

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

**I WILL CHOOSE TO BE CONSISTENT | SET LIKE FLINT**

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Well, good to be with everybody today as we get ready to weather the great snowstorm of 2025. It wouldn't be January in Indiana without one. So, I don't know if that kind of feels like par for the course. But I'm glad you guys are here. I want to welcome everybody across all of our locations and online.

Today's message is just going to be an extremely, extremely practical message to kick off a brand-new year. And at the end of today's message, we're going to take communion together across all of our locations. So, right now I just want to encourage you to, if you don't have that already, grab a communion cup to be ready to participate with us here in just a few moments.

It's hard to believe that it is 2025. Can anybody else believe that? We are officially a quarter of the way through this century. That's one way to think about it. Makes me feel really old. And I don't know how you are feeling about a new year. I don't know if you're kind of like on the bandwagon: New Year's resolutions, goal setting, like you're super, super excited about it or if maybe you are a little bit cynical, and you've got some doubts and you're just totally not a New Year's resolution person. I can kind of understand that as well.

But, what I want to invite you into is to do a little bit of evaluation as to what we just came out of over the last 12 months and then what we are kind of entering into. I typically do that between Christmas and New Years, those five to seven days. I'll just spend a little bit of time reflecting upon the previous year, getting my heart ready for the year to come.

And as I was doing that last week, one of the things that I just really began to think through was, overall, 2024, I would just put that as a really, really good year for me personally, but not without some adversity. And one of the things that I was just reflecting upon was that there were some high highs and there were some low lows. Maybe for you too.

Here's the thing that the two had in common. I didn't see the highs coming and I didn't necessarily anticipate the lows, or didn't see them coming. In fact, there were many things that happened, and I was like, "Man, those are some blessings. I don't deserve them." And then there were some bad things, really discouraging things that happened that I didn't see coming as well.



Here's what it initially did to me. I'm just being confessional with you and I'm trusting that some of you will be able to relate too. Because of that I found myself kind of gingerly inching into this year. Like, "Well, if that was true in the past 12 months, and actually was true in 2023 and 2022 and 2021, probably in 2025 there are going to be some unexpected blessings, some high highs, and some unexpected challenges, some low lows."

So, I found myself kind of like posturing trying to figure out, "How can I enter into the year to try to maximize the good and minimize the bad so that I can net an overall good year at the end of the year?" And really, what that is spelling out is control, if I'm being honest, and a lack of trust in the sovereignty of God. Because there isn't really anything that I...

There are so many circumstances that are outside of our control, both the good and the bad. And really, what I want to do is I don't want to try to live my life in the absence of adversity. I want to try to live my life so that I can face adversity well.

I want to be surefooted and recognize that good or bad, whatever may come, I'm going to trust the sovereignty of God in that. And it's an unfortunate truth, but it is true, that when I look back at my life, the times when I've grown the most spiritually and emotionally and even in other ways—like physically—have been through adversity not around it.

Actually, adversity, when you are surefooted can become a blessing. So, what I want to encourage you with is just simply these truths right here:

God wants you to meditate, Satan wants you to ruminate.

So, God wants you to meditate on what it is that you have been through and where things are headed. And Satan wants you to ruminate. What's the difference between the two? Well, one keeps you spinning on circumstances you can't change. And the other one gets you reminded of the truth of God's word and an unchanging God. One turns the attention on you the other turns the attention upon the only One ultimately powerful and sovereign enough to bring about real change.

So, at the beginning of a new year, let these words of St. Augustine encourage you. I love how he writes this. He says:

"Trust the past to God's mercy, the present to God's love, and the future to God's providence."

Trust the past to God's mercy because you cannot change it now. It's in the past. Trust the present to God's love. The present moment that you are in—be fully present in that



moment. And recognize the gift that it is. It is God's mercy and love and grace upon you. And then trust the future to God's providence.

When it comes to the primary things that matter the most in your life and in my life, I would just kind of narrow them down to these four buckets. If you are taking notes, you can jot these things down:

Your spiritual growth—your walk with God. That should be the most important thing.

Your relationships and everything that would fit into that category: Dating, marriage, kids, family, co-workers, your community.

