

Witnesses

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[0:00] John 5 verses 30 through 47.

Jesus speaking says, But I say these things so that you may be saved.

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard. His form you have never seen. And you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you.

[1:44] I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? I believe that the only thing that can mend the division that we are experiencing in our nation right now and in the world at large is Jesus Christ.

I truly believe that. Only the gospel, only the faithful witness of Christians is capable of bringing the peace that is lacking in our nation and around the world as well.

Now, some will hear that comment and disregard it automatically because they see religion as being one of the primary causes for the division that we experience today.

[3:01] But when they do so, especially when they look at Christianity as being a problem and not a solution, many of those who do that do so without investigating Christ's claims for themselves, without picking up the Bible and reading what he actually had to say.

They just dismiss it automatically without searching to find for themselves and to understand what Jesus has said. I believe that Christianity has the power within itself to explain and expunge the divisive tendencies within the human heart.

Because Christianity is not like other religions in that it is not a man-made religion. It is truth. Christianity is the truth.

Christians believe that all people are created in the image of God. And therefore, though we may disagree with them about many things on many issues, and though they may hate what we believe in, we see in them still value and we see worth within them because they are image bearers of our Creator.

The concept of human rights and equality of worth and value is rooted in the message of Christianity. Christianity is the source of those things.

[4:35] In the Greco-Roman world in which the church was birthed, the culture took a seemingly open and tolerant position towards religions.

However, the practice of their culture was very different. It was very brutal. There was a large disparity during that time between those who were rich and those who were poor.

A middle class didn't really exist. And in those cultures in that time, the poor were despised. And their lives were deemed as not having much, if any, value or worth at all.

But Christians were different. Christians thought differently. They gave generously. They shared their resources. They did not turn anyone away based upon their race, their economic status, or what level of education they had.

Even the Apostle Paul, who at one time was breathing murderous threats against the church, and who sought to bring Christianity's existence to an end.

[5 : 45] Even Christians welcomed him, that man, into their assembly when he came to faith in Jesus Christ. Women also were part of the marginalized group of that time.

Back then, they were deemed as property of their husbands. They didn't have, really, again, much value in the eyes of culture.

In fact, female babies were often discarded and left for dead by their fathers, or they were sold into slavery because they wanted sons. They didn't want to have daughters.

But again, Christians acted differently. They afforded women much greater security and equality than they had ever known prior to that time.

Also, during terrible pandemics, two great plagues that took place within the first two centuries, Christians were there. Christians were on the front lines.

[6 : 45] They were the ones who were treating the patients. And oftentimes, it was Christians who gave their lives in that service. They died alongside those whom they were trying to make well.

To a Christian, the message of the gospel was inclusive to all people of all walks of life.

Jesus said, Go to the world, the ends of the world. They did that. They went to everybody, everywhere. Everyone needed to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

But, their message was and is exclusive. They were persecuted because of that.

They were persecuted because they refused to serve other gods and they refused to take part in any other kind of religion. Yet, though they held such exclusive views, they continued to serve so that they could continue to demonstrate the love of Christ and share the good news that Christ saves sinners.

[7 : 59] And you can't share that good news unless you go to sinners and share that good news that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners. Why would such an exclusive belief system lead to behavior that was so inclusive of others?

Well, it was because Christians had within their belief system the strongest possible resource for practicing sacrificial service, generosity and peace making.

At the very heart of their views and their message was a man who died for his enemies, who prayed and asked God for their forgiveness as he hung on the cross.

And so knowing who Christ is and knowing what Christ has done, reflecting upon his life and his sacrifice can only lead a person to a radically different way of dealing with those who are different from them.

We don't return evil for evil, but we fight evil with good. And so Christians then and today, we cannot oppress those who would be our enemies, but instead, like Christ, we extend grace to them because that is what we have received from Jesus.

[9 : 24] Yes, injustice, unfortunately, has been done in the name of Christ by those who have called themselves Christians before, but their actions weren't truly at all really in line with what the Bible says or the way that Christ lived or has called us to minister to others.

