

Walking in the Light

by Jack Hayford

Jack Hayford emphasizes the importance of walking in the light through community, accountability, and the power of God's forgiveness.

Duration: 50:46

Scripture: Psalm 86:11, Matthew 18:20, Acts 2:42, Romans 7:17, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Fellowship And Unity", "Faith Community"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a funny incident involving a little boy named Kyle. The speaker emphasizes that children often do funny things without realizing it, which adds to the humor. The speaker then transitions to discussing the importance of having a circle of believers who can support and build each other up in their faith. They highlight the need for individuals to make a decision to actively seek out this kind of fellowship and unity. The speaker also references biblical examples, such as David and Jesus' teachings, to emphasize the significance of being connected to others in the faith.

Transcript

They're impressed, but it's not like you would like them to be impressed. And on that occasion, I never forgot the presentation, because they said, Pastor Jack, we're making you an honorary member because as a minister of the gospel, we understand you're in fire prevention also. And there's a... You know, I've got to tell you a story this morning, has absolutely no relevance to anything I'm going to say, but I like it so much, I just heard it, and I've got... Can I tell you a joke? Tell you one thing I've discovered about this story.

I just ran a test. I was speaking this last week, or a little over a week ago, to a group of pastors and their wives in Nebraska. And the week before, I had been with a group of people, and there were men and women there also, husbands and wives, as is the case in many cases today.

And I discovered that this story doesn't really ring it with women, and I don't know the explanation. I was trying to do a psychological study on it, because it has nothing to do with understanding. I don't mean by that I think the girls are less quick-witted or anything like that.

I really don't. But I don't know why it's not... So, don't feel embarrassed, sweetheart, if it doesn't strike you funny, okay? But the guy next to you, he's going to like it. See, I've obligated him to like it now.

Jake was a pastor in a mountain village, Colorado. And the thing that impressed everybody was not only the quality of Jake's spiritual leadership, he was a man of real character, strength, and purpose, and everybody admired him. But he was also particularly admired because he was a remarkable sportsman.

Jake was the best fisherman in town. And the thing that impressed everybody is that even on times that the guys who were good fishermen in town would go out and catch nothing, Jake would come back with a boatload. And that was really something that just was terrifically impressive.

One day the game warden in the community said, Jake, you know, there's nobody apparently who seems to have the skill you do, and I'd just like to know what your style is. Would you feel you were betraying a confidence or, you know, a secret you want to keep? If I went out with you sometime, watch your technique. Jake says, no, warden, you're welcome to go with me.

So they set the date, and when the date came, they got in the boat, went down to the far end of this enormous lake, they went down to the far end, cut back in a cove, were back in a corner there when they pulled up, Jake got the boat anchored, and he got seated, reached under the seat where he was sitting, came out with a stick of dynamite, lit it, threw it in the water, and, you know, and fish just came stunned, bellied up to the surface of the water. He, uh, no, that's not it. You helped me understand why women don't get it.

But, Jake, uh, Jake started reaching over to gather in the fish, and the warden's sitting there looking at him, just the other end of the boat, just absolutely, you know, just startled beyond words. He's speechless. Finally he says, Jake, I can't believe what I just saw.

He says that kind of illegal thing, you know, he says, you've always been such a man of character, I can't believe you'd do anything like that. And he says, besides Jake, he says, I'm here. He says, I mean, you know, the warden.

When we get back, Jake, I hate it, but I'm going to have to arrest you. Jake just looked at him a minute and didn't say a word, reached under the seat, pulled out another stick of dynamite, lit it, slid it across the bottom of the boat, it went under where the warden was sitting, and he said, Warden, is he just going to sit there and chat, or are you going to fish too? We were, the other day, Anna and I were home, got a phone call from Becky. She's our oldest child.

She and her husband pastor a congregation up in central California in Merced, and they have three of our five grandkids. And Kyle, who's the middle of the three kids, this happened, I said the other day, it was a few months ago, and Kyle was just starting to talk. He was approaching his second birthday at the time, and just beginning to talk.

It occurred to Becky this particular morning, Scott had already headed off for the office, and Kyle's older brother Brian wasn't awake yet. Kyle was there, and she'd just fixed his cereal, and was ready to take his hands and just say, Kyle, let's pray, and usually she would help him say a prayer, but he had never entered into it. He would just bow his head and listen to Mama pray.

