

“Do Not Drift”

Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 2:1-4

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Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we thank You for the many blessings that we have received from Your hand, all of them through the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father, as we come to You, we come to You through Him, having the confidence to do so knowing that You are not only God, but that You are our Father through Him, and by His Spirit working in our lives to open our eyes, to make us aware of what He has done and the significance of it on our behalf. So Father, we come not only with confidence, but we come with the warmth of relationship, knowing that You love us and care for us. And so because You first loved us, we love You.

And Father, as we come, we pray that You will increase our love for You. We pray that You will enable us to know the power and the magnitude of Your work and Your Son on our behalf. And we pray, Father, that as we do, that that would overflow from our lives into the lives of others as we speak about, as we proclaim the gospel, the good news of Your Son, the Lord Jesus.

But Father, we come before You not only with joy in our hearts because of Christ, but also with concerns. And You've invited us to come to You. You have told us to lay those concerns before You, and so we do. We think about Geneva today. We also remember Albert, and certainly John and Sandy. And each one of these names may be known to some of us but not all. But each one of them is known to You. And You know not only the name of the person, but the problem. And we are confident because of Psalm 139 that You knit these people together in the womb, and You know them better than they know themselves. And so Father, we commit them to You, asking that Your hand would be upon them for good. We pray that You will strengthen not only their bodies, but Lord, if there is faith, we pray that You would strengthen that. And if there is not, we pray that You would grant it.

Father, we ask that You will bless us today as we study Your word. We pray that as we come to the book of Hebrews that we would not only find a book of enrichment that we might know more about You, but we pray that we might feel it in our hearts deeply. And we ask these things in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's in His name that we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Let's think about the opening of the text. It begins with the word *therefore*. Now the word *therefore* suggests that an argument was preceding that word. And you know how that goes, right, if you've had philosophy classes when you've gone to college. All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, right? You have the three dots that look like a pyramid if you're taking a philosophy class. But the point is that *therefore* indicates that something has gone before.

And if you're reading Paul, there are “*therefores*” scattered all over the place in his writings. But when you look at this particular text, you notice that the word *therefore*

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indicates that an argument has gone before, and we know what that argument is. That argument had to do with the angels. If you look at verses 5-13 again, one of the things that we are told very emphatically, clearly, is that Jesus is greater than the angels.

And we know that this isn't just a singular argument. It is an argument. It's a very powerful argument. It was well made, well-constructed, based upon the Scriptures. But it is a sub-argument in a thread of arguments indicating that Jesus is better than the Old Covenant, because He's the fulfillment of the Old Covenant.

And so when we think about the word *therefore* at this point in the unfolding, the exfoliation of the entire argument, we realize that we've come at least to the end of the first argument. And so there's a *therefore*.

Now at the end of this *therefore* we don't have what we might think of as a premise on which to build the next argument. What we have at this point is an admonition. What we have at this point is what we might call an *encouragement*. This is what exegetes call a *hortatory* section in the New Testament. In other words, it's an encouragement. It's built upon the word *paracoleo*.

Now I want to just talk to you a second about this because this is important. When we get to this point in the letter, this is where we sit back. This is where we listen, and this is where we realize that the Preacher is speaking into our lives. He's bringing that argument to bear.

Now when you think about this, you can think about this in two separate ways, and they're both wrong. (*Laughter*) And first of all I want you to think about a “Peanuts” cartoon. Obviously, right, Don? It's either “Peanuts” or it's “Calvin and Hobbes.” (*Laughter*)

So in this “Peanuts” cartoon, two boys—not main characters in the “Peanuts” saga—but two boys are walking along and they see Snoopy. And Snoopy is shivering, right? And they walk up to him and they talk to each other as they do. And they say, “Snoopy looks cold.”

And they walk up to the dog. And they look at him and they bend down. And they say, “Snoopy, be of good cheer! Be comforted, Snoopy!” And then they walk away from him. (*Laughter*) And Snoopy in the last frame has a question mark over his head as he looks after these two boys walking away from him.

And we know what Schultz meant, right? We have every indication that he had the Biblical passage in mind where it mentions, “Be of good cheer and be warm,” and then they walk away.

Now that's an admonition that is not meant. And so one of the things that we need to understand is that the Preacher in this story means what he says.

The second thing that we need to think about is this. There's another “Peanuts” cartoon. Sorry, Don. (*Laughter*) But Don, I need to tell you that today I'm the only one who can see these cartoons. (*Laughter*)

Participant: So we're all in the same boat.

