

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

THE BEST NEWS EVER | LOVE & WAR

AARON BROCKETT | MAY 21, 2023

Video

Josh

We were like four to five years into our marriage and we had had issues with infertility. We were really just struggling in the midst of that.

Emily

We were sitting in our living room and just dreaming about our family and I asked if he would ever want to adopt.

Josh

Prior to marriage we hadn't ever talked about adoption at all.

Emily

And in my heart, I had always wanted to. So, I was nervous to ask this question because if he said no I would be really sad.

Josh

And lo and behold, we had both been thinking about adopting since we were each in high school. It felt like after that conversation we actually were pregnant with our daughter.

Emily

After we had Vera, you were adamant about adopting our next child. So we pursued private adoption. We started going to some meetings and meeting with some agencies.

Josh

A friend of mine, he and his wife were looking into adoption. And they went to a conference. And there was a speaker there who talked about foster care. And he just said, "There are some of you in this room that are here to adopt and you're like tuning me out because you're just like, 'Why is this guy up here speaking about foster care.'"

And there was no way I could foster kids because I couldn't grasp them leaving my home.

And he said, "Those are the types of parents that those kids need in their lives."

Emily



So right now we are parenting a two-year-old, a four-year-old, and a six-year-old.

Josh

Knowing that God called us into this and we are holding it loosely, whatever it looks like. The things that we know we can control are how we love and care for the kids that are placed within our home.

Emily

There is beauty in it. But there is a lot of chaos in it as well. When you get into the hardships and you want to quit, the gospel is what is going to sustain you through it. God is going to be the One who is going to sustain you through it.

Josh

You're brought up to some of your hardest moments with no place to turn but God. But you also see the progress and the steps that these boys have made in our care and how rewarding it is for these boys to be able to run around and jump around like normal boys.

Emily

Our community has reminded us of why we do it when we have wanted to tap out and say, "We are done." And that has been so impactful. The community that we've made here at Traders Point—we have a care community that supports us. They help provide a meal for us once a week. So one less night I have to worry about what our family is having. They help with childcare, which is so important, just to be able to have a break or run an errand or go to an appointment or go to a training. All of that is so important to have—that support.

Josh

Without our care community I honestly don't know if we would still be in the midst of this two-year placement. It took a heavy weight from us and made it a little lighter.

The whole process is just a glimpse of what the gospel is in a sense of how God adopts us as children. It puts kind a new perspective on it because you see your own brokenness and why would God adopt me as a child, because like I have so much that is such a mess and so ugly. But despite all of that God looks past that and through that and accepts us and loves us.

Emily

God left heaven and stepped into our brokenness. And because of that, we want to do the same. There is one more quote that I want to read. I just feel like it sums up why we do what we do.

I could be sitting on the sidelines in blissful ignorance as the brokenness surrounds me, enjoying the wholeness of a sweet and sheltered life, missing out

on the beauty of breaking off pieces of my heart and my life to make another whole, missing out on the joy of offering those broken pieces of worship to my Savior.

End Video

Aaron

Hey, let's give it up for Josh and Emily. We're really grateful that they invited us into their home to share a little bit of their story with us.

Today is a day that we are just acknowledging as Stand Sunday. And that's a day when churches all over the nation choose to stand for vulnerable children in their communities.

And it is not too drastic of a word to say that what we are facing is not a foster and adoption care need, it's a crisis. In our state of Indiana, we rank number five in the nation for the number of kids in foster care. There are roughly 12,000 children who are in the foster care system awaiting placement.

And the gospel message essentially says that our God is a Father to the fatherless. And because of His care and His justice and His mercy He adopts us into His family. And that's what motivates us to do the same.

So I just want you, at the very least, to be aware of our FAM ministry, our foster and adoption ministry. You can go to the website tpcc.org/fam. And we have people in the lobbies of all of our locations at a table who would love to meet you and answer any questions that you might have or just help you to know what your next steps are.

For some of you, as you were watching that, you might feel a little bit like they felt. You know, "Is God really calling me to this?" Or maybe it's kind of pulling on your heart strings and you're wondering about it. And we would love to talk to you about what those next steps are.

Maybe for you, you don't feel called to foster or adopt but you can be a part of the care community. You can come around those who do. So I want to encourage you to check that out. At the very least be praying about that ministry and be aware. Your generosity helps us to resource this really, really incredible ministry that we have.