Your physical and emotional health. Those are important things because we are holistic beings.

Your financial health, because as Scripture says, wherever your treasure is your heart will follow.

Those four things. It comes to spiritual growth, relationships, physical and emotional health, and your finances.

Now, I think that for many of us, if we are being honest about those four categories, we would say that too many times our strategy has been these two little words here behind me:

I hope

I hope I grow closer to God this year. Don't know if I will, but I hope.

I hope my marriage gets stronger.

I hope I find and meet the right one.

I hope my connection to my kids gets better.

I hope I'll be in better shape physically, emotionally, and financially.

But what I just want to gently point out is that the words I want and I hope aren't effective strategies. It's a good place to start, but it's not an effective strategy that will sustain you through the year, especially when adversity comes.

Now, we already know this. Just think about it for a minute. We don't train one time and go out and run a marathon. At least most of us. We don't just save a little bit from one paycheck and expect to retire after that. We know both of those things require consistent behavior over time. I think it is what Paul was driving when he was mentoring a young Timothy. He says this in 1 Timothy, chapter 4, verse 8. He says:

"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." NLT



Going to the gym in 2025, that's how I want you to think about your spiritual formation, which is just a fancy term for growing to look more and more like Jesus. Listen. Your salvation is not based upon your works, it's based upon the finished work of Jesus. However, your formation, that is based upon your works.

So, we're saved through grace by faith, but then training for godliness means that we've got to put in some effort. Paul is saying we don't just automatically become godly, we have to train for it.

C.S. Lewis would say it this way in the Screwtape Letters. He says:

"The more often one feels without acting, the less one will ever be able to act, and, in the long run, the less one will be able to feel."

"The more often one feels without acting," in other words, "I've got the motivation, but I never apply what I know," that's what he is saying. "I'm feeling without action." "...the less one will ever be able to act, and, in the long run, the less one will be able to feel."

Do you hear what he is saying? He's saying, "If you never apply what it is that you know, you'll eventually lose the motivation to grow." So, you've got to begin to take what you know—this is what I want to encourage you with not only in today's message, but with every message in 2025. I don't expect that all 40 minutes will apply to you equally every single week. It doesn't need to. You just walk away from the message and go, "What's the one thing God wants me to know?" And, "What's the one thing that God wants me to do?"

Now, I'm telling you that if you will try to pinpoint what it is that God wants you to know and what it is that He wants you to do and if you would do it that week, then you are training in godliness.

Lewis would say this in another book of his that is lesser known, *God in the Dock*, he would say:

We all want progress, but progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road.

I think it was Albert Einstein who said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." That's essentially what Lewis is saying. He's like, "Listen, man. If you are not getting to the place where you want to be in your relationship with Jesus, you've got to ask yourself, 'Maybe I don't need to keep going down the same road, I actually need to do an about turn and take a different path.'"

And that's literally what this eight-week series is about. When we're kicking off a brand-new year. I don't want us to be a people who are trying to insulate ourselves from



adversity because adversity is going to come. I want us to be the kind of people who develop a godly resilience in the face of adversity. That we would develop, could I coin this term? a spiritual grit, "I'm going to be surefooted even in the face of adversity and whatever may come."

So, our message series that we are kicking off today—it's going to be an eight-week series—is based off of a single verse in the Old Testament book of Isaiah where the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, says these really powerful words. And I think he was doing a little bit of meditation of his own. He goes:

"Because the Sovereign Lord," that word sovereign just means that He is control, "...helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have," here it is, "set my face like flint," Flint is another word for stone. It means that I'm fixed. I'm not going to be blown around by the waves of change. My eyes are fixed upon becoming more and more like Christ. "...and I know," that in all of that effort, "I will not be put to shame." Isaiah 50:7 NIV

That's what this eight-week series is all about. Actually, what I want you to know is that I have laid out all of the message series for 2025. And the way I lay out a message series is kind of like a menu. Like, what does our church body need? What nutrients do we need to carry us through? Really, kind of a mega theme for 2025 is preparing us to follow God wherever He may lead.

And if you've been in our church over the last year, you've heard me talk about this a lot—the Great Awakenings. The fifth Great Awakening could happen this year because every 50 years is when God has sparked one. And that would be 2025. We don't speculate that God might do that. We do anticipate it. We anticipate, "God, would You please bring revival and would you please bring awakening."