Jeff: That's right. You're all in the same boat. So there's another “Peanuts” cartoon. The other “Peanuts” cartoon has Charlie Brown with Snoopy. Charlie Brown walks up to Snoopy and says, “Sit!”

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Snoopy walks on by him, walks into the other room, gets into the recliner and sits down, (*laughter*), as if to say, “I’ll do it when and if I want to.” (*Laughter*) “And certainly where I want to.” (*Laughter*) “And I will not do it when you want me to and where you want me to.”

And the point is that both of these are wrong. Now I want you to think about that a minute. If I’m up here exhorting you and I don’t really mean my exhortation, I’m just up here because, you know, this is what the text says, but I don’t really care if you do it or not. And if you’re sitting there and you’re saying, well, you know, this is kind of entertaining and I love the cartoons. But I’m not really going to do anything that this guy says, even if it’s based on the Word. I just don’t care; I’m not going to do it. Then we have ourselves a communication breakdown. We have ourselves a problem in the Biblical sense of the word, because the exhorter means what he says. And he expects the exhorted to receive it and apply it.

Now the reason I make a big deal out of this is because this is not going to be the only time where we find this in the book of Hebrews. In fact there are some who study the book of Hebrews in depth. And they say that this particular letter or sermon or book is built on the hortatory. It is built on the encouragement.

Now let me just say a quick word about what we mean by that. And here is what I have in mind. Here’s what the writer has in mind. Oftentimes it doesn’t matter whether it’s the author of Hebrews or it’s Paul, or whoever it is. The word has this idea in mind.

It’s the word *paracoleo*, made up of two words, *para* and *coleo*. And *para* means *alongside*. *Coleo* is the Greek word for *call*. And so you put them together and you have the obvious—*call alongside*. So an encouragement is when I call you alongside myself.

Now you do that, don’t you? You tell your children when they’re young. You say, “Come, stand over here,” right? And hopefully they walk over, right? Hopefully they realize that you’re the exhorter, they’re the exhorted, and they obey.

The wonderful thing about that is that after you’ve exhorted them so long and they realize that the safest place to stand is nearby you, that they do it naturally.

I had to go to downtown Pittsburgh yesterday. And I had to take my kids down there. I had an appointment for my son. And I had to take him down.

It’s the funniest thing in the world, right? You come out of the building. You’re in downtown Pittsburgh. And you look at your children and you say, “Do you guys know which way it is to the car?” (*Laughter*) And you say it with that broken voice. And they look at you like “Don’t you know?” (*Laughter*) It’s just the greatest thing in the world. And you know, I never do that sort of thing. I’m always very serious. (*Laughter*)

But anyway, they don’t know whether to believe me or not. They’re looking at each other like “Is he serious?”

Anyway, the point of all this is that we were walking down the street and we came to a fairly crowded section. We were walking down the street and I noticed my daughter who had been keeping two or three feet in between us, because she’s almost 13, right? And I noticed that when we got to this section where she was a little bit intimidated, I noticed that two- or three-foot gap closed very quickly. And I felt her presence right beside me.

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She knew where to go in order to find safety, right? I didn't even have to exhort her. She understood the exhortation to come alongside of me. And she just did it.

And that's really what it ought to be when it comes to us. After we read the Scriptures and study the Scriptures for so long, we ought to embody the teaching of the Scriptures. I mean we ought to in some sense understand before we even arrive.

Listen, here's the deal. I'm a minister of the gospel. But I tell my congregation this. The thing about a minister is this. I don't tell you things that you don't know. My job, really, is to remind you of everything that you could really figure out for yourself. I just have a little more time to do it. But all of us know these exhortations. And it is for all of us to embody these exhortations.

And so it's really important that we keep this in mind, because we're going to run into a lot of exhortations. I'll name some to you.

Participant: Jeff?

Second Participant: Wait for the microphone!

Jeff: Wait for the microphone. Yes?

Participant: Why wouldn't we take it at face value, the verses and the illustrations that you used? Those are good illustrations, but what's the point of not taking them at face value?

Jeff: Yes. I think sin has a way of working in both directions, right? So I think that, for instance, as the exhorter that ministers experience burnout. And I think that oftentimes they experience burnout because they don't have the mind of Paul who says—Am I answering your question?

