

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

HOW TO KNOW YOU KNOW | LOVE AND WAR

AARON BROCKETT | JULY 2, 2023

Alright. Well, how are you guys doing this weekend? You guys doing good? The 4th of July crowd is strong. It's good to see you. I want to welcome anybody joining us from our other locations or maybe you're tuning in online.

Before we get going today, I just want to take a quick minute and just share a few things with you to kind of celebrate some of the things that God has been doing in the life of our church this summer.

We sent about 777 kids and students to CYI and camps this summer. More than we have sent in any other year. And the number I'm really, really excited about is that between last weekend and this weekend 76 teens who went to camps and CYI got baptized. Out of that 700 number, 127 rededicated their life to Christ and 11 said that they felt called to full-time ministry. So that's just incredible to see happening over the summer, just in the last month.

I heard so many stories of volunteers and difference makers taking time off of work, taking vacation time to go and to serve our kids at camps and CYI. They just went above and beyond, not to mention the fact that I just believe that we have one of the most talented Kids' and Student Ministry teams on the planet. So can we just thank them for all of their effort and time.

You know we're going to be doing some baptisms today, but I wanted to share this number with you. I thought it was pretty cool. In all of last year, 2022, we baptized 421 people. Well, we're six months into this year and we've baptized 435. We've already exceeded that this month.

And we had our *Rooted* celebration on Tuesday night. We've had over 1100 people graduate from *Rooted* in the last six months. And Tuesday night we baptized—I think it was about 50 people. My back is still sore from Tuesday night. So just really amazing to see what God has been doing in the life of our church.

You know, it's summertime. It's 4th of July weekend. I think this is a time for all of us to kind of downshift a little bit, to Sabbath rest. We're not taking time off from God, but we are learning just to rest and then to recognize, as we look to the fall, all that God might do.

So, I just want you to know I'm going to be taking this month to study and to do a little bit of travel. Lindsay and I are taking our oldest daughter on a trip, just the three of us.



We leave this next week. And I'll be taking the rest of this month just study, plan, and pray looking ahead to the fall.

The first weekend in August I'll be back and we're switching our service times that weekend. So I just want to draw your attention back to that. Take a look at the service times at your particular campus. For a handful of campuses, we're adding an 8 a.m. So I just want to encourage those of you who are early risers, you're on mission with us, to maybe consider going to that 8 o'clock so we make room for more people in the fall.

Can I just ask this of you? Would you just be praying? Just be praying toward what God's going to do in the fall season in the life of our church and expecting Him to do big, big things as we've already seen Him just working in tremendous ways the first six months of this year.

Well, if you have a Bible go ahead and find 1 John, chapter 5. 1 John, chapter 5 is where we are going to be today. And as you're finding that and kind of getting settled in, I want to ask you if you would just help me finish these very, very familiar sentences. Alright?

There is nothing new under the *sun*.

Yeah, you've heard it before.

History repeats *itself*.

The more things change, the more they *stay the same*.

Yes, and one more:

What goes around, *comes around*.

Yeah, you've heard them before. And the reason why you've heard them before is these are kind of familiar sayings and clichés and because there is a lot of truth behind them. History repeats itself.

Winston Churchill one time said this, "Those who don't know their history, are doomed to repeat it."

And we see evidence of this in every area of life. But maybe none so more clearly than in fashion. Right? Fashion just has a tendency to kind of come around again. What used to be in is out and what is out is in. I've just noticed this here lately that the 90s seem to be making a little bit of a comeback. Have you noticed this? Kind of for better or for worse.

Tie-Dye

It's like tie-dye shirts are apparently coming back into style. I don't even know if that was original to the 90s. I think it was original to the 60s. And then it went out of style and then it came back.

I remember saving up my allowance to a pair of these:

Doc martens



Remember these? They are coming back. I remember there was a time where they were kind of not cool after a while and I threw them out. Now they are in style again.

Platform shoes

High platform shoes are kind of coming back.

And then I never, ever thought that I would see this trend come back:

Mom Jeans

Mom jeans are apparently back in style.

