doing well. I pray God that you would meet the need in that family. And I just pray God that you would be magnified and glorified in all of our lives. We love you and praise you.

In Jesus' name, amen. Go with me back to John chapter 7. And I want you to mark some things in the chapter before we look at it. But as we think about this chapter, I just want you to know how would it feel, and many of you might have experienced this to some degree, to not be believed in by your own family.

To not be believed in by your own family. For your mother and your daddy and your brothers and your sisters not to believe in you. And you're stepping out to do something major with your life and they don't believe in you.

And they're willing to openly express that. That's got to be one of the hardest things that could ever happen. And that's what's going on in Jesus' life. Right now, he's got people wanting to kill him.

[2 : 16] There are people who seek to kill him. And his own brothers just openly admit, we don't believe in you. We do not believe in you. And I just want you to realize that's got to be Christ's time in his life.

And you might be trying to serve God right now. And in your heart and in your mind, you want to do things for God. And you seem like there's a lot of resistance and people aren't with you. It seems like maybe there are attacks against you.

Might even seem like some of your own family don't believe in you. But right here, you're going to find the answer to how to deal with that and how to handle that. And how to know that God's going to work in your life and move in your life.

So if you've got your Bible, let's just mark a few things. If you would, in John chapter 7 and verse 1 that we've already read, just underline this. They sought to kill him. You need to get the background.

Jesus, they are wanting to kill him. They're finding every way. They're looking for the means to kill him. In chapter 7 and verse 3, I want you to underline, his brethren said to him.

[3 : 15] Just get his brethren. That's his brothers and sisters. And they've talked to him. And they've said to him, why don't you go up? Nobody does what you do in secret.

I mean, if you're who I think you are or who you claim to be, if you claim to be God, if you claim to be the king, if you claim to be the Messiah, it's time that you let everybody know that.

So why do you do it all in secret? So why don't you go down and show everybody so everybody will know who you are? Verse 5. I hope you have it marked. His brother, neither did his brethren believe in him.

His own family didn't believe in him. And then he says in verse 6, he said, well, I'll tell you why I'm not going to do that right now. My time has not yet come.

Jesus knew something that you'll, I hope, will learn today. God is at work in your life. God has a plan in your life. God is developing you. He has predestined you to be conformed to the image of his son.

[4 : 15] And he is at work in your life since the day you were born again to turn you into what you ought to be. Jesus knew, hey, I'm on God's timetable and God is at work.

And they didn't like him. Nobody liked Jesus. Everybody's against him. And the reason was because he told them that what they were doing was wrong. He showed them that they had to believe in Jesus or they couldn't be saved.

And so he goes up in secret there and nobody will talk about him openly because they're afraid. Before we get started in the message, you might not know that Jesus had brothers and sisters.

So let me just show you a couple of verses right quick. Look in your Bible to Matthew chapter 13 verses 55 and 56. Jesus is the firstborn child of Mary.

Mary was a virgin. Mary had not had relations with a man at all. And she got pregnant by the Holy Spirit. He did a miracle in her.

[5 : 12] And Jesus was born without his mother ever being touched by a man. But after the birth of Jesus, Mary had other children. And the Bible tells us that. If you look in Matthew 13, 55 through 56, it says, Is not this the carpenter's son?

Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? There's their names. You might underline them. Jesus had brother James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas or Jude.

And in verse 56, and his sisters, are they not all with us? When sin hath this man all these things? We know this guy. We know his mama. We know his daddy. We know his brothers. We know his sisters.

I don't know why he thinks he's somebody so special. We know right where he lives. We know all of his family members. Go with me if you would to Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1. They don't believe in him in the story today.

But I'll go ahead and tell you that in the future, they're going to believe. In the future, they're going to believe. In Acts chapter 1 and verse 14, the Bible said, These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, with his brethren.

[6 : 19] In that upper room, Jesus has now died on the cross. He has been buried, and he has risen again from the grave. And they're meeting in the upper room, and they're praying with 120 of them.