And it could happen. It seems like things are kind of getting set up where that could happen. What I want you to know is, if that does happen, we can expect resistance because the enemy is not just going to roll over.

So, if God is going to bring a revival, and if He is going to bring awakening, then that means that right now you need to get your feet set. Right now you need to recognize that there is going to be resistance, there are going to be battles. And I want to prepare you for the battle that I know you're already facing. Doesn't it, at times, feel like life is such a battle? Or is that just me?

You guys are kind of doing what the 8 o'clock did, you're just kind of looking at me. Maybe it's that the 17-degree weather has gotten into your soul. Alright? I just need to kind of warm you up here. Don't leave me alone up here.

I think it kind of feels like we're all in a battle. Does it feel like you are fighting for your marriage tooth and nail? Does it feel like you are fighting for your kids? Does it feel like you are fighting for your own emotional health and sanity? You're fighting for your



relationship with God? It's because you are. You're in a spiritual battle. Not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of darkness in the evil realm.

And worse than actually being in a battle is being in a battle and you don't know it. And I want you to actually know it and I want you to be surefooted and I want your faces to be fixed like flint—that we are going to be a people who don't try to dodge adversity, but we try to live well in the face of adversity.

So, this eight-week series is really about moving—I want to move you and me from I hope to I declare. I declare that this is the kind of person I'm going to be in 2025, Good or bad, blessings or curses, I declare that this is going to be the person I'm going to be.”

I just want to kind of tease out where we are headed in just the first four weeks of this eight-week series. I'll tell you what we're going to talk about today in just a minute. Next week we're going to talk about facing temptation, so it's like we're going to be a people who fight temptation, not give in to it. The week after that, “I want to be the kind of person who handles criticism well.” Hello. I think all of us need that. Right? How do we handle criticism in godly ways?

And then the week after that we're going to talk about: How do we move on, refusing to stay offended. Being offended is a fact of life. Staying offended is a choice. And some of us have chosen to stay offended. So, that's just the next few weeks. We're going to have so much fun.

Today, here's where we are going. I want to talk about consistency today. I want to be the kind of person who is consistent. And here's why. If we were to identify, if I were to identify some of the primary things that have kept me from becoming who God has ordained me to be and from doing what God plans for me to do—a lack of consistency would likely be the culprit.

Honestly, at times, I'm not sharing with you brand-new information. I'm just trying to remind you of information that you already know, you just need to apply consistently because a lot of our lives are filled with lots of stops and starts.

So, if you have ever been stuck (which we all have) if you've ever hit a wall (which we all have) if you've ever thought, “Why am I not where I am in life where I thought I'd be at the age of 20,” or, “by the age of 30,” or, “by the age of 40?” And so on. Likely it was a lack of consistency. It's not that you didn't know what to do. You knew what to do. You just weren't doing it consistently. That was likely the culprit.

Listen, man. That is true in all four areas that I just mentioned. That is certainly true in our spiritual walk, but it's also true in our relationships, our physical and emotional health, and in our finances. Inconsistency is one of the greatest detriments to transformation and change in those four categories.



When I was in college I remember reading this book by Eugene Peterson. And if that name sounds familiar to you it's because he was the one who did The Message paraphrase. In a lesser-known book of his, which was highly influential in my formative years, is this book behind me. The title is:

### A Long Obedience in the Same Direction

Doesn't that just sound so inspiring? We don't want to hear that. Do we? We want to hear, "A short obedience in whatever direction I want to go." That's kind of what we want to hear. And honestly, my spiritual growth would not be described, at times, seasons in my life, where it has been a long obedience in the same direction. If I'm being honest it's been momentary obedience when I felt like it in all sorts of directions. And I go, "Why am I not changing?" I love the subtitle of the book, it's Discipleship in an Instant Society.

Which means that your discipleship, which is once again a fancy word for looking more and more like Jesus in your life, cannot be microwaved. It doesn't happen with one sermon. It doesn't happen just by attending church one time. It doesn't happen just going through Rooted one time. You cannot microwave it. It's more like a crock pot. And it's developed over time. And, unfortunately, through adversity not around it.