History sort of repeats itself. And not just in fashion, but in every realm of life. In fact, let me describe a certain cultural moment that a set of Christians found themselves in and then you try to guess what era I'm talking about. Here's the description:

The culture was incredibly confusing, chaotic, and divided. Pressure and temptation were so intense and so constant that many were wrestling with whether they should hold on to Jesus or let go and walk away. Ideologies and agendas were being pushed to the point that it was becoming disorienting. In fact, it's been revealed that some Christians and even some pastors no longer believed what they used to and now they are misleading others. And many have deconstructed their faith and they've walked away and it's really discouraging and disorienting.

Now, if you had to guess what time in history I'm referring to what would your guess be? And some of you may go, "I don't know. It kind of sounds a lot like today." Well, I'm actually describing the 90s. Not the 1990s—90 A.D. About 60 years after the resurrection of Jesus.

And this is the cultural moment that John writes these three little letters at the end of our New Testament—1, 2, and 3 John—to a group of Christians who, a lot like us, found themselves in a very confusing, divided, disorienting culture revealing to us that we are not living in unprecedented times.

We hear that phrase a lot. We heard it a lot through the pandemic: These are unprecedented times. But pandemics are recorded all throughout history. What we should say is that these are uncharted waters for us, but they are not unprecedented. They've been here before.

That's one of the things that I want us to see here as we wrap up this series in a letter—1 John. John is writing to very, very similar cultural circumstances that you and I are living in today, which means that the application that they had then can still be the same application for us today.

We've been calling this series *Love and War*. And the reason why is because John likes to use sharp contrast to make his point. And there is a tension between the two. John's favorite was light and darkness. And love and war seem to be these two words that are

in sharp contrast to each other. But the reason why we're using them is because they keep coming up in John's writing.

John wants to make us aware of the war that we are in because you cannot win a war you're not aware of. But he makes it really clear that we're not fighting a physical war, we're not fighting a cultural war, or a political war, or even an ideological war. John is saying, "Hey, we're fighting what Ephesians 6 so well describes, a spiritual war, the principalities and powers of darkness behind the scenes that are seeking to disillusion us." So we've got to recognize who our true adversary really is.

And John would say, "The way in which we win this war is love." Now we've also got to define that. What does that mean, exactly? So John has been going back and forth describing what the love of God means and describing this war that we are in.

And one of the primary things, if you've been with us through this series, is John, in the same sentence, will provide us with an assurance of our faith and before the sentence is even over he brings about conviction of sin. And it is within the tension of having assurance of where we stand with God and then conviction of our sin that brings about transformation.

So we're not going to let go of conviction and succumb to the culture, and we're not going to dig our heels in and go to war with the culture. But we're going to allow God's love to transform who we are so that His presence in our lives is evident and undeniable to the culture. That's why John writes.

So as we come to the end of the letter we'll see that the end kind of ends like the beginning. John, at the very beginning, tells us why he is writing. And now, before he wraps up, he's going to remind us once again as to why he is writing.

Look at me in verse 13, He says:

"I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,"

So John is saying, "Here is my target audience. This is the bullseye of who I'm writing to, those who believe in God." It doesn't mean that those who don't believe in God won't get anything out of this, because the Bible is living and active. It penetrates our lives. You don't just read, study, dissect and explain the Bible. The Bible reads, studies, and dissects you. So John says, "This is applicable to everybody, but I want to be really clear, the bullseye of my target is those who believe in the Son of God. And then check out what he says at the end of that verse:

"...so that you may" what's the word? Know. "...so that you may know you have eternal life."
1 John 5:13 (NLT)

He doesn't say, "So that you might wonder if you have eternal life. So that you might cross your fingers and hope you might have eternal life. So that you might guess..." No. He goes, "I want you to know." And the word for that is *assurance*.

Now why does John keep reassuring us all throughout the letter? Well, I think it's because we need it. I don't know about you guys, but at times I can second guess and I

can become paranoid, and I can kind of wonder not only where I stand with God but where I stand with you and where I stand in relationship with others.

So John continues to come back to this and he says, “Hey, guys. I want you to know.” Why is assurance so critical? I think for a couple of reasons. The first is simply this: God really does love you and John wants us to know it without a shadow of a doubt. The unfortunate thing with the phrase: God really loves you, is that we’ve turned it into a bumper sticker and it’s sort of lost its meaning.