Jesus is about ready to ascend into heaven. And thank God, his brothers believe in him. They knew him. They believed in him. They've accepted him. They put their faith in him.

And actually, a couple of them go on to write two of the books of the Bible. They write the books of James and Jude. Galatians chapter 1 and verse 19. Other of the apostles saw none, said James, the Lord's brother.

I just want you to know that maybe your family's not believing in you. And maybe your family doesn't want to get saved right now. And maybe your family thinks you're a nut because you accepted Christ. And you started trying to live for God.

And maybe they're resisting you. Maybe they try to keep you from going to church. Maybe they try to keep you from reading your Bible. Maybe they try to keep you from honoring God with your life and living a holy life. And you feel like you're under a lot of pressure.

[7 : 16] I just want you to know that if you'll just hang in there and keep believing and praying and teaching, God just might be going to save them and do a great work. There was a young guy named Henry in our ministry in Peru.

He used to jump across the wall. They have big walls around our houses. He used to jump across the wall to sneak off to Sunday school and church. When he'd get home, he'd get a spanking for having gone to church. He was about 15 or 16 years old.

His daddy would just go into a rage and beat him. One day he told me, he said, my daddy's the meanest man. He will never, ever get saved. And it wasn't long after that. I said, why don't you trust God? Believe God might save him.

And it wasn't long after that till his daddy and mother were saved and going to church. And Henry would brag, my daddy memorized more Bible verses than anybody else in the Sunday school class this week. So you serve a big God.

Say amen. You serve a God who saves people. You serve a God. So serve him and believe in him. I want to talk to you about some dangers in Christian service. I want to talk to you.

[8 : 11] That's what's happening in Jesus's life here. Number one, look at the danger. Look at the danger of the persecution that Jesus is dealing with. He's dealing with persecution and danger.

We're going to go to verse one. While you're getting there, he's suffering two kinds of threats. There are people that want to kill him. There are people that want to kill him. And so I would imagine that that could be a tad nerve wracking.

If you knew when I step outside of my house, there are people out there that want to kill me. I think that might upset. How many of you would be nervous if you knew there were some people out there that want to kill you?

Say amen. All right. Not only was he dealing with that, there's a whole nother faction of people that want him to be made king. They are out there and their whole goal is to get him lifted up and make him the king.

Because he can make bread and he can fill their bellies and he would make a good president and he would make a good king. And so they want to make him king. But he didn't come to be made king.

[9 : 07] He came to die on a cross. And he knew that wasn't what God's plan was for his life. So he's kind of dealing with some pressure. Constant threat in danger from those people. They want to make him king.

They want to kill him. Look if you would in John chapter 7 and verse 1 again. Mark this. After these things Jesus walked in Galilee. For he would not walk in Jewry.

Or down where all the Jews are living. Because the Jews sought to kill him. The Jews sought to kill him. So Jesus said I'm not going where they want to kill me.

And that's not because he was afraid. It's because it wasn't time. And God had a timetable. I'd like to give a little parenthesis. Because we're such a missionary church. And we actually have missionaries this morning.

Out of our church. And members of our church. And missionaries that we love. And they're in countries where they could get in trouble. This morning. Tyler Masters. A few hours ago.

[10:05] Tyler Masters crossed the border from Ceo to Spain. And he went over into Morocco. Which is a very dangerous country. To go in and tell the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Aaron Basho is living over on that side of the border.

Cesar Copa is over there. Renzo Suniga. We support all those guys. And then over in China. We got Mark Tolson. A member of our church. With his wife Natasha. And their baby Ava. And then we got Jake and Stephanie Talby.

And they're right over there. And so sometimes people are in danger. I don't think most of us are in much danger. But some people are in danger. And so you ought to know. What Jesus did when he dealt with danger.

You know what he did? He wasn't afraid of what people would do to him. But he didn't take foolish chances. He didn't just run out there looking to get hurt.

There was a famous preacher back when I first started in the ministry. His name was Lester Roloff. And they used to joke about him. They said Lester Roloff used to enjoy. He used to enjoy getting hurt.

