

# Discussion of "No Jesus? No Different. Know Jesus; Be Transformed"

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[ 0 : 00 ] John 9-1-12 When he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.

And his disciples asked him, Rabbi, whose sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva.

Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which means scent. So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?

Some said, It is he. Others said, No, but he is like him. He kept saying, I am the man. So they said to him, Then how were your eyes opened? He answered, The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash.

[ 1 : 37 ] So I went and washed and received my sight. They said to him, Where is he? He said, I do not know. So the first question that we have tonight.

First question, The disciples and the blind man's neighbors saw him as a lost cause, but Jesus didn't. Are there people whom you perceive as lost causes today?

We talk about a general group of people. Talk about a specific person, though, you know, maybe you don't want to be so specific, especially if they're in the room here.

Or maybe not. Maybe not. But is there someone whom you, and we can even, we can talk about now, we can talk about in the past. Josiah.

Josiah. We're running like a marathon. I'll hand you the baton, and you can. Smooth transition. I sort of hesitate to bring this up, but I ran across a documentary on TV.

[ 2 : 45 ] I should never sit in front of the TV. But anyway, it was on the BTK killer up in Wichita, Kansas. And member of a Lutheran church, one of the chairmen's, and blah, blah, blah.

And it went into more depth than I realized of the crimes he committed. And then it showed him talking at his sentencing. I think it was the sentencing.

He got graphic. And to this day, according to the documentary, I have nothing to go on, but he still hasn't apologized for it or anything. And here's a man who was teaching in the sentencing school. They showed a reenactment of him teaching, you know, a class to the youth, how you're going to love everybody. And so it's somebody like that. I just sat there and, you know, Lord, I don't understand.

But I know you could still save him. But there's a part of me that doesn't want him to be saved. So when you see the crimes and you see the ugliness in our world, sometimes it's hard to pray for them.

[ 3 : 56 ] Just being honest. I'm glad that you are because I think a lot of us feel that way. I'm familiar with, anybody else familiar with who Dwayne's talking about, BTK? Okay.

Don't familiarize yourself with him. If possible, just a word to the wise. You know, I told you that I like to read a lot of true crime books. And I'm from Kansas, so I know exactly who you're talking about. Yeah. And he was caught sending a letter to the police from the church computer. That's how they were able to trace it back to him. But another example of someone who's in the church, someone who, I mean, you know, obviously didn't seem to have a clue to think that he was capable of these things, yet he did horrible things.

And even as he stood in trial talking about these things, it was just so cold and uncaring. And so, yeah, we can be tempted to look at someone like that and be like, there's no hope for you. And also to hear some of the pain that they put people through and still through and think. I think I appreciate your honesty because it is tough to look at somebody like that and be like, and say, and pray, God be gracious too.

[ 5 : 10 ] Be merciful. Okay. The book that we're studying in Ladies Book Club, Seeking All of Finding Jesus by Nabil Karishi.

Thank you so much. I'm going blank. The guy that won him to Christ eventually. Established a friendship with him over several years. In the middle of the book, it has, you could go, his friend was David.

So, in the middle of the book, it says, if you want to hear David's testimony, go to YouTube. What was he, Leandra, a psychopath?

He was a social. Yeah. And he was in his teens when he attacked his father, meaning to kill him. And it goes through his testimony.

When he was in prison, a criminal who was now a Christian started debating. And this man is, you could tell he's very, very smart.

[ 6 : 16 ] But emotionally, not there. But in that prison, when he was arguing for a long time with this gentleman, this other prisoner, God convicted him.

And he was saved. And now he is patiently working with Nabil. He got out of prison four or five years. We don't know all the time.

But then went to college. And now he's working side by side with Nabil, who is a Muslim. And just, you know, they like to argue.

So, some of their arguments are sort of fun to listen to. And they're sort of snobbish because they are intelligent and they can make fun of the way somebody talks, you know. But just to listen to him in the book and knowing where he came from, where at one point he says his thoughts were to do harm to other people.

I'm not going to go graphically there. But, you know, I didn't realize somebody who had nothing born that way, and as Leandra has said a couple times, there's no way that could have changed unless it was a God thing.

[ 7 : 21 ] So, God can save anybody. And we just have to remember that. But my emotions and my, I struggle with some of those that God will save.

But, and that's where I have to confess my sin. Because, you know, God is sovereign and who am I to question his ways. Yeah, amen. That's part of the way and the transformation we undergo through Christ.

giving us a mind like his and eyes to see like him. And as we go along to see, and even in a situation like that, well, there's an example of somebody who is a lost cause, yet Christ saves them. And to be in his word and to see through the lens of scripture that, you know, pray for your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.