Well, today I'm really glad that you are here because we're starting a brand-new series of messages called *Love and War*. And we are working our way through this little book at the very end of the New Testament known as 1 John. Now, it's not John's gospel, it's John's epistle. And it doesn't get quite as much air play as his gospel.

If you're somewhat... I remember whenever I was new to faith and new to Bible study, I remember one of the many questions that I had when it came to this, I looked at the New Testament and I saw all of these books that had John's name on them, and I was like, "What's up with all of the Johns?" And I got to the end, 1, 2, 3 John and I was like,



“What is this? A race? Did he take all three spots on the podium? And what is an epistle anyway? Is that a wife of an apostle?”

I just had all of these questions. And maybe some of you have as well. And if I could just kind of clear some of that up as we dive into our study, John was one of Jesus’ disciples. He was actually part of the inner three: Peter, James, and John.

So, John, a little bit later in life writes his gospel. And a gospel is just simply a biography of the life and ministry of Jesus. And John’s gospel is a bit different than the other three. Matthew, Mark, and Luke kind of write their gospels almost immediately. And I say immediately, just within a handful of years after Jesus’ resurrection. John took his time and he waited.

John was a bit of an older man by the time he wrote his gospel. And he really wants us to be introduced to the person of Jesus and to understand how it is that He reconciles us to God. Which is why anytime anybody ever comes up to me and they are like, “I’m a little bit intimidated by the Bible. Where should I begin as I read?” I will almost always point to them to the gospel of John.

But then a little bit later, John writes a series of letters to the church, generally known as an epistle. That’s what an epistle is. It’s just a fancy word for a letter. And the one that he writes gets divided up into three: 1, 2, and 3 John. We’re going to take a look and study the book of 1 John together the first part of the summer. We’re just going to take it verse by verse, line by line. I’m just going to read and explain and apply.

Now we’re calling this series *Love and War*, which might sound a little bit strange because it may seem as if those two words don’t belong together. Kind of like jumbo shrimp or virtual reality or working vacation. These words don’t belong together. But I think that you’re going to see as we study together why we are putting them together.

For starters, one of John’s characteristics in his writing is that he loves to use sharp contrasts to make his point. Maybe one of the clearest ones (we’re actually going to see it in our passage today, we see it all over in the gospel of John) is that he uses light and darkness. These contrasts help us understand.

Love is a big theme for John. John would describe himself as the disciple Jesus loved. John was the guy who arguably wrote the most well-known verses in all of the Bible. It’s probably one of the very first verses you memorized as a kid. It’s a verse that has somehow made it onto the chests of shirtless men with beer-bellies at the end zone of football games, John 3:16, “For God so loved the world.” John penned those words.

But John also wants us to see, primarily in his epistles, that we are at war. John wants us to understand that there is a war that we are in. And if you’re taking notes, there are like three aspects of this war. There is spiritual war, the tangible war, and the internal war. There is the war that is going on behind the scenes, even as we speak. The principalities and powers of darkness in this evil world.

Which then lends itself to the tangible war that we see in front of us and on the news. We see things like literal wars. And we see road rage and abuse and school shootings. All of these things are a result of the spiritual war that we are in.

And then there is the internal war that is being waged against you in your mind—in your body and in your mind. So we would even say illness and disease and things like ALS—the battle that is raging in our bodies against us. But then also the battle in our minds: habits and addictions and temptations.

So we are at war. And John wants us to make us aware of this war because we cannot win a war we are not aware of. John writes his epistle, not only to just make us aware of this, but to reassure us of how the war has been won and can be won.

And if I could sum up 1 John in two words, I might use the word *assurance* that's a big, big word. John wants to provide us assurance, but then also the word *convicting*. I don't know if you guys read ahead, but anytime I read 1 John (and I did it just in the previous weeks as we were preparing for this series)... I read 1 John, maybe even more so than any other book in the Bible, and it's wild how in the same sentence that John writes I can be so comforted and encouraged and yet by the time he finishes the verse, I am equally as challenged and convicted.

I usually try to have my message written by Wednesday at noon, primarily because I want to just put that thing in the crock pot and let it simmer for a few days. And the other reason is because I have a production meeting at 1 o'clock and they want the notes. Alright? A couple of reasons there.

And usually when I walk into that production meeting at 1 o'clock on Wednesdays, I'm little bit disheveled because I've just finished the message about an hour before and I'm trying to work it all out. Man, that was the case this week. I just kind of walked in and I'm meeting with the worship team and we're kind of walking our way through the message and one point in the message I just said, "Guys, I'm just like really convicted as I am preparing this because this is one of these messages where I'm like, 'Man, I need to make sure that I'm doing this before I preach it.'"