2 Peter, chapter 6 talks about being patient in endurance. James, chapter 1, verses 6 through 8, let these words encourage you, say:

"Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do." NLT

And I would say that for a lot of us in the church in the west, this explains why there is no power. It's because we're living kind of divided lives, between God and the world. It's sort of like asynchronism. We've got one foot in and one foot out. So, because of that we're not tapping into the helper—that's the word for the Holy Spirit—a helper that we all need. And we end up forgoing the power that God has made available to us. We often just think, "You know, man. Change seems to come through one big decision. Let me get a running start and then I'm going to jump into change." And when we don't see it we get frustrated.

So, change doesn't happen in one crucial conversation. Change doesn't take place in one counseling appointment. Change doesn't take place in one investment, one act of generosity, one killer vacation with the fam where I connect with my kids. Instead, it's like consistent, daily conversations.

Maybe just one church service, one sermon series, one prayer—if the change I'm looking for doesn't happen then, we assume all kinds of things: Well, it didn't work. God doesn't

care. I must have done something wrong. Or our favorite option—we just blame other people.

We're oftentimes missing this equation right here. Take a picture of this with your phone and write it down. I think this is such a crucial thing for us to remember.

Consistent, actionable behaviors over time = real change.

Consistent—that means regular and daily; actionable—I can see it. I can measure it; behaviors—more than good feelings and intentions; and this is really key, over time—I am not going to give up, even when it gets hard, even when resistance comes, even when I lose my motivation, I'm not going to give up—now, it may not look really pretty today, but I'm going to keep moving forward, that equals real change.

And oftentimes we are inconsistent. There is nothing really actionable, it's just kind of ethereal, it's kind of like emotional and it never gets translated into behavior and we don't give it enough time. And we don't experience the transformation that Jesus died for us to have.

In James, chapter 2, verse 17 it says:

“So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.” NLT

Really, what we are after here is transformation. That's what we're after. And:

Transformation happens when I do consistently what I used to do occasionally.

That is true in relationships, finances, health, and with God. And all sorts of things sabotage this. Don't they? Paul writes these really familiar words in Romans, chapter 7. And I think they are familiar, not only because we've heard it—it's a pretty familiar passage—but when we read this, Paul is really sharing with us the human experience that all of us can relate to. Listen to these words as he writes them:

“I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it.” How many of you can relate to that one sentence right there? It's like, “Man, I want to do what is right.” I think most of do. But that doesn't mean that we do it. “Instead I do what I hate.” Which leads to all sorts of shame.

Verse 16, “But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good.” In other words, that means that if the Spirit of God is living within you pricking your heart, convicting you of sin—that's a good thing.

Verse 17, “So, I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, this is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.” NLT



How many of you, that would explain yesterday? It's like, "Man, you just kind of like boiled it down into one sentence. This kind of explains my whole life experience." There are so many things that can sabotage our transformation. It can feel like a daunting task.

What I want to do in the remainder of our time is break it down and make it as simple and practical as possible. I don't want to confuse you to the point where you don't have to apply anything I say. I just want to make it simple and practical. Let me give you four things.

1. Small things done consistently outweigh big things done occasionally.

Number one: I want you to recognize that small things done consistently outweigh big things done occasionally. I think oftentimes we are waiting for the mountaintop experience. We'll go to a conference. We'll take a mission trip. We're looking for that one big, huge... And listen. God moves in those ways. But more often than not, God's going to work in the small daily things that you do consistently.

It's kind of like eating an elephant. One bite at a time. It's going to outweigh the big things that you do occasionally. Zachariah, chapter 4, verse 10 says, "Don't despise small beginnings."

So, that's how I want you to think about character development. I want you to think of it sort of like physical training. Spiritual formation and physical training are very, very similar. I think that's why Paul uses that term with Timothy—training for godliness.

Here's the thing. I don't know if any of you are members of a gym or anything like that. But traditionally, gyms are packed in January. And then by February they are like ghost towns. What ends up happening is that we end up running at that thing.