And as you were talking, I was thinking about prison ministry that we go to. Y'all raise your hand if you've been in our prison ministry. All right. Yep, I knew we had one.

[ 8 : 23 ] But, you know, even thinking about that, because how many of those men have others deemed to be lost causes? And one of the, you know, one of the things they tell us in the training, one of the things I've heard from others of you who have been a part of that prison ministry longer than me, is don't look up the prisoners and why they're there.

And that's good advice because, but yet when we go and we worship with these men, it's so, for those of you who have been, you know, it's so uplifting. It's so worshipful.

I mean, and a lot of them are just, it's clear that a transformation has taken place in their life to the point where you're just like, I can't imagine what you've done to be in here.

And some of them knowing that they're going to be locked up for a long time, if not maybe the rest of their life. I know for some, the rest of their lives.

So yet, you know, they're not lost causes. And that's why I think it's so important that we continue to be a part of that ministry because even as society, you know, for society, for a lot of those men, not just their families and their friends, but society has said, you're a lost cause.

[ 9 : 34 ] We have, we want, you're beyond rehabbing. But yet Christ is able to do what nobody else can do, what these prison systems can't do, what the world is incapable of doing to bring

transformation to a life, especially to some of these people who the rest of society views as a lost cause.

Kendra? When I look at this question, I think about Paul. And it makes me think about ourselves. Do we see ourselves as sinners? We could, I think, easily look at people that are in jail or people that have other religions or people that have done these terrible things and think, oh, well, no, I'm better than they are.

But, you know, Scripture tells us that all of us, all of our things that we do that are good things are like filthy rags, that none of us are good enough, you know, and that we are technically all lost causes, and it was grace, his grace and his mercy poured out on us.

And, you know, we look at Paul and his story and how terrible, what terrible things he did to the church, not just to some terrible people, but towards the church, you know, people that were like, no, those are our people.

[11:11] And we should find that terribly offensive, right? But at the same time, how often do we fail to see ourselves and our own sin and are broken by our own sin?

I think that's an important flip side of the coin as we're looking at this question, to be honest about who we are and what he has done.

Amen. Good. Totally agree. And that's part of the transformed thinking that we receive, well, in being saved, in being transformed, is the realization that without Christ, I'd be a lost cause too. But I agree that we can get to the point as Christians where we, if we're not careful, if we're not prayerful, if we're not reading our Bible, we can tend to think, well, I'm better or I'm above these other people.

I'm not as lost of a cause as others were. But, yeah, to keep that constantly in your mind. Very good. Wes? I was going to say the, I think the key word here is perceive.

[12:24] We all know that God can save anybody. So nobody is truly a lost cause. But I think we all still look at people and think, I think of like some of those interviews with Planned Parenthood where they're talking about selling baby parts and stuff, talking about that guy being so cold when he's being interviewed or witnessing or whatever.

These people, it's just business to them. And the tendency would be to think they're a lost cause that's not even worth it. But I think what we need to do is always be thinking there might be an opportunity there.

Because we've all heard stories of where someone just went ahead and witnessed to somebody. And do you know Jesus? And the guy says, no. In America, it's like, really?

And then all of a sudden this total transformation happens because the Holy Spirit's doing the work. So I think it'd be hard to go to a Planned Parenthood place and try to witness to these people and try to, you know, tell them about Christ.

But we need to, when opportunities pop up like that, instead of looking at them and perceiving, I'm not going to even try because they're just, you know, they're not savable.

[13:34] But know that they are and then maybe say the things that might lead into an opportunity to witness. You know, we did those three circle things, made it pretty easy.

And I use it on my phone when I get the chances to. So the perceiving is we still kind of look at people like, yeah, he probably won't. But knowing that it's possible he could.

So just to keep that in mind that maybe he will or maybe she will. So open her mouth and say something. Good. Shirley? Also, I was thinking even the deepest, darkest, terrible terrorists, the ones that cut people's heads off and do that terrible stuff that we don't even want to think about. Pray for those people because the Holy Spirit can move in their life. I like to pray when I hear something terrible or for our current president and things like that, too.

Good. And also with the VOM side of the story, we hear all these stories. People, they really are chopping somebody's head off. And they hear the gospel and then they turn around.

[14:39] So it is possible. I mean, it really, really is. Sure. Don't ever give up on anybody.

Absolutely. And I think, you know, we've all hit on a good something that we need to constantly consider that we, if we're not careful, can be caught into the trap of thinking that there are people that are too far gone for God to save.

Or we can be caught into the trap of even maybe not wanting them to be saved. If we forget who we are and what we would be apart from Christ.

And if we're not constantly, you know, again, in Scripture, think of Paul, think of many others, and we'll get to that in another question. All these people that we know, we know if you've been saved by Christ, you've been transformed.

