

2025 CC Charlotte Men's Conference - Session 3

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[0 : 00] Good afternoon. You know, I couldn't help, I think it was funny, the after lunch session by the guy who just came back on a long trip. Because why not, right?

Yeah, yeah, that's true. If I can stay awake, you can stay awake. I got back from Japan yesterday, last night. My family picked me up around 8.30, so that's where that joke's coming from.

But it's good to be with you today. This has been a wonderful time looking at 1 Corinthians 11, verse 1, focusing in on, I use a New King James, so mine says, imitate me just as I also imitate Christ, but again, follow me as I also follow Christ. Session one, who we follow determines who we are. Session two, those who follow also lead, and to this session, Jesus, infinitely worth following. My goodness, what a deep and amazing thing to do in 45 minutes, so bear with me.

I was sharing with Jared and Aaron, just the direction the Lord was taking me. It was kind of funny. I was studying on this trip and getting ready, and thinking, okay, you know, this would be a good way. I'll just kind of look at this section, and woke up one morning and realized, wait, there's nothing there. That's not where the Lord wants to be, and I was like, okay, well, Lord, I got nothing then, and so I need something, because I don't want to come empty-handed, and it was great, because I woke up the next morning, and it was like, there it is. It's all, okay, I'll go from there.

[2 : 01] It was an outline that God gave me, and when we look at Exodus 3, Moses, he's encountering the burning bush, and you don't have to turn there, but he's encountering the burning bush, and when he asked God, who, what is the name that I shall give to the Jews of the God who you are? What is your name?

And he says, I am who I am. It's Yahweh, the becoming one. I am, it's a verb, and it's just a beautiful picture of God always wanting to be whatever you need him to be in your life. That's what he is. He's the all-becoming one. John, in his gospel, he points to Jesus Christ and the divinity of Jesus Christ, and in chapter 8, that's where we read that Jesus says in verse 58, he says, and Jesus said to them, most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. And so this morning, or excuse me, this afternoon, see, I am a little out of it. This afternoon, we're going to look at the seven I am statements of Christ and see why he is infinitely worth following, because he so much is.

And so we'll list them real quick, and we'll go through each one, some a little deeper than others, and some you're going to hear a little repeat, which is just the Holy Spirit, because none of us talked about our messages, or at least I didn't. But the first one we're going to look at is Jesus says, I am the bread of life, and then he says, I am the light of the world, John 8.

I'm the door, John 10. I'm the resurrection and the life, John 11. I am the good shepherd, John 10 again. I am the way, the truth, and the life, John 14. And finally, I am the vine. All right, well, we're going to obviously break this up into seven little sections. The bread of life, you can look at John 6. Jesus is infinitely worth following, because he sustains, right? He's the bread of life.

In John 6, Jesus feeds the 5,000 with a miraculous multiplication of five loaves and two fish. And the next day, he's on the other side of the lake, and the people have found him there.

[4 : 23] And they ask him this question in verse 25. It says, Rabbi, when did you come here? And Jesus answered them and said, Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and you were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you because God the Father has set his seal on him. And then they said to him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? And Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he sent. And therefore they said to him, What sign will you perform then that we may see, it and believe you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. And then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I

say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. And then they said to him, Lord, give us this bread always. And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not never hunger. And he who believes in me shall never thirst. You know, we've all just enjoyed a fantastic meal. It's given us some nutrients that can sustain us through the day. And some things probably we don't need, but it was very yummy and tasty. But it didn't just appear over there.

All right, we had some volunteers, wonderful ladies in the church that came to help and they were served in the background, arranging the meal, getting it ready. There was a caterer who spent hours preparing the meal. Someone before that labored to raise the meat, the animals for the meat. Another labored to provide the feed for that animal. And, you know, since the fall of man, labor and labor and labor has been happening because it's a part of our lives. Jared looked at that a little bit this morning.

Some people live their whole life to work and others work to live. All too often we labor for the wrong things. Christ gives us all we need if we seek him first, though. In Jesus, we are offered a better life that sustains. Matthew 4, verse 18 to 22 says this, And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And then he said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they immediately left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets. And he called them. And immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. You know, in this passage, we see Jesus calling four men to follow him. And when he calls them, they're in their boat of life, striving to make a living.