[11:02] So he could get a lot of publicity out of it. They said if somebody was shooting a gun in a room. He would run and get in front of the bullet. So he could say he got shot. And that was a joke. Not really the truth. But the point is we ought not be doing that.

We ought to be trying to continue the ministry. Look if you would at John chapter 10 and verse 39. On more than one occasion people are out to get Jesus. Jesus has a ministry to do.

He will not deny the truth. But he will not put himself in harm's way for nothing. John 10 39. Therefore they sought again to take him. But he escaped out of their hand.

It's not wrong for a missionary to say. Hey I'm getting out of Dodge. They're about ready to kill me. I'm changing towns. Jesus escaped. Look if you would at Luke chapter 4 verses 29 and 30.

And rose up and thrust him out of the city. And led him unto the brow of the hill. Whereupon the city was built. And they might cast him headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went on his way. They took Jesus up on a hill.

[12:01] And they were going to throw him off the hill and kill him. And I don't know what he did. He made him where they couldn't see him. He made him where they didn't realize who he was. And he just turned around and walked right back through the crowd. But he got away.

And he moved on because it wasn't time for him to die. It wasn't time for him. There's no need for him to risk his life. Now you say well what's all that got to do with it?

You know Jesus came to die. You know that right? When Jesus came to earth. He came with the express purpose of dying. In Matthew chapter 20 and verse 28.

He came to give his life a ransom for many. Now they're wanting to kill him. They're wanting to kill him. They're wanting to kill Jesus. And you might say what's going on here? Jesus is escaping.

And Jesus isn't letting them kill him. Because he knows God has a time for him. And a place for him to die. He knows that his life is in God's hands.

[12 : 56] Look at verse 8. Right there in John chapter 7. He doesn't flee his duty. But he doesn't place himself in danger needlessly. Look at John 7 and verse 8. Go ye not up into this feast.

Or go ye up into this feast. For I go not up yet unto this feast. For my time is not yet full come. My time is not yet full come.

Now I'm going to get to that in just a minute with you. And how it works in your life. But I just want you to know. Did you know Jesus' whole life is being lived out on a timetable? He knows it's when he was born when he was supposed to be born.

And he went to the temple at 12 when he was supposed to go to the temple. And he shows up at John's place when he's supposed to show up at John's place. And people are trying to get him to jump off of pinnacles in the temple.

And throw him off of mountains. And they're trying to kill him. But Jesus knows exactly what God's plan is. And he's on a timetable for the exact time Jesus is supposed to be on the cross.

[13 : 51] And pay the debt of our sin for us. And here's the sad part of this story. This is probably the part that jumps out of the story most to me. Look if you would in John chapter 6 and read with me verse 3.

Here it is. This is probably the most hurtful thing to me in the story. His brothers say to him, Hey Jesus, I think you ought to go on up.

John chapter 7 verse 6. Go up to the feast for I... Excuse me, verse 3 I meant to say. Chapter 7 verse 3. His brethren said unto him, Depart hence and go into Judea.

That thy disciples may also see the works that thou doest. For there's no man that doeth anything in secret. And he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.

For his brothers really didn't believe in him. Now here's the thing. It's kind of like, well... His own brothers are looking at him saying, Jesus, you know, you're working all these miracles.

[14 : 51] And you're not getting any fame for it. And they're not writing you up on the first front page of the New York Times. And the Washington Post hasn't written you up yet. And the Wall Street Journal doesn't know about you yet.

And why don't you go on up there? There's one or two things could be going on. We're not really sure what's happening. And one side of them is probably they're thinking, well, he is our brother. And he's going to be great.

And if he goes up there and he works all those miracles in Jewry, in Judea, in the big city where everybody gets in. If he goes to New York, he will make the big time. And he will be made a king.

But Jesus said, that's not my father's will. And I'm not out to make me famous. And some of us want to use Christianity and our church and our life to make us famous and to get recognition when the whole point is to get Jesus recognition and not us recognition.

Can you say amen right there? It's not about you bragging about the change in your life. It's not about you bragging about your holiness that you've gotten. It's not about you bragging about the changes that took place.