I just need you to know this. I'm going to preach chapter 1 today. And John just says some things that are so encouraging and at the same time so equally convicting. And I don't have a problem preaching things that make us feel convicted, because that's where change comes from.

But I do want to make sure that I use the right tone. I do want you to know that I'm not saying this at you. I'm saying this with you. I do want you to know that I say some of these things with a broken heart for the struggle that I'm in, the struggle that you're in. And to recognize that if I step on your toes, I reassure you, God has already smashed my feet.

And so as we dive into this together, just about everybody that I know in their walk with Jesus, I've certainly been there, has wondered at one time or another if their relationship

with Jesus is legit. We don't say it like that. We oftentimes say it like this. We kind of say it with Christian ease. We say things like, "Well, I wonder if I'm really saved. I wonder if I really have been reconciled with God or was that just emotionalism? Does the prayer that I prayed as a kid still stick today as an adult?"

Some of you maybe, a few weeks ago at Easter, were the ones who stood to your feet for the very first time and you said out loud for the very first time that you believe, that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And you followed me out those doors and you were baptized.

And since then your life has been kind of messy and it's caused some doubts in your mind, "Was I really sincere?" And, "Does God still love me?" Or, "Maybe He loves me but He doesn't really like me right now because I've promised Him some things, but I keep breaking my promises." Or, "How do I know if I'm still in a relationship with Jesus? How do I know if God's grace has really covered me?" And this question of assurance is on all of our minds at some time or another.

Now, most of the epistles in the New Testament, the names of the epistles have the city or the geographic region that they were originally written to. What I mean by that is the reason why the book of Galatians is called Galatians is because it's a letter that was written to the Christians in Galatia.

But if you notice, 1 John is an epistle that doesn't have a city or geographic region attached to it. It's got John's name. And I think part of the reason why is because John knows that this question of assurance is something that every Christian across all time asks to some degree. And John wants to speak to it.

So today, John is going to share with us some of the best news ever. In fact, I've titled this message *The Best News Ever*. How many of you love good news? How many of you know that oftentimes good news usually doesn't come without some bad? It's like, "We don't like part of it."

Anytime anybody comes up to me and is like, "Hey, Aaron. I've got some good news and some bad news. What do you want first?" I don't know about you but I'm always like, "Give me the bad news first," because I want to land on the good. Now, my theory is that the bad news will make the good news all the better.

And can I say this? The gospel message is oftentimes known as Good News because it is. But here's the thing. If you find yourself unimpressed, tired of, or bored with the gospel, it's likely because you've forgotten how bad the bad news really is. In order for the good news to be really, really good we've got to understand the two. John navigates this so well.

So, with that set up, let's jump into verse 1 of chapter 1. John writes this. He says:

"We proclaim to you," he's declaring something here, he's going to use that word three times here in just these first verses. We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning..."

Now if you go to John's gospel you see how similar he starts his gospel and how he starts this. He begins his gospel with,

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." John takes us all the way back to the beginning and says Jesus has existed from the beginning. And he says, "This is somebody that we've heard and seen."

"We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us," who's us? He's talking about the disciples, the apostles. He says:

"...and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy. 1 John 1:1-4 (NLT)

What is John doing here? Well, what John wants us to know is that he is getting ready to say some relatively heavy things, and he's saying, "Hey, listen. The authority by which I say what I'm going to say to you is not because I've got this all figured out. It's not because I'm smarter than anybody else. It's not because I've got this philosophy of life that is really dialed in."

He said, "The authority on which I'm getting ready to say this to you is because I was with Jesus and I heard Jesus and I saw Jesus do the miraculous. Not only that but I touched His resurrected body."

See, the apostles never tried to draw their authority from the fact that they thought that Christianity was the best explanation of the world, although we could make that argument, we could go there, that's just not what they lead with. They say, "The reason why we have this authority is because He verified who He was through the miraculous. The proof for them wasn't in His teachings or what others said about Him, but it was their witness to His power. They were like, "Guys, what we're getting ready to proclaim to you—we saw it. We saw something that was almost unexplainable but it was undeniable.

One of my favorite examples of this is in John's gospel. It's in John, chapter 9. There was a Jewish man born blind. And the religious leaders thought that that was a sign of

God's judgment upon him. His family members sinned or something had gone wrong so he was born blind.

Jesus didn't think so. Jesus meets the guy and He heals him, which was incredible. This guy has been blind his whole life. Jesus heals him. And now the guy can see.

