

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

God With Us

PART

1

TITLE

In Our Weakness

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 33:1-34:10



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On the mountains and in the valleys, in our highs and in our lows, God is with us.

It's great to see you, Providence family. I hope you had a great week. Time to just pause and to give thanks for all of the kindnesses, or at least some of them, that you have in your life because of the grace of God. If you are new with us, we're so glad that you're our guest and I pray this time will be encouraging to you. I want to pause and let's pray, okay?

Father in heaven, on this week when we are reminded to give thanks, more than anything we want to be thankful. God, we want to feel thankful. And so as a church family... Not only have we as families and as friends paused to say thank you, God, as a church family, we look and we see your kindness to us. We see all the sin that you've forgiven. We see all of the friendships that You have built and restored. We see how You have provided for us. How You have protected us. How You have given us repeatedly a peace that passes understanding. I pray this morning knowing that many of our hearts are troubled. I pray for those who feel anxious, who feel angry, who feel lonely, who are afraid.

I ask, God, that You would use this time and the time that we've spent singing to remind us of your love for us. I pray this month that You would remind us of your commitment to draw near to be with us that we could be with You. I ask, God, that You would speak through weakness this morning. That You would give us grace to be able to hear from You. God, we want to hear from You, our maker. Thank You for the book of Exodus as we open it up. As we observe, as we read, would You open up our heart to You? And so we look to You now in faith, asking that You would do things that we can't do in our hearts, for our hearts, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

If you have a Bible, turn with me. The book of... The 32nd chapter. I think it's on the screen. It is. It says 33. It's actually 32. We're going to look at three chapters, but as you know, I like to get a good running start. And so if you're wondering where we're really going to start, we're going to start "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," which is a pattern of mine. This little book. This second book marks God's faithfulness in a people to actually bring them out to exit Egypt and to move them into the promised land, but it's a story of great peril. It's a great story that really speaks to God's tremendous commitment to be with us.

We use the word with all the time. We really don't think a whole lot about what it means. We just say, well, I'm with him or I'm with her or I'm with this, but what the word really means is to be near something or someone. It's to be connected to someone or something. If you are with somebody who is kind and who is gracious, who is wise, then what you have on your hands is a tremendous blessing. In fact, if you just think about it. When we are with a parent... When we're a little kid and we're with a parent, we are connected to their strength and to their love. To their empathy, their concern, and their wisdom. But when we're with our friends or with a friend, we are truly connected to their care, to their empathy, to their skill maybe to help us do something that we can't do by ourselves.

When we are connected to God, we are connected. When we are with him, we are connected to God's authority. His kindness, his mercy, his grace, his patience. We're connected to something that is surreal. With God, if you can say it this way, is a really great place to be. Which is why Christmas is such an amazing gift. The birth of Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:23 says, "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall his name Emmanuel, which means God with us." God being with us, it's... Like we hear it a lot, but we don't always think necessarily how it meets one of the greatest needs that we have and that is that we have a significant problem. Every one of us at some point in life, we're going to experience this problem in various levels and that's the problem of loneliness.

Loneliness is something that is literally one of humanity's great perils and deepest pains. It can either be caused by being alone or by feeling alone. Feeling disconnected. Feeling unseen or unheard. What you find... this is interesting... is that loneliness, then, by definition, is simply the absence of with. It's the absence of being with people. It's the absence of being with God. But it's also a really significant and serious thing. In fact, God's very first recorded concern in the entire Bible deals with loneliness. This should startle us. God looks at everything that he created and he says that's good and that's good and that's good and that's good and that's good. The very first time he looks at something and he says that's not good... It wasn't the absence of morality. It was the absence of togetherness. He says it is not good for the man to be alone.

What we know is that loneliness actually is a coin with two sides, but most of humanity only pays attention to the one. One side of the coin is when we are isolated from other people. And so we think what we need to do is we need to surround ourselves with other people. We need to make friends. We need to have family near us when we're lonely. But what you find is there's another side. The other side is there's a loneliness because of an isolation from God. Most of the people in the world, when they feel lonely, they don't necessarily identify that it's a loneliness from God. And so there's an assumption that says, well, I just need more people around me, but actually, there's an actual loneliness that your heart feels. That you can be around a lot of people, you can be around your people, your family, your friends, and you can still feel this gnawing sense of loneliness. And so what we're going to do in the month of January is we're going to focus in on what does God in the Gospel through Jesus make available so that we can actually have a solution for our loneliness with people, but this advent season, we want to look at what God did, his relentless commitment to us to draw near, to be with us, in order to deal with our loneliness from Him.