And not to think that God is incapable of saving anyone. So why even share the gospel? That's wrong. Cameron.

So I was kind of arguing within myself whether to talk about this in question one or question three. But kind of the one that came to my mind was when Jesus takes the demons out of the man and puts them into the pigs.

[15:51] This was a guy who even society in general saw as a lost cause. Not just the church. They had him chained up in a cemetery, just away from everything.

Society, as evil as we see our society be, saw this man as a lost cause. And Jesus made it a point to be there at that place at that time.

And so that should really open our eyes to see that in Jesus' eyes, nobody's a lost cause.

And I think we can all kind of take that. And you remember, this is right after he crosses the sea where his own disciples are going, who is this that even the wind and the waves listen to him?

You know, so right there back to back, you see just how powerful he is and that he's not afraid. And he can save the lost of the lost.

[16:55] And so the other story that came to my mind was when we went to the men's retreat a few years ago, Rewired at Falls Creek. One of the breakout sessions I went to was called the Red Dot Kids.

And this youth pastor was, or he's now a senior pastor, but when he was a youth pastor, he had gotten hired on in a new church. And the senior pastor sat him down with a, like, list of the role of the youth.

And he was going down with these highlighters or colored pens, and he would, like, okay, this is John Smith. And he would mark them with, like, a green highlighter.

His dad's very involved. He's financially given to the church a lot of money. He's a deacon when it comes time. So you're going to want to spend a lot of time with this kid.

This kid is Joe whatever. And his parents are here every Sunday, but they're not involved too much. So he'd mark them with, like, a yellow highlighter.

[17:56] You know, spend some time with them, but, you know, okay. But they're not, you know, hugely important. And then they'd come across kids of, like, this is Josiah.

And he'd put, like, a red mark. And he'd say their parents just drop them off on Wednesday nights. They only show up when there's food in the building.

They're not involved. So don't spend any of your time with these kids. And I just, and, you know, even him as a youth pastor sitting under a senior pastor going through this, he's just going, how wrong is this?

You know, and it was just like, okay, I need to get out of here ASAP. And so I think even we, just as humans, we have kind of these natural biases toward people that look like us, sound like us, are in same socioeconomic classes, you know, whatever those biases are.

And so I think we constantly have to make that conscious effort to make sure that we're not putting those kind of natural biases that we have on people.

[19:12] And we're, you know, spending our time with the people that give the most or spending the time with the people most involved. Like, you know, everybody in the pews are just as important as everybody else.

And so I think it's so hard to take that lesson from Jesus that, hey, even the loss of the lost, that even society has cast out was important enough for Christ to approach.

Good. Yeah, very un-Christian way to approach a very important ministry in the church. How un-Christlike to treat some as unworthy or not worth any of your time.

And then, so let's skip question two and go to question three and we'll come back to question two. We'll go out of order. Because that's one of my favorite scriptures is Jesus in the Gerasene demoniac.

The man is running around naked. The man is cutting himself with stones. He's, well, two of them, right? And they're trying to keep them chained up.

[20:20] They can't do that. That's not working. They're breaking the chains. And, yeah, pretty much left out for the rest of the society. Nothing to do with them. Terrified of them.

And Jesus comes. And I love the part where the demon-possessed men see him and run up to him and bow before him and beg for mercy.

How awesome is Jesus? How powerful is Jesus? And then when the people see him, he's clothed and he's in his right mind. Clear, total transformation has taken place in this guy's life.

And it's because of Jesus. So what other examples of scripture can you think of where an encounter with Jesus left that person transformed in their thinking and seeing?

There's a lot. There's a lot. Nick. I think of Nicodemus. Yeah? Who came to the Lord. It's like, you know, we know you're a teacher sent from God.

[ 21 : 20 ] And then, you know, he's kind of going back and forth with the Lord on rebirth. But then after the Lord died, we see that Nicodemus came to claim his body, which for him could have been a death sentence.

But the disciples had scattered. Nicodemus comes to take the body. And it's like, wow, Nicodemus had been changed. Yeah. And the spices, I remember Tom talking about the spices that they brought to you and how expensive those were for the burial.

But absolutely, this is a guy who, and you can see it with him. And some are instant and some are a little bit more gradual where they meet. And then the scribes and the Pharisees are meeting.

And Nicodemus kind of speaks in defense of Christ a little bit. But then after the resurrection, I mean, yeah, unless he's believing. Because to be seen doing that task or carrying that out could have lost everything.

But yet he realized that Jesus was the Christ. Okay, Amy. Ready? The woman at the well. Yes. And the reason I love her the most is because she was walking around in her daily clothes, doing her daily thing and just living her life and stuff.