[7 : 59] Peter and Andrew, they're casting their net. I'm not sure if you've ever seen these nets that they cast, but they've got, it's kind of a circular shape. They've got weighted weights around the edges of this net in a string or cable, whatever it is nowadays, in the center of this ring. And they'll sit there and they'll use all their strength to throw it out as far as they can, get as wide as spread as they can of this net. So when it falls in the water, those weights go down. They hopefully scoop up a lot of fish. And when they pull up on the top of that rope, those weights then come together with centrifugal force and whatever's inside gets stuck. And they're using all of their strength to pull up this net. And so you see here, Peter and Andrew, they're casting a net.

You know, perhaps that might be you today. The cares of the world, the present challenges of life, they're pressing on you. And all you can do is muster up enough strength that you have to get up each day and push on, hoping and hoping it'll get better, but maybe it isn't.

Or perhaps you relate more to James and John. They were in their boat of life and they were mending their nets. You know, these are the holes. There's holes in their life and they're seemingly keeping you from success.

And all you can do each day is sit there trying to fix the holes that are in your own life. But every time you fix one hole, another hole pops up. There's nothing that seems to be going your way. Everything's coming down around you.

Well, my friends, Jesus said to these men in their boats of life, he said to them, follow me and I will. [9 : 55] Jesus will give you strength for each day. He'll give you his strength. Jesus will mend the nets of your life. And Jesus will sustain you.

You know, we were created to depend on God for everything. But the enemy of our souls will lie. He's going to lie to us, just as Jared shared earlier.

He's going to lie to us in such a way that we're going to think that we have to depend upon ourselves. And it's a lie. It's a lie straight from hell. Jesus says, come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

When we follow Jesus, the only work we are asked to do is believe. That's it. This is the work of the Father. Believe in the one whom he sent.

[11 : 00] Jesus is infinitely worth following because he will sustain us. Secondly, Jesus says that I am the light of the world. This is in John 8, verse 12.

Jesus is infinitely worth following because he guides with a perfect light. You know, you walk into a dark room and it's hard to see anything. I think we've all tried it. We walk around in the dark. We usually walk into something, kick something with our feet. We step on a pile of Legos. That feels good, doesn't it? Yeah, you've all done that. I've done that. But if you turn on a light, you can start avoiding the hazards. You can see where they are. You can see the places that perhaps maybe need to be cleaned up. Light reveals what's in the dark. And as the light of the world, Jesus reveals both the reality of our sin and the truth of God. It's a beautiful picture.

[12 : 00] We like to compare ourselves to those around us trying to justify our sin by saying things like, well, at least I didn't sin as bad as that guy did. Or perhaps we say, well, I've done this, but at least I didn't do that.

We like to view our sin on a bar graph where this sin may be way up here on the bar graph, but lying its way down here, so it's not so bad. But the reality is, from God's view, all sin is equal. He looks at that bar graph of ours that looks so pretty on this plane, but he looks down on it and he says, it looks all the same to me. All flat. Spiritually, without Christ, we're all walking around in darkness.

Jesus, the spiritual light of the world, he comes in and he exposes our sin. And he gives us sight. And when we look at Jesus and we see the perfection of God, as Peter saw the perfection of God and he fell on his knees and he said, depart from me for I'm a sinful man, O Lord. Jesus, the light of the world, he shines the light of his love into our hearts and leads us into the way of righteousness. We surrender to his will. That is the key.

[13 : 25] You know, the ultimate reason that people do not come to Christ is because they don't want to. They love the darkness because there they can hide their evil ways.

But my friends, the light shines in the darkness. And when I am in sin, me, I don't want people to find out what I'm doing. But when I come to the light and I confess my sin, there's an incredible freedom.

There is no more condemnation. First John 1, sometimes we call the spiritual soap, right? If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we will have fellowship with one another.

In the blood of Christ Jesus, his son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. What a beautiful promise. You know, there's beauty in transparency.

[14 : 33] My life, it's not perfect. Your life, not perfect. If it was, we wouldn't need a savior. But in the light of Jesus Christ, our sins are revealed.

And when we confess our sins, he will wash them away. And he'll lead us in the paths of righteousness for his sake. And that's why Jesus is infinitely worth following.

Because he guides with that perfect light. Third, Jesus says, I am the door. This is in John 10. Verse 7 and 9.

And Jesus, he's infinitely worth following because he's the only way to salvation. Our sin, it separates us from a relationship with God.

And we try different ways to get right with God. We try morality. We try philosophy. We try good works. We even try religion. Right? But none of these work.

