

Overcoming the World

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[0:00] Well, good morning. For those of you who don't know us, I am Aaron, and this is Jay. Hello. We first wanted to say welcome to the gathering. It's great. It's great to have you here. If it's your first time, welcome. We hope that you meet some new friends and get to know some new people that you don't know. And if it's your, I don't know what, how many times we're at 50th time, 52nd time.

We hope that this is a place you find community and are able to build friendships, but most importantly, grow on your walk with God. And so we just read our mission statement together. And so it sort of gives us the purpose of why we meet. If we were to say it simply, I think we would say it's the me, we, they. We come here to grow in our walk with God. So to be challenged and look at the word and grow in our walk with God. But in the midst of that, we do that together by using our gifts, challenging each other, talking together, talking about what God is speaking to us and growing in our walk together in the hopes that as we grow in our walk together, we are going to the they, we are scattering. And we are sharing the good news with the people in Hong Kong because doesn't Hong Kong need God. Um, and so one way that we like to do this is actually to challenge ourselves to step outside of our comfort zones, um, and to do things a little bit differently, the odd time on a Sunday morning. And so if it's your first time, uh, you've lucked out and we're doing things a little bit differently today. Um, and we're walking through what we call, um, discovery Bible study. And so if you've never heard of what discovery Bible study is, a discovery Bible study is where we, we look at a passage and then we take a few minutes in small groups. So we obviously can't reorganize in this room. So it's whoever you've sat beside is who you're going to get to talk to. Uh, and so three, four people, um, we'll give, we'll, we'll read through the passage and then we'll give you a question to talk about with those people around you. So we'll just give you a few minutes to sort of see what God is speaking to you about this passage. And then, uh, Jay and I will, we'll share our thoughts on what we've, what we've taken from it as we've looked at it this week. And so we'll work through three different questions with that. But you know, the hopes of doing this one, we, we do want to, we do realize it is uncomfortable. It is stretching, especially if you don't know the people around you, it is hard. Even if you know the people around you, it is hard. Uh, so if you don't know the people around you, maybe start with a, Hey, what's your name? And maybe your favorite color or favorite animal, I don't know, maybe get to know them a little bit. Um, but it is uncomfortable, but we do this because we know the value of developing these skills. And our hope is that as we walk through something like this on a Sunday morning, that you can do it and you say, wow, as uncomfortable as it was, it actually wasn't that difficult. These are things that I could do with my colleagues at lunchtime, as we're sitting in, in the lunchroom, or these are things I could do with my friends that I don't need to spend hours and hours and hours preparing, but I can still see what the Bible is speaking to me. And I can still grow on my walk and challenge those around us. And so, uh, that's the hope of it. And you know, as Jay and I have met and talked about it, it's been fun for me to get to know Jay a little bit more. And I learn how God speaks to Jay and he learns how God speaks to me. Um, it's funny because we were talking about, Oh, how does God speak to you? And I'm like, Oh, well, when I go running, you know, like running for me is a time where I, I, my brain is clear and I can hear from God. And Jay's like, I'm just praying that I can make it through the run. Like, I'm just thinking I'm so tired. And Jay's like, well, for me, it's in silence. [3:50] I sit in silence and I hear God. And I'm like, how can you sit in silence? I can't do that. And so we learn how God speaks to us and, and we value that we are all different and we see things differently and we hear from God differently. And so that really is the hope of doing this together.

And so I encourage you and challenge you step out of your comfort zone. Um, take the challenge and just see what God speaks to you and speaks to each other this morning. And so let's, let's open

the word together today. Let's, let's stand as we read together. We like to stand to just remember the power, the significance, the reverence that these are the words of God. Um, and we like to show respect for that. And so today we are looking at first John five verses one to five, first John five verses one to five. And it says, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God to obey his commands and his commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that he that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the son of God. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray father. We know that your word is alive and active and that you speak through it. You speak to us through it. And so today, as we delve into this passage as a group, as, as a community, I pray that you would speak to each of us, speak through each other. May we be encouraged and challenged in our walk with you this morning in your name, we pray. Amen. Feel free to have a seat.

So if you, if you're, if you haven't been here or you're new here, we've been working through the book of first John, um, slowly over the last few months. Um, and just seeing what, you know, what we can pull from, from first John and some of the themes that have come out are, you know, walking in the light, fighting against the things of the world or the draw of the world, um, warning against, against the antichrist. There are those things of culture that can really divide us between God and our relationship with God. Um, the importance of us being children of God.