[ 22 : 32 ] And when Jesus came to her, and he came to her on purpose, she was changed. And in her change, then her people, her circle changed.

And then her city changed. Yeah. And all of those things like that together, I mean, he's not limited by our unbelief.

That's a nice word. But by our expectations, he will do what he wants to do with whom he wants to do it. And he will do it so well that you'll just have to stand back and bow down.

Yeah. I mean. Amen. The woman at the well. There you go. Yeah. She's kind of hiding. She's afraid of, not afraid, but, you know, she's been talked about.

She's got a past that people know about. So she goes a little while at a time where she's expecting not to see anybody. And she meets Jesus. And then what does she do? She goes back to all these people who treated her as an outcast.

[ 23 : 43 ] And she boldly proclaims the gospel with the result that they come, hear Jesus preach, and many of them are saved. Yeah. Very unlikely person to spark revival.

Yet, it's not about the person. It's about what Jesus can do. Total transformation. Wes. Wes is in the back by the door.

And he's got a piece of paper. And he told me he had done his homework today. So I didn't want to pick all that low-hanging fruit like Nicodemus. I was just sitting right out there about ready to fall off the tree.

But I was thinking about theophany. So in the Old Testament, in Genesis 18, 1 through 2, the three men came, two were angels, one was God.

And so Abraham was changed when he met these guys. Genesis 32, when Jacob wrestles with God at theophany. And it changed him.

[ 24 : 40 ] And then I think of King Nebuchadnezzar. He threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace. And he sees, hey, there's four in there now. And you might want to check what he said afterwards.

Like, these guys, God is the most high God. I mean, they really changed him. He understood what that was. And Isaiah, when he sees the temple filled with the Lord's glory.

And Ezekiel chapter 1, where he talks about seeing the chariots. So the Old Testament had quite a few places, too, where people came into contact with the, I guess you call it the preborn God, you know, Christ, the theophanies.

And it really turned them around and changed their lives. I mean, you think if you were to, you meet face to face with Christ, it's going to change you, right? So. Amen. Good, Wes. Going back to the Old Testament, Christophanies or theophanies, Christ's appearance in the Old Testament.

Examples in each one of those where that person was transformed. It's not just limited to the gospel. See it in Acts, too. Okay. I was thinking about Mary Magdalene.

[ 25 : 50 ] Think about her. Wasn't she? Yeah. Yeah, it was, had all the demons. And then, I mean, look what she ended up doing for Jesus in the end. Yeah. Close follower. Incredible transformation for her.

Absolutely. Elsa up here, Josiah. And one leopard of ten that came back and praised God after he was healed. Yeah, there you go. All right. Up here to Elsa, right?

All right. Yes. I found Zacchaeus, who was a really chief tax collector. Yes. And he encountered Jesus, and Jesus came to his house.

And from this unrighteousness, he made the right thing, and made even a payment plan and gave to the poor.

Yeah, didn't just, so tax collectors are another, a lost cause, another type of person that people wouldn't want to be saved. Yet, Jesus sees him, calls him down, goes to his house.

[ 26 : 48 ] Salvation comes to Zacchaeus. He not only repays what he's stolen, but he quadruples it, doesn't he? Four times as much. That's a transformed person whose life was all about money and being greedy, and now he sees that it's just material.

He's found the true treasure that there is in Christ. Josiah? I think Matthew as well. Matthew, yeah. He's a tax collector. Another tax collector, absolutely.

who the Lord called and whose life was transformed. Think of all the disciples, too. I know I used Peter as an example this morning, but again, you know, Peter, fisherman, a common person in the eyes of the world, and yet the Lord used him in powerful ways.

And even when he messed up over and over again, the Lord was still there to forgive and continue to use him. Good. Good. Who else? Okay. Okay.

I was thinking of John the Baptist. I mean, you know, when he encountered the Lord, he was in the womb. Yeah. So it changed his whole life. Yeah, he was flipping for joy.

[ 28 : 03 ] Amen. Amen. Okay. There's a lot. We could be on this one for a long time. Wes?

I'll just go through my list so we can... Okay. Okay. The Roman guard at the crucifixion when he saw that Christ had died said, surely this was the Son of God. And then...

The Roman centurions, too, right? Yeah. Okay. Well, I think that was it. There's a guy named Saul of Tarsus, and he had an actual encounter with Christ.

Yeah. You call that one? Kendrick gets credit for that one. Okay. Was that all of them? The jailer? The Philippian jailer?

Good. We could go on and on and on because there's a lot, aren't there? Do what?

[ 29 : 03 ] Yeah, we could. We could. But the point of the matter is that there are many examples where someone encountered Christ and they were completely transformed in their thinking, in their seeing, in their life.