But now that he was starting to talk, it occurred to her, this is a good chance to teach him to pray, to say his own prayer. He was used to joining with the family and hearing Daddy or his older brother or Mama pray, but she says to him, she says, Kyle, this morning Mama's going to help Kyle say the prayer. So you can say the word, because Kyle is getting to where he can talk now.

So he apparently was a little excited about that. Well, now for you to really understand the story, I need to leave them there at the table with their hands joined, just a minute ready to pray, and I need to give you a piece of background information. Kyle and Brian are among perhaps the four or five million children who every morning, five days a week anyway, watch Sesame Street.

And Kyle's favorite character, for some peculiar reason, is the Count. Now those of you that don't have kids at home probably don't watch Sesame Street. If you do, I wonder about you.

But at any rate, if you aren't familiar with Sesame Street, and I've lost touch with it, I think you can appreciate, so I needed to be updated on who the Count was. And the Count is called that. He's actually called Count Count.

And he's a takeoff on Count Dracula. But it's not as sinister and as fierce. But the character is used to teach the children to count.

That's why he's called Count Count. And he talks like Bela Lugosi did. You know, Lugosi spoke of that kind of, I don't know, the Hungarian, I don't know if you call it drawl.

Maybe in southern Hungary they do, I don't know. But at any rate, Lugosi, you know, well the Count, the way he does, he'll go, one, two, three. Well, because he goes slowly, it helps the little children learn the numbers.

And he always laughs. He always laughs like, you know, after he does the counting. And that, of course, creates the climate of happiness in and around a child's first exposure to numbers that are said slowly enough that he can understand them and so forth.

So it all works in the program. Well, Kyle really likes to count. Now you need to know that and that he really tunes in.

Okay, now we're back at the table. Becky's got his hands. Kyle, we're going to pray.

And she says, all right, Kyle, you say what Mama does and so I'm going to have to be both of them. So Becky says, dear Jesus. Kyle says, dear Jesus.

Thank you. Thank you. Four.

Five. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Well, now that story I told on purpose this morning, not because it's only cute and enjoyable, but because it kind of underscores a point.

We probably don't analyze the funny things that little kids do, but if you took a minute to think about it, you would know that Kyle didn't really do that to be funny. He didn't know he was being funny. As a matter of fact, that's what makes the things children do so funny is they don't know they're being funny.

There's an innocence about it. And an innocence that we don't use the word ignorance because ignorance sounds like an insulting term. But ignorance simply means that you don't know.

And they don't. And they're learning. And in that case, he was trying to fit together two pieces of information, some that he got off television, and some mama was feeding him right then, and he didn't know how to integrate the two.

And his inability to integrate the two came off with a rather cute kind of episode, and we all laugh at it and we enjoy it because it reflects that simplicity of a child in a very real sense. I wonder how frequently in our own lives that we, not knowing how to integrate things, end up with something that maybe really isn't all that funny, however. And that the only way that we can really learn how to put the pieces together is to acknowledge what we really are, and that's children.

I've mentioned already this morning, we sang John's birthday greeting, I mentioned standing within my 50th year of life, and we gather on a wide spectrum of age categories here, but all of us are people of mature years, but measured against the greatness of the wisdom of God and the fact that He, according to Scripture, is the eternal Ancient of Days, it's small wonder that the Bible refers to all of us as children, irrespective of years. We're children. And there's something about coming to acknowledge that and how much we need to, very humbly and simply, acknowledge our dependency for wisdom and for mutual support and help to be circled about with people that care.

That comes to all of us with some difficulty. There's a ferocious compulsion that drives most of us to verify our adequacy by saying we basically don't need anybody. Ironically, that's only in the private areas of our life.

There's not any group that I could speak to anywhere that would be more ready to acknowledge their need of one another professionally than firefighters. You guys have a phenomenal sense of teamwork and absolute dependency upon each other, not just to get a job done, but for your very survival. So I don't need to talk to you about the need of one another in those terms.

You're not only trained that way, you understand it. It's gut level to you, it's not just intellect. There's probably a few men here that don't owe your life to somebody else because of that recognition you not only need each other for the work to get done, the job to be accomplished, you need each other for survival.