I mean, that is a profound statement. The Creator of the universe knows you and loves you. And yet, it’s a statement that doesn’t necessarily impact us as emotionally as what it should, because I think that maybe it’s become kind of cliché or surface level, but I want us to stop and camp on that for just a minute. God really does love you.

And I just wonder if there is anyone here who, if I were to put you in the corner and ask you if believe it, you’d say, “Yes.” But you really haven’t received it. I don’t know about you guys, but there have been plenty of times in my life where it’s like, “I know God loves me, I just don’t know if He likes me,” because I’ve messed up so many times.” He knows I’m so inconsistent.

Yet, John wants us to know that God really loves us. And here’s why this is so powerful. When you love someone, think about somebody that you genuinely love with no ulterior motive or no outside agenda, then you want them to know it. You’re not going to keep them guessing. You’re not going to play games with them or keep them walking on thin ice around you. You want them to know it because that transforms the relationship.

I remember the very first time that I told my wife, Lindsay, when we were dating that I loved her. And it was really, really scary for me for the obvious reasons, but the other reason was that there was only one other girl that I’d been dating that I loved, and it didn’t go well. So I had PTSD from some of that.

I remember that I told this girl that I loved her. I don’t think I really loved her I think I was just really, really infatuated. And I could tell that she was going to break up with me, so this was a last-ditch, hail Mary to try to convince her, which is not wise, by the way. If you’re dating and taking notes, and you sense somebody might be breaking up with you, don’t try to get her to stay by telling her you love them. I remember she just looked at me and her eyes glassed over and she goes, “Those are big words.” And that was the end of our relationship.

So, when I was dating Lindsay and we were six or eight months into this and I knew this was more than infatuation, and I knew I really loved her, and I wanted to tell her that. I wanted her to know where she stood with me. And it scared me. I remember when I told her, she looked right back at me and she said, “I love you too.” And there was this sense of relief and security in our relationship.

Now, that was a romantic relationship. You think about any relational dynamic that you have: with your boss, with coworkers, with friends, with a spouse or your children—it’s a power play to keep somebody guessing about where they stand with you. And maybe you’ve had that in some relational dynamic in your life. And if that is the case, whether

you're playing games with them or they are playing games with you, you kind of want to maintain a position of power over them. That is cancer to the relationship.

So, here's what John is trying to be really clear about. We serve a God... The Christian faith is about a God who wants to be clear. Most other belief systems are vague. It's, "Do your best. Try to achieve the thing. Learn as much as you can. And hopefully you'll be okay."

But God is very, very clear about His righteous requirements and how He feels about us because He doesn't just want a bunch of subjects who will just sort of follow after Him by checking our brains at the door, God desires a relationship. So He tells us, flat out, how He feels about us. You might write this down:

Real, authentic love can only grow in the soil of security.

See, when you make people behave by threatening or manipulating them, you might coerce their behavior, but you will never captivate their heart. And that's why, as Christians, when we're seeking to live out our faith and be on mission for Jesus in this very, very divided, confusing, and disorienting time we've got to realize that it is impossible to moralize or to argue somebody to Jesus. You just can't do that. If you could argue somebody into a relationship with Jesus, all that's going to be required is a better worded argument to get them out of it.

What we desire to do is to live out and to explain the gospel message and trust that the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people to bring them to a saving faith. We're not trying to win an argument, we're not trying to convince them, we're trying to bring them to this place where the very presence of Jesus can transform them.

I see right now these two really dramatic extremes happening in our culture. Over the last 50 or 60 years as we've seen culture become more brazen in its defiance of truth, I think that we find ourselves, as Christians, somewhat confused and disoriented by all of that. And the response for some is to cave in and the response for others is to sort of rise up. So I see these two...