Christmas, along with the story that we're about to read here in the book of Exodus, is part of a grand story that actually proves his relentless desire to want to be with you and with me in spite of a weakness. And that weakness is in ability to resist sin that separates, that distances us, from God. And so, like any story, there's a beginning. And, like any story, there's an end. My wife, she loves to read books. How she reads book is really interesting. She reads the first chapter and then she reads the last chapter. If it is what she likes to learn, then she'll read the whole thing. If not, like you kill off her favorite person, then she's not going to read your book. That's how she reads her books. And so it's important for us to look at this grand story of all of Scripture and to say, okay, where does it begin and how does it end? And this is why it's important. Where it begins, because

it begins with God, it's speaking about intent. Divine intent. And where it ends, because God is the one weaving the story of redemption in order to this end, it is his desired accomplishment at the end.

So, the beginning is what you know. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and God created man in His own image. The word image, it means likeness. The idea here is this. Is that though He created all things, only human beings were created in His image. With the ability to relate to Him. To know Him. To hear from Him. To speak to Him. To have emotion like Him. To have relational skill like Him. In other words, what this really means is that He created us to be in a relationship with Him. And then you turn to the very end. In the very end, there's this amazing picture of what Christ accomplished in bringing about heaven and what heaven will be like. There it says that the dwelling place of God is with man and He will dwell with them. They will be His people and God himself will be with them as their God. What happens in the middle is the reason that you have, are, or one day will, feel lonely.

God wanted to protect this togetherness with Him and so He opened His mouth and He gave instructions to the man and the woman. In those instructions, there was only one restriction. And yet, finding that restriction to overbearing, the Bible says that we sinned against God. That sin broke fellowship with God. And not only did it break fellowship, separating us from Him, it also says that we hid. We hid because we felt insecure. We felt shame and guilt. It says that the man and the woman, not only did they hide and isolate themselves from God, they hid in different bushes to hide and isolate themselves from each other. This created the first necessary ingredient for loneliness.

What I'm trying to say is this. Is that if there's no solution, then you're going to live the rest of your life hiding in bushes. From God and from each other. This is also very important. Is that because sin is the cause of loneliness, the only way to deal with loneliness is to connect with the person who can deal with sin. In other words, your need for togetherness... You get 100000 people all around you and you can still feel lonely if you don't know God. You need a relationship with God and that is precisely what He made available. Once we separated and hid, in God's love, amazing love, He began to move toward us by promising a rescuer. And so what we find is that each new person, each new Bible character, is that God, instead of waiting for that person to come and be with Him, God is seeking to go and to be with them.

Begins with Abraham. Abraham, God comes to him and he says, look, I know right now you're worshiping rocks and that's exactly where God found him. He knew that there was something to worship. He didn't know what it was and so he said maybe it's these rocks that we can turn into idols. This is where Abraham began. God came to him without invitation and said, "I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great and, in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." In other words, in you, there will be a son that will be born who will be this rescuer. And in that son, all the nations and all the families of the earth who look to him will be blessed.

Well, Abraham had a son. His name is Isaac. He had the same problem about lying about his wife as his dad. And yet, in spite of his moral insufficiency, his weakness to resist sin, God, by His grace, came to Isaac and he said, "I will be with you and will bless you. And I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham." Well, Isaac had a son. More than one, but we he had a son. His name was Jacob. One day, Jacob, whose name means liar or deceiver, God came to him and He said, "I am the Lord. The God of Abraham and your father and the God of Isaac. I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." You see this pattern throughout the entire Bible. Well, eventually, this family started to say, you know what? One of our family distinctives is that this God wants to be with us. And so not only did they wait for God to say it to them, what happens is that they began to comfort themselves and one another within the family by saying, you know what? God is with us. And so on Jacob's deathbed, he gathers his son to him. His name was Joseph. He has 12 of them, but the one... and this is what he said. He goes, "I'm about to die, but God will be with you."