I spend, and John mentioned it a moment ago, I spend a certain amount of my time just talking to men. It's nice to be with you ladies and pastor of a congregation. I, of course, have an awful lot of people in both genders that I'm privileged to call pastor.

Tomorrow I'll probably speak to 5,000 or 6,000 people, and that's a special thing. But nothing's more important than the time I'll get together with a few hundred men every month in my church. And when I was asked to come and talk here this morning, it didn't take a long time to make the decision.

Not only because I so respect you men, not only for what you do vocationally, but who you are in terms of your commitment. Most of you would have walked with Jesus Christ in a desire to be his ambassador where you go, a representative of him and his life. And I honor and respect that.

But frankly, it was because it's a chance to be with another group of men. I like to be with men. I believe in men.

I believe in people. But I feel that something special happens when a man comes to recognize the true source and fountainhead of his life. Not only in terms of his relationship with the Lord, but in terms of the need to grow into an openness of relationship with other men.

An open relationship. Let me read just five verses from the first letter of John. 1 John chapter 1. John wrote these words.

This is the message, he says, which we have heard from him, that is from God, has a capital H here, which we've heard from him and declare to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. Now if we say we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we're lying and not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin, we're deceiving ourselves. The truth is not in us. But if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I'm not particularly proud to relate this episode to you, but it's the best way I know to get into what I want to say. It happened about, well, maybe four months ago. We have about 85 people on the full-time staff that works at our church, and of those, there's five that work closely with me.

Four of those five are women, very gifted women. And my personal staff helped me sort out a lot of the very demanding details of my life. There's my personal secretary that coordinates everything, and I have a correspondence secretary and an editorial worker who handles writings and manuscripts and books we're working on, and a receptionist for the office.

Those are the women. One of those came into my office to go over some material on that day about four months ago, and it's nothing unusual about that day, except I don't want to sound either self-righteous and I hope not to sound too corrupt, either one, when I tell you what happened. But what did happen is that when she sat down in the chair next to my desk and put the material on this to start going over it, I had something go on in my mind that I'm not going to pretend to you had never happened in all of my life, but I hadn't experienced anything like that, certainly not with regard to this young woman who was sitting there at the desk.

I don't think I'd have experienced anything like that as foul as what was happening in my mind for quite a while. And I couldn't even explain to you why. I didn't have any designs on that girl.

But all of a sudden, while we're working on, as a matter of fact, what we were working on is a very spiritual kind of material. And all of a sudden, my mind is flooded with the foulest, most corrupt, sensual, and sexually impure thoughts that you can imagine about that girl and me. And the whole duration of the thought going on in my mind lasted about this long.

It started like now and stopped like that. And the reason it stopped is because I stopped it. I think most of you will understand what I mean when I tell you I didn't start it.

What I mean by that is that thought just came full blown in my mind. I wasn't anticipating it. I wasn't sitting around thinking dirty thoughts.

I hadn't just left a room where I'd been pouring over a piece of pornographic literature. All of a sudden, it's just there. There's not a man in this room who can't sympathize with me with the fact that we're bombarded with so much pollution in our culture that to maintain a pure mind really isn't a matter of being able to say, I never had an impure thought.

It's what you do with it when it comes. It determines. Everybody gets them.

I suppose the girls face them, too. But I think there's something of a point of unique vulnerability that we fellas face. I don't think it's because we're less pure, basically, than any of the women are.

I think there's just a special point of vulnerability we face. And I cite that not because my remarks this morning have to do with sexual impurity or pornographic thinking or obscenity of the mind. That it's just an illustration to get to a point.

That particular thought, like I said, probably lasted if we timed it three seconds before I stopped it. Now, the worst part of the story is what happened the next day. Because I stopped it.

We went ahead and finished that. And the next day, I don't remember what point it was in the day that the same girl came in and we were going over some probably the same material. I don't know, because it was a thing that was being done in continuum at that point.

And I'd forgotten what had happened the day before, because I'd shut that off just about as quickly as it started. But that same thing started in again. Now, you need to know, because many of you don't know me, and I'm making myself fairly vulnerable to you, and I don't feel awkward in doing so, but you need to know that, to begin with, she's a very gracious woman.

There's nothing suggestive about the way she carries herself or dresses. There's no commentary on her. I don't really think it's any commentary on me either, other than the fact of my humanity.