This is one of the mind-blowing things to me. The religious leaders of the day were so distracted and unaffected by that that they meet this guy and immediately... Instead of celebrating the fact that he could see, they confront him and they say, "It just can't be. Jesus teaches false things so therefore He couldn't have healed you."

And I love this guy's simple response. It's found in chapter 9, verse 25. I don't know about you, I just imagine this guy saying this with a country accent. I don't know why I think that. I just think that's how he says it. He's like:

"I don't know whether he is a sinner... But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!" John 9:25 (NLT)

That's kind of how I envision it. And I can say that because I'm from rural Missouri. That's how we talk. I love his response. He's like, "I don't know what you guys are talking about, but here's what I know. I know right now the unexplainable is undeniable. I was blind a second ago and now I can see."

And I just want to submit to you that that is a really good definition of faith. Faith is not checking your logic at the door. Faith is not naïve thinking. Faith is not just, "I want it to be true so I'm going to make it true. No:

Faith = When the unexplainable meets the undeniable

Right now there are a lot of things about Christianity that are challenging to believe. And if you don't say that, then you're not being intellectually honest. Mainly: the resurrection. It's hard to believe. There are a lot of things that Christ has called us to that, at times, can be hard to believe or hard to do.

And maybe for you, right now, today... I'm speaking to somebody today who is kicking the tires of faith. You really kind of want this to be true, but you can't bring yourself to totally dismiss God and just say He doesn't exist. There are very, very few pure atheists out there. Statistically, over 90 percent of us believe in some kind of God.

So very few of us can dismiss God, it's just that we reshape Him. It's like, "Well, I don't necessarily like this kind of God so I'm going to reshape Him to be a little bit more palatable to me." And maybe for you, you're coming in here and you're like, "Well, I kind of want this to be true but I've got a list of objections as long as my arm. And I've got

some things that need to be reconciled first. Some things that need to make sense to me first.”

And I want you to know that your questions are welcome and your objections are welcome. God can handle them. And likely it’s not anything He hasn’t heard before. Here’s what I want to lovingly challenge you with. As you kind of lead with these objections, as you kind of lead with these doubts... Man, there are some really, really good ones.

Maybe for you, you’re like, “The thing that is keeping me from faith is morality. It just kind of seems so offensive. So repressive, especially in our day and age.”
Or, “What about the problem of evil and suffering? How do we reconcile that with a good God?”

Or, “What about the injustices that have been done throughout history and even today in the name of Christianity?”

Or, “You know what? It’s just the Bible for me. I don’t know that I can trust the authority of the Bible. Hasn’t it been written and rewritten over the centuries by men who had an agenda?”

And, by the way, these are all really good objections. They have really, really good answers. In fact, in the month of August I’m going to do a series on this called *Deconstruct/Reconstruct*. It seems like everybody is deconstructing their faith and I don’t think that’s always bad just as long as they reconstruct something.

And we’re actually going to talk about some of these things. We’re actually going to talk about the authority of the Bible. We’re going to talk about injustices. And we’re going to talk about sexuality. It’s going to be really fun. What can go wrong? So all of that is coming up in August. Kind of tuck that away, earmark that.

And all of those have really, really good answers. Here’s the deal though. If you are the kind of person who says, “This needs to make logical sense to me first before I submit my life to Christ,” you likely won’t. I’m not saying never. I’m saying you likely won’t. You’re actually coming to God and saying, “God, You need to come to me on my agenda. It’s got to make sense first.”

Here’s what I want to ask you to do. I’m not asking you to do anything drastic today. I’m not necessarily asking you to pray a prayer or be baptized or even to submit to Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life just yet. Here’s what I want to ask you to do. I want you to ask yourself this question:



Am I willing to doubt my doubts?

“I’ve got some doubts.” Good. So do I. That actually increases faith. So am I willing to doubt my doubts? We come to this place where the unexplainable is undeniable. And we have this encounter with God.

See in the remainder of the chapter John is going to address a question that Moses and David and Jesus and Paul all address. And it is simply this question: how can a sinful person come into a right relationship with a holy and just God?

And one of the things that John is going to do is he is going to take aim at religion, which might be surprising to some of you because you are like, “Well, isn’t that what we’re doing right now?” And I would say: No.

There is a difference between religion and what we might call religiosity—this idea that I’m trying to earn my way to God or I’m trying to earn a right standing with God with moral behavior, which I would submit to you is the root of most church hurt, when a group of Christians forget their need of grace and they no longer give it to others. We got saved by grace through faith on the day of our conversion and we left grace there and then we started living by works.