[15 : 34] The only door that leads to God is the door of Jesus Christ. All others are lies that steal life and waste time. In John chapter 10, Jared read some of this.

But we'll read it again. And most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, the same as a thief and a robber. But he who enters the door is the shepherd by the door.

Excuse me. Is the shepherd of the sheep. To him, the doorkeeper opens. And the sheep hear his voice. And he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings them out, brings out his own sheep, he goes before them and the sheep follow him and they know his voice. Yet they will not by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. And Jesus used this illustration, verse 6, but they did not understand the things that he spoke to them.

And then Jesus said to them again, most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who enter, whoever came before me are thieves and robbers.

[16:46] But the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy.

I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly. There are many in this world today who do not like the fact that God has one way.

They want there to be many ways. The problem with this is that if there are many ways, then how do you know which one is real? Which one is the best way? You know, if I go left and it brings struggles and trials and then I look over and I see you and your life looks full and wealthy and successful, in my opinion, you have security.

Well, then I might be tempted to go and leave the path I chose and go follow you and try to follow your path. You know, the problem with this is if I do that, I never really have anything solid in my life because I'm always looking for something else.

I'm not content, not satisfied. I'm always looking for something to better myself and yet it never comes and it leaves me more frustrated than ever before.

[18:05] You know, there's many who have fallen into this trap and they just give up. They choose to walk around in life in depression with no hope, no certainty of life, more abundant and free.

And all they do is just walk around in suffering and pain. But there is hope. Hope is found in Jesus Christ who says boldly and passionately, I am the door.

If anyone enters by me, we will be saved and we'll go in and out and find pasture. In contrast to the thief who only steals, kills and destroys, Jesus came into this world that we may have life and have it more abundantly.

And praise God. Praise God there's only one way. Having one way removes questions and uncertainty and all these other religions in the world. They have this idea of, well, maybe you'll make it.

But you don't know. You have to wait until you're dead. And then you'll find out if you were good enough. There's no promise in these other things.

[19:22] These other religions or faiths, as they're called. There's no promise in them of a life after death. Only in Jesus Christ do we find that there's hope and a life for future glory with him.

And why is that? Well, it's because God cannot lie. And his word tells us so. John 3.16, right? For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Thank God he can't lie. And that's why Jesus is infinitely worth following, because he's the only way to salvation. He's the door.

Fourthly, Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. This is in John 11, verse 25. And this just shows us that Jesus is infinitely worth following, because he gives life.

In sin, we're spiritually dead. But in Christ, we have new life. Believing in Jesus gives us restoration now to live this life for the rest of this life.

[20:39] And to beyond, into forevermore. But for this life, we can live it free from the power of sin. We can live it following Jesus Christ. We can live it knowing him and making him known.

But for many people, many, the problem is that they don't live in this truth. They continue to live in the old man, the dead one. The sad fact is that many are satisfied with Jesus as simply Savior.

But they don't really want Jesus to be Lord of their life. It has been said that in our heart, there's a throne. And so the question for you and I today is, well, who's on the throne?

Is it me or is it Christ? When you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, he wipes away all your sins. We're saved. There's no question. But in that moment, the Holy Spirit, he comes and he takes up residence in your heart.

But the fruitfulness of the rest of your life here on this earth will be determined by your willingness to be completely surrendered to the leading and guiding of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

[21:53] Jesus Christ is the resurrection and he's the life. He is life. In Christ, old things have passed away. Yes, we're saved by believing in Jesus, by faith, through grace.

But James exhorts us that faith without works is dead. We are saved to live a life of faith that glorifies God, not a life that is just about us.

It's a life no longer bound and trapped by sinful living. But how can we do that? Well, only through a complete surrender to the leading and guiding of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit and through his word.

A short poem says it this way. There's two natures that beat within my chest. One is cursed and one is blessed. One I love, one I hate. The one I feed will dominate.

In order for us to imitate Christ and live for him, we must spend time feeding on God's word. If we say Jesus is infinitely worth following, follow him.

[23 : 06] Romans 6, Paul writes this. He says, How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Therefore, we were buried with him through baptism into death. That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now, if we died with Christ, we also believe that we shall live with him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.

Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died once for all. But the life that he lives, he lives to God.

[24 : 16] Likewise, you also reckon yourselves to be dead, indeed to sin, but live to God, excuse me, alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus is infinitely worth following because he gives us life. We're no longer dead. Fifth, Jesus says that, he says, I am the good shepherd.