What this does is it brings the people of Israel into a place called Egypt. There in Egypt, years later, they become slaves. They become slaves there for a long, long time. In the process, there's a baby that's born. His name is Moses. He grows up and he comes the prince of Egypt. Then, all of a sudden, we're told one day he's out in the wilderness and he sees a burning bush. There, he draws near to the bush and God meets him there. God tasks him and tells him... He goes, I have a calling for you. I want you to go back to Egypt and I want you to lead my people, Israel, out to the promised land. Moses says, wait a minute. I have a problem. He says Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" Notice the words and the comfort that God gives to Moses. He says it really doesn't matter who you are. Here's the deal. I will be with you. You plus me is enough. I will be with you.

So, Moses, we're told, he leads the people out of Egypt. They stop at Mount Sinai. And there at Mount Sinai, all the people stay at the bottom. Moses climbs to the top of the mountain and he receives instructions from God. While he is there, this is what happens. Exodus 32, starting at verse 1. "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, 'Up. Make us gods who shall go before us.'" Verse 2. "So Aaron said to them, 'Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives and your sons and your daughters and bring them to me.' So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, 'These are your gods, oh Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt'"

Well, God saw all of this, but Moses didn't. And so God, in the presence of Moses, says, Moses, I am telling you. You need to go down. And then he says in verse 8, "Why?" He says, "For they have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, oh Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.' And the Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people and behold it is a stiff necked people.' What does that mean? They have a weakness to resist sin that causes them to separate from me. Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them."

You notice the word alone here. It's the opposite of the word with. In other words, in this moment, he says, Moses, right now, it's not a good idea for you to be with, near, connected, to me. And so Moses, we're told, is that he then implored. This is what he said. He said, "God, would you remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel?" That's Jacob. "Your servant to whom you swore by your own self and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and all this land that I have promised, I will give to your offspring and they shall inherit it forever.'" What he does is he reminds God of the promise that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Notice the words of mercy. It says, "And the Lord relented." God showed mercy, but listen to me. The damage was done.

This leads to the first truth that I want you to see and hopefully you'll even be able to feel and it is this. That God has always felt the offense and separation of our sin. He has always felt the insult. It's always been personal to Him. You see, sometimes we translate in our own minds and our hearts that God's patience with us and God's recurring forgiveness.... We kind of translate that into an absence of offense or an absence of severity. We start thinking, you know what? I have done this so many times. Every time I do it, I feel bad. And so then what I do is I just go back and I ask Him to forgive me and, every time, He forgives me. So, I keep doing it and there's really no significant consequence over my life. There's no calamity that I face every time I do this. And so maybe it really isn't a big deal to the Lord.

I want you to know that is simply not the case. That God's big heart feels every sin. He goes out of His way to try to help us understand what it feels like to be Him in a relationship with us. How difficult that it is. The words that He uses to describe this feeling of being in a relationship with us, it actually makes Him look vulnerable. It's confusing to people who know that God is the everlasting rock. That He's the sovereign one. That He's the strong one. He never changes. It's hard of us to imagine God being affected. And yet He uses language to not only say not only does your behavior affect me, it tears me up. What He does is he uses different illustrations that we know and experience here on the earth.

In Jeremiah 2, we find one of them. He says, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride." In verse 5, he says, "What wrong did your fathers find in me?" Now, you can read this whole account. It really is something, but just for the sake of time, I just limited it to two verses. This is what He says. People have asked me this question right here in my office. Husbands, wives, whose husband or wife left them for someone else. They come in and they say, you know what? I remember when we met. I remember how I loved them so much. I remember how I fell in love. I remember the affection. I remember the warmth that I felt. I remember the honeymoon. I remember the wedding. I remember the love as a bride. I remember it all. And then life happens and sin happens and sometimes what happens is people leave and it leaves a jilted lover. A jilted spouse. A jilted husband. It's amazing that God almighty would look down on the earth and says do you know what's it like being me in a relationship with you? I look back and I remember the honeymoon when you first came to me and how you trusted and loved and sang to me. And now I only have to ask this question. What is it about me that you don't want to be with? What's so unsightly and unpleasant about me?