[15 : 53] It's about you bragging about Jesus who made the difference in your life. The other side of that story could be that his brothers don't believe in him. And they figure, hey man, if he gets put under pressure, maybe he'll either die or he'll work his miracles.

But they don't believe in him. I don't know what dangers you face as you're trying to do ministry. I really don't know. But I'll tell you this. There's some reason that most of us are stymied.

Most of us are closed mouth. Most of us are quiet Christians. Most of us are secret disciples. Most of us are terrified of the danger just outside our door.

And it keeps us from doing the ministry that the Lord Jesus has for us. We're not doing what he would have us do. Jesus will go up to that feast.

And he will be up there. And they will talk about him. But in verse 10, chapter 7, verse 10, it says, And when his brethren were going up, then went he up also to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

[16 : 53] I have a question for you. Do you witness wisely? There are two kinds of witnesses, I'm afraid, among us. There's the young, brash, hurt everybody's feelings and be a jerk witness.

And there's the guy that doesn't do any witnessing. I don't know why we can't have a modicum of moderation. But we get saved. And we get right with God. And we go to our mom and daddy's house and say, But y'all are going to hell.

I got saved, bless God. You know, the Bible says y'all are sinners. And I was a sinner too. But Jesus saved me. And the whole family's like, You're a jerk. And he says, You're calling me a jerk.

But you're going to be calling me a jerk from hell. Because you're going to hell. And boy, we just want to be rude and crude. You say, Well, I know. That's foolish. That's why I quit witnessing altogether.

Boy, that wasn't a smart move. Say, man. You know, it's like, It's like, If you witness, you're a jerk. So we just don't witness. Jesus, go down there and show them who you are.

[17 : 54] Go down there and show them your power. Go down there and let them make you a king. Go down there and let them kill you. Whatever the goal is, There's danger on both sides of that. You and I need to witness about Jesus.

You and I need to go talk to people about Jesus. And the devil has learned to play a game with us. He's a make us a jerk or make us a mute. He makes us a jerk or he makes us not tell anybody about Jesus.

Second thing I want you to look at with me. They're not only danger there, They're attacking his character. That's the hardest thing most of us can deal with. Look, if you would, in John chapter 7 and verse 3.

His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence and go into Judea, That thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, And he himself seeketh to be known openly.

Why do you do it in secret? If you want everybody to know about you. Go down and show yourself to the world. Because we don't believe in you. The world hates him. The world hates him.

[18 : 55] Everybody's talking about him. And they're talking bad. And they want him to fail. Did you know it's amazing? Most new Christians need to backslide enough to fit in with the rest of us.

Most new Christians get really excited. And they've got to backslide so they can be a good Baptist. Most new Christians are really excited. And these guys are like, Hey, we don't believe in you.

We don't believe in you. That has got to be the hardest thing you can imagine. He came from heaven. He was born of a virgin. At 12, he could astound scholars.

At 30, he's working miracles like no one has ever seen before. And everybody's saying, I might be your brother. I'm your brother and I don't believe in you. You see what the devil's doing?

He's looking for ways to keep you quiet. Your own brother says, I saw my brother get saved. I saw my sister get saved. I saw my family member get saved.

[19 : 53] But we'll see if it lasts. And they doubt you. And they criticize you. And they attack you. Well, Jesus knew exactly what that was like. They were doing the same thing to him.

His own brothers don't believe in him. So I want to say to you that I doubt very many of us are in real danger. Maybe the guys in China. And maybe the guys in Morocco. And maybe some of the missionaries on the foreign field are experiencing some danger.

But most of us in this room, we're not experiencing any real danger. But we think we are. We are almost afraid to talk about Jesus. We're afraid to tell people what he's done in our lives.

We're afraid to share our faith. Fact is, we can't even invite them to church. Be honest. When's the last time you even had the courage to say, man, I'd like to invite you to come to our church and hear the Bible talk.

You know, we can say to them, let's go get something to eat at the Olive Garden. We can say, hey, I invite you to vote for so-and-so for president. I invite you to go to the ballgame. But when it's Jesus, somehow there's a danger out there in our hearts.