A true follower of Christ, I believe, is a peacemaker. We don't tolerate sin, but that intolerance of sin does not lead us to commit acts of violence.

We don't try to force people to come into our church building and force them to sit down and worship. We want them to, but we can't force them to do that.

That's not how salvation works. Instead, we, when we see division, what we should do is it should drive us to our knees in prayer, praying for healing, praying to be used by God to bring hope to hopeless people and hopeless situations.

And so then that prayer should move us onward to action. Again, hoping that we will be used by God to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

[10 : 42] We want people to be saved. And so we go, as the Lord did, and we give our testimony as we do so, as witnesses to them, that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

And that hopefully, in doing so, they will be saved. They will have peace with God, which results with peace with men and salvation for all who believe.

So, we've been in John chapter 5 for a while, and we've dug deeply into verses 27 through 29. And so we kind of need to resurface a little bit to remember what's going on in John chapter 5.

Well, remember that Jesus has healed an invalid, a man who is trusting in superstition for healing. And Jesus healed him on the Sabbath, which was a big no-no to the Jewish leaders. And they were very upset that he broke one of their man-made laws. And so, they were accusing him for doing that and for other claims that he was making.

[12:00] They were basically charging him with blasphemy. And so, this was a very tense moment in Jesus' ministry.

And there would be greater moments of intensity as he would go on. But this is a really tense moment of conflict. Again, Jesus is being accused by them of violating the law of God.

The Jewish leaders are now here in John 5. They've been conducting a sort of mock trial against him in which they are again accusing Jesus for the actions and the claims that they have made and they are doing so before the court of public opinion.

And so, here, as they have this exchange, a lot of legal language is being used and again, they've presented their indictments against him. And in response, Jesus gives his defense.

They've accused him of blasphemy. They've accused him of declaring himself equal with God and both of which were crimes punishable by death.

[13:10] And so, again, in verses 27 through 29, Jesus revealed that though they were putting him on trial with their accusations, he was in fact the one who was judged.

He was the one who was judge of the universe. That he is the one who will judge them one day. That one day they will stand in judgment before him.

And so, in verse 30, he summarizes his defense. That he did not act on his own initiative, but rather, he always acted in ways that agreed with and accomplished the will of God.

Verse 30, he says, I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge. And my judgment is just because I do not seek my own will but the will of him who sent me.

And so, now, Jesus continues to unfold his defense. And he does so at this point by calling on various witnesses to testify on his behalf that his claims that he's made and the actions that he's performed are in line completely and totally with the will of God.

[14:17] To understand what Jesus is doing here in calling forth his witnesses, we need to understand ancient Jewish culture a little bit better and how they tried people.

Again, the charge of blasphemy was a capital crime which meant that if you were found guilty, the punishment was death and the death penalty for them often meant being stoned to death which would mean a large crowd of people would grab the biggest, heaviest, sharpest rock that they could throw and they would pelt you with them until you died a slow, painful, torturous death.

But before the death penalty could be handed down, the person who was accused had to have at least two witnesses come and give testimony that they were guilty of the crime that they were accused of having committed.

And those two witnesses, their testimony had to be in complete agreement with one another. They couldn't be in contradiction to one another or else you couldn't find that person guilty.

So the idea of giving a true and accurate witness was so important to Israel that when God fashioned his constitution for his people, he included among the Ten Commandments you know, one of them which was thou shalt not bear false witness.

[15:52] witness. So this was a big deal. So if you were called upon to give witness and it was determined that your witness was false, well guess what? You got the death penalty too.

This was a big deal to these people. In these verses Jesus calls forward his witnesses in a way to testify to the truthfulness of his claims and again to justify his actions.

So this is the main idea for this morning's message. Jesus, as he's testified and he's claimed, is the eternal son of God who came, died, and rose again to save sinners from their sins, our sins.

Reliable witnesses have verified his claims and their witness continues to provide testimony today that Jesus Christ is all that he claimed to be.