And then John just keeps hammering, hammering home, loving one another, loving one another. It's, it's a theme that is throughout this entire book. And we see it today too, the importance of love. And so that's what brings us to first John five today. And so what we're going to do is we're going to give you a question. This is where it gets a little bit awkward. Unfortunately, in my lack of foresight, if I was brilliant, I would have had the question up here. Um, but I wasn't that brilliant this week. I'm sorry. Uh, so I will repeat the question a number of times for you.

[7:08] But the question that we're going to look at first is what does this passage teach us about God? What does this passage teach us about God? And I will tell you, uh, it's not easy. Okay. So Jay and I, we've worked on this for, we've known for probably about a week and a half, two weeks. Now we've met a couple of times and we will acknowledge it's not an easy question to answer. It takes a bit of thought, a bit of working through, and we're not expecting you to come up with a three point sermon to tell us what this passage says about God, but it's more taking time to reflect on what does this say to me about God? And so we're going to give you three minutes, three or four minutes.

Okay. Not a long time. So it's not going to be super uncomfortable, but three or four minutes to talk with your friends around you. What does this passage teach you about God? What can you draw from it? Okay. So take three minutes, talk with your friend around you, and then we'll come back together and we'll share some thoughts with you. Okay. Let's, let's pull it back together. We'll, uh, come back together for a few minutes to just share a few of our thoughts and what we're thinking. Um, but first anyone who's had a brilliant thought or anyone who would like to share maybe what this speaks to them about God. I hear Lucas has a brilliant thought. Go ahead, Lucas.

Okay. So I think it actually wants to tell us that when you want to love God, we have to also show it out, not just like sucking yourself into the room and just praying, but it's also that compassion that you actually present towards the people and how you actually share the gospel and how you actually show the type of love that God gives you to the world and to your peers. I think that's very important because like God wants us to actually spread it out. Sometimes maybe we just shut it in and we should actually like share the message and also share the love through our compassion. That's good. So if we love God, there should be a result of loving others. And if there's not, anyone else, uh, what this speaks to them about God, anyone, we may be kind this morning and not put people on the spot, but we could also not be that's how Canadian I'm feeling. Okay. Well, I'll take this one. I think this is probably the hardest question for this, this passage. And so, uh, a few thoughts that we had as we were looking at it, um, what this passage speaks about God. One, uh, is that God is our father. It talks about us being born of God. And so we are his children. Um, and so we serve a God who, who is our father.

Who is in relationship with us. You know, I have a student, uh, who I'm walking with, who is a Buddhist and he talks about Buddha and how Buddha just sort of sits up there and watches him. There's no interaction. There's no relationship. It's just sort of watching him, but all the onus is on

the student, but we have a God who wants to be in relationship with us, who loves us, who is walking with us, um, who wants to talk with us, who wants us to talk with them and who loves us. And so, um, that was the first thing is that we have a God who is in relationship with us and who is our father. We can go to him with everything. Uh, the second one that we came out with was that God gives us strength to overcome. Now, the thing is when we're looking at, it gives us strength to overcome. It doesn't say that God is taking us out of the difficult situation. Wouldn't that just be incredible? It's not saying, Oh, I'll take away all your issues, but it says he gives us strength to overcome. So, like I said, I enjoy running. And so I sort of equate it to running when you're running and you're in the middle of, let's say a marathon and you're tired. You don't just get extracted from the situation, but you, you eat, you eat your gels, you eat your fruit, you eat things to give you strength along the way to make it to the end.

[11:30] And that's like our relationship with God. He's, he's our gels or our bananas. Maybe don't quote me on that, but he, he gives us the strength to make it through this life that when we're in the middle of walking through something difficult or we're tired or we're drained and we just don't know how we're going to put the next foot in front of the other, he doesn't take us out, but he gives us the strength to make it through. Um, and so that was, that was one that stuck close to us. Uh, there's four that we have. The third one is that God is the one who saves.

God is the one who saves. God is working in us. And this is the only way that we can do anything, but it is God is the one who saves us. It's not our actions. It's not what we do.