He goes to another one in Hosea. Hosea 11. He talks about a parent to a child and he says, "Look, Israel, it was I who taught them to talk. I took them up by their arms. I led them with cords of kindness. I bent down to them. My people are bent on turning away from me." He says, "They are bent on not being with me." You say, well, what picture is this? Well, let me show you the picture. You have a little guy, a little girl, and suddenly they crawl and it's time for them to start walking. So, what do you do? You bend over. That's what He said. He goes, "I bent over towards you." And you pick them up. And then you put two fingers out. All the way up. They're like this, but you're like this tall. They're all the way up like this and then all of a sudden they start that little wonky walk. They're just trying to stay up and they're doing this number and you're just holding them. Well, eventually, there's some progress.

And so what happens? They get a little bit more confidence, so they say, "Dad, I got this." I'll tell you what. Just one. And so they let go of the one. They're just holding on like this, but they're getting a little bit faster. And then what happens is, over time, there's a little bit more and more progress to where, suddenly, I don't need your hands, but I'll walk with you. And all of a sudden you keep walking and Dad says, "Hey, stop. Come back." And he says no. He says I call him back, he says, but the more that I call them back to be with me, the more they want to leave me. We've been forgiven so many times that we have come to believe that it's really not a big deal to sin anymore. His big heart feels every sin. And so let me encourage us to not allow God's endless grace to God's real pain. Every sin.

The second thing I want you to see, which is remarkable if you think about what I just described and what happens next, is he teaches us the second thing major truth and that is that God's nearness has always been our greatest good. Is that we have this perpetual nature, this weakness to resist sin, to walk away from the Lord and to see Him as everything and not to want to be with Him, and yet He's created us to where the greatest good that we're ever going to experience is actually to be close to Him, is to be near Him. And so the story goes on and Moses, he comes down from the mountain. He destroys the calf. He rebukes the people. He rebukes Aaron. And then he says... After a time of judgment, he says, look, I'm going to go back up on the mountain and when I get back up on the mountain, I'm going to pray for mercy that God still wants to be with us.

And he gets up there and God says to him, "Depart. Go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying to your offspring I will give it. I will send an angel before you and I will drive out..." And then he lists all these people groups. Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. And he says, "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you. I won't be with you. Lest I consume you on the way for you are a..." Let me just translate it. A weak people who cannot resist sin that separates you from me.

It's interesting. Some people might hear what I just read and think this is a great offer. Okay, so this is what you're telling me. We get the land. You're going to send an angel with us to protect us. You're going to sovereignly... From some distant place, you're going to drive out our enemies. You're going to give us a land of milk

and honey, blessing and provision, and we don't even have to be necessarily obligated to care about you or your wrath because you're not even going to be all that close. But notice what he said in verse 15. See, Moses knew something about the Lord. And he says, "He said to him, 'If your presence will not go with me, do not bring me up from here for how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight. I and your people. Is it not in your going with us? So that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the whole earth.'" In other words, God, you can keep all the milk and honey if it doesn't come with you. If you aren't with us, I don't want to go.

That gives us an important question to ask and answer and it's this. If God gave you your heart's desire... If God said to you whatever it is that you are pursuing, whatever it is that you think is going to make you happy, if I gave it absolutely all to you, but to have it, you wouldn't have me, would you take it? Moses said no way. And the reason is because Moses learned something very important and that is that God is not a vending machine that we approach for treats, but instead God is the greatest treat and prize in heaven and on earth. This is what the psalmist said in Psalm 73:25. He says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you."

There's a lot of people that say I can't wait to get to heaven so that I'm going to be able to see this person or experience this. Do you see what the Bible says? When you get there, the only thing you are going to want to see is Christ. He is the treasure of the redeemed. There's a vast amount of people who are going to live their entire life on the earth chasing one trinket after another on this earth only to find out that there's not a single trinket on the earth that can actually satisfy the soul. And he says, "Even on this earth, there's nothing that I desire besides you."