How many of you have ever done one, big, massive workout? And then you go home and you're like, "I don't see any change." You're likely so sore you can't move. And then you don't go back. Or maybe you get injured, and it sidelines you. Instead of starting small and consistent and recognizing that when you do something consistently and small, it's going to outweigh the thing that you did all at once.

That's why I just encourage you at the beginning of the year with daily Bible reading. I know it sounds like such a small thing. I don't know how many of you have tried to read the Bible all of the way through. Maybe you've tried to do a Bible reading plan. And then you got somewhere in the land of Leviticus and you just like waved a white flag. You're like, "Oh, man. I just can't."

Or life started to get crazy. Kids got sick. And all of a sudden you just realize you let one day slip, and two, and three, and four. All of a sudden you're off of the plan. I totally get all of that. I want to give you lots and lots of grace. You should give yourself grace. Because, really what this is about... Here's how I want you to think about it. Daily Bible



reading is recognizing that I've got all kinds of inputs coming into my mind all day long and I want to take 10 minutes to listen to the one voice that truly matters.

So, when I read the Bible, it's not like trying to plow through massive chunks of Scripture, it's about trying to get through it little, by little, by little. Stopping and asking myself, "God, what are You saying here? Just read one verse and go, "God, what are You saying to me? What am I going to do with this? I'm going to apply it today." Man, you do that every day, I promise you that by the end of 2025 you will see significant transformation and change in your life.

I want to invite you to read the Bible with me. Seven days ago, I started this Bible reading plan called The Bible Recap. I know many of you are on it and numbers of you have reached out to me, DM'd me about it. Many of you finished it last year and you're starting over. You can download the YouVersion Bible App, find Bible reading plans, find The Bible Recap.

It's chronological, meaning you start in Genesis and Job. It goes oldest to newest. And you just read through the Bible. It takes you about 10 minutes a day. And then there is a five-minute devotional that explains what you just read. It's something you can apply. Go ahead and find me on YouVersion Bible App, and friend me, and we'll read the Bible together this year. I promise you, if you can stick it out this year, you'll change.

Here's one more thing that I'll promise you. At some point you're going to wake up and your day is just going to be crazy. And you're going to miss your Bible reading. And that's okay. You missed one day, just don't miss two. "Oh, man. I missed two." That's fine, just don't miss three. You go back and you get caught up. And what I love about it is, when you get done reading it gives you this gratifying checkmark. It's like, "Oh, oh." It's so amazing. So, I want to encourage you to read the Bible with me.

Small things done consistently outweigh big things done occasionally.

2. Don't give up when things aren't changing as fast as you thought they would.

Number two: Don't give up when things aren't changing as fast as you thought they would. Man, don't give up—long obedience in the same direction.

Maybe some of you have seen this graph before. I think this is really helpful. You've got results on one side [vertical line]. These are the things that you want to see happen spiritually, relationally, physically, emotionally, financially. Here are the results I want to see.

And then there is the time that is required to actually see those things happen [horizontal like forming a right angle with the vertical line]. And then the dotted line [extending from the intersection of the joined lines going up and to the right] is our expectations. This is what I hope will happen. And isn't it just... We all want up and to the right, hockey stick growth. Don't we? Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way.



Typically, this is how it works. We call this [the first inches of the dotted line] January and February. That's what we call that little line. The valley of frustration. You start in and actually it kind of feels like you've gone in reverse a little bit. You've put forth all of this effort and it doesn't feel like you're getting any results. But what happens is, if you stick with it, eventually the growth comes in dramatic ways. That's not just the wisdom of man, that's Galatians, chapter 6, verse 9. Paul says this:

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if," what? Say it with me, "we don't give up." NLT

Sometimes that's all you need to hear. Just don't give up. Compound interest isn't just a thing that happens to your 401K. Compound interest is also something that happens to you spiritually and emotionally and relationally. And, by the way, resistance is often a key indicator that you're headed in the right direction. You just keep going.

### 3. Enjoy the growth process over the outcomes

Number 3: Enjoy the growth process over just the outcomes. Here's what I mean by this. You've got to develop a process that you enjoy. Because if you don't enjoy it you won't stick with it.

It's kind of like this. How many of you have asked, "What's the best diet to go on?" I don't know. The one that you will stick with. "What's the best Bible reading plan to do?" I don't know. The one that you will actually do. That's the best one.