[20 : 56] Well, we get scared. And then if you're not scared, even the people that know you're like, it won't last. It won't last. I don't believe he's really saved.

There's a character assassination. And buddy, they want to see you fall. I grew up hearing this all the time. Every time I did wrong, they'd say stuff like this. Oh, missionaries are like that.

So you're going to be a missionary when you grow up and you still do all those sinful things. And I ended up telling people I wished I had never said I was going to be a missionary because the second you ever set yourself up is serving Jesus.

They're out to get you. Jesus was dealing with that. But here's the third thing. Look, if you would, at John chapter 7 and verse 6. Jesus trusts God's timetable. He knows that God is at work in his life.

John chapter 7 and verse 6. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come. Underline that. My time is not yet come. But your time is always ready. Go ye up unto this feast.

[21 : 56] I go not yet up unto this feast, for my time is not yet to come. Jesus knows he's on God's timetable. He knows that God's will is going to be done in his life.

He knows he has nothing to prove. He doesn't need to go up there and work miracles and let everybody check him out. He doesn't need Donald Trump to give his stamp of approval. He doesn't need an American idol to tell him he's good at what he does.

He knows I am God in human flesh and I am ready to go and preach. I'm ready to go to the cross and I'm ready to die. He doesn't need these opportunities.

His time hasn't come. You know what his time is? His time is when he's going to die on the cross. Look at Matthew chapters 26, if you would. Matthew chapter 26 and verse 18. And he said, go into the city to such a man and say, the master said, my time is at hand.

I'm going to keep the Passover at your house. And a few hours after that, he'll be on trial headed to die. My time is at hand.

[22 : 59] I would like to say to you this morning. Would you look this way and listen? If you're born again, God's at work in your life. If you're born again, God's at work in your life.

And your life is not an accident. In Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6. He that begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

Do you understand this? On May the 6th, 1962, when I was a little seven-year-old boy, I placed my faith in Christ. Did you know God was working in my life?

He saved me. I didn't save me. And he's been working in my life all this time. And he knows exactly what he's going to do with me. And my life's not an accident. God has a plan and a purpose for me.

How many of you believe that? Say amen. He does. He does. And the world says it's trite for us to say that God's working in our life. But in Romans 8, 28, it says, all things work together for good to them.

[23 : 55] Love God or call according to his purpose. And so we know that everything has been happening in our life. Just like Jesus. And Jesus said, y'all make fun of me all you want. Y'all try to kill me all you want. I know what my timetable is.

I know when I'm supposed to die. God's got a plan for my life. And I'm on God's schedule. And I'm going to live God's plan for my life. Romans chapter 8, verse 39, it says that God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son.

And so he's at work in us. And he's taking us forward to be what we ought to be. How many of you are born again? Say amen. Do you realize you're not an accident? Do you realize God has a purpose for your life?

Do you realize that God is moving you from babyhood and recent birth and a newborn baby? And he's taking you through to maturity. And he's going to use you and work in your life. And that's the reason Jesus could deal with the danger.

And that's the reason Jesus could deal with the character attacks. Because he knew. Say what y'all want to say. But the God of heaven is working in my life. My time's not yet come. I know what God's doing in my life.

[24 : 55] I don't know everything that God's doing in my life. But I know this. I know this. There are no accidents in my life. I know this. God's at work in me. I know this.

God is bringing great things to pass in my life. Some of those things are going to be very difficult. We sat with a pastor yesterday who buried his 44-year-old son who died of cancer. I know that there were times in my life when horrible things happened in our family.

And my children were hurt. And then that whole time, and I was so terrified, the only thing that gave me comfort was, God's at work in my life. And there are no accidents taking place in my life.

And all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose. And he has predestined Austin to be conformed to the image of his son. And Jesus is like, bring it on.

Do what y'all want to do with me. I'm not here for you. I'm here for the Father. And the Father is at work in me. And my life is his. Your life's not out of control.