And when you start to live by works it will either crush you in a sense of shame because you can never do enough or it will lead to a sense of spiritual pride because you’ll start comparing yourself to others and looking down upon others.

John says it can’t be religion. Please know... I always know that somebody is not really in a relationship with Jesus when I say, “Hey, tell me about your walk with God.” And they answer with the denomination of the church they grew up in.

“Tell me about your walk with God.”

“Well, I grew up Baptist.”

Which I did, by the way.

“Well I’m Methodist.”

“Catholic.”

Nothing wrong with any of that stuff. That’s not what I asked. I’m not asking about the denomination you grew up in, I’m asking you to tell me about your relationship with Jesus. And religion is just as much an enemy of the cross of Jesus as secularism. What I mean by that is that the crucifixion of Jesus was a partnership between the secular and the religious groups of the day, which means that even today religiosity is every bit an enemy of Jesus as secularism. See, just because you’re religious doesn’t mean that you know God.

So John has to get us lost before he can get us saved. And what he's going to say next is going to sting a little bit but I want you to know that it's a good kind of sting. It's kind of like if you have to have surgery, when the surgeon walks in to the operating room with a hatchet, that's not a good sign. You should probably think about getting another surgeon. But if the surgeon walks in with a little anesthetic and a scalpel, then you submit yourself to that surgeon because he's cutting for your good. And this is the tone that John writes with and it's certainly the tone that I want to preach with. Look at what he says in verse 5. *He goes:*

"This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you:" I love that because John is simply saying, "I'm just the mailman. I'm just delivering the mail that has been given to me. And then he uses these sharp contrasts right here. He goes: "God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth." 1 John 1:5-6 (NLT)

And I love how he puts that here. It's this idea of practice. There is no way that you can justify yourself in this. In the eyes of a holy God we are saved by grace through faith and then we start practicing righteousness, we start practicing holiness, we start practicing truth knowing that when we hit a foul ball God's grace is there to catch us. It just takes repetition. You are not going to get good at a golf swing by just thinking about golf, you've got to actually go out and you've got to do it. The same thing is true with righteousness and truth. We begin to practice this. And he says that we are actually lying. Well, who are we lying to? Well, I think it's implied that we are lying to ourselves. It certainly could be that we are lying to others. We could be lying to God if we say that we are in fellowship with God but we're not practicing the truth.

What does that look like? Well, it means that we really don't know God if we are willfully and defiantly pursuing what God calls sin. I want to say that by also simply saying this. After our conversion, you and I, we are going to sin. We are all broken sinners and we're going to sin on a daily if not hourly basis.

What he's talking about here is premeditated sin. Do you know what that is? It's when you know it's a sin but you're going to go ahead and do it anyway because you want to. And, "God will forgive me." In the words of Philip Yancey, it's because that's His job. And so you just kind of do that over and over and over again.

Or you say, "I don't really know that it is a sin." After a while you begin to move it out of that category and you say, "All I am doing is following my heart. What's wrong with that?"

Or, "I'm going to act on my desires. Maybe God gave me these desires. So I'm just acting on them." And this so clearly violates God's best for you.

Here's how you know if you are really following God. It's how you feel about His commands. Are they cumbersome? Are they lame? Do you feel like they are old fashioned?

David writes this of God's commands in Psalm, chapter 19, verse 8. He says that God's commands are right and bring joy to the heart. They are clear and they give insight for living.

Is that how you feel about them? Or are you like, "Eh, I don't know that I need that anymore." Or, "Let me kind of do some hula hoops around this to try and figure out a way around them."

So how do we stay in spiritual darkness? How are we lying to ourselves? There are three common ways. If your taking notes, the first one is this: Believing in God without repenting before God.

Statistically, over 90 percent of us say that we believe in God. That doesn't necessarily mean that we've turned our lives around. The word repentance is metanoia. It's this idea that it's a change in perspective, it's a change in the direction in which I'm heading. But instead we do what we really want to do, what our flesh wants to do, instead of submitting to Jesus.

Submitting to Jesus as Savior, man, that's great. I don't know of anybody who has a problem with that. Who doesn't want to be saved? But submitting to Jesus as Lord, most of our issues that we get tripped up on are lordship issues, "I just simply don't like what He asked me to do. So, Jesus, I want You to be Savior of my life." I remember being in that baptistry and I was explaining to a lady one time, I said, "Hey, do you believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God and do you accept Him as Savior today?" And she was like, "Yes!"