God is the one who saves us. And we're going to dig in more to that as we go along. And so I'm not going to get into that too much. And then the last one is that God's commands are not burdensome. Now this one was, uh, we were talking about it. And as I look at this, uh, I think this, this should actually be a quite freeing thought, but sometimes I wonder if it's as freeing as it really should be. Because if I look at this, it says God's commands are not burdensome. So it should, his commands shouldn't weigh me down. And as I was looking about this, and as I was reading a little bit, the light switch went off when I read it. And it said, his commands aren't burdensome because we don't have to do them to be saved. We aren't saved by what we do.

And that is the incredible message of the gospel. It is just our faith in God that saves us. I don't want to get too much into this, his stuff, but God's commands are not burdensome because he has saved us while we were still sinners. Now there is a resulting action when we are saved, but it is not our actions that save us. And so his commands shouldn't be burdensome. It's, I read an illustration. I'm going to finish with this and then we'll move on to the second question. Um, there was a good illustration that I read for this. It said, it's like an aspiring young musician. He has a tutor who tells him to spend four hours every day practicing his instrument. It's not easy to spend four hours a day on this. He sometimes has other things he wants to do, but he knows that it is for the best. He knows that if he is to be successful, he must follow the tutor. He also loves playing. So for him, it is not a burden.

[14:25] It is a joy. Every time he feels good after practice, knowing he accomplished a lot, he feels even better when he can see the fruits of his practice. And he feels even better that when his tutor praises him for his progress, for the believer, obeying God is not a burden. Hearing well done is the greatest possible reward and worth every difficulty. And so God doesn't give us his commands to be a burden.

He gives us his commands because he knows what's best for us. And he knows that if we follow his commands, our life will be better, but it should not be burdensome because it is a response, which we'll get to in the next question. So those were a few things. God is our father. He's in a relationship with us. He gives us strength to overcome. He doesn't extract us, but he gives us the strength to overcome. God is the one who saves. We don't save ourselves. God is the one who saves and his commands are not burdensome. There should be freedom in following him. So the next question that we're going to move on to is what does this passage teach us about humanity? Or what does this passage teach us about us as humans? What can we take from it from that? Okay. So take another three minutes or so.

And then Jay is going to come back and share some of his thoughts on this one. What does this passage teach us about humanity? All right. Let's bring it back in. Unfortunately, I am not as nice as Aaron here, and I am going to pick on someone. And that someone is Cubon. Avoiding my eye contact. All right. Let's go.

All right, guys. Let's bring it back in. Thank you. All right. Cubon. What does this passage teach us about humanity? So in other words, let's simplify the question. What does this teach us about us? Are the human heart, the human condition? A couple of things are it teaches that we have things that are burdensome in our lives. And we can also access the superpower of faith.

[16:58] Right? Wow. So it teaches us that there are things in our life that are burdensome, actually, truthfully. But we have an access to this faith that allows us to overcome the world. Okay. All right.

At this part, I'll be nice and I'll not pick on anyone further. And I'll just... One more. Okay. Oh, there you go. Let's go. I think it's the underlying truth that, just like what Cubon said, it's like, it kind of reflects how without God or without faith, it is the opposite of what it says. Like burden, like being weighed down by worldly rules. And yeah, so I think it's just the goodness of this reflects on the badness of the absence of faith.

Yeah. Right. Wow. Good. So the absence of faith. Awesome. So God admit, when we first was meditating on this part, this question was quite difficult. Like what does this passage actually reveal about us?

And for the past couple of weeks as a church, we've been covering 1 John, right? And there's a lot of principles and doctrines that we've been covering. If we love the Lord, it is impossible to hate our brother and sister. If we love the Lord, we have to walk in the light. And these are all great things. And if we love the Lord, our obedience to him will not be burdensome.

But the question is how? How do we get there? How do we get to this place where we can obey the Lord and none of his commandments are burdensome to us? And I think we just have to go to the passage. How does the, I think it really reveals how the Lord desires to change our heart, how he desires to bring change into our lives. Yeah. So let's go to the passage.