Well, you know, some people encountered Christ and they wanted to crucify him, you know. So, yeah, all those who were saved. But it goes back to the point that when you met Jesus, you weren't indifferent to him, I think.

Either you were seeing him as Lord and Savior or you were hating and detesting him. Think of anybody who kind of went in the middle. Yeah, either way, yeah, Jesus had a reaction on people. And the gospel will have a reaction on people, won't it? They'll either. Rich young ruler who, yeah, went away. Loved his treasure too much.

His worldly possessions. Let's move back to question two. Besides the gospel, what other methods or means do people trust for life transformation?

[ 30 : 19 ] How effective or lasting have their results been? So, what other methods, what other things do people pursue besides the gospel?

Thinking that it will change their life. Transform their life. What was that? Self-help books. Self-help books. Self-help books. Is that what you're going to say? No.

Okay. Well, I mean, it's probably in the same category, but I'm going to say with quotes, gospel. There's so many people that follow like a Joel Osteen type.

Oh, I just have to love God and love others and that's it. And there's no change in their lives.

There's no transformation. They just kind of want these self-help, uplifting, kind of fluffy churches.

They're not, you know, really digging into a true gospel. And so, I think that's a huge one in our culture is we're so much of a me-centered culture that it's just, it's my truth and whatever I want to

believe is just fine.

[ 31 : 33 ] Yeah. Therapeutic moralistic deism, which you talked about in one of the American gospel movies that we've watched up here to Michael. Exactly. People who claim to speak in the name of Christ, but their gospel is not the true gospel.

Michael? I mean, you know, look at any other world religion. They have, they all have their methods and things that, you know, these are the things that are going to transform your life.

You know, the Quran, you know, whatever it happens to be. And obviously, they feel like it's going to have a lasting result on their life, but in the end, it's going to lead to ruin.

Yeah. For sure. Religion. Religion. The difference between religion and gospel that we believe is what man must do, whereas the gospel is what Jesus has done for you.

But yeah, a lot of people, they think, well, if I follow this, I follow the, what is it? What is it in Buddhism? The sevenfold. Eightfold. I always look to Nick because I know you. Nick is smart. Nick knows all this stuff.

[ 32 : 36 ] What is it? Eightfold path. I was, I missed it. I missed it. I missed it. I missed a fold. So I wouldn't have made it.

Wouldn't have made it. Wouldn't have made it if I found all eight. Okay. Paul? A lot of people think that if I have enough money or enough power or enough fame, that will transform my life and my life will totally be worthwhile then.

And always when I think about that, there's two things I think of. First of all, if that were the case, Hollywood would be the happiest place on earth. Yeah. And it's not.

No, it's not. And the other thing that I read years and years ago was, I don't remember which Rockefeller it was, but he was, one of the Rockefellers was asked, how much money is enough? And his answer was, a little more. Yeah. And so it just, they, but people do, they trust that, that if I had this much more, it would be enough.

[ 33 : 40 ] Yep. For sure. Huge in, huge in our nation, especially being as wealthy as it is, that our security, we can find security in money and possessions and that's what life is about.

He who dies with the most wins kind of a deal. But you hit on it perfectly with Hollywood. I mean, they are so self-absorbed that they can't have lasting, they don't have lasting relationships.

Their marriage is constantly and in divorce. They've got all kinds of things, multiple houses, cars, you name it, yet are miserable. And how many do we see even tragically take their own life?

I was, I was thinking about, my parents were in town bringing Hazel and Jack back, but we were talking about, my sister used to live, my oldest sister lived in California.

And there's a couple trips, we get to go out there and do some fun things. And I was at, I got to go to a tonight show taping with Jay Leno and his guest was Robin Williams.

[ 34 : 51 ] And the best part of that taping was when the cameras were off. And Robin Williams would just run around. He would just talk to people in the, in the audience.

And he was hilarious. And he seemed like he had so much joy and so much happiness. And yet we know how his life tragically ended. Okay, Wes.

I want to thank Paul for the introduction for mine, but I'm going to name it, flip this house. So people thinking they're going to get rich quick by flipping houses. And now on the internet, you got these guys showing up and they're in this paradise thing.

And I made \$6 million every day. Now you can too. So people trying to change them there. And I think of some people even getting into real estate thinking it's going to be an easy way to make money.

And just, it's tough. And they just, you're talking about how long it lasts. It's usually not very good unless you're really disciplined and want to stay with it. Yeah. So again, another like a get rich quick scheme or plan.

[ 35 : 55 ] This is going to bring transformation to my life. And then, yeah, it doesn't. Transgenderism. Yeah, for sure.

I'll change my gender and I will be in physically transformed. But again, I think, and I don't, I know I've read studies. I don't have anything off my mind that I can like directly reference.