But that thing started in again. And here's the part I don't like to tell. That it went just about the same amount of time, but instead of shutting it off thereafter, about the third beat, where I recognized, I'm thinking, my God, where's this garbage coming from? That's what's going on in my head.

That's what I thought the day before. This day, I'm thinking, I don't believe it. This is coming again.

And then, for about that much longer, I let it go, and then stopped. And that bothered me. It really bothered me because I've come to learn a few things about myself, and that when I'm dishonest with myself to the point I will tolerate.

See, I hadn't welcomed that. I probably ought to admit to you, there's times in my past, I guess all of us have done this, times we've all welcomed fantasies of different kinds, not just sexual fantasies. There's times I've welcomed things in my past, but I think I've outgrown that.

I don't say that condescendingly, but I think I have. I don't entertain those things on purpose. But this was coming, as I said, unwelcomed, except for those two extra beats there.

Then I entertained it. Are you following what I'm saying, okay? That bothered me. It bothered me because I was being dishonest with myself.

See, I don't feel guilty at all for the things that bounce in on me. You know, all of a sudden, oh good lord, what's that? You know, and then when you handle that. But when you give it place, then I become accountable.

After I finished going over probably five or ten minutes, whatever we were working on, and she left the room, I buzzed my personal secretary, and Janet came in, and I said, Janet, see if Dennis is going to be clear any time this morning. I want to talk to him. Dennis is my right hand in the ministry of our church, and a very gifted young man, phenomenal, strong.

I'm honored that he calls me his father in the things of God. I'm not quite old enough to be his father. He's 34.

But he calls me his spiritual dad, and we've been related for about 18, 19 years. And I was his dean of students when he was preparing for ministry. And we have a very strong relationship, and he's a strong man of God.

So I said to Janet, see if Dennis can come over. And about 45 minutes later, Dennis came into the office. He said, Janet said you wanted to see me.

So I closed the door and sat down. The conversation went something like this. I'm going to have to take longer to tell it, I guess, maybe than it did with us, because there are a lot of things we already mutually understand.

Maybe the best way to tell you is this. Of the 21 guys that partner with me in pastoring our congregation, we have a covenant between each other. And the covenant is basically this.

We work, to begin with, besides the fact we're just men, fallible men, who need the strength of one another, we also are men that have to work very close with people, and oftentimes with people in deep difficulty, sometimes in deep grief, points of real emotional vulnerability, to where you're counseling, especially with a woman. You can become very vulnerable to an infatuation that, as a good and godly man, you certainly don't intend to indulge, but you can become very deceived and very vulnerable. And so we've had the agreement that among one another, that any time we ever felt we were being taunted by temptation toward a woman that we knew we were supposed to shepherd, as a shepherd does a sheep, and to care for, and if we ever felt anything impure were coming in, we would come to one of the other guys on the pastoral staff and acknowledge it so that we could... There's something about acknowledging a thing like that to somebody else that cripples the power of the temptation against you.

You become strong, because you're not trying to stand in your own strength. And I know that the whole mentality of so many people who know the Lord say, well, all you just need to do is tell the Lord. But I've known people that tell the Lord, and it's not that God's incapable.

It's because His plan is that we know a strength with one another, a partnership with one another. And that's in this passage I read, but I want to wait to talk about the passage after I finish the story. I said to Dennis this.

I said, Dennis, I asked you to come by for a minute because something happened yesterday, today, and then I told him what I've already told you. But without being lurid, or graphic, or crude, I described a little more the kind of thoughts that had come. And they were rotten.

And I said, I said, I don't, I'm not really having any emotional difficulty with, and I said the girl's name. It's on the staff. It's not a matter of really feeling temptation.

It's just that I despise the fact that I gave those extra few seconds of thought, and I felt I needed to acknowledge that, just have you agree with me. Now, you need to understand that Dennis didn't feel that the need was for him to bolster me up because I was about to fall into adultery, because I wasn't. About 20 years ago, I nearly did.

As a godly servant of Jesus Christ, in a role of spiritual leadership, I came so close to falling into adultery that I learned to distrust my own resolve. It's the grace of God that I didn't, and I'm thankful for that. I could have lost my marriage.