John 10, 11 and 14. This just shows that Jesus is infinitely worth following because he cares and watches for you.

Speaking to the Pharisees in chapter 10, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. There's an interesting comparison just for time.

I'll encourage you to read it later. But Ezekiel 34, 1 through 12. It's a contrast between bad shepherds and the good shepherd. Where the bad shepherds of Israel don't take care of the sheep and God rebukes them for it.

[25 : 28] He finally says, I will come and shepherd my sheep. Jesus is that good shepherd. Jesus came on a rescue mission. He came to seek and to save the lost.

We read that in Luke 19, 10. Jesus says in John 10, 14 and 15, I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and am known by my own. And as the father knows me, even so, I know the father and I lay my life down for my sheep.

For the sheep, excuse me. I do want to turn over real quick to Psalm 139. The psalmist writes here, David.

He says, oh Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. The idea of he knows everything you do. You understand my thoughts from afar off.

That's every thought. Even the ones you don't think anybody knows about, God knows. You comprehend my path and my lying down. This is where I go, wherever I linger, wherever I go.

[26 : 51] He comprehends it. In a choir, excuse me, you are acquainted with all my ways. My every motivation, God knows it.

For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, oh Lord, you know it altogether. He knows everything that you say or that you think about saying.

You have hedged me in, excuse me, you have hedged me behind and before, right? That's our past, present, and future. And laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

It is high. I cannot attain it. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend into heaven, you are there. If I take my bed in hell, then behold, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, right? If I can go at the speed of light, no matter how fast I go in life or how fast I drive down the road, even there your hand shall lead me.

[28 : 02] And your right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall follow me, even the night shall be light about me. Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from you.

But the night shines as the day, and darkness, the darkness and the light are both alike to you. For you formed me in my inward parts.

You covered me in my mother's womb. I shall praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well.

My frame was not hidden from you. When I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed.

And in your book, there were all written the days fashioned for me, and when as yet there were none of them. How precious are all your thoughts to me, O God!

[29 : 02] How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with you. O that you would slay the wicked, O God!

Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men, for they speak against you wickedly. Your enemies take your name in vain, and do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate you?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with a perfect hatred. I count them my enemies. Search me, O Lord, and know my heart.

Try me and know my anxieties, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. What an amazing love that God has for us.

It's overwhelming. He's given us a commandment to love one another as he loved us. Wow!

[30 : 09] Jesus gave his life for you and me. If we are his disciples, followers of Jesus Christ, well, then we are to imitate him. We are known as disciples by our love for one another.

So what do you give your life to? Everyone has the same 24 hours a day. How are you spending yours, these times, these days that you've been given?

Ephesians 5, 15, 16, we read this, See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Paul's example to us in 1 Thessalonians 1, 8, he shows us that we should be willing to give our very lives for the sake of others.

Man, we need to spend our time wisely caring for and watching over the things that the Lord has given us charge over. Our personal walk with him, first and foremost.

[31 : 16] Our relationship with our wife. Our relationship with our kids. Our work and the ministry that God has given us to do.

We should care for all these things. And our good shepherd, he shows us how to do that, how to love those around us. And that's what makes him infinitely worth following, because he cares for us and he watches over us.

He sends us out to do the same. Number six, Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 14, 6.

Jesus is infinitely following, because he is the source of all truth and all knowledge about God.

When Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, I can't help but see that it's, you know, some of you know who I work for, so I can't help but see that it's summed up in John 3, 16.

And Billy Graham, he would say that the whole gospel, everything you need to know about salvation, forgiveness, eternal life, it's in that passage, right? And I see that Jesus says, the way, the truth, and the life.

[32 : 30] It's in this passage as well. Jesus, the way, right? Believe in the Son. The world's way, there's many doors. You don't have to put your faith in one.

The God's way, there's one door. The world's way says that, oh, you know, this way's right, it'll be fine. Oh, that didn't work. Oh, try this one, that'll be a better one.

Right? Proverbs 14, 12, and 16, 25, they say the essence of this, different ways for each, but, you know, there's a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death.

Whereas Psalm 18, 30, tells us that the way of the Lord is perfect. God's way is perfect. The world's way, love me.

Everything you should do would be about me. Love me. God says, love you. The world says, me first. God says, you first.