[26 : 00] Who in this room right now, you are going through the mess. I mean, just be honest. Your life is kind of falling apart. Your income's gone. You might have lost your house. And I don't know what all has happened.

You got junk going on. And sometimes it seems like life's out of control. Let me give you a hint, if you're a born-again Christian, it's not. God is at work. Get focused on him and trust him.

Focus on his purposes. Go to verse 12 with me. Boldly, let's talk about Jesus. Let's boldly talk about Jesus. Look at verse 12, if you would. And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him.

For some said, he's a good man. And others said, nay, but he deceives the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews. Do you understand what's going on?

I mean, Jesus has become like the axis. Jesus has become like the center of attention. And everybody's got an opinion. And everybody's talking. But everybody's kind of keeping it quiet. Some people think he's a bad guy.

[26 : 58] And he's a deceiver. And he's a fraud. And he's a liar. And they think he's just a charlatan and a crook. And they think he's out to get their money or get their attention or get a following.

And other people believe, no, he really is God. He really is somebody special. He really is who he says he is. But everybody's scared to say anything about him. And nobody will speak openly.

Oh, openly, I do not know of any name or anything that causes us to be so quiet as the name of Jesus.

We are afraid to speak openly of Jesus and our faith. I'm not talking about arguing about petty things. And I'm not even talking about arguing about baptism and what form of baptism.

I'm talking about Jesus is the son of God. And he's the only way to go to heaven. And he came and he died on a cross. We're afraid to get that out of our mouth. Honestly, the word Jesus is used by the majority of us more on Sunday morning.

[28 : 00] Maybe Sunday night and maybe midweek. But all week long, he's out of our conversation. And there are no Jews going about to kill us. We've fallen into a trap of believing there's danger.

We're tired of everybody attacking our character like they were attacking his character. And we don't know that we have a purpose. You have a purpose. You're not an accident.

He is wanting to use your life for his purpose and his power. But that we let fear shut our mouths. Fear is the most effective tool the devil has. And it keeps us with our mouths shut.

Fear steals the most blessed and exciting things that God wants to do in our lives. I'll give you two Bible examples real quick. If you want to open your Bible to John chapter 19. But just let me say this.

Let me say to you, we're not afraid to talk about politics and sports and weather. Brother John was talking a minute ago about how Jeremy was so excited about the football game.

[28 : 59] Well, our son Chris lives in the basement. And I was upstairs. And I was sitting in my recliner. And I am studying. And Chris was screaming at the top of his lungs.

He was yelling at them for dropping the football. I heard him, you idiot, what are you doing? And I was like, what in the world? I thought, my goodness, he's going to kill my grandkid. I was scared to death he was going to kill one of my grandkids.

And I said, mind your business. Mind your own business. Granddaddies aren't supposed to get involved. And I said, and he kept yelling, calling them names. And you know what happens? Come on. That's football.

That's sports. But most of us have a problem with it being Jesus. There are two guys in the Bible. There are 007 Christians if there ever were. There are secret agents. It used to be kind of funny in Arequipa when we started the ministry.

There were bars and liquor selling stores that just sold the liquor and other things. And a lot of the bad element of the city would sit on the curb on the street leading up to our church.

[30 : 03] And our church people, quite a few of them were very funny. They didn't want to be laughed at. And so they would come by and they would take their Bible and they would stick it down in their pants. And they'd have their Bible hidden or they'd put it under their coat. Or they'd stick it in something.

And they'd walk all the way down the street because they didn't want anybody to know where they were going. And then when they got to the church, they'd reach in and whoop out their Bible like they was coming to church. They loved Jesus. And I used to tell them, I said, quit being 007 Christians.

Pull out your Bible and let them see you got one. And you know what they said? But when we walked down the street, they all called us, hey, brother. Hey, brother. Where are you going, brother? Hey, sister. And they just made fun of them.

There are two guys in the Bible kind of like that. If you're in John chapter 19, one of them is Joseph of Arimathea. And old Joseph of Arimathea, he was a disciple but secretly for fear.