And so if you are a believer of Jesus Christ, I encourage you to listen to this message because you are called to be his witness today. The better you know what he said, the better you understand what these witnesses have testified to him, the better and the greater, I believe, a witness you will be for the Lord again in a time where we need witnesses to go out from the church and to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

[17:17] If you are not a believer, I encourage you to listen to what these witnesses have to say with the hope that you will listen and believe and that you will know the peace that comes with knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and the hope that you have no matter what you're going through in life that Jesus has risen from the dead and is coming back.

And so Jesus continues his defense in verse 31 by saying, if I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. Now, don't misunderstand him. What he's saying here is, you know, what he's not saying here, I should say, is that my self witness is unreliable.

That's not at all what he's saying. But what he's saying is what we know, a testimony from a person isn't really legally valid in a trial setting unless someone else verifies that what they've said is true. So think in our day and age today in our trials, right? Somebody has been accused of murder and that person has pled innocent. And so they give an alibi and they say, well, I couldn't have been me because on that day and that time I was here.

So I couldn't have been there. Well, no jury is going to say, okay, we believe you. You're innocent. Go on your way, right? No. They've got to have somebody, the defense will have somebody come to verify that that alibi is true, to verify that what the defendant has said is true.

[18:52] Another way in which we understand this or see this is whenever you have to have a document notarized. You know, whenever you've had to do that, there's a place for you to sign your name and then there's a place for the notary to sign their name, either underneath it or beside it or whatever.

Now, if you had to have a document notarized and you signed your name and then you signed your name in the place where the notary is supposed to sign, they're not going to accept that.

Why? Because in that case you cannot be a witness for yourself. And so that's why you have to have it notarized. Somebody there to validate, yes, it was you with the pen in your hand and it was you who signed your name on that line.

And so in a similar way, that's what Jesus is doing here. He's calling forth witnesses to corroborate his testimony. And they are really good witnesses.

Though this isn't a true legal proceeding, Jesus wanted everyone to hear his testimony and to know that it was true, that they would believe it, that they would come to faith in him.

[20:04] And so Jesus, in the first case, in the first instance, called forth four witnesses, but the first one he called forth was the forerunner, the witness of the forerunner.

At this point in Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist was more well known than he was. John the Baptist was that forerunner.

He was a man who created a major stir in Israel at the time. He went out to the Jordan River and he was baptizing and he was preparing people for the coming of Christ.

And he was a pretty big deal. One of the reasons why he was a big deal was because it had been 400 years since the Israelites last had a prophet from the close of the Old Testament to the beginning of the New Testament.

And so here, finally, is a prophet. And so they were eager to go out and hear what he had to say, to hear him preach and to be baptized by him also.

[21:13] And so people were flooding to him. They were going out to him to hear him, to see him, to be baptized by him. Jesus describes him in verse 35 as being a burning light and a shining lamp.

Again, he was pointing the way to Jesus. He was preparing the way for Jesus. But his lamp burned so bright that for some people it got uncomfortable for them to be in his presence.

And for a group that was uncomfortable to be in his presence was these Jewish leaders who are now confronting Jesus. And Jesus says to them, you were willing for a while to rejoice in his light.

But eventually, John the Baptist found himself in conflict with them just as Jesus was fighting himself with conflict with them in chapter 5. On one such occasion, John the Baptist, when he sees them coming to him, in chapter 1, verses 25-27, it says, they asked him, then why are you baptizing if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet?

John answered them, I baptize with water, but among you stands one who you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.

[22:30] And then again, later, when the Pharisees came to him to be baptized in order to associate themselves with John the Baptist, right? And their minds are thinking, John the Baptist is popular, he's big right now, everybody is into his ministry, and if we can just wiggle our way up next to him and somehow be seen with him, we can continue to keep our places in religion.

We can continue to be admired as he is admired, but John saw right through that in Matthew 3-7, it says there, but when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, you brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come.

And that's truly who these men were. Jesus would later call them the very same thing. You're a brood of vipers. You know, farmers then, as they continue to do now, they'll burn the stubble of their fields to get the land ready for the next planting season.

And as the flames of the fire approach those dens where vipers are and snakes are, what the snakes do is they slither away.

They try to escape the flames. But often what happens is that they don't escape the flames and they perish in them. And so that is what John is saying.