And then I said, "Are you also making Him Lord over your life?" And she looked at me and she said, "What does that mean?" And I said, "It simply means that you are no longer going to treat Jesus like a salad bar where you take this and this but you're going to submit every area of your life—your bank account and your bedroom to the Lordship of Jesus. And she goes, "Yes," but not nearly as enthusiastically.

That's hard, isn't it? But can I tell you you can't get the one thing without the other. Repentance is what God desires for us. Belief is great. That's just the first step. The Bible says that the demons believe. That doesn't mean that they are saved.



When Jesus was preaching the gospel in Mark, chapter 1, repentance was the first response that He called for. Peter, when he was preaching in Acts, chapter 2, and they said, "What do we do?" He said, "Repent." And Paul said that God has commanded everyone everywhere to do... This is what He's asked us to do now that we know that Jesus has been resurrected and that is to repent. Acts, chapter 17.

Now, please understand me. We are not saved by the things we do. We are saved by grace through faith through the finished work of Jesus, therefore we do those things. It is out of the new identity and transformation. And, actually, at first, it seems a little bit harsh and abrasive.

Any of you ever go to a summertime matinee in the middle of the afternoon? And it's air conditioned. And it's dark. And you're watching the movie. And then you get done and you leave the exit straight from the theater into the parking and it's a sunny day. And it's like, "Ahh," the sun is harsh and abrasive and you want to shield your eyes or maybe you even run back in. But if you actually stay out there long enough you begin to acclimate and you begin to see that the light is good. It's the exact same way when we step into the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Number two:

Praying a prayer with no with no accompanying life change.

George Barna reports that about 50 percent of Americans say that they've prayed some kind of sinner's prayer even though half show no fruit, show no regular presence of any kind in church, have lifestyles and worldviews that in no way differ to those outside of the Christian faith.

If I had a chair up here and I said, "Man, I believe in this chair. This is the best chair in the world."

"Well, Aaron. Would you sit in it."

"I really don't want to. I don't really know if it will carry my weight."

That's not really trust. To trust in Jesus is when we say, "You know what? Maybe it doesn't even make sense to me at first but I trust that Your way is good and You have my best interest in mind."

Here's the third thing:

Being casual rather than confessional about our sin.

Can I just ask you right now, when it comes to personal sin in your life, are you casual about it or are you confessional. It's easy to treat it flippantly or dismissably, especially in the days in which we live. Maybe we know something that the Bible says but we don't



like it. We don't agree with it. Or it's inconvenient so we rationalize it, change it, or dismiss it.

But you can't say that you know Jesus as Savior and Lord and then continue to ignore what He did for you on a cross. You see, we are not mistakers in need of a life coach, we are sinners in need of a Savior. And He's not offering you just some suggestions on how to be a better you. It's an invitation to come and be transformed into a whole new version of you.

And by the way, your flesh will disagree with what Jesus asks of you. If you don't then you are probably not being honest with yourself. If you insist on it all making sense to you at first, you agree, "Okay, Jesus. I'll submit this area of my life to you just as long as I understand it." That's not Lordship. That's bargaining.

This doesn't mean that we will never sin at all. Man, we will. All of the time. It is almost guaranteed. Here's what I'm asking you. What is your internal response when you do? Do you hide it? Do you conceal it? Do you rationalize it? Do you explain it away? Or is there a posture of confession and surrender and repentance?

Can I just tell you that the waves of God's mercy are like the waves on a beach that just keep rolling in. But you won't experience the waves unless you go down to the beach and that's what confession and repentance is. He will receive you no matter what. So here's the bad news. You don't know, you can't really know God if you are willfully continuing in and harboring sin. But the good news is you can know Him if you're always humbling yourself in a posture of surrender.

Look at what John writes in verse 7:

"But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth." 1 John 1:7-8 (NLT)

Man, that's the best news ever but it's couched in a phrase that is so convicting. And he says here that we've got to step into the light, "I've got to grasp how sinful I really am before I get to see how gracious God really is."

Here's the challenge. I remember when I first started preaching and one of the things that I learned right away is that some messages get you applauded like a hero and other messages pounded like a nail. And I just learned this right away. I was like, "Man, when I preach grace and forgiveness, I get applauded.

When I say things like, 'We are saved by grace through faith.'" Amen. Pastor. I say things like, "Hey, man. No matter what, no matter who you are, God's grace is there for you. The



ground at the foot of the cross is level for everyone,' people cheer." But then I begin to talk about our need for grace, that we are sinners, it's not as much. Have any of you ever trained a puppy? And you just applaud the puppy. The puppy is going to learn that behavior.