Remember the tug-of-war thing I gave a few weeks ago between hedonism and legalism? Right now I hear this sentiment from a lot of people within culture. Even from some Christians. It's like, "You know, we just need to tell people to follow their truths." And then the other side rises up and says, "No, we just need to hit the with the truth." And the gospel message is in the tension, in the middle. So we need to realize... If you were... Let's just say on Tuesday, the 4th of July you have a bunch of people over to your house for a meal—big, big family and friends gathering., You have babies at the table and you have elderly people at the table and everybody has to eat. So, you're going to pay attention to what kind of food is being served and how you serve it up so that people can receive the nutrients.

Some little babies are going to need to be spoon fed. Some elderly adults, maybe they need to be spoon fed. And others are going to have to have their meat cut up for them. Some are going to need to have Jell-O and some are going to need to have milk, and some are going to need to have something more substantial.

So when it comes to serving up the truth of the gospel... I think when I want my kids to receive nutrients I could take a steak and jam it down their throat, and likely they are not going to receive it. Or I can cut up the steak. So what I think we need to recognize is, in the culture in which we live, especially as the extremes get wider and wider and things get more divided, as Christ followers we need to hold onto Jesus and we recognize the truth of Colossians 4:

"Live wisely among those who are not believers and make the most of every opportunity, let your conversation be," here are the descriptive words, *"gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone."*

1 Peter 3 says:

"If somebody asks you about the hope that you have as a believer, always be ready to explain it." And then he says this: *"But do this with gentleness, do this with respect."* See, we're not trying to coerce the behavior, we're trying to give people the opportunity to have Jesus captivate their heart. And we've been here before. The church in Martin Luther's day believed that people would only obey if they were threatened with harsh consequences for their rebellion. And Luther didn't see that in the Scriptures, so he decried that posture.

Here's what he called it, "A damnable doctrine of doubt." Here's what he said, "Yes being afraid of judgment will indeed produce a surface level adherence, but underneath that thin veneer of obedience will rush a river of fear, pride, and self-interest."

The only way to develop love for God is to have fear removed. Love for God only grows in the soil of security. 1 John 4:19 says:

"We love God," Why? Because we were commanded to? No. Because God loved us first. And having the assurance of the love that God has for us is what produces genuine love for God in us.

And that naturally leads to the next thing that John writes in verse 14. Look at it with me. He says because of this:

"...we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for." 1 John 5:14-15 (NLT)

Now, I don't know about you, but the cynic that is in me rises up when I read those two little verses. Doesn't it for you? John just said, "Hey, we can be confident that God hears us when we ask for anything that pleases Him," and then, "since we know that He hears us we can make our requests known, and He'll give us what we ask for."

And yet, every single one of us can probably say, "Yeah, I've prayed some prayers before and I don't know if God heard me. I've prayed some prayers before and God didn't answer that request." But the key to this is found in that little word at the end of verse 14 where it says, "When we ask Him for anything that *pleases* Him," and all that means is when we ask Him for anything that is in alignment with His will for us.

That just simply means that God sits on a seat from which He has a perspective that you and I don't have. He's all-knowing. He sees time all at once.

And certainly this is true, the older that I get, the more I realize that I go back and look at some old prayer journals or look at some seasons of my life in which I genuinely thought what I was asking God for that the rock solid answer to that should be: yes. And now, with a little bit of time and perspective: 10, 15, 20, 25 years later I realize that actually the best answer to that prayer was: no. Because my perspective has changed. So, God answers every single prayer we pray. Now whether He answers it the way you want is another issue. The timing in which He answers it, that's the biggest issue. And I think, for many of us, we want a vending machine God, "Let me put in the thing, and He'll give me the prayer right away."

God can say yes to our requests, which we all love a good yes. That's why we've prayed those prayers. I don't know about you, I've never prayed a prayer asking God to say no. If there is any prayer that I pray it's like, "God, please say yes to this."

He can say yes. He can say no. I would say maybe the majority of the time He says, "Wait." There have plenty of times in my life when I've interpreted *wait* as *no*. But it wasn't *no* it was *wait*. And it's in the waiting that formation takes place. It's in the waiting that God begins to organize some things.

Several years ago I saw a pair of Air Jordan Fives online for \$100. No laughter. So no Air Jordan fans here—\$100, that should have tipped you off to the fact that these weren't real. These were fake. So, \$100—I've got to snatch these up. I ordered them. Eight weeks go by—nothing. And I'm emailing this little company, this shady little company on the other side of the world. I emailed them, "Where are my shoes?"