But how many of people who have gone through with that procedure who have later committed suicide or who have been in despair knowing that they've done something to themselves is irreversible. And it didn't bring the promises to them that they thought that it would.

Didn't bring the transformation that was lasting like they thought that it would. Okay. Kendra. Relationships. Like, man, if I got married, my life would be totally different.

Or if we just had kids, our marriage would be totally different or better or whatever. And both of those things are great joys.

[ 36 : 55 ] Joys, but, I mean, I'm just going to be honest, are the most sanctifying parts of my life. And so, totally not easy. So, I know, honey, I'm sorry.

I love you so much. I mean, the kids, I love you all too. Yeah. But apart from Christ, it's to make your, to wrap yourself up in a relationship where you're making that person your God or you constantly have expectations of them or your children.

And they're a human being and they're falling. They're going to consistently disappoint you. But yet we put them up on this pedestal. How often do we see that, especially with children in our culture, whose parents are pushing them and pushing them and pushing them?

Not so much, I think, because they truly want what's best for their son or daughter to achieve their fullest potential, but because they like to be able to brag about them. And it's more about the reflection that that successful child has on them to the rest of the world that they're looking for. Michael. If I just do enough good things. Yeah. Religion. Good deeds outweigh the bad deeds. That's going to bring transformation, make me happier, more content with myself.

[ 38 : 11 ] Okay. Elsa right here. Oh, Evan got it. Sorry. Evan and then Elsa. Thinking as life transformation is, you know, something changing.

Something I've seen in the workplace is oftentimes it can be a certain specific thing, namely retirement. If I can just make it to retirement. Yeah. Last year I worked with a guy who had the number of years left.

He had a counter on his desk. And if he could just get past retirement, his life was going to be so much better. Yeah. Um, what?

That's what we're hoping for. All of us who are still in the workforce. Come on. I'm joking. So, yeah, just sometimes if I can just make it to this point past this certain event, whether that be if I finally get out of this job and the next one, or if I make this certain life decision, whether it's to get married or to have an abortion or whatever it is.

It's like life's going to get better after this thing. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Lots of people do that. Lots of people think this event in my life is going to make my life worth living or more happy or I'm going to be more satisfied.

[ 39 : 33 ] I knew somebody in ministry who was 10 years from retiring and he talked about it all the time. And, uh, and I remember just, you know, people, problems would come up and, and he'd look at me as somebody who was younger in ministry and say, I only got to put up with this stuff for 10 more years.

And, and, you know, I was just thinking, man, you know, yeah, like, great. I got like, I don't know, my young twenties, 40 years of this stuff still ahead.

But again, it goes to the fact that, you know, how tragic it is for that thought process to even exist in the mind of a minister that I'm just, I'm just going to do what I got to do.

I got a date set in mind. Life is going to be good. Doreen. Doreen. With along the lines of what Evan was sharing, um, there was a lady when I was still working, she was about my age, but she was going to retire at 58.

And, you know, we're talking about it and everybody was all excited about her 10 days before she retired, she died. She just was visiting some people in Kansas and had a heart issue.

[ 40 : 43 ] And, you know, so they told us Monday when, you know, they called us all together and it devastated everybody. Because we were all celebrating that she was going to get to retire and her and her husband were going to travel and do all this.

And, you know, she missed it by 10 days. And what does James say about that, about, you know, you make your plans and all these things and they're for nothing.

Sorry, Elsa. You're fine. We were making our way back. Yeah. I look in the internet in Bartlesville. They offer, um, recovery through alcohol and substance abuse programs, uh, with detox, inpatient, outpatient, but also relapse, uh, help.

That means it doesn't guarantee that it's going to work. And what happens, they don't see the root of the problem, the root cause.

They don't see it as sin, but as a disease. Yeah. Absolutely. I think, again, we can go back to examples from Hollywood of somebody entering a rehab facility and being cleaned for a short time and then falling right back into that.

[ 41 : 56 ] Uh, certainly the Lord can use those things, but apart from the Lord, even still, you're lost without him. There's no salvation except for him.

Yolanda? Yeah, a lot of people, too, think that maybe, like, a horoscope or psychics, uh, are going to tell them what their life is going to be like, and so it's going to transform.

They're going to be bitter. They're going to know who to pick because the psychics told them or the fortune tellers or horoscope. Yes. Not last, not even true. Yeah.

Yeah, Chinese fortune cookies. But seriously, you know, if you've known people who have looked to their horoscope and they treat it as if it's God's word, um, or there's even different personality tests.

Yes, Myers-Briggs, uh, Enneagram. You guys are familiar with the Enneagram stuff that's going around? Uh, and people looked at those things and trust in them.