[23 : 57] That's the imagery he's using. That's what Jesus uses as well in regards to them. They were adding to the division that was taking place in their society.

They were separating people from God by their insistence that they had to obey the law perfectly in order to be saved. something which they themselves were not even doing.

And so again, John's primary purpose was not just to expose their hypocrisy, but to point the way to Jesus Christ. And that's exactly what he did when Jesus arrived at the Jordan River.

John testified that this was the one whom he was the forerunner to. This was the Messiah. This was the Son of God. This is the one who had been come, who had come to save sinners.

John 1, 29 through 31, he gives that testimony. The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[24 : 59] This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me. I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel.

So thus far Jesus has reminded his accusers of the witness of John the Baptist, who had prepared the way for his arrival, and who had testified to his true identity, who backed up all the claims that Jesus had made, but they still did not listen to him.

They still would not believe. And so Jesus calls on his next witness, which was the witness of the finished works. The witness of the finished works in verse 36.

Jesus continues, but the testimony I have is greater than that of John for the works that the Father has given me to accomplish. The very works that I am doing bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

The miracles that Jesus performed were primarily done to demonstrate that what he said was true. Listen, believe in what I've said because look at what I am doing.

[26 : 13] And the fact that I'm doing these things gives credibility to the statements that I have made, that I am making. Now he didn't do these miracles, these finished works, in order to prove that God exists, but to show that he is God.

Those who witnessed his miracles came away with an understanding that Jesus is different. Jesus is not like anybody else. No ordinary man can do these things.

They understood that. Sometimes I like to watch this show called Fool Us, Penn and Teller Fool Us. Have you ever seen that?

And so you guys probably know who Penn and Teller are. They're very famous magicians. They're in Vegas and they've been on a lot of TV shows. They've been around for a long time. And so on this show, they sit in judgment seats, right?

They're out in the crowd and they sit and they watch these different acts come up, these different magicians, these different illusionists come up to the stage.

[27 : 22] And so the magicians, the illusionists, they will perform their acts and they're amazing. And you think, well, how in the world are they doing that?

But somehow, most of the time, if not almost all the time, Penn and Teller, without giving away the secrets, they speak in this kind of jargon so that the person who was just gave the performance realized that, yeah, he hadn't fooled them.

They knew exactly how he had performed that trick. Now listen, magicians and illusionists, it's neat. They performed their acts to draw crowds right, to make money. Jesus was not a great magician.

He was not some great illusionist, as some people have thought.

He wasn't ahead of his time in that regard. What he did, the miracles he performed, were concrete miracles. He walked on the water, right?

[28:26] It wasn't a frozen lake or anything like that. There was no tricks to what Jesus did. And people knew that. When we see a great illusionist today, we realize, well, there's something that they're doing.

It's a trick. They don't really have supernatural powers. But the things that Jesus was doing, there was no trick to it. There was no way that you could do it unless you were supernatural yourself. And so people understood this. And we see that in Scripture. In one case, Nicodemus was one of those who understood that Jesus was not an ordinary man. And so he came to Jesus at night, and he confessed to that very thing.

He said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. These people weren't dumb. They understood this person is doing things that the only way he could be doing them is because God is with them.

That is sound reasoning. And Nicodemus understood that the things that Jesus were doing were revealing, I should say, a much greater reality about this man.

[29:36] Jesus' miracles endorsed the fact that he was sent from God. And he, Nicodemus, was not the only one who came to this rational conclusion in John 7, 31.

It says there that many of the people believed in him. They said, when the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done? In John 11, 47 through 48, even the chief priests and the Pharisees who were meeting in council understood this.

And they said, what are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation. So you see their true motive in all of this when they come across Jesus, when they enter into conflict with him, is they don't want their place to be taken by him or anyone else.

So Jesus appealed to his finished works as witness to his true identity. And again, in John 10, 37 through 38, he says, if I am not doing the works of my father, then do not believe me.

[30:45] But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works so that you may know and understand that the father is in me and I am in the father.