Now, Jesus still loved him even though he was a disciple secretly. He loves you. You know, you won't talk about him and you're not excited about him. But he still loves you. But look if you would in John chapter 19, verse 38.

[30 : 59] And after this, Joseph of Arimathea being a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews. But sought Pilate that he might take the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave him leave and he went and took the body of Jesus.

You remember that? You got this story? Here's old Joseph of Arimathea. Whenever he's around, people are talking bad about Jesus. He's just kind of like, I'm not saying anything. I'm not going to say anything good. I'm not going to say anything bad. I don't need it to hurt my business career.

Don't want anybody to know I'm an open Christian. Don't want people laughing at me. Don't want people mocking me. And that's kind of where old Joseph is. Now Jesus dies. He dies.

And his dead body is hanging on a cross. And all of a sudden, Joseph gets up enough courage. And he goes to Pilate and says, by the way, I'm a rich guy.

And I do love Jesus. And I'd like to take his body off and bury it. I question in my own mind. I wonder what it must have felt like to, because of your fear, not to have been there when he was doing a lot of those miracles, not to have been there when you could have had long heartfelt conversations with Jesus.

[31 : 58] I wonder how much he missed by letting fear take over his life. I wonder how much he missed. Because fear took over his life. The next guy in the very next verse, his name is Nicodemus.

In John chapter 3, if you recall, he went and he met Jesus, but he went at night so nobody would know. And he talked to Jesus, and he also became a secret disciple. And he comes and he brings the stuff to prepare his body to be buried.

And secret disciples. If your church was a prosperity gospel church, you'd talk a whole lot more about it.

If your church was a popular thing, but since Jesus, I mean, Jesus centers hell.

Jesus died. We allow the world to scare us, and we don't share the most exciting news in the world. So what are we missing?

[32 : 59] There are people that might get saved just from your influence, just from your talk that would give you the greatest joy and peace and happiness as a Christian. But because you're 007, you'll never know that.

I remember more than one person saying to me after they got saved, they would come to our church, and they would find out that their neighbor had been a Christian all their life.

And they said, he lived right across the street from me. I had no idea he was a believer. I had no idea he loved Jesus. They allowed the devil to scare them.

I wonder if they regretted it. I wonder if regret drove them to the cross. Are you allowing fear to hinder what God could do in your life? Are you allowing it to make you afraid to share Jesus with your family?

Your church is so young, and we've yet to have anybody on the deathbed. I've not been called there, but I can tell you that dozens of times in my ministry, families who were quiet about Jesus when their family member was dying would call and say, Preacher, would you come and tell my mama, my daddy, my brother, my sister, my uncle that I've never told about Jesus.

[34 : 09] Give them that one shot right before they died. When they had all that time, they could have shared Jesus with them. Last thing I want to show you, and I'm through. Look at John chapter 7 and verse 6.

Now is a good time for you. Now is a good time for you. In verse 6 it says, Then Jesus said unto them, My time's not yet come, but your time, it's opportune.

It's ready. It's right now. It's always ready. You can go. Jesus said, I'm hated. Jesus said, I'm hated because I tell them who they are.

Look at verse 7. The world can't hate you because you're one of them. They don't hate you. But it hates me because I testify of it and the works thereof that are evil that they do.

Jesus knows who he is. He's secure in who he is. His brothers haven't yet decided to follow Jesus. They're still living in the world. They're going up to the feast. Jesus is not going to go up to the feast right now.

[35 : 06] And the reason he's not going to go up to the feast, if he goes up with them, he's either going to try to kill him or they're going to try to set him up as a king. It's not time for him. But he said, this time y'all can go on to the feast.

But can I tell you that right now, it's the same deal for us. It's time. We can now take a stand. We can now take a stand. We can now this week say, I do know Jesus is the son of God.

And I do know he died in my place. And I do know he's the only way to go to heaven. And you don't have to be obnoxious. And you don't have to be a jerk. But your family ought to get a gospel track. Your family ought to get an invitation.

Your family ought to be prayed for. You ought to mention Jesus to them. You ought to talk about Jesus. Or you're going to live to regret not sharing the Lord with them.