Participant: Yes.

Jeff: Okay. It's because Paul says, “I don't tire of telling you these things,” right? But a minister could say to himself, “Boy, I really get tired of telling my congregation these things,” right? Maybe he doesn't see what he thinks he ought to see. There's a sin problem there, right, because he doesn't have the right motivation at that point.

And there can be on the part of the exhorted that same kind of problem. I remember probably about 15 or 20 years ago, maybe a little more, around there. But I was preaching in an independent congregation. I was preaching through the Ten Commandments, and this one man came to me afterward and said, “Look, you've got to stop this. We're New Covenant people. You've got to stop this nonsense, preaching through the Ten Commandments.”

And I said, “Well I don't understand what you're saying. Are you saying that the Ten Commandments are—

“No, no, no. The Ten Commandments are good. I just don't think you ought to preach on them.”

“Okay; I don't get it.” *(Laughter)*

Well in about six months I found out that he was having an affair, and he didn't want me to get too—

Men: Ohhhh! *(Laughter)*

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Jeff: So sin has a way of making me as the exhorter not exhort as I ought. And sin has a way of making the exhorted not receive it as they ought. And I think that sin is really the issue. Does that make sense? Okay. Anybody else? Yes?

Participant: You could have kept the congregation happy by just not preaching on that particular sin.

Jeff: That’s right; I could have. *(Laughter)* “We are going to pass over—“

Participant: But I think that it’s not simply because we grow tired because of sin. I guess that’s true. We also just get tired because of our flesh. Paul says, “I never get tired.” I wonder if that was 100% “I never get tired.” I bet you there were times in his life that he got tired.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: He just wasn’t tired at that time. So we all get tired because it’s the nature of the flesh. Is it sin? Yes. Will it stick with us the rest of our lives? Probably, in a lot of cases, to some degree or another.

Jeff: And to your point, I think the tiredness may be a result of sin, but it’s not necessarily a result of my actual breach of the commandments, right? So it’s a point well taken. Yes?

Dale Thurston:

“Two spirits dwell within my breast.

One is evil, the other is blest.

One I love, one I hate.

The one I feed will dominate.”

Jeff: I look at it a little differently than that. I look at that as the Spirit lives in me. And then there’s a carcass that’s rotting that I need by the Spirit’s help to clean up, right?

Participant: Yup.

Jeff: That idea. The old man is dead. Does anybody want to respond to that? Anybody else? Hey, hey, hey, you don’t have to leave because of that. *(Laughter)* Anybody else?

Participant: You shouldn’t have preached on that sin.

Jeff: I know, I know. *(Laughter)* All right. Let me give you some exhortations that we’re going to hear as we go through this letter.

In 3:12: “*Take care, brethren.*” 4:11: “*Therefore, let us be diligent.*” 4:14: “*Let us hold fast our confession.*” 6:1: “*Press on to maturity.*” 10:35: “*Do not throw away your confidence.*” And 12:1: “*Run the race.*”

Now let me say one more thing about this that I think is absolutely important. And I’ve said it before, but I want to say it again because I think you need to hear this as we work through the book of Hebrews. You find that the Preacher urges these people. But he doesn’t doubt them. In other words, remember what I told you early on? I said that he comes to these people with a certain mindset. He comes to them believing their profession of faith. And so he may say some hard things to them. He may encourage them or call them alongside of him with some really hard things. But he says later that “I think better of you,” right? “I have better hopes for you. I think highly of you.” That’s what he’s saying.

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So he thinks that they will respond accordingly to these exhortations. So I think that’s absolutely important. I say it as one who exhorts. I say it as a minister of the gospel.

When I stand up and when I get behind my pulpit, here’s the deal. If I start to think that the congregation is not regenerate, I think at that point in time that it’s time for me to get out of the ministry, or it’s time for me to take a break, because at that point I need to say to myself, what is my attitude toward the people of God who have made a profession of faith, and that profession of faith is a good profession of faith? In other words, they’re not under church discipline or anything. If I have a negative attitude toward the people of God, maybe the problem is with me and not with them.

So when I exhort I may need to say some hard things in exhortation. But always in my mind I’m thinking that these are the people of God, and they will respond to it, right? And that’s the way we ought to be when we get into that situation. Go ahead.

Participant: And it’s not so much them as it is God working in them.

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant: That’s your confidence. Your confidence is not necessarily in them, but God working in them.