And I finally got back this message. It said this. "Shoes on boat. Wait longer." And that was my first tip, these are fake. And sure enough, I got them in the mail. They were made out of cardboard. It was awful.



But you know, oftentimes... In the book of Daniel—do you remember this? Daniel prays a prayer and he doesn't hear anything. And then finally an angel shows up one day, I would imagine out of breath, and says, "Daniel, as soon as you prayed that prayer, heaven dispatched me to answer your prayer. And I got hung up in a spiritual battle behind the scenes." There is a whole lot going on behind the scenes that we need to recognize. I want you to hear me say this. I think that, as a father, I know this to be true. If my kids make a request of me, as their dad, I'm always looking for a yes. If there is a way for me to say yes to them, I'm gonna say yes. The only way that I'll say *no* is if what they are asking is illegal (which I don't know if that has ever happened, that would be really concerning) or if I know that it would hinder the development of their character or if I know, flat out, that it's the wrong request and they just can't see it from their perspective. If it's anything else, I'm looking to say yes.

This is what John is driving at here. And then he says something. Verses 16 through 17, I think are the most confusing in the whole letter. There is an explanation for it. Notice... You're going to see what I mean as we read this. Look at verse 16. He says: *"If you see a fellow believer sinning in a way that does not lead to death,"* so hold onto that little phrase. He says:

"...you should pray, and God will give that person life." In other words, God is going to bring this person back. God's going to be at work in his life.

"But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it." So, right there, that's confusing, those two dichotomies. We've got to understand what he means by a sin that leads to death. And he says:

"All wicked actions are sin, but not every sin leads to death." 1 John 5:16-17 (NLT)

So, thanks, John for being clear as mud. Here's what we know. I think it is very clear that his original audience knew what he meant by the sin that leads to death because he doesn't take time to explain it. I think they would have known.

For us, today, we're left with a little bit of difficulty in understanding fully what he meant, but we do have some clues. Commentators offer a few suggestions. Number one, we just have to start with this baseline. Because we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God that has led to death. A general death. Your body is going to give out in 80 or 90 years—that's about the mileage that we've got. And this world is broken because of sin. So all sin leads to death, very generally.

Then you've got a sin that leads to death, specifically. And he's not talking so much about a physical death, but a spiritual one. And I think that's what the original audience

would have understood: a spiritual death. So, what is that? Well, two things come to mind, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and apostasy.

So, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, if I could define it would just simply be this: a deliberate, open eyed rejection of known truth. It's verbal, knowledgeable, and it's continual. Hebrews, chapter 11 says, "Esau hardened his heart to the point that repentance was impossible."

And a lot of times we get a little bit freaked out by that—the sin that is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. And we say it's the only unforgiveable sin. And we're like, "Well, I certainly don't want to commit that if it's the only unforgiveable sin. How do I know if I haven't committed it?"

And I would just simply say, if you're worried you've committed it, you haven't committed it. Does that make sense? I don't think so. It's the idea that conviction of sin reveals that you are still connected to the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is who convicts you of sin. So if blasphemy of the Holy Spirit means that you are so hard-hearted you no longer feel conviction, that's what that is.

The other is what we might call apostasy. And this is what John was contending for in this letter and we see this a lot today: apostasy—a total rejection of Jesus as the Son of God and a denial of the faith. You formerly gave lip service to Him. You formerly said He was Lord and Savior. But now you full-on have deconstructed and denied the faith, you walked completely away from Him. So John is drawing this distinction here and he says in verse 18:

"We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning," think free throws in the drive way. You're practicing at something you are trying to perfect. He goes: "Yeah, God's children are going to continue to sin, but we're not perfecting it." And he says: *"...for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them."* Man, that's good to know. Verse 19:

"We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one." 1 John 5:18-19 (NLT)

Verse 19 should bring about a lot of explanation as to why there is so much pain in the world. It's under the control of the evil one. I've heard it described this way. Satan is like a chained, rabid dog. You get close enough to him and he's going to bite you. But he's chained. He only has a certain reach.