[ 43 : 02 ] And this tells me who I am. Yeah, and I've used that. I, you know, I did a, I think I did one of those in seminary. And so, again, these things can be helpful.

But, just because that's what that thing says your personality is doesn't mean that God can't change you. And I think people, a lot of people will use that as an excuse. Well, I'm, uh, this type of person. So, I'm not interested in that or I don't have to do that. Does that make sense? And the whole, and I'm not too certain about the Enneagram stuff besides, you know, what I've heard is that it's got roots in, um, paganism from the past.

So, I would, again, I would just say I'd caution you from doing those types of things because I do think people get into a lot of these things and they think that that's going to bring transformation or understanding.

And, uh, it's not the gospel. And it's, it's not, uh, it's not from Christ. But I want to say again, let me be clear.

[ 44 : 07 ] Some of those, some of those things are helpful. But, I'm not going to read them and be like, well, that's just who I am. Or I'm not going to cry tears. Oh, somebody at this test understands me.

You know? Um, because again, you can look at Moses. When the Lord wanted to use him to lead his people out of, uh, slavery. And Moses, all these excuses.

But I'm not this type of person. I'm not this type of person. God's like, it doesn't matter who you are. I'm choosing to use you. And because I'm God, I will use you to accomplish my purposes. It doesn't matter who you are. You'll just be willing to go and do what I tell you to do.

And say what I tell you to say. I'll put the words in your mouth. I'll give you your brother. Um, and he will help you. Let's, did anybody else have their hand up before we move on?

John Likens. John Likens. So drugs and alcohol. I know that was kind of mentioned. That's another thing that people often will go to.

[ 45 : 09 ] Well, I've learned over the years that, um, God's mercy and grace run very deep. And if we're all being honest, it probably run deeper than what we allow for people who are committing horrible crime.

But this was probably in response to the first question, uh, the lost causes. John MacArthur, uh, one of his sermons, he was talking about an incident. He was in Angola State Prison.

He was teaching or preaching at a session. And afterward, uh, Fischel came up and, and I asked him that, John, did you see that guy on the third row looking intently at you?

And he said, well, no, I didn't notice him. I said, well, that's, um, forget the guy's name, but he was a hit man for Escobar. And, um, he killed men, women, children, whatever Escobar wanted eliminated.

He did it. And one day he was headed toward the airport and he got stopped on a traffic ticket. Well, they found out who he was and ended up going to prison and probably for life.

[ 46 : 11 ] And while he was in prison, apparently his life was transformed. He, he believed in Jesus Christ. And according to the official that he led a exemplary life, you know, and, but that person will probably never get out of prison because of his crime.

But he'll, but he'll be, he'll be in heaven if his life is transformed. So that tells me that no one is the lost cause. Yeah. So that's what I want to say. Amen. Yeah.

We shouldn't write anybody off and think that it's impossible for God to save them. Last question. A little bit of time we have left.

Is there something that Christ is changing in your thinking or seeing today? Is there anything that Christ is changing in your thinking or in your seeing today?

Who's got the guts? Well, and this is one, but I mean, honestly, what I hope is that there is something changing in your thinking or your seeing because we are sanctified, but being sanctified. [ 47 : 30 ] We are becoming more like Christ and constantly a work in progress being changed.

Okay. I got guts. Changing in my thinking. I am seeing people who are in our government that I would like to previously would have liked to have taken them out.

I can't say because I'm in church, but, and now I look at them and I think, you poor soul. You poor, poor, lost soul.

So my heart's changing about that. And I'm also changing in seeing my own sin.

And I'm getting, changing there, not cutting myself so much slack. Because I know I'm forgiven for it.

[ 48 : 42 ] But how does that sin affect those around me that are not saved? So my goal is to be moving towards that sanctification.

Keeping the eye on the cross and moving that way. And I think that it's been, now that I say it in church in front of all my friends and stuff, I will be tested on it.

Because that's the way it works. So y'all pray for me. Because I'll need it. But yeah, I think that that's true. God is, I mean, God is doing work here in this church with our family here and with individuals here.

And we are changing from glory to glory. One of your scriptures this morning. And I love that. That's what I've got to say. Good.

So changing in, like what we've talked about, who you view as a lost cause or even who you may think, gosh, yeah, for whatever. And to see them as somebody who you need to pray for.

[ 49 : 53 ] And amen. Okay. Nick. Something that the Lord is helping me see is those experiences in my life, going all the way back to my childhood, that were horrible.

And while I was going through them, you know, it was like, Lord, do you see this? Are you going to involve yourself? Why are you letting this happen? Why don't you fix this?

Have you forsaken me? The older I get, the more perspective I have. And I can see now, in almost every instance, blessings that have come from those experiences.