Jeff: Yes, that’s exactly right.

Participant: And it’s interesting, because if you look, for instance, at the baptismal service of the *Book of Common Prayer*, that is the assumption, versus are you really sincere? Did you really mean it when you gave your life to Christ?

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant: So the emphasis moves away from the congregant and on to God’s action.

Jeff: That’s right. I was counseling a gal in the congregation one time. Her husband who wasn’t a convert was standing there. He said he was, but he wasn’t a convert. The reason I know that is because he was later excommunicated from the church for having committed adultery and for his unwillingness to be reconciled to his wife.

But I was talking to her and she was telling me about this difficulty that she was having with one of her neighbors. And I said, “Well, look. I have confidence in the One who is in you, because *‘He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.’*”

Her husband looked at me and he looked at her and he goes, “Well that was kind of an insult, wasn’t it?”

And I thought to myself. I mean, that was sort of like what? Yeah! So again, Ted, that’s an excellent point. Bill?

Bill: This is a point that maybe Paul did write this letter, because when he addressed probably the most immoral people in the New Testament, the Corinthians, he starts out by calling them *saints* and *sanctified*.

Jeff: Yes. That’s right. Excellent point.

Okay. So let’s move now to *the warnings*. And verse 1 begins, “*Therefore we must pay closer attention.*” Now I want us to think for a minute about what it is that he’s saying here in this warning.

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The first thing I want us to think about is *the type of attention that he is talking about*. And that’s indicated by the adverb *much*. You can see that here. “*Therefore we must pay much closer attention.*” That adverb, that modifier—“*much closer attention.*”

There are two ways that we can take it. The first is that we can take it in the *superlative* sense, that is, there’s an intensification. In other words, I must hear with the greatest possible amount of attention. In other words, you’ve heard “I’m all ears,” right? So the idea is tell me. You’re the exhorter, I’m the exhorted. I’m willing to hear. So there’s the superlative sense. That’s the type of attention that we’re thinking about. It’s intense attention that we are giving.

Now I just want to tell you something. That is hard. We need to just sit back here and acknowledge that that kind of attention is difficult.

Now I’m not talking *difficult* because, for instance, it’s hard for you at 5:00 in the morning or 6:00 in the morning to sit here and pay attention if you don’t have your coffee. That’s not what I’m talking about. What I’m talking about is that you hear full well. But the difficulty in hearing is the difficulty in doing or embodying. That’s the difficulty.

And let’s face it. That’s going to cost, especially if we’ve committed ourselves to patterns or habits of sin that have entrenched us in a certain type of behavior that will cost us to get out. That’s the kind of intense listening that we’re talking about.

So I just want to make clear that I’m not talking about the list or the row kind of listening. Am I listening to premise 1 and premise 2? Am I understanding its conclusion. No, I’m talking about that which says have you heard? And have you heard in such a way that this will uproot those patterns and habits such that you can get yourself into a right way of living?

The other sense in which we need to think about this idea of paying attention is in a *comparative* sense. Now what do I mean by that? Well, there’s a comparison going on here in the text and we need to remember that, because we need to remember that we’re in the midst of an argument as it unfolds. We’ve just taken care of the first argument. Now we’re in a hortatory section. But we’re going to be progressing on with the argument.

And remember what the argument is. The argument is that Jesus is greater than the Old Covenant because He’s the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. But when we keep that in mind, the comparative comes into play. And the comparative is between *the church and Israel*.

And so when we get to chapter 3, he’s going to pick up this idea. And he’s going to say, “*Today, if you hear his voice,*” remember, don’t be like the Israelites. And I think he’s quoting Psalm 95 at that point.

And so the idea is that “I’m comparing you. In the midst of this unfolding argument, I’m comparing you, the church, with Israel, with the Jew, the one you are tempted to return to,” right? That’s the idea. So there’s a comparative sense.

So when we think about paying attention, we need to think about the superlative, and we need to think about the comparative sense. They’re both here in the text.

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The second thing that I want us to talk about is *the description of paying attention* at this point, the description of paying attention. “*Pay close attention*” is what he says.

Now when you think about paying close attention, you probably think about all kinds of different things. I know what I think. I think about my dad saying, “Are you listening to me?” (*Laughter*) Because he had to say it a lot.

But this term is a nautical term. In other words, this term was used among seafaring men. And it had this sense. The person guiding the ship had to pay close attention as he brought the ship into port. That’s the idea.