And so he says, God's children, He's got us. He's holding us securely in this world that is controlled by the evil one. And he says that we are not going to premeditate or hold onto

or persist in or practice sinning. Are we still going to struggle and fall occasionally? You bet we will. And when we do we recognize it, we see it, we turn from it.

And real Christianity is not us white knuckling morality. If you've ever tried to white knuckle morality you know, some of you can testify to this, all you do is give that vice or temptation more power over you.

What happens as you come to God is that it is death to your former self and new life. It is a renewal of your mind and your heart. And God gives you a new set of desires. Some of those happen right away. Some of those happen over time as we grow.

You know, as I was growing up I absolutely hated Brussel sprouts. And if you would have told me when I was a kid that I would order them as an appetizer, I would have told you you were crazy. Man, I love them now because...

What happened? Did the Brussel sprouts change or did I change? It's like, "I've got a lot..." Well, the bacon. It could have been the bacon that helped. I've got a new set of desires, a new set of tastes. And the same thing is true as it comes to our tastes and desires in this world.

Romans, chapter 12, verse 2 says this:

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world," but what? "...let," who? "...let God transform you into a new person by changing the way," not you behave, "...by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12:2 (NLT)

So, God doesn't change us by standing in front of us and beating the sin out of us if we touch it. God changes us by giving us a new heart, which means we've got to be born again. We've got to be born from above. And when that happens, God gives us a new set of desires. And we're still going to continue to struggle, but when we do, we get back up. I love how the book of Proverbs says it in verse 24. It says, "The righteous man falls seven times." Man, if somebody falls once, that's an accident. Somebody falls twice, that's unfortunate. Somebody falls seven times, better check how you're walking. It's this idea that somebody fell seven times and he goes, "...but rises again." And righteous people, you and I, we're still going to fall, but then we get back up we look to Jesus. Your salvation is not demonstrated by never falling. Your salvation is demonstrated by what you do when you fall. And conversion is not sinless perfection, it's a new direction. So, when I fall I don't say, "Well, that's just what I do." When I fall I don't try to hide it. When I fall I don't try to explain it away. When I fall I say, "Man, I fell. And I'm going to own that and I'm going to have contrition and humility. I didn't make a mistake, I sinned. And I'm going to stand back up and I'm going to look to Jesus." Look at what it says in verse 20. He says:

"And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life. Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts." 1 John 5:20-21 (NLT)

Why? Because anything else that can take God's place in our hearts is not enough to save. It's not enough to justify. It's not enough to give you your identity.

Some of you might be here today and you might be thinking, "Man, this kind of seems... I don't really understand how this works. How is it that just by somebody saying that they believe in Jesus, or calling on the name of Jesus that somehow that makes them right in the eyes of God? That just kind of seems flimsy to me, that just kind of sounds cheap to me."

And I would say this to you. When we say believe in the Son of God, what we are essentially saying is *rest in the account of*.

So let me illustrate it this way. My kids love all inclusive resorts. Can I get a good amen? Who doesn't love a good all inclusive? And we took them to Cancun last summer. We had an all-inclusive. They were living like kings and queens.

They were ordering tacos from the taco truck. They were ordering beach cabanas and breakfast buffets. You know, ordering anything they wanted. This is amazing. They were acting like nobody had to pay. Somebody had to pay. Right? But what they would do is they would just go up on their own to this little kiosk or whatever and just be like, "Yeah, charge it to this account."

So, a perfect picture of this is that our room had a Jacuzzi in it. Half of the Jacuzzi was in the room and half of the jacuzzi was outside on the deck. And there was a TV over looking it.

We came into our room one evening and my youngest daughter, Kadence, she was 10 and the time, she's 11 now, she was 10, she was in a swimsuit with her goggles on, with the whirlpool going watching TV eating chocolate cake that she'd ordered from room service. Just living her best life.

And I was like, "Honey, what is that?" And she was like, "Oh, I just charged it to the room." Right? So, what's happening here is they are resting in the account of me. That's what is happening. Nothing is free, this isn't cheap, this is costly but they are resting in the account...