And by the way, if you're not saved, it's your time. Let me just ask you a couple of questions. Do you allow the world to manipulate you into not witnessing? Or to making a jerk out of you?

[36 : 05] Are you discouraged and controlled because they attacked you personally? You tried to witness once and they embarrassed you. And so now you're just not going to say anything.

Your family doesn't want to hear from you. Jesus didn't stop because they said to him, we don't believe in you. Are you dealing with stuff today? And you fail to realize that all the junk that's going on in your life that God has a plan for you.

You're not an accident. And the president nor the congress or no one else is responsible for you. But God is and he's at work in your life. Would you trust him? Would you trust him?

His fear causing you to shut your mouth. Would you be honest and say, I really don't want to talk about Jesus. I'm a little bit afraid to. There's a great danger here. Jesus.

They want to kill you. They want to assassinate your character. Your own brothers don't believe in you. Your own brothers don't believe in you. They want you to go up and make yourself a king.

[37 : 03] They don't want you to die because that's not pleasing to them. And there's some people that could have known all these great things. They could have spent all that time with Jesus. But they were secret disciples and they missed it.

So this morning I challenge you. Is it time for you to say, I have nothing to lose. I live for Jesus. I die for Jesus.

So I'm going to tell people about Jesus. Get you some gospel tracks. Hand them to your friends. Say nice things. Don't be a jerk. But invite them.

Bring them to Christmas on the north side. Take them to other church activities. Have a Bible study with them. Be open with the gospel. Mention Jesus. Here's what we say.

Yeah, but there's some people. They're just obnoxious. How much they talk about Jesus. You know who says they're obnoxious, don't you? I doubt Jesus does. I doubt Jesus calls them obnoxious.

[38 : 02] Do you? I'll bet you it's lost people that call them obnoxious. Years ago, I was kind of a, they called me a Jesus freak and a, and a Jesus fanatic.

And they made fun of me in my school. They called me homosexual when I was in high school because I didn't do any of the stuff everybody else did. No sex and no drugs and no alcohol. And I carried my Bible to church or to school and I was this Jesus freak.

And so I couldn't wait to go to college and I asked God to let me meet one friend. One friend who would love Jesus. And I wouldn't be laughed at all the time. I was so tired of being laughed at and maligned and cursed for being a Christian.

But sometimes when you take a stand, when you meet somebody who's really a tad more fanatical than you, a tad more open than you, it will just mess you up. So we got to school the first day and I went to a school that was for training preachers.

That's what they told me. And I got there and everybody was getting unpacked and a bunch of guys were all standing around. And this one guy whose last name was Taylor. He said, hey guys, let's go get us a beer.

[39 : 08] And I thought to myself, I don't drink beer. Beer. I am not going to go drink beer, but what am I going to do to get out of it? So I was sitting there thinking, okay, I got to unpack. I got a headache. I got to get my sleep.

School starts tomorrow. What am I going to say? And one of my buddies jumped up and he said, bear, bear, bear nothing. What you need is Jesus. And he reached in his pocket and started passing out gospel tracks and he backed up and started preaching to him.

And all I could think was this guy's going over the top. I mean, it would have been a lot nicer to say we got a headache. You know what I mean? I was embarrassed. A few days later, that same guy came up to me and he said, he said, hey, I've been thinking we ought to witness everybody in this town and get them all saved before we get out of college.

What do you think? I said, man, this guy is a nut. Sure. I'd love to go. And every afternoon we go. That guy was crazy. And somehow we think that the guy who's on fire for Jesus is a nut because he makes us uncomfortable.

How about giving up your 007 badge? How about getting your weapon out instead of carrying a concealed weapon?

[40 : 16] Just get it out and carry it, you know, like open where they can see it. How about mentioning his name? How about not being an undercover Christian this week?

Father in heaven, I love you. I pray your name would be glorified and magnified. I thank you for your wonderful people. Thank you for this passage. And I pray you'd work. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church.

For contact information, location, service times, or more audio and video recordings, log on to www.visionbaptist.com.