Let me encourage us... Let's refuse to settle for a good life without God. Let's refuse to settle for a good life without God. See, in this world that God has littered so abundantly with good gifts, it is so easy to build a life around these gifts without ever considering the greater good found in the giver. And so God continually comes to us and He gives us one more metaphor after another. There's one in Luke 15. It's one the most devastating ones. If you really think about it deeply... We know it as the prodigal son. Like, oh, that's the one that went away and then he got so sorry and he came back. Let me tell you how it begins, though. Jesus says, do you want to know what it's like to be God in a relationship with you? He goes, "It is like a man who has two sons and one of his sons says, Dad, I wish you were dead. Because if you were dead, I would get my inheritance. But you're not dead. So, let's act like you are dead and go ahead and give me the inheritance so that I can enjoy it without you." That's the beginning of the prodigal son. Just imagine.

It's so important for us to personalize this because so many of us, we just have this wrong view that actually thinks that God is a book or he's a religion or he's an idea. He's a system of thought or theology. No, he is personal. And so sometimes it's good for us to personalize what this would be like. Just imagine Christmas. Two days before Christmas, you've gone through all the work to secure the money to be able to buy a gift that you know your children are going to love. Just imagine your kids coming to you two days before Christmas

and saying, “Dad, we’re really looking forward to the goodies on Christmas, but we just assume that you put them out by the tree and you leave before I wake up.”

And so the question that I have asked all week... God, why are You so relentless to be with us when we are so relentless to be away from You? The only answer the Bible gives is love. He doesn’t even tell us why He loves us. He just says he does. He loves you. He just loves. God has created our soul and its capacity for joy to adjust to the size of our treasure. That means that if you fall in love with something that is truly noble and something truly glorious, what happens is your soul, it expands and your capacity of joy then also expands. But if you fall in love with little trinkets on the earth, little things, little lusts, what happens is your soul that was built for something great dehydrates and it becomes like a raisin, as does your capacity to feel and know joy.

You see, a soul that makes his gifts the treasure on the earth momentarily feels very full, but then very quickly feels empty. Because most people don’t look to God for the issue of their loneliness, what they do is they simply keep looking for the next trinket. They live their entire life five minute splashes of happiness followed by devastating despair that the last thing they pursued wasn’t enough. God’s nearness has always been our greatest good. And God keeps pursuing us to be with us as we drink from these muddy puddles in the word because his love knows that there is a fountain, a beautiful fountain, just over the hill. So, what would it look like for you this Christmas to find real joy in knowing Christ and pursuing Him with your life?

The last thing that I want you to see is that God’s character has always been the blessing of his nearness. What that means is this. Is that we’ve identified that he feels pain when we sin. We’ve identified that his nearness is better than having all the goodness of his gifts without him. But what makes his nearness so good? What he tells us here is that it’s his character. His capable hands blesses people, but the Bible says that it’s his character that moves his capable hands. And so look what it says in chapter 33, verse 17. “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘This very thing that you’ve spoken I will do meaning I will go with you. For you have found favor in my sight and I know you by name. And Moses said, ‘Please show me your glory.’” This is one of the most unique requests in the whole Bible. From a man who has seen such glorious things. This was a man who’s already seen the plagues. He’s already seen the burning bush. He’s already eaten miracle food. He’s already seen the exodus. He’s already seen the sea split and then walk on dry ground. He has seen remarkable things, so why would he ask this? The only reason is because he knew that there was a source to all this power that was even more awesome than the works themselves.

And so in verse 19, notice what he says. God says, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim before you my name the Lord.” Verse 21. “And the Lord said, ‘Behold, there’s a place by me where you shall stand on the rock. While my glory passes by, I will put you in the cleft of the rock and I will cover you with my right hand until I have passed by. And then I will take away my hand and you shall see my back but my face shall not be seen.” Chapter 34, verse 6. “And the Lord passed before...” I’m sorry, verse 5. “And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed. The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in

steadfast love and faithfulness. Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.” Verse 8. “And Moses quickly bowed his head before the earth and worshiped. And he said, ‘If now I have found favor in your sight, oh Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us. Be with us.’”