But again, though those miracles were incredibly incredible and ultimately the most incredible of those miracles when Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after he had been crucified was more than enough evidence for people to understand that he was divine.

Yet many still rejected him and still do today. But Jesus isn't done calling on his witnesses as impressive as those first two are.

He calls on a third witness and that is the witness of the father in verses 37 and 38. He says, and the father who has sent me has himself born witness about me.

His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen. And you do not have his word abiding in you for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

[31:51] And so on two occasions, the audible voice of God gave witness to the fact that Jesus was his son.

The first time was at Jesus's baptism in inaugurating his earthly ministry there in Matthew 3, 16 through 17. When Jesus came up out of the water, when he was baptized immediately, it says he went up from the water and behold the heavens were open to him.

And he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. And behold, a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

And then a second instance came later in Jesus's ministry in Matthew 17, 5, when he was with three of his disciples and he was transfigured before them. It says there that while he was still speaking, when behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice from the cloud said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased, listen to him.

So in each instance, God is making it clear that this is my son, I'm pleased with him and I want you to listen to him.

[33:07] And so here's the thing, when maybe in some of your families, one of either the mother or the father or both, whenever one of them says something, like lays down the law, we call it, you know that there's no more discussion after that.

I think in our house it rotates between me and my wife. But the tone of voice, you know, okay, it's done. It's settled. I'm out of here because if I say any more, it's trouble. When God speaks, there's no rebuttal.

There's nothing left to be said. If God says this is my son and I'm pleased with him and I want you to listen to him, then that solves it. That's finished, right? And so we believe in the father's testimony. That should be witness enough. If God says it, then it doesn't matter what anyone else says or what we might think. However, the Jewish religious leaders were unwilling to accept even what God had said about Jesus.

And in so doing, they displayed their ignorance of God since those who reject Jesus can't truly know him, nor can they speak for God.

[34 : 19] And so a fourth witness is the witness of the faithful scriptures. And so here, this is something that is interesting to note about who Jesus is speaking to, about who Jesus is defending himself against.

We know it's these Jewish religious leaders, Pharisees, many of them. But sometimes we don't understand what a Pharisee was back then. We imagine that Jesus in this case is having an argument that he's defending himself against liberal, secularist, atheists.

But these men were none of those things. During this time, they were the conservative group. This was the fundamentalist group.

These were the guys who carried their Bible to church, to worship, who were consistently in the temple. Whenever it was open, these were the guys who were the first in the door.

That is who Jesus is talking to here. But none of those things that they took pride in, none of those things guaranteed their salvation.

[35 : 37] Jesus says to them that they were as lost as those whom they looked down upon. And what he says here is that you can know the scriptures well, but knowing them and believing them are two totally different things.

And so what Jesus says to them in effect is this. You guys have your Bible studies, and it isn't that short 15-minute devotional type of Bible study.

You dig deeply into the scriptures. You are disciplined students of the scriptures. You get straight A's in your seminary courses, but you don't truly understand what the scriptures are saying, because they speak about me.

And you think that the fact that you have them in your possession, and that you know them, and that you can quote them, saves you. But they all are speaking about me.

And you have rejected me. And so Jesus continues with them in verses 41-43, saying, I do not receive glory from people, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you.

[37 : 03] I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. And if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. I remember hearing R.C. Sproul tell a story about somebody came to him and said there was a speaker they really wanted to be able to get for their conference.

And so maybe they thought R.C. Sproul could pull some strings for them or something. And so they said, how can we get him to come to speak here? And he said, well, that's easy.

Honor him. Give him some kind of award, some kind of a plaque, some kind of a degree, some kind of a statue, and I guarantee you that that person will come.

Why? And I don't think he was speaking of a Christian. I hope not. But why? Well, because we love to be honored, don't we? I mean, let's admit it. We like people to honor us.

And not to say that being honored is wrong. I think that there are some cases where it's great to give honor to people. But listen, Hallmark has made a holiday for everybody.

[38 : 19] Is there anybody left that doesn't have a day yet? You know, there is somebody to honor, it seems like, every single day. And they've made a lot of money off of our desire to want to be honored.