Now I mean when I was younger, we had a speedboat. And my dad would sometimes trust me to bring the speedboat into the dock. And you know, I want to tell you something. This is the way it was. Bang, bang, right off of the turn buckles on the dock, you know? It wasn’t the smoothest approach.

And that’s the idea here. Pay close attention as you maneuver this vessel into the port and into the docks. That’s the idea.

When you see that, you can begin to get the idea of how carefully one must pay attention. It’s almost as if we are bringing our whole selves to the bar of this hortatory section and saying, “do with me what You will, God.”

And there’s an injunction that we need to think about, and it’s this. If we don’t do this, we’re going to drift.

Now when I was young, we were on the beach. This wasn’t on the ocean so it wasn’t that scary. But when my brother and I were playing, we lost track of our parents. And we sort of came to ourselves and looked around and said, “Where are we?” And here we had drifted all the way down the beach. We were a long way down the beach.

We weren’t paying attention. We were engaged in doing our own thing. And the currents just took us down the beach. You all know that.

We can get bound up in the currents of our lives, not focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. I say this to my congregation quite a bit. That’s why it’s so important for you to keep your eyes on Jesus, because when you keep your eyes on Jesus you’re not going to drift, because your eyes are always going to be on Him as the One who is fixed upon shore.

And you’re going to feel the currents then. You know, if we’d kept our eyes fixed on our parents, we would have said, “Oh, we need to pull ourselves back up a little bit and get ourselves in line with our parents, and keep our eyes on them as we play.” You know, that sort of thing. When we don’t do that sort of thing, we find ourselves in a world of danger.

Let me ask you this. Are you drifting? Now when I say are you drifting, I just have some things I want to throw out.

Are you struggling to believe? For instance, has doubt of some sort crept into your mind about the Word, about God’s faithfulness, about His goodness, about His willingness to forgive?

Sometimes I think the worst thing that we deal with in the Christian church today is the view that God the Father is a tyrant who had to be made amiable to the Son’s death on our behalf. And we think that the Son is going, “Oh Dad, come on! I mean, really! I died for them.”

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And the Father is going, “Yeah, bring him here. Bring him a little closer.” And we think that when we get close enough, He’s going to pull out His fist and give us a good beaner. That’s wrong!

Or *are you struggling with patterns of disobedience?* I’m not talking about instances. I’m talking about patterns. Have you gotten yourself entrenched in a pattern of disobedience, and you’re drifting? And you’re saying, “I just can’t get out of it?”

You know, I’ll tell you what. I don’t know about you guys, but years ago, back in the ‘90s, R. C. Sproul was really influential in my life. I hadn’t listened to him for a long time and I’d not read anything from him for a long time. When he died it was almost like Grandpa had died, you know?

And so I got out the books and I started listening to some of the lectures again. And I decided that what I was going to do was to read some of the books that I never read. So I read the book *Johnny, Come Home*. Have you ever read that book?

Participant: Yes.

Jeff: Only one? (*Laughter*) You know, that was the novel that he wrote back in the ‘90s. And I thought, I’m going to read this novel. I started it one time and put it on the shelf years ago. I got it out. It’s a fascinating novel, and it’s really a biography. Not a wholesale biography—in fact, he says that this is really not a biography. But when you listen to him lecture, like years ago listening to him lecture in the ‘90s, I heard all the stories come out in the book. And it was like, oh, everything down to the professor at Westminster College, who got up on the desk and said, “You’ve got to work!”, you know? Remember that?

Well there’s a character in the book. It’s Johnny. And Johnny gets married. Johnny gets married to a woman and she can’t have children. And so he has an affair. And pretty soon he sets the woman up in a home, and then he has a child by the woman. And then he has another child by the woman. And he gets himself in a web. He gets himself in a pattern of disobedience and he wants to extricate himself, and he just can’t see the way forward.

Is that where you are, maybe not to that degree, but at least to that sense of feeling that you just can’t get out? Are you ever listening but never learning? Are you forsaking worship? All of those things indicate a drift.

Now what are the consequences? Yes, Don?

Don: A couple weeks ago, Jeff, I encountered a website. It’s called Common Sense Atheism. (www.Commonsenseatheism.com)

And the guy who invented it grew up in the church and even went on mission trips, and at the age of 22 became an atheist. And I kind of wonder about what you were saying here about drifting, how important it is. And yes, I know that the Lord will not allow us to be severed from Him and that no one can snatch us from His hand, everything like that. We know that. He preserves us. But I often wonder about the importance there. When did he begin to drift? How important it is to hold on to the means of grace, and that kind of thing.