When we say put your trust in Jesus, that's what we mean. We say, "I believe in Jesus," that's what we're talking about. We're not talking about easy belief, we're not talking



about a loop hole, we're saying this, "I am not righteous enough, my moral bank account has zero dollars in it. But when I trust myself to Jesus, I am resting in the account of my heavenly Father."

You can't earn it. You cannot possibly earn a right standing with God by writing checks from your moral bank account. That's religion. No. You charge it to His righteous account and He covers the bill.

Now, here's the thing. I'm glad to do that for my kids. I want to do that for my kids. But it would be a big, red flag if I saw that they were being harsh and greedy with one another. If Kadence wasn't willing to share that chocolate cake with anybody else and was like, "No, no. I worked for this," that's religion.

If they were rude to the resort staff, then I can cut them off right away, "No more charging because your heart is in the wrong place." If they were entitled, if they were making demands, that reveals to me that their hearts haven't been transformed. I'm glad to do this, but I want it to lead to greater generosity of spirit in their lives. I want to see their hearts change.

Colossians 3 puts it so well in the first three verses. It says:

"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits," I want you to circle, underline, highlight, write that word down, Christ sits. That's the idea that the work has been finished, so He sat down. When do you sit down? When the work is done. And:

"...Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3 (NLT)

And then in verse 10 it says this:

"Put on your new nature, and be renewed," that's a renewal of the mind, *"as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.":* Colossians 3:10 (NLT)

It's not just about learning information. It's about learning information so that we can be transformed. And the gospel (you heard me say this a few weeks ago) is not an achievement it is a standing. And it is not dependent upon how much you know. And it's not dependent on how much you do and how well you perform. It is first and foremost about you and me resting in the finished work of Jesus.

From that position, we can now grow. From that position, we can now take a stand on our convictions. But we first have to sit and we have to keep coming around to that



position of sitting and resting in Christ. Otherwise we begin to delude ourselves into thinking it's something that we perform or something that we achieve.

So here's a good example of this. If I were to walk up to you and I were to say, if I were to ask this question, "Are you a Christian?" And your response was, "I'm trying." Or if your response was, "I'm learning. I'm reading a book right now. I'm trying to figure this out." Then all that shows me is that you still don't fully get it yet and that you are still trying to Super Mario Brothers this thing. It's like, "I think there are more levels. There are more levels that I have to achieve in order for me to finally feel justified in the eyes of God." Listen. If you are holding out because you've got questions and you want all of your questions answered, and once you get all of your questions answered then you come to Jesus, it doesn't work that way because that's not faith. Faith is bringing your unanswered questions to Jesus.

And here's how Jesus prefers to answer the questions. He doesn't send you an email back with a full paragraph explanation for each question. He says, "Hey, actually, I'd like to walk with you through this." So you come to Jesus before you have all of your questions answered and He walks with you through them. And through that experience you get your questions answered over time.

Some of you are like, "Well, I just got to get my stuff together, man. My life is a mess. I've got to clean up my life." It doesn't work that way. You come to Jesus with the mess and you say, "This is me." And Jesus receives you as you are and He's the One who cleans you up and begins this work of transformation in your life. Jesus finished the work on your behalf. And you receive that and you rest in it.

The Old Testament provides a picture of this in Leviticus 1. It simply says this. We're talking about the Old Testament sacrificial system. It says:

"When you present an animal as an offering to the LORD, you may take it from your herd of cattle or your flock of sheep and goats. If the animal you present as a burnt offering is from the herd, it must be a male with no defects.

"Bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle so you may be," and here's the key word, "accepted by the LORD. Lay your hand on the animal's head, and the LORD will accept its death I in your place to purify you, making you right with him." Leviticus 1:2b-4 (NLT)
Now, thankfully, we don't live in the Old Testament sacrificial system any more. We live under the New Covenant where instead of... I'm just so thankful. As I stood at the front door today watching all of you walk in from the parking lot, nobody was carrying an animal around their shoulders. I'm so thankful for that. It would get messy in here really quick.



We don't have to do that anymore. Why? Because that burnt offering, that animal sacrifice, was a foreshadowing of the one true perfect sacrifice of God's Son. Instead of you bringing a sacrifice to the Temple, Jesus went to a cross.