I could have lost my ministry. I could have lost my relationship with the Lord. None of those things were lost, and I'm very, very grateful for that, but it is no tribute to greatness on my own part.

That has its own story, but that's not the point of the morning. The point of the morning, in spite of the fact that I'm using it as an illustration, really doesn't have to do with sexual purity. The point of the morning has to do with the need of each other strengthening one another in the Lord.

Now, this passage of Scripture says, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. And I learned some years ago, something except the blood cleanses us from sin, but it's a verse that has to do with a powerful principle of mutual dependency in the fellowship of brethren. Let me say it to you in a broad kind of amplified Bible sort of way.

Using that situation, if Jack and Dennis walk in the light of Jesus, the way that Jesus is light, then they're going to become more tightly knit to one another in the love of God, in fellowship with one another. And as they walk in that kind of mutuality, it will give place for the power of Christ's cross to penetrate their lives with increasing liberty. Jack, where does it say that? Well, let me say it to you again.

If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, literally the Greek tense says, keeps on cleaning us from our sin. Let me say that again. Keeps on.

Most of you have known the Lord long enough to know that when you receive Jesus as your Savior, you're forgiven completely then. But see, the problem is not just the record of my sin that is instantly forgiven. The problem is the fact of my sin nature that still abides with me.

I don't just have a record of sin. There's a reality of it that lives with me as long as I live in this clay. I think, as I said, I think I'm growing.

You probably are too. I don't submit to the same kinds of things I once did in other times in my life, but I'm still haunted by other things. And the power of Jesus Christ, God has ordained, is not something that only is released on a vertical level of relationship, where, well, Jesus, it's you and me, but on a horizontal level relationship, where I enter into relationship with other brothers in Christ and live in transparency and openness with them.

There's an episode in the Old Testament Scriptures that impacted me powerfully just a while back. The story of a man that was about to, really about to violate, to compromise righteousness, and God spoke to his heart. I won't digress into the story of Abimelech.

Abraham's involved in the story. It's in Genesis 20. But the powerful thing that came to me came out of a phrase.

When Abimelech said this to the Lord, he said, Lord, I've walked in the integrity of my heart. What he was basically saying is, God, I didn't know, excuse me, I didn't know I was about to do something wrong. And God's word back to him was this.

I know you were walking in the integrity of your heart. And that's the reason I stopped you. Because you didn't know.

There's a message wrapped up in there that says, when a person will walk according to what they know is right in their heart, that God will keep them from making destructive mistakes. But they have to walk with what the Bible calls a heart of integrity, or in other words, a perfect heart. I want to define the word perfect because it can be terribly intimidating.

The word perfect, as it's used in the Scripture, does not have to do with accomplished perfection. Would you say that with me? The word perfect in the Bible doesn't have to do with accomplished perfection. Say it.

The word perfect used in the Bible does not have to do with accomplished perfection. By that it means you haven't attained unto it. Perfection in the Scripture has to do with more a wholeness of commitment, more than it has to do with a holiness of accomplishment.

Let me say it again. It has to do with a wholeness of commitment more than it has to do with a holiness of accomplishment. There's not a person in the room that's likely to accomplish perfect holiness in your lifetime.

I'm not saying that I'm indifferent about it because of that. I'm just simply saying you're not going to make it. Now I know that somebody could say, well, if I'm not going to make it, why try? Well, I'll tell you a lot of reasons not to try, the main one being that you can never accomplish it in your own strength.

But a reason to be interested is because people who make up their mind to let God work holiness in their life, and I'm going to define holiness in a minute, so be patient with me. People who make up their mind to let God work holiness in their life, those people are going to find something of a deep sense of satisfaction of God endorsing the details of their lives. It's like the Lord coming to subscribe and say, I'm going to work with you.

Now what do we mean by holiness? Well, we don't mean religious prudery. We don't mean some kind of stained glass snobbery. I'm not talking about some condescending looking down your nose at everybody else around you and saying, you haven't quite arrived.

I mean, there's a sort of a conceitedness that some people think holiness has to do with, and it becomes absolutely out of the question for most men I've ever met. They feel, forget it, baby. I'm never going to arrive there, and if you ever really were holy, you'd be such a kind of a panty-waisted, less than manly person anyway who'd be interested.