[33 : 32] The world says, death and destruction. That's all it brings, right? But God says, peace and life. Jesus says, the truth, the truth is God loves you, for God so loved the world.

Too many people today ask the question, how can a God of love let this happen? Why does God hate me? The problem with this incorrect view of God is that it really is.

It's just selfish. It's all about me. It assumes that I know how God should love me, and when he doesn't do what I want, well, then he must be wrong.

And how can he be a God of love if he's not doing what I want? Because he loves me, right? It's the, I want this. If this is my view of God, then I see his word as a bunch of rules that are meant to be followed, that are just meant to restrict my life from the freedoms that I want to enjoy.

And so that's why we see the world today trying to say, oh, God is dead. This doesn't mean anything. It's old. It's archaic. If that's my worldview, then reading Leviticus, yeah, it's going to become very boring and hard.

[34 : 56] But this is a lie, and it's blinding. Because if you read Leviticus from the light of God's love for you, man, it's a whole different perspective. These aren't rules.

These are wonderful instructions of how to love one another and love God from him himself, the author and perfecter of love. God is love. When we see Jesus and understand and believe the gospel, he gives us a new heart, and we see God for who he really is.

He's full of grace, and he's full of truth. Before Pontius Pilate, Jesus said, for this cause I was born. For this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

And we all know what Pontius Pilate said. What is truth? God is truth. You see, God cannot lie. That's a beautiful fact. The fact is that God is love, and that is truth, and God can't lie. So everything in this book is true, even if it's hard for us to accept.

[36 : 08] And Jesus shows us the truth about God. Colossians 1.15, it tells us that he, Jesus, is the image of the invisible God.

Turn real quick to Hebrews. We're going to read the first few verses. Chapter 1. Verse 1 through 4. God, God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in past times to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Wow. He's the truth. He's the image of God himself. And he's the life. In Jesus, you and I can have everlasting life.

Jesus himself, you know, it's interesting. Life is not ever really mentioned as being created. It just was. And life was in Jesus Christ. He is life.

John 17.3, and this is eternal life that you may know, excuse me, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. That's what Jesus said about eternal life.

[37 : 56] This everlasting life is not just for the future, but it's for now. Knowing God. We can know God now and experience a life, excuse me, experience the life that he intended for us to have when we follow Jesus Christ.

As we look at, looked at it earlier in Romans, our old man died with Christ, and we are a new creation meant to live with him in this life.

Now, it's not something we're just waiting for and kind of going through the motions throughout the day. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3.18. And Jesus, because he's the way, the truth, and the life, he is infinitely worth following because he's the source of all truth and all knowledge of God.

And finally, the vine. John 15, 1 and 5. Jesus is infinitely worth following because he brings us into a personal relationship with him.

[39 : 13] We're going to read verses 1 through 5. I am the true vine, and my father is the vine dresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away, and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes, and that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. Nothing at all. You know, bearing fruit is becoming more like Jesus Christ through an ever-growing and deepening knowledge of him and his grace.

As followers of Jesus Christ who want to glorify him, we are to bear much fruit. Fruit's not solely about evangelism and bringing more people into the church and into the fellowship of God, but it's also, and probably more so, a focus on our character.

[40 : 32] The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. So, pointing out just two things here.

A connection to the vine directly affects the fruit-bearing of the branches. Quite simply, you will not see the fruit of the Spirit in my life if I don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

If I'm not abiding with Jesus Christ, there will be no fruit. We've met some people who say, oh, I went back to church, I accepted Christ when I was a kid, didn't really do anything. Well, there's probably a reason for that.

Doesn't mean that their salvation's not real. That's between them and God. But abiding in Christ, that's a relationship. Spending time with Him in prayer, in His Word, and in fellowship with other believers.

You know, if one thing that COVID kind of hurt was, Jared alluded to it, the idea of, I can watch online. I work in Asia, and that hurt the church pretty bad.

[41 : 42] Because people still want to just watch online. There's too many other distractions online to watch church online. You see, I can do nothing of any spiritual significance apart from Christ.

I can run off, as 1 Corinthians talks about, and I can love all kinds of people, do all these great things, do wonders, but if I don't have love, if I don't have Christ in the midst of it all, it's all for nothing.

Secondly, pruning. Right? Pruning may be painful at times, but it's done out of love. so that more fruit can be produced.