And so now the question is, who or what are you trusting in to justify yourself? This is the invitation of the gospel. You rest upon the finished work of Jesus.

And I know, right now, some of you are like, once again, questioning the tension between evangelism and discipleship. It's like, "Well, where is the challenge for people to grow?" Or, "When do we stand upon our convictions?"

And that is a really, really good point. I want to illustrate it this way. There is a little book that I highly recommend that you read this summer called *Sit, Stand, Walk*. It's written by a guy named Watchman Nee. I listened to it on audible. It took me about an hour-and-a-half. It's based upon Ephesians. And in it he says that there are three positions that we must take with Jesus: sit, stand, and walk.

He said that we've got to remember all of those positions in the Christian life. So sit is the recognition that we are justified by the finished work of Jesus on our behalf. And you simply sit in that.

When I sit in this chair, I'm not extending any energy to keep myself up like I was just a minute ago. I'm resting completely and fully on this chair. If it were to give out on me, I would fall to the ground because I'm resting in it. And he says that is the primary position that we have to come to with Jesus.

And then from this position... At times there is going to be a moment when we're going to need to get up and we're going to need to walk with Christ. You know, that's the most common analogy in Scripture for our relationship with Him. It's a walk. This is why we oftentimes describe it that way. My spiritual walk. And as I'm walking with Jesus, that's growth, that's sanctification, that's digging the wells deep.

As we have taken a seat in Christ and as we're walking with Christ, then when the opportunity arises, we can stand. We can stand when life is hard. We can stand when our faith is challenged. We can stand when cultural winds blow against us. But we can't forget that first step. As Christians, we can't fail to come back to it on a regular basis. See, rehearsing the gospel message and receiving the gospel message isn't just for the day of your salvation, it is for every single day thereafter because as human beings we have a tendency to slip into religion and to begin to work for it and try to justify ourselves.



I just want to encourage you today to come back to this position, to take a seat. Scripture says that Jesus is our Mercy Seat and we rest completely in it. So today, I want to invite you to do that.

Some of you, you haven't taken a seat in a long time and you're exhausted. You've been running. You've been trying to grow. You've been taking a stand. You've been fighting a cultural war. All of that is fine and good but it means nothing if you are not seated in the person of Jesus Christ. The account of your heavenly Father is what covers you. So today I want to invite you to take a seat. That's for those of you who have never come to Christ before and that is for those of you who have been following Him for a long time. Take a seat. Sit upon the finished work of Jesus.

If you've never gone public with that, the Bible says that the first act of obedience is baptism. And I think it's because we need something physical, we need something tangible to really seal that internal commitment. That's what baptism is. It's the death, the burial, the resurrection. It's symbolic of cleansing, not dirt from the body but a pledge of a good conscience toward God.

So today, here at the Northwest campus, I know that we have a few planned baptisms, but we also want to extend that on out. Maybe there is somebody today who is listening to this and is like, "You know what? I need to make that decision for myself." I just want to invite you to come. We're ready for you. We've got a change of clothes, we've got towels, we've got dressing rooms. And we'd love to receive you today. So I'm going to turn it over to our campus pastors to provide instructions. We kind of back loaded our worship time so that way we would have some time to do this today. So let me just pray.

Father, we come to You right now and we thank You for this study in 1 John. And it's so good to be reassured of who You are and where we stand with You and at the exact same time be convicted of sin and convicted of where we need to grow. And we know that it is in the tension of those two. We don't want to let go of either one of those things so that we can be transformed.

God, we live in confusing, disorienting, divided times. And there are casualties of this spiritual war. God, keep us from one side that says truth is relative, there is no such thing as sin, and keep us from the other side that wants to drift into legalism and become somewhat rigid and brazen.

Keep us in the middle, God, where we hold onto the conviction of the truth of who You are but we also recognize that we want to always be ready to explain the reason for the hope that we have and that we do this with gentleness and respect, not to coerce behavior, but to activate hearts. We know that You are the only One who can do that.



So, God, I pray today that You'd move. We're going to celebrate with these people who are going all in today. And we're going to celebrate who came today and they were not planning on doing this, but they are going to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit and come.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