So, instead of just being so goal oriented... Here's the deal. Let's just say, you set a goal to lose 50 pounds. Well, once you hit it then what is your motivation? Or let's just say you stop short of it. You only lose 45. Then all of a sudden you're like, "Oh, I'm a failure." No, instead say, "You know what? I'm going to develop a lifestyle of health."

And the same thing would be true spiritually where you're saying, "You know what? I'm going to implement these spiritual practices where I actually enjoy the presence of the Lord more so than what I might get out of them. Then when I begin to develop these rhythms, when adversity comes and challenge comes, I've actually been building and developing these spiritual muscles all along. I'm ready to face the challenge."

Daniel chose this. In the Old Testament book of Daniel, Daniel is in Babylon. The administrators of King Darius are really threatened by him. And they realize that they can't catch Him in any sort of ethical or moral thing. In verse 4 it says:

"Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs," in other words, the way that he was doing his job, "they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn." And by the way, may that be said of us, Christians in the marketplace. If you're doing your job so well that even if people are coming against you they can't find anything to criticize or condemn because

of the way that you are working. It says, “He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy.” NLT

That is a picture of consistency. They knew that they weren’t going to discredit him that way. So, what they did is they pushed through a law that made it illegal for anybody to pray to anyone but King Darius, knowing that Daniel wouldn’t do that. So, Daniel—things are about to become really complicated for him. But I love what it says in verse 10. Daniel when home and:

“He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.” NLT

In other words, he had developed the rhythms so that way when adversity came, he just continued to go through those daily rhythms, and he was ready for it. And that’s how I want you to think about the spiritual rhythms in your own life.

You know the most common analogy to your growth as a Christ follower is not a run, it’s not a sprint, it’s not a flight. It’s a walk. That’s one of the first things that we learn to do as little humans. I remember coaching my kids to walk across the living room floor. They wobbled and it didn’t look pretty, and they fell.

And that’s what God is doing, through the Holy Spirit. He’s just encouraging you to take some wobbly steps. You start right where you are and you develop a process that you’ll enjoy so that it is sustainable, recognizing that really the ultimate goal is not to get things from God, but it’s to look more like God.

James Clear says in his book Atomic Habits:

“New goals don’t deliver new results. New lifestyles do. And a lifestyle is a process, not an outcome. For this reason, all of your energy should go into building better habits, not chasing better results.”

And I don’t know if he meant that in the spiritual realm, but it applies. So, could I just encourage you with a few... I’ve already encouraged you with Bible reading. Can I encourage you with three more? Is that okay? Actually, I don’t care if it’s not okay, I’m going to give you three more anyway.

Here’s the thing. You’ve heard me talk about this when it comes to our expectations of you. We call this:

### Battleship Mentality

There are five of them. I just want to give you three.

#### 1. Come Ready

The first is: come ready. And, by the way, this is the first Sunday of 2025, snowstorm is coming. You’re here. Give yourself a gold star. That’s amazing. So, you come ready. What this means is regular, physical (that’s key), church attendance, not just online.



What I mean by that is, if you look in Hebrews it talks about this. It says, “Hey, let us not give up meeting together,” and they didn’t have online then, so that’s what he meant— physical, “as some are in the,” what? Habit. That’s what ends up happening. Your kids get in sports, you miss church, it becomes a habit. You miss one Sunday because you’re retired, or a snowstorm is coming. It becomes a habit. And then you miss week two and you miss week three.

Listen. Hear me in this. Your church attendance is not tied to your salvation. You don’t get into heaven because you got gold stars on your attendance chart. But your sanctification and formation definitely depend upon being here.

What does that mean? Well, that means that it’s no longer about you anymore. It’s not just about what you can consume. It’s not just about what you can experience. Don’t get me wrong. I want you to receive something. I’m going to work as hard as I can to prepare a message from God’s word every single week that will give nutrients. I’m not always going to tell you what you want to hear. I’m going to tell you what you need to know from God’s word so that you can grow.