And here's one of the things that I learned as a young preacher. Anytime I started to feel a little bit uncomfortable and insecure, especially in a message, I would just immediately run to grace. I would actually take the short cut. Maybe hop over some of the bad news just to get to grace. And I think I did people a disservice. In order for the good news to be good you've got to understand what you need to be saved from.

Francis Schaeffer, one of our country's greatest apologists, was once asked what he would do if he met a man on a train and had just one hour to talk to him about the gospel. Here's how he responded, "I would spend 45 to 50 minutes on the negative to really show him that he is morally dead. Then I'd take the last 10 to 15 minutes to preach the Good News of the gospel."

And then he says something that convicted me so much. He said, "I believe that much of our evangelistic and personal work today is not clear, simply because we are too anxious to get to the answer without taking the time to help people realize what they need to be saved from."

Here's where I think a lot of preachers and a lot of Christians misstep though. We get the tone wrong. We say it at people instead of with people. We say it in a sense of superiority and judgmentalism rather than confessing, "I'm just one beggar telling another beggar where to find food."

BAD NEWS: You don't know God if you say you have no sin.
So the bad news is that you can't know God if you say you have no sin, you refuse to call it sin. You just call it preference.

GOOD NEWS: You do know Him if you are deeply aware of your sinfulness.
The good news is that you do know Him if you are deeply aware of your sinfulness. The clearest sign that you are growing in your understanding of how God's grace works is not that you no longer sin, but that you become acutely aware of how much sin has pervaded your heart.

Man, I'm so glad for the weather right now. Can I get a good amen? I looked at the forecast for the next 10 days, we've got lots of sunshine, 78 – 80 degree weather. Those of you who are watching from tropical places on the coast, just know that for us the months of May and June are God's redemption for us wandering in the wilderness of the winter for all of those months.



Now, here's the thing. I think back on those really dark, dreary winter days I fail to see how dirty the dashboard of my truck gets. There's just this thick layer of dust. I don't even see it because it's so dark and dreary. And then we get a really bright sunshiny day and I'm like, "Oh. There it is." And right there is an opportunity to clean the dashboard rather than say, "Oh. It's not that bad."

So, the closer you get to God, the closer you come into the light, you drag your sin kicking and screaming into the light and you begin to recognize your... You don't feel all your... You recognize your need for the cleansing of God.

I think a common misconception for a lot of people is they think, "The closer to God that I get, the holier that I'll feel." But actually in reality you're recognizing the need for Him. Isaiah said this so well. The prophet Isaiah. He was nearly at the top of the pyramid of the spiritual and religious food chain. He was a prophet. And Isaiah said that he came close to God. And here was his response, "Whoa. Whoa is me. I am a man of unclean lips." Man, that's how you know. It's Peter when he recognized that Jesus was the Messiah. He fell to his face and said, "Away from me. I'm a sinful person."

You meet Christians who have been following Jesus for 20, 30, 40 years and they are humble and they recognize their need for grace. And they are not harsh with you. And you know that those are people who are walking with God.

You meet Christians who are judgmental, and harsh, and are cold—they have all of this knowledge of God but it's not being translated to the heart. That is the equivalent of theological and spiritual B O. You ever been around somebody whose deodorant has failed them and they don't know it? I've met a lot of Christians that way. Their need for and their sense of God's grace has worn off.

John finally finishes with this in verse 9.

"But," one of the greatest buts in this letter. "But if we confess," what's the opposite of confess? Conceal. He said, "...if we confess our sins to him, he is," this is the word, circle it, underline it, highlight it in your Bible, "he is faithful," God is faithful. He'll do what He says He will do. God is not flaky. God does not miss appointments. God does not overlook it. He is faithful every time. And He is just, which means that God will always do what is right.

"...to forgive, not to condemn, "...to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." Guys, that is the best news ever! And it comes with this invitation to confess not to conceal. And he says:

"If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. 1 John 1:9-10 (NLT)

Here's how I summarize that verse. If we are faithful to confess, He is faithful to forgive.