Jeff: Yes. Are you asking that, or sort of wondering that out loud?

Don: Wondering out loud. It’s just a comment.

Jeff: Yes, well taken. Yes?

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Participant: Maybe you’re going to get to this, but in the exhortation, as far as it goes, what have you or the men found here to help to keep you from drifting?

Jeff: I’ll tell you what. To some degree I personally think that one of the things that has helped me the most is the very thing that he begins with. I actually think he begins with sort of that bolus of Christology, to say to us at the very beginning that if your eyes are on Christ—not just on the Christ of your making but the One who sits on the throne, the One who supplies you with justification in Him, and the One who supplies you with renovation in Him, that’s the best place for you to start. Did you want Bill to come back over? Yes, Bill?

Bill: For me pragmatically—and I don’t know if you guys would agree with this—and it’s been even more so recently, it’s praying and fasting. You said *uprooting*, and that for me helps keep the focus. That has been a pragmatic way. I don’t know if there are other ways like that that you guys can think of.

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: Jeff, the way you explained the nautical term, I think that’s been helpful to me, to think that Jesus is our destination.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: That’s where you’re going. And when you keep that in mind, it keeps you from drifting.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Bill, you might want to come up. I figured I’d save you a little distance and geography.

Bill: What we refer to as our vertical relationship with the Lord, in reading His word and fasting and prayer are beautiful things. But without that horizontal relationship, the relationship with each other, being at meetings like this, being a part of men’s groups, having mentors, having people to hold us accountable, that really is key also.

Participant: I very much like what it says in the second chapter of Acts, what the apostles and the disciples did. It says that “*they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the breaking of bread, to fellowship and to prayer.*”

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And in context with that I find that I’m very encouraged by the words “*he who endures to the end will be saved.*” I mean I’ve now gone through months of having very bland quiet times. Sometimes I don’t want to have a quiet time. I find them boring. But I feel like I’m obliged to get out there and get on my knees every morning, read the Word, pray, journal. I just do it because I’m going to endure to the end with the apostle’s teaching, prayer, fellowship and the breaking of bread.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Participant: Jeff, I think I’m agreeing with everything you’re saying. But I think that sessions like this—and not just coming to have a cup of coffee and sit here,—but the interplay between each individual’s personality is really something. I had a guy a couple of weeks ago who doesn’t belong here but is a good friend who I see almost every week. And he shared something with me. And he said, “I know I can trust you.”

Jeff: Yes.

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Participant: And when he opened his mouth,—not that I’m smart, and everybody here knows that!—consequently I was able to answer and relieve him of the situation. But I really believe that a lot of it has to do with what we have in here as brothers. You know, you may not talk to everybody every day. You don’t talk to everybody every week. But you see that sometimes when you come here, you’re acknowledging sometimes that it’s that ability to reach out and know that you’re going to get a good brother behind you.

Jeff: See, and that’s the thing. I think all of these comments sort of indicate that there’s a—Well let me put it like this. So you have the church or the men’s group that puts on the plastic face that says that everything’s fine and okay and I’m wonderful, and isn’t Jesus great! Everybody knows that’s a lie, because everybody knows that we all deal with sin, right? And there’s something that we’re dealing with.

And so when we come and say, look. This is what I’m dealing with, and it has even become a pattern in my life, then that’s not a cause for everybody to be fearful. That’s the cause for everybody to either judge me or jump on me, right? Jump on me verbally, or jump on me ecclesiastically. That’s the cue to beat me up. That’s not the cue to beat somebody up. If it’s like what we’ve been talking about, that’s the time to minister to the person. That’s the time to come alongside of them and to call them alongside of you as you stand alongside of Christ, because that’s really the key, right?

I mean that’s really the part of the illustration that’s lost when we’re parents. We tell our kids, “Come alongside of me.” But when we’re Christians, we’re standing alongside of Christ, calling others to come and stand alongside of Him as we stand alongside of Him.

So that’s when the real ministry begins, when men come and stand alongside of us as we stand alongside of Christ, and we actually minister to them and walk through the issue with them. Go ahead.