Those were the experiences that were transformative for my character, but also for my relationship with the Lord. And, yeah, I just, I have so much more perspective now than I did five years ago.

And so it's, is that something that he's changing in me today? It's, yeah, it's like I can look back on my past and things I've been through. And even though often it was unpleasant, I can truly see that he was absolutely orchestrating all of it for his glory and for my good.

[ 51 : 05 ] Good. And how does that affect you in the present and in the future? Having, seeing that, experiencing that change, how is? Yeah, I mean, absolutely.

I mean, you know, I can even say my family is cratering. We are doing horribly. And it's easy to be hopeless about it.

But I know that God is using it. I know that he is. And I don't know right now why he's letting this happen. But I know that he's working.

And I know that he's sovereign even in this. And I think five years ago I might have just been despondent. But I have hope. I have hope. I know he's on the throne. Amen.

I think that's good. And something that sometimes we don't do. All right, Paul up here is when we're in difficult situations to think that God isn't doing anything.

[ 52 : 04 ] That we're just forsaken. But to think, well, what are you? What is the Lord teaching me in this time? And I think we can all say that we've been through those moments where it's been difficult.

When we talk about suffering today, that the Lord works all things together for the good. And we're able to go back on our life and see that was a really hard time. Yet I see God at work in it.

I have faith that no matter what, if there's another hard time or it's harder than the last time, God is sovereign and God is good, like Nick said, and faithful.

Paul? I think over the past few years, it seems like God's been drawing my attention more and more to how Jesus in his earthly ministry treated people.

And as religious people, I'm afraid that too often we and me, we act like Pharisees and not like what Jesus acted.

[ 53 : 15 ] He was most compassionate with the ones that religious people look down the most upon. And he was hardest on those that knew better and yet had this hypocrisy about them.

And it is such a difficult example to follow. And I think it's taken me years to even begin to kind of understand that and how it should affect how I treat people around me.

Yeah. Good. I think a lot of us struggle with that. Elsa? You know, what God is trying to tell me is that it's okay to pray for my current needs, but I need to really seek the kingdom first.

And all these things will be added unto me. Amen. Good, Elsa. Yeah, because so often we're always like trying to fix ourselves without first thinking of the gospel, thinking of Christ, thinking of the transformation, and acknowledging our help, our need for his help.

We can't do it. Couldn't save myself. I'm not going to change myself. I need the Lord's help. It's just acknowledging that hopefully that I think we actually begin to start to see some of those even more noticeable changes in our lives too.

[ 54 : 46 ] One thing for me, and I'll wrap up is I am a home buddy. I like to be at home. Ask my wife.

I love being at home. I love being inside of my home. I don't know. It's just the way. I'm not going to explain why. I just do.

But I realize that, you know, if I'm only in my office or if I'm only in my home, and yeah, I have a job to be a pastor, to minister to you all, but, you know, God has called me to be a disciple maker just like he's called all of us, and so I need to be more present and active and outside of my home.

I've got to push myself to be outside in the community. That's something the Lord is changing my thinking through because even I think, could I go to a coffee shop in town and do my sermon notes? And for me, that's like, but I have all my books in my office, and that's where I, but even just to think, what if I need that book and it's in my office, and then I'm not going to, but, you know, that's something that's changing within me too, and it's good that the Lord is continuing to work on us, isn't it?

It's going to be hard, and some of these things are like, I want to hold on to that, though. Let me hold on to that. But when you finally give it to him, you let go of it, God works, and he works in powerful ways.

[ 56 : 07 ] Let's pray, and then we'll sing happy birthday, and we've got birthday fellowship tonight. Right? So I'm sure, you know, my wife is not going to forget that I just said that, and so she's going to be forcing me out of the home, as will the rest of you.

So that's a good thing. I need accountability, and I have a good accountability partner. All right, let's pray. Lord, thank you for this time that we have together. Lord, thank you for the way that your word sharpens us and for the time that we have to sharpen one another, talking about your word, talking about the transformation that we've experienced because of you, talking about Scripture and the many examples from Scripture of those who have had their lives completely transformed by you. So, Lord, we thank you that you are always continuing to be at work in our lives, giving us the mind of Christ, convicting our hearts of sin, bringing us to repentance, so that we continue to see more like you and think more like you.

And, God, we pray that that would just continue to be the case, that you would use our lives in the time that we have here not to pursue worldly treasures, not to be caught up in what the world thinks will bring happiness or transformation, but to continually seek after you and your kingdom and your righteousness, knowing that you love us, knowing that you've got good plans for us, more importantly, knowing that you have an eternal life, a kingdom prepared for us that far exceeds anything that this life or this world could ever give or promise to give to us.

Lord, it pales in comparison, so may we live our lives completely and totally for you, and we pray that you'd be glorified by that. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.