So what do we do with this? Well, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. It's just application. Regardless of who you are today, I want to ask you to search your heart right now. I want to ask you to ask God to search your heart right now by His Holy Spirit. Which of these warnings that John gives today might be true of you? Are you, right now, willfully and defiantly continuing to sin? Maybe to the point that you wanted to change the definition of sin, "I don't think it's really a sin." Are you justifying that behavior as not all that bad? Are you hiding and concealing or covering up sin rather than confessing it? Maybe this. Are you having a hard time believing that God's grace could actually cover you because you've brought the same sin into the light over and over again in your life? "At some point God's just got to be exhausted with me."

I want you to know that you can't out exhaust God's grace. He says, "You just keep coming to Me as often as you need and you confess and you ask for a heart change and a sense of transformation."

A couple of days ago we lost, I believe, one of the modern spiritual giants of our day. Tim Keller, pastor at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, a prolific author and writer, had this uncanny ability to take a really lofty, heavy theological concept and simplifying it in ways that you could grasp it and understand it.

His writing impacted and shaped me so much as a young man. I used to just read his sermons and just watch how he unpacked the text. And he went home to be with the Lord a couple of days ago.

So I think it's kind of fitting to end this on a Tim Keller quote. He says, "The gospel requires you to believe two really difficult things at the same time. You are so bad Jesus had to die for you. There is no other way for you to be justified in the eyes of a holy God. And yet, He is so gracious and loving that He was glad to die for you."

And if we're honest, we don't really like either of those statements. We don't want to think of ourselves as that bad. And it's hard to imagine that God is that good. We kind of prefer the mushy middle we're not that bad and God doesn't have to be that gracious. But that's the gospel message. And it's why for many it's difficult to believe and why few actually do.

All that it requires is for you to surrender. Not once, but on a continual basis. Not part of you but all of you. You might be like, "Well, how do I even begin to do that?" And one way that you might employ this into your life right now is every day, on a daily basis, when you get up, once you're awake, once you've had liquid Holy Spirit—coffee, you get that into your system then you begin your day with this prayer.



“Lord God, I am a sinner. I sin all of the time. In my thoughts. In my speech. In what I do. And I need your forgiveness today. And always. So I start the day today asking for it now.”

That would be a great way to start the day. And you just begin to see conviction and repentance, not as something to run away from but something to run to. You begin to see it as a gift. It's a sign that the Holy Spirit is with you.

And I think oftentimes we begin to think that confession and repentance is God taking us out to the woodshed and giving us a real what-for. But actually confession and repentance is not like a woodshed. It's more like a daily shower that you take, stepping into the cleansing, gracious waters that Jesus offers. And He's cleansing you of your sin, clothing you with the fragrance of Christ.

2 Peter says it so well, “God is patient. He doesn't want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.” So I want to give you the opportunity to do that now. Today. Just simply confess and repent before Him.

I want to ask you wherever you may be. If you're at one of the locations, you're in this room or online, wherever you are seated would you just simply bow your heads and close your eyes really quickly. And I want you to take both of your hands and extend them out in front of you and close your fists.

I want this to be symbolic of the fact that maybe you're holding on to some sort of sin. Maybe you're holding on to something that you're concealing. Maybe it's something, as I've been preaching that has just pierced your heart and convicted you. And maybe you've already cursed me under your breath. Maybe you've gotten a little bit angry. Maybe you've tried to figure out a way to navigate around this so you don't have to employ it.

What's the thing you are holding onto? I just simply want you, in the spirit of humility to say, “God, I confess this to You. I release this to You.” And as you pray that you can simply open up your hands as symbolic of just releasing. You're not going to conceal it any longer. And if need be perhaps you need to confess that to someone else. Here's what God says that He will do. He says, “I will be faithful to you. I'll be just to forgive and to cleanse. Today I want to give you that opportunity to do so. And maybe as we sing this final song together, you might come to the altar. You might fall to your knees. You might confess before Him asking Him that He would forgive. Because this is the best news ever. But before it can be good news, we have to feel the weight of the wrath and how gracious our good God really is.



Lord God, we come before You, I stand before You, a very, very sinful man. And I am keenly aware of how far I drift from You and how rebellious I am and how crafty I am to try to circumnavigate Your commands rather than to submit to them.

God, I pray, as a church, that we would have the sweet, sweet spirit of Your grace to know that it's not that we should love the sinner and hate the sin, it's that we should love the sinner and hate our own sin. And then invite others to do the same knowing that Your grace is as vast as the ocean, it's just like continual waves that never run out. But we've got to go to the beach in order to experience it.

God, I pray that we would do that today. We know that You are faithful. And as a people we confess. God, would You meet us right where we are at and give us the insurance that we are in right standing with You, not because of what we do but because of what You have done and continue to do on our behalf. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.