Participant: Pastor, I personally struggle not with believing God but trusting God. And that’s what I question, like Abraham believed God. But when he was willing to sacrifice his son it was evidence that he trusted God. Is there a difference?

Jeff: Yes, and I think that’s a great question that you ask. And so I immediately think about John Newton who was an atheist slave trader, kind of a despicable fellow. He starts to read the Bible and he says that “*when I started to read the Bible, I determined to believe everything I read.*”

Now how do you do that? And how do you do that, especially when you realize that faith is made up of three things? It’s made up of *knowledge, agreement to that knowledge,* and then the last is *Spirit-created trust,* right?

So I can get knowledge and I can agree with that knowledge. The demons have that, though. The trust is God-produced, Spirit-produced.

So what do I do in that situation? Well I think that you do exactly what John Newton did. You say this, and this is simplistic. But you follow up with a question. You say this.

Here’s a chair, right? I know something about chairs. Chairs at least have four legs. Some have backs. Do I agree that this is a chair? Well it looks like a chair and I agree that it’s a chair.

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Do I trust it? Well, let's say that my struggle is that I've got chair phobia, right? And somebody says, "It looks like a chair to you."

"Yes, it looks like a chair."

"Do you agree that it's a chair?"

"Well to the extent that I can, I agree that it's a chair."

"Well then, sit down in the chair," right? And I may have struggles sitting down in the chair. But I'll sit down in the chair. And I'll trust God to create in me the saving trust that I need in order to depend upon Him.

But my part in this is to continue to know and to continue to agree and to continue, so far as I am able, to put my trust in what I already know. Does that make sense?

Participant: Yes.

Jeff: Over here, Bill.

Bill: Christians are unspeakably horrified to think that there's a sinner amongst us. So we remain alone in our sin.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Bill: And he who is alone in his sin is utterly alone. So we need to be real and authentic, and be willing to bear one another's burdens. We like to throw stones because it puts the attention on someone else instead of on myself.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Bill: And I think too, just like with my brother Ted, I think the encouragement is that just as we take stuff in, it's good to find a younger man to put it back out too. That way it gives us energy and joy to impart to those that we possess.

Jeff: Yes. I might have told this to Mike before. But one of the things that I did a year ago which was so beneficial is that I met with four other guys. And we actually started to meet because one guy, a younger guy among us, was struggling with some serious patterns of sexual sin. And we met with him for the purpose of accountability. What we did was that we met for over an hour. We met twenty minutes for accountability, twenty minutes for prayer and twenty minutes for Bible study. And we just all went through the same book. We started meeting for him, and it became such a wonderful thing for all of us.

But that's just what I mean when I talk about walking alongside of someone and being honest about your struggles, and being not just willing to hear about someone else's struggles, but being willing to speak your own. And there's trust that needs to be there, and so forth. And that trust had been built in that circle. And what a wonderful thing it was!

Participant: Oftentimes I think it comes down to what we tell ourselves. And in our sinful nature we tell ourselves all kinds of lies.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: We live in a fantasy world because we tell ourselves the lies. And I think that what I see Paul, or the writer, the Preacher, doing here is bringing us the truth of who Jesus Christ is. And when we read through that list, there is a big list in chapters 1, 2 and 3, the Christology, an incredible list of who Christ is. Take a piece of paper and write down all those things about who Christ is that he talks about, and then begin to tell

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yourself the truth. That’s where I struggle, telling myself the lie in my own nature, or finding what the truth is and telling myself the truth.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: There’s a huge difference.

Jeff: And it’s often really difficult, because sin breeds secrecy. And secrecy feels safe, but it’s really not. In the end it’s devastating.

Well listen, I’ll tell you what. Let’s wrap it up. I’ve got a doctor’s appointment that I’ve got to make. And I want you guys to know that this is your fault. *(Laughter)* This time it’s not me going slow. And I’m happy to go slow, but it’s all your fault. *(Laughter)* I’m putting this all on your shoulders. So let me pray—

Participant: It’s because of that guy Sig.

Jeff: Hey, hey! No, no, come on, now! *(Laughter)* Come on! *(Laughter)* All right. We’re gonna pray and we’re gonna go! *(Laughter)*

Let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day and the time You’ve given, for the love of the Lord Jesus Christ shed abroad in our hearts by Your Spirit. Thank You, Lord, for these men and for their love for You. Lord, we come before You now, thanking You for this day. Give us a blessed one, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen. *(Applause)*