But I want to talk to you about just two holy guys that I know of. One of them is Jesus Christ. There's nothing panty-waisted about him.

He's the man of history, and he was the only person in history that was absolutely holy. And strong men respected him and trusted him, and women weren't afraid to be around him, and little children came to him and wanted to be with him. Holiness basically has to do with completeness.

Whole and holy are related words, cognate words in our language, and that's not accidental because they carry the idea of completeness. Another holy person in the Bible was David. David's renowned, among other things, besides being a great warrior and a great king, he's also known as a man with a classic case of murder and immorality to his record.

And the Bible still calls him a man, listen to this, with a perfect heart. Now it certainly wasn't perfect when he murdered and when he was involved in that affair with Bathsheba, but the fact is, the Scripture says the record was his heart was holy after the Lord. And that it was the perfection of a heart that wants God entirely.

These are David's words. He said, Lord, unite my heart to reverence your name. Listen to that word, unite.

Have you ever seen the way that they make French fries and run that thing over a potato and make all those little square strips rectangular solids that make that by just running that thing through? Imagine a heart that has that done to it. Not your physical heart, but your attitudinal heart, the spiritual you. We get fragmented.

We get cut into pieces. Our interests, our goals, our objectives get shredded and how many people get going ten directions with things that, things don't just come together. It can happen like what I described in my office.

It can happen in your mind and there are those things that want to turn your mind away from where your commitments ought to be. David, recognizing that in himself, said, Lord, unite my heart. Take the pieces that are trying to be shredded apart and draw them all together.

Unite my heart into one because I want a perfect heart. That's a holy heart for you. Well, God worked that in David and he becomes a great man of history because of the perfect heart being worked in his life.

He was committed to. When Jesus comes and teaches us how to live, the main thing that he says in his word is that you're going to need other people. So he trains, when he trains the men to work with him, he trains them to be in groups and never to be in less than pairs.

He always sends people out in twos when he makes a commission. Peter, James, and John are three of the twelve. Sometimes people made the mistake of thinking he liked them better than the rest.

What you have a case of is Jesus teaching people that they need to be in smaller groups. You can count on it that the whole group of the twelve broke up into smaller groups. There was that one Jesus was training in a special way and he would one day say wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I'm in the midst of them.

And he wasn't talking about church services. He was talking about the specialness of what happens when people determine that there will get a group that live in the light, in fellowship with one another, so that there can come the ongoing power of the cross of Jesus Christ in their lives. The blood of Jesus Christ keeping on cleaning them from their sins.

Purifying, refining, and developing. I was just working on my calendar the last 24 hours and was setting apart the times in the next few weeks that I will be with a group of three men I meet with. I need guys just to grow around.

Guys that will hold me accountable. Guys I'll open up myself to and say I'll trust my life to you. I want to say something without condemnation at all.

But I'm going to guess. I'm just going to make a guess. The guess is on the second thing.

The first thing I know is true. But I'm going to guess the second thing is true. The first thing is, I'm talking to a group of men, every one of you, move with a circle of guys in a company that you trust your life to.

But to move in the life of Jesus Christ, I'm going to say, and I guess, the majority of you don't have a circle, a company of two or three that you move with that you trusted your spiritual life to. You say, well, Jack, I just trust my life to Jesus. That's enough to get you to heaven.

That's enough to get you to heaven. But see, the challenge is, we're not going to heaven today, probably. Reminds me of a little kid that was in a church service and the pastor says, everybody want to go to heaven, stand up.

And everybody stood up except the little boy. The little boy didn't stand up. He says, son, don't you want to go to heaven? He says, yeah, I want to go to heaven.

He says, why didn't you stand up? He says, well, I thought you were getting up a group to go right now. See, all of us want to have time of life now and we're going to. The grace of God got a lot of years.

What we be and become during that period of time, you need a circle of people where the life of God is infusing that fellowship and developing and building you. Two things I want to say and then I'm done. The first is that there's a need for you to make up your mind.

That you really need to make up your mind what I'm saying. Not just to think, well, that's an interesting thought. Yeah, I really like what he said or whatever.

You decide you're going to find a circle of two or three brethren. They don't have to all be firemen. The people in the church you go to.