You know, Jesus, he'll come in, and the Holy Spirit will reveal things in our lives that he wants to take away. There's areas in our lives that don't look like Jesus Christ, and so he wants to take those away and prune them out.

Sometimes it's painful, but sometimes it's a huge blessing when we finally let it go. because if it's still on the branch, it's still sucking life out of us.

[42 : 52] You cut it off, well, now that burden's gone. I'm going to close just sharing my testimony with you. I was saved when I was seven.

Grew up in a Christian home, and so I remember Bible stories at night, and in high school, I was known as a Christian. I had one of those letterman's jackets, and on my sleeve, it said Jesus with a big red cross on it.

It's wearing my faith on my sleeve. Out of high school, I joined the Marine Corps. First thing I did is, where's the church? And I found a church, and I went to church, but honestly, I was a hypocrite.

In my heart, it wanted to do other things. I was away from home, and people knew me as a Christian, but at some point when Tim and Rod Tate, some people move on.

Started to see how much I could get away with before God would actually deal with me, though I knew God was speaking to me, and I didn't want to listen. And I made some pretty big mistakes, all because I wanted to satisfy my flesh.

[44 : 03] But the Lord used all of it to show me that I was really just playing games with Him, that I was content to have Him as my Savior, but I didn't want, you know, He wasn't really the Lord of my life.

At 22, I finally surrendered, and my life began to have drastic change. I began to see Jesus as the bread of life that sustains, as the light of the world who guides perfectly, as the door who, the only way to salvation and the resurrection and the life.

Saw Him as the good shepherd who cares and watches over me personally. Saw Him as the way, the truth, and the life, as the vine and the foundation for all other relationships in my life.

Man, Jesus Christ is just infinitely worth the Halloween. If you're not doing that today, then we're going to bow our heads, and I just want to pray with you.

Because today is the day of salvation. Today is the day that we should be living our lives for Christ. We don't want to just come and hang out together and walk away thinking everything's all hunky-dory all the time.

[45 : 23] Because the reality is, you know, there's something going on. And God wants to prune it and sharpen it. And I just want to take a moment and pray with you guys before Jared comes up.

And we are going to do communion today. So, let's close in prayer. Father, I just want to thank you for today.

Thank you that you love us with a love that's unconditional. And it's a love that tells us, hey, we didn't choose you, you chose us.

And that was a choosing that happened while we were still in rebellion against you. it's like you went and ran off to your enemy and said, hey, I love you and I want to save you.

I want to change your life and I want you to come and live in my house. All you got to do is just admit that you're against me and repent and I want to change your ways.

[46 : 21] Pretty amazing little thought. The Bible says it's impossible to please God without faith. Lord, we pray that you would increase our faith to trust you and to walk with you more and more and to see that you sustain our life.

You have a perfect plan for our life, that you are the only way of salvation. There is no other route that we can take. And that because you are the resurrection and our life, we can live a life now that glorifies you in every area of our lives.

In our home and our work and our playtime and our ministry. Father, you're the good shepherd. You care for us and you show us that care. You show us how much you love us and we have your word to prove it and to be a guiding light. And then you say, hey, all these things you see me do, go and do them.

And so we ask for the strength to come from you, Lord, your Holy Spirit to move and work in through us. And as you are the way, the truth, and the life, Lord, we want to surrender completely to you and ask that you would be continually feeding into us as we cling to you for that intimate relationship as the vine and we all branches hanging on for dear life saying, Lord, thank you for not letting go of us.

[47 : 52] And Lord, for those of us and we all got things in our lives that we need to surrender to you and so, Lord, we just want to do that now. Each one being reminded of whatever it may be that you've been calling us to for months or years or maybe even just moments.

But we choose now, Lord, I just pray that every man in this room would choose now to surrender that to you, that you would be Lord of our life, that we wouldn't be satisfied with just a Savior, although we need that desperately.

But Lord, we would be longing for you to be Lord. And as we've talked earlier, Lord, a Lord who leads us, Lord, who we follow so closely, not trying to walk next to you, Lord, but we follow behind you even as the Israelites crossing into the promised land followed behind the ark because they didn't know which way they were going or we don't know.

And so we follow you. And we thank you for this day that we were able to set aside for this wonderful conference to come together, men from across the city, across this region, Lord, seeking you, seeking your face.

Lord God, help us to imitate you in every area of our lives that we would be fully surrendered to the leading and guiding of your most wonderful and gracious Holy Spirit.

[49 : 24] We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.