And in fact, people have gone from, I've noticed more today, maybe you have too, you know, on your birthday you should be honored. I agree. But we have, we've stretched our birthday out longer and longer, haven't we?

To now people are saying, I'm celebrating my birth week. To now people are saying, I'm celebrating my birth month. Honor me all month long.

Right? Because this is the month in which my birth has taken place. And it just kind of gets silly and sillier. My birthday is in November, by the way.

So, just so you know. But I don't, I don't expect that. You could tell me happy birthday, that'd be nice. But Jesus didn't care for any of that. Jesus says, I don't need any of that.

[39:24] I don't desire any of that because I truly know what's in a person. And listen, compared to anybody else who's ever lived, Jesus should be honored more than any.

But he didn't need it. That wasn't what he was after. Finally, Jesus said, do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me. For he wrote of me, but you do not believe his writings. How will you believe my words? Again, we can hold Scripture in high regard, and we do, and that's a good thing.

And we can know it, we can quote it, we can obey it. But, if we're not obeying it because we know Christ, because we've experienced the grace, and we're obeying it because we know that his ways are better and good, not just because we're trying to use him to get something from him or from other people.

We can know all these things and quote all these things. But if that truth doesn't abide in our hearts, it doesn't do you or anybody any good. And so, finally, a fifth witness.

[40:33] The fifth witness that Jesus has to give testimony of himself today is you and me. People can deny God's existence. They can deny the truthfulness or the authenticity of the Bible.

But they can never deny what God has done in your life. They can never deny that. They can never deny those answers to prayer.

They can never deny those moments where you have felt God so closely. They can never deny the salvation that you have received from him. They can't deny the miracles that he has performed in your life or that you've seen him perform in the lives of others around you.

And so, listen, I'm never offended when anybody talks to me and they tell me they don't believe in God or they question Christianity or any of those things.

That never offends me. Because, for me, it's settled. It's done. I believe and that's not going to change. I want that person I'm talking to to believe.

[41:43] And so, for us, too. We shouldn't be unsettled by these things, but see it as an opportunity. Let's go and let's share. Let's be that fifth witness to testify to the world that, you know, I have experienced the love and the joy and the peace of Jesus Christ.

And nothing can take that away from me. And I want you to know it, too. And so, again, this isn't something that we should do. This is something that Jesus has called us to do, that we must do. Matthew 28, 18 through 20. And Jesus came and said to them, before he ascended into heaven, after he rose from the dead, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

And so the question I want to lead you with before we go through these points of application is this. Are you a reliable witness for Jesus right now? Are you a reliable witness to Jesus right now?

[42:50] Do your actions back up your words? Are you somebody who people know that you're a Christian? They can go to and they have questions and it's not a guessing game.

They know that person's a follower of Christ. And so are you a reliable witness for him today? So even though 2020 has been terrible, I don't know how else to say it, God is still doing good things. And we're still seeking to be the best church that we can be in 2020. So first of all, we do that by building community. And I encourage you right now, it's a good opportunity to have conversations with people about what's going on in our world and use those conversations to point people to the gospel.

Every conversation is a conversation that we hope to eventually steer back towards the gospel truth. And so we can do that by building community, by listening, by sharing. Also by equipping believers.

And so even though, unfortunately, a lot of our programs haven't been able to meet and things that we haven't been able to do because of COVID and whatnot, we still have the opportunity to equip believers here.

[44:00] You have the opportunity to equip believers in your family. You have opportunity to equip people through all different kinds of things, social media and whatnot, sharing good articles. I've seen many of you do that, sharing scripture.

That equips believers. And then again, we share Jesus. That's important to what we do. We must be sharing Jesus in all things. And finally, we teach the word.

And we don't teach it just so that people will, you know, be able to quote it because it sounds good. But we teach it because it is the word of God. It is foundational to all that we believe because it is living and is active.

It is sharper than any two-edged sword. It is the very word of God. And so we hold it in high esteem. We want to meditate upon it.

We want to be able to quote it because it's abiding in us so that we will be better at building community, equipping believers, sharing Jesus, and teaching the word.

[44:58] you