Guys you know that walk in Jesus. Don't get together and talk about the Super Bowl results or what the impending baseball season is going to be or how the Lakers are doing or what's going on with your car or like that. You don't even get together to have a Bible study though that certainly is worthy.

You get together and talk about where you're at in your own growth and your own response to God's word in your life and what things are trying to sneak in and shred your heart so that it's not united. What things make you to become more of the man that God would use to change your surroundings. Not because you're a chest thumping wonder that impresses everybody but because you're just a plain duck like the rest of us that's learning to walk in Jesus or would grow in him.

I believe the Holy Spirit would hold you accountable to think and respond to that word somehow. No way I can monitor it. No way anybody at the table can monitor it.

You just decide what you're going to do about it. You contact some guys and you say hey I want you to think with me about it. One thing you could do if they'd never thought about it order through John's office however you do it get one of the tapes of today and sit down with those guys play that and say this is the kind of thing I'm talking about.

Get started if you don't have something like that going and I'll tell you because I know men I know people. At least four out of five of you don't have a circle like that and like I said that's not condemnation. I think it's revelation.

I think it's something God's saying to his people today. He wants it to happen. How many of you nod your head and say hey that sounds right to me.

You agree? Yeah. It's happening. The other thing has to do the second thing and I said two things and I'm done.

This is the second. Have you ever begun your life in the Lord Jesus? Have you ever come to know the Lord? Now most of the people in the room here have already begun their life in Jesus Christ. Firefighters for Christ obviously people have begun their life in Jesus Christ but there may be two or three or more or less I don't know who have never begun their life in the Lord.

Now inside every human heart there's a monitor. An awareness. I say monitor in the same way we talk about TV monitors.

In fact they're surrounding this room. And you get a picture every now and then. You get a picture that says this is what I know I want to be and what I really know inside me I am or what I'm not.

And that monitor is the picture God gives not because he wants to shame you into humiliation but because he wants you to catch a vision of what you could be if you'd let him make you complete. And the truth of the matter is none of us can come complete on our own terms. That's another one of the illusions most of us are trained to live in.

Just like some of us think we can be strong in Christ without the help of brothers. It's built into the fabric of our race. Say you're going to you will become what you make up your mind to become and so it's all up to you.

Go for the top. You know what you were created to be and so forth so you can arrive. Well we were created for better things than we usually arrive at but you don't arrive there on your own steam.

By getting in touch with the one that created us and the only way that can happen is if we reestablish communications which our own sin and failure have broken. And the way that those communications are established because God sent his son to establish it. By coming to Jesus Christ we not only get forgiveness of sins but the beginning of a power for life.

He gives us the power of his spirit to live for him. And if you are getting the picture this morning that says you really do need to get back in touch with the Lord and begin with him. And I want to invite you to make a decision this morning too.

Say Lord I want you in my life today. Say well I don't know if I could just start today. Yes you do know.

You don't start by saying I'm going to be a nicer guy today and tomorrow. You don't start by saying I'm going to rush off to church tomorrow because the fact is probably most of you are going to rush off to the station tomorrow. But you make up your mind that you are going to give your life to the Lord.

And he begins on his side of things working a power toward you that is more than you can imagine until you open up to it. I don't know if I can live it. Somebody says well I'll answer that question for you right now.

We'll make it easy on you. No you can't. That's why you need him.

That's why you need to come to him and he'll work his life in you. This morning I think I probably have the year of a couple hundred guys that know the Lord that are saying yeah I really am going to figure out how I can pursue relationships that will help me become a man of a perfect heart who walks in the light and finds the power of Jesus increasing because of living in that way. And maybe there's a half a dozen or more or less I don't know.

I don't know but who say Jack I need Jesus today. Maybe just one guy here that's the case that I want to open my heart to him today. To that fellow or woman I want to say that nothing would rejoice me more than for you to let me be the second party in an agreement Jesus said people could make.

Here's what he said. He said if any two of you agree concerning anything they ask God will do it. That's Jesus' words.

In other words if you and I just come to a moment of agreement we don't even have to shake hands on it. We could just let our eyes meet and we agree this is the moment this is the day. The Lord says I'll do what you agree on and in just a minute when we all bow our heads so we can give the privilege of privacy to everyone in the room I'm going to ask anybody in the room that's inside saying that thing of I'm getting the picture Jack the monitor of the Holy Spirit in me is giving me the picture and I need the Lord and I want him in my life today and I want to open my life to him.