Now, you notice that when God answered his request and he showed him his glory, that Moses did not see a great light. He heard a great name. It says that he proclaimed a name to Moses and that was the answer to his request. You see, God’s name is the description of his character. It’s the basis of his actions. What that means is that He loves to give you mercy and the reason is because He is merciful. Therefore, his character is the confidence of his people. That’s why Proverbs 18:10 says, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous man runs into it and is safe.” And so if you think about this, the name of the Lord is the attributes of the Lord. And so from what we have just read in this text, he says that He is authoritative. The authority of the Lord is a strong tower. It says that he’s merciful, gracious, steadfast love, faithfulness, forgiving, and just. That these things are the strong tower and the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

Well, that leads to one last question and that is this. How in the world are we as people going to be safe if we have already sinned against him, if we have offended him, and the list of the attributes actually says by no means will he clear the guilty? I mean, that’s a dilemma that you need an answer toward. We have sinned and He says by no means will He ever clear the guilty. So, what’s the answer? How in the world can we be safe? The answer is Christmas. We can run to the strong tower because the strong tower in Jesus Christ, the son of God, he ran to us. John 1:14 says, “The word,” that’s Christ, “became flesh and dwelt among us and we’ve seen his glory. Glory as the only son from the Father full of grace and truth.”

You see, religion, every religion save one, says this. Says we have this founding teacher. If you live the way that our founding teacher taught how to live, it will be enough to clear your guilt and be with God. Jesus comes to earth and he says, all right, let’s be honest. Reckon with yourself. You know you’re too weak. Your entire history has proven that you’ve never kept anybody as a teacher in terms of morality. You know. And so what does He do? He says, look, your weakness will never allow you to live as you ought and so I came and lived as you ought. And then I went to a cross and I died for your sin. This is what it means when he says he will by no means clear the guilty. For those of us who are in Christ, that doesn’t mean that He ignores the sin, it just means someone else died for it. Every sin will be punished by death, either ours or Jesus. And then he says, “I rose from the dead. And because I rose from the dead, I have the ability to give eternal life to all who would run to me.” And so He says, “And if you will run to me and trust me with your life, I will take away your sin and give you my righteousness and it will be enough for you to be with God.”

My question is have you come to that place in your life where you know you need a savior? And where you look at Jesus Christ and you recognize his uniqueness in the way that He lived and the way that He died and the fact that He rose from the dead and what it means for you. Have you come to that place in recognizing that if Jesus Christ rose from the dead, it means he has the authority to be called Lord? You can trust Him

today. For those of you who will and for those of us who have, there's one last application I want you to see and it's simply this. If this is true, then let's prioritize knowing Christ as the ultimate pursuit of our life.

There is a lot of pursuits, isn't there? Even noble ones. Even ones that are endorsed by Christ. He tells us to be great at family and friendship. He tells us to make disciples. He tells us to care for the poor. Care for the widows. Orphans. Those who are oppressed. He tells us to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. He tells us to work and be creative and to produce because he's a worker who produces. He tells us all kinds of things that where we should have aspirations on the earth. We should have a pursuit, but here's the deal. Any noble pursuit that replaces our pursuit to know and enjoy Christ more deeply will be like a train that's disconnected from its engine. Which is why Paul said, "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord."

And so, this Christmas, let me encourage you to do something. Let me encourage you to ask Moses' question. God, would you show me your glory? And then open up one of the Gospels this month and read through one of them and say, God, help me to see the glory of Jesus Christ. And surround yourself with people who love to talk about Jesus that would inspire you with the character of Christ. I know you know things about Christ. I know many of you do. But I want you to know something. That well is so much deeper than you've ever experienced. And so keep going deeper.

Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank You that You love us. And because You love us, we thank You that You are with us and for us. God, not only do we confess our sin because we are sinful, but God, we also tell You we are deeply sorry for the offense and the pain that our sin and our rebellion has brought to You. Lord, the best days on this earth are those days when we are close to You. We've experienced that. We know that. And so I pray, God, that as we leave this place, God, we have the potential even as before we walk out of these doors to sin against You because we really are weak in this area. And so I ask, God, that You would help us. We need You. So, as we sing this, God, would You help it to be a confession of our own heart. A prayer to You. To plead with You, God, for strength to be able to walk with You, to be together with You forever. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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