But it’s not just about you. And, actually, your physical presence here impacts other people’s lives in ways that you will never know. And you just can’t do that online. Now, online has its place. Online is the front door to our church. Online is a great supplement if you’re sick, if you’re traveling, if for whatever reason you can’t get here. It is not a great substitute.

So, man, if you are in a location where you can get to a good Bible teaching, Jesus centered church this is a supplement, not your replacement. If you’re close to one of our campuses, I want to encourage you to attend.

Here’s the deal. The average committed Christian, statistically, this isn’t true for our church, but the average committed Christian, statistically, in America today, says that they are in church 1.2 times a month. And I just want to encourage you, wherever you are on that spectrum, you just say, “You know what? 2025 is the year that changes. I’m going to come as ready as I can, as consistently as I can. I’m going to model that for my kids and family.”

## 2. Man Your Station

Number two: this will go much faster. Find a place to serve. We call that man your station. So, you just come, and you make a difference serving in some capacity. And here’s the goal. You show up to church every week saying not, “How can I be blessed but how can I bless someone else?” And I promise you when that mindset gets shifted the Holy Spirit will begin to do dramatically powerful things in your life.

## 3. Find Your Crew



The last thing is: find your crew. Get into a group. It can't just be a big setting like this. It's a smaller group. For some of you, maybe your action step is to sign up for Rooted. Actually, the closing date is today. We only have a few more spots left. We'd love for you to sign up for Rooted and start the new year off in a 10-week small group called Rooted. We want you to be in a group.

And if you just do those four things: read your Bible daily, attend church more regularly, serve more faithfully, and find a small group and you do it consistently all year long instead of lots of stops and starts, I promise you, you will experience some sort of change and transformation.

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 58 it says:

"So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable." Set like flint. "Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." NLT

You might wonder, "Am I making a difference? Am I experiencing change?" But God promises you right there, all of it is an investment into your growth and into your eternity.

Last thing that I will give you right now is:

Don't try to be perfect. Be consistent.

Don't try to be perfect, just be consistent. And that is really challenging for all of our perfectionists in the room. And it's really challenging for those of you who, like me, fear failure. I fear failure. Failure can keep me paralyzed. Here's why. I don't want to do something unless I can be good at it. Any of you like me?

That's why I don't play golf. The only way to get good is to do it. But I'm going to have to do it really poorly in order to get good. And for some of us, that's true when it comes to our spiritual growth as well. I'm just telling you right now, we've got to learn to take a hit.

I was watching a documentary on Joe Montana over Christmas break. Kind of random but I just came across it on Netflix. Go Notre Dame. And Joe Montana was talking about the difference between getting sacked when he could see the linebacker coming and when he couldn't.

And he said, "Always, when I couldn't see the linebacker coming it was way worse. That's when I was prone to injury, that's when I was so tempted to stay down. But when I could see the linebacker coming, I could brace for the hit."

I could say the same thing is true spiritually, emotionally, relationally. Can I just tell you, going into 2025 you're going to take a hit. We've got to learn to be people who can take a hit so that way we can get back up. And consistency is not perfection. Remember this is a long obedience in the same direction.



God is so merciful. He is so good. Even if 2024 was one of the most challenging years of your life, one of the things that we still need to recognize is that even in the midst of adversity, we can still praise God and say, “God, thank You so much because I am the recipient of Your mercy and grace.”

And regardless of where you stand with God today, whether you have given your life to Jesus or not, I want you to recognize that everybody listening to the sound of my voice are the recipients of God’s general grace. What does that mean? Well, that means you were born, and you didn’t have anything to do with it. It means that your heart is beating in your chest right now and you’re not commanding it to. That’s all God. And the result of God’s general grace should be humility and gratitude that leads you to His saving grace. That’s what He is beckoning you to. That’s really what all of this is about.

2 Peter, chapter 3, verses 8 and 9 says:

“A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.” So, what we think a long obedience in the same direction is, God’s like, “No, it’s just a day.” “The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.” NLT

One of Satan’s greatest tools against you is temptation. We’ll talk about that next week. All of us are susceptible to temptation and all of us are going to fall. But once you fall, he goes to the ground game of ground and pound, of accusations and shame. And if he can erode your consistency in following Jesus in a long obedience in the same direction through whatever strategy: temptation, failure, shame, accusation then he knows he can get you to give up and short-circuit your spiritual growth.