I do today open my life to Jesus Christ. I'd like to agree with you on that and God's going to do something because we agree. Not your power or mine but his promise.

So when we pray in a minute I'm going to ask you after we've all bowed our heads I'll ask you to lift yours and I won't embarrass you just when our eyes meet I'll just say I agree with you this is coming to the beginning and start your life with the Lord today. The rest of us can be at prayer about what we're going to do and we can talk about his call to us to walk in the light through fellowship with each other. Let's all bow our heads shall we.

Heavenly Father we come in prayer right now because we need you and we thank you for your love to us that reaches out with a powerful embrace right now. Lord it's been such a beautiful morning. The beauty of the music has always been ministered and the truth just the enjoyment and breakfast.

Now we come to this moment I ask that by your Holy Spirit you would take the word and make it life in the heart. I'm going to pause in that prayer while all of our heads are bowed. I'm going to finish the prayer in a minute but I'm going to just put a comma there.

While our heads are bowed and as I said the courtesy of privacy is given to everyone how many are there that would say just with your eyes Jack I've never received the Lord and maybe you didn't you walked with him long ago but you drifted a thousand miles away like it was and today you say I'm coming to him I'm opening my life to him today and I want to agree with you Jack this is the day my life begins for Jesus Christ I open to him today.

While nobody else is looking around I'm scanning the room to see how many would just lift your head right now and let our eyes meet and I promised I wouldn't embarrass you but the encounter of our eyes is your way of saying not with words but with a glance this is the day you open your heart to Jesus Christ you want to begin you say I want God's power in my life and I agree to it lift your head right now I'm scanning the room you see that's why you're looking at me right now I agree with you I'm really grateful for that are

you with her whisper to her whisper to her you're receiving the Lord today go ahead are there others look this way Jack I'm beginning my life with the Lord today just the encounter of our eyes you're looking at me right now I agree with you too is that your wife or

what just whisper to her you're receiving the Lord today that's power in that agreement anybody else just a signal of agreement sir you look at me for that reason boy listen I agree with you that Jesus Christ began his work in your life today would you just tell the guy next to you one of the guys just whisper to him there's power in that go on speak to one of the guys just tell him I'm beginning my life in the Lord today thank you Lord for each of these I'm going to take one more sweep with my eyes here if I missed you that time around would you signal me with your hand if I missed you so our eyes can meet in that agreement anybody else boy I'm so thankful let's all just with prayer thank the Lord for men opening their life to Jesus Christ right now Lord we do give you praise on

Thanksgiving and pray by your Holy Spirit you establish and extend your righteous purpose in men and for all of us who come like children today we say help us grow up in your way with a perfect heart in Jesus name amen amen amen amen amen it has been super to be with you God bless you while listening to this tape perhaps God's spirit has been talking to your heart if you felt the need to draw closer to your creator why not start today God has provided a way for man to enter into relationship with him forever through his son Jesus Christ Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life no man comes to the father but by me the Bible says that as many as receive him to them give he power to become the children of God you too can receive him right now by asking him to forgive you of your sins

and asking him to come into your life and to be lord and savior of your life if you would like to receive Jesus Christ into your life today you can do so through a simple little prayer just open up your heart and repeat this prayer with me Lord Jesus I admit to you that I am a sinner I believe that you died on a cross for my sins please forgive me of all of my sins please come into my heart and into my life please make my life acceptable unto you thank you lord for your gift of eternal life and I receive you this day in Jesus name I pray amen now if you prayed that prayer with me right now you are a new person all your past sins and faults have been forgiven by God and in his eyes you are a brand new creature the bible says that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature old things have

passed away and behold all things become new now as a new born spiritual infant you should seek the sincere milk of God's word so that you may grow by it so read your bible and pray to the lord often and seek out other Christians and enter into fellowship with them we'd love to hear of your decision for Christ we'd love to give you a free study of the book of john on cassette by pastor chuck smith Jesus never turned a spiritual or hungry or thirsty soul away but filled everyone who asked so we'd like to do the same for you in his name so please write to us at the address on this tape and tell us of your needs and what the lord has done for you today may the lord bless you now and keep you in everything you do and everything you say welcome to the family open our eyes we want to see

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