The anecdote to all of that is confession and repentance. Confessing to God for the forgiveness of sin. That’s what puts you right with Him and then confessing to others for the sake of your relationships—help so you can heal.

So, maybe today as we start a brand-new year you would just develop that practice of confession and repentance and say, “We are going to be a people who are set like flint, have a resolve to follow God, a long obedience in the same direction, recognizing that it is our job to employ these consistent, actionable behaviors, it’s God’s job and God’s job alone, to bring about the results. They might come immediately, and they might come a long time from now. And we keep going.

I remember a few years ago reading about Chinese bamboo trees. It was kind of slow work. And I don’t know if any of you have done much reading on Chinese bamboo trees, but if you haven’t I guess apparently what happens is you plant the seeds just like a normal tree. And then nothing happens. And we’re not talking about a couple of weeks or a few months. We’re talking about years. The Chinese bamboo tree doesn’t start



growing until year five. And, actually, within six weeks of year five, the Chinese bamboo tree grows nine feet tall.

I was thinking about this last week. I was thinking about... Can you imagine what that experience would have been like for the first Chinese bamboo tree farmer if there was such a thing? He hears about this new thing. He puts his business plan together. He gets a loan from the bank. He tells his wife to get ready to live on easy street, "We're going to make so much money."

He goes and he plants all of these Chinese bamboo tree seeds. I don't know if that's a thing. I'm just imagining. And he comes home and she's like, "How's it going?" and He's like, "Well, I'm not really seeing much activity." Gets to the end of the first year, and she asks, "Hey, can I go look at our investment?"

"Well, honey. There's really not much to look at. It's still just a dirt field." He gets to the end of year two, year three, year four. It starts to create real tension between them to the point where I wonder if she was even starting to get a little bit cynical. He would come home at night, and she would be, "Hey, how was your day being an imaginary Chinese bamboo tree farmer?" But then year five comes. And within six weeks he sees 9 feet of growth.

Can I say right now that that might explain what's going on in your life? Maybe your marriage is hanging on by a thread. And you've given it everything you have. And you're just seeing very little change, maybe no change at all. Can I just say, keep on going?

When it comes to your emotional health, or your spiritual growth, or your finances—all of those things that we just talked about, you're so ready to throw in the towel. Can I just pastorally encourage you not to? But to continue to just keep going—consistent, actionable, behaviors over time, trusting in the real change that can come.

So, right now what I want us to do as a church family is to go to the foot of the cross and let's take communion together. I want to invite those of you, even if you are not a part of our church fam, if you've given your life to Jesus, to participate with us. If you haven't, that's totally okay. You can just spend these few moments and reflect upon what you just heard and maybe make a decision that will change your life forever.

But if you've got the communion cup ready, this is a meal that Jesus shared with His disciples just before His crucifixion. He took some bread and He broke it and said, "This bread represents My body that is broken for you. So, when you take it do this in remembrance of Me." Let's do that.

Then Jesus took some wine and he poured it out and He said, "This wine represents my blood that was shed for you on a cross," because the Old Testament talked about how there needed to be the blood of a spotless lamb to cover over the guilt of our sins. Jesus did that once and for all. So, let's take the juice together.





Lord God, thank You for being a God who is not slow, but patient. You've given us another year to work on our spiritual formation, to grow more and more to look like the image and likeness of Jesus in our lives. In the words of John the Baptist, "Less of me and more of You, until it is Christ alone."

So, Father, as we head into this year, we know that there are so many unknowns, what we can be confident about is that there will be both blessings and challenges. There will be both highs and lows. There will be things that will propel us forward and things that might set us back. And regardless of what may come, we set our faces like flint focused on You and You alone.

And would you ready our feet to be a people who don't just try to dodge adversity, but to live through adversity really well. And that starts by consistent, regular, actionable behaviors every single day over a period of time, trusting the results to You.

Would You ready our hearts. Would you come, Lord Jesus? Would You please do a great awakening and a revival in our midst? We want to be a people who are ready for it. So, right now we are so grateful for Your general grace and Your saving grace. And we desire to be a people who live for You and face whatever may come. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.e?