[18:38] Everyone who believes that Jesus is a Christ has been born of God. So the moment you believe that Jesus is a Christ, you're reborn into God. And everyone who loves the father loves whoever has been born of him. And by this, we know that we love him when we obey his commandments and his commandments are burdensome. So let's strip this down, right? Let's make it really simple. Let's make it really simple. So it begins with when we believe that Jesus is the Christ. And then that leads to love for his children and the father. And we know that we love the children, his children and the father, when we obey his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome. So it begins with this when we believe, but I wonder so often we do it the other way around where we try to obey first, hoping that it would lead to faith, hoping that we would believe and hoping that it would change our hearts. But John is saying, no, that's not how we're supposed to approach this. We have to begin with belief. So in first John four, when it, where it says we love because he first loved us, it has to begin. The transformation begins with us understanding how much the Lord loves us. So that's not to say that. Okay.

Let's, let's use a practical example, right? Uh, there's someone in your life who you're struggling to love. And the Christian doctrine says, I have to love this brother and sister. That's how I know I love the guy. I love God, but also I'm just going to grit my teeth and I'm just going to force myself to love this person. I mean, this is something we've all struggled with, right? I just, I just got like, Oh, I got to grit my teeth and I'm just going to love this person because that's what I'm supposed to do. That's what a good Christian does.

But that's actually not the approach that the Lord desires here because that change, that motivation to love this person is actually rooted in fear and guilt. Every kind of change we try to make in our life lives is always rooted in a deeper underlying motivation. And what the Lord wants that deeper underlying motivation to be is his love. So we have to start there.

We have to believe, we have to start with believing that Jesus is the Christ. So we have to start by believing that Jesus is truly who he says he is. And that will transform, bring transformation into our lives and it will not become burdensome. So bringing back to this example, right? When we are trying to love someone who is very difficult to love, it's not, Oh, I just got to love this person because that's what God tells me to do. It's actually something completely different. It's, I understand that I am a sinner. I've fallen short of the glory of God.

I suck. And, but yet the Lord loves me and the Lord has forgiven me over and over and over again. And he will over and over again in the future. And that frees me. That gives me the ability. So the next time that person annoys me or hurts me or slaps me across the face, I can take it because Jesus took it for me. So when we're approaching this, it's bringing upon change, not trying to force

yourself to do it, but it's remembering what he did for us first. And that brings a transformation into our hearts. And we have to remember this.

[21:27] We're not trying to bring the change upon ourselves. It's actually our faith in him that will change our hearts. So now the question is that if it is as simple as we just have to believe that Jesus is the Christ, how do we actually apply this to our lives? Like how do we actually get to this place of allowing his love to transform our hearts? What are some practical things that we can do? Because I think for a lot of us in this room right now, we've come to church for a long time. We believe that Jesus is the Christ and he died for us. Intellectually, it makes sense in our head. We're like, okay, yeah, cool.

Jesus died for us. He loves me. You've heard it a million times over and over again. But how does this become a reality in your heart that it actually begins to change who you are and change the way that you perceive your life, the people around you and just fill you with more love? How do we get there? What are some practical things that we can do? And I think as a church, we can just discuss this just two, three minutes. Just ask yourselves, like, how can I get to this place of not trying to force myself to obey him so that it's not burdensome? How can I get to this place where I can really be transformed by his love? And James mentioned a few weeks back, the greatest distance in the world. The greatest distance in the world is from our head to our hearts.

We understand it in here, but do we really feel it in here? So how do we bridge this gap between these two things? Yeah, just feel free to discuss this for a few moments in your groups and we'll regroup. So just a reminder of what the question is, how do we actually apply this teaching to our lives, right? So I just, we just covered the idea that transformation has to come from understanding, believing in him and believing what he did for us, not trying to force ourselves to this transformation. So how do we bridge this gap? How do we make the reality of who Jesus is a reality in our hearts? Not just something that we say, yeah, Jesus died for me. Cool. Like, how do we actually get to this place where we feel in our hearts and we allow it to transform us?

What are some practical things we can do? All right, let's bring it back in. It's nice to see everyone discussing. It seems like a lot of people have something to share. So, um, Gabs, would you mind sharing a little bit? Uh, Gabe, sorry, not Gabs, Gabe. Where's Gabs? He's in the kids' room. Oh, I see, I see. Uh, all right, guys, we'll bring it back in now. All right, Gabs, what does, how do we apply this passage to our lives?

Yeah, what I thought of is, is like, thinking if the way we love is through our faith in Jesus and remembering what God has done for us, or not just remembering, but like, that what Jesus has done on the cross for us has actually completely changed our nature, then like, one way to love more is to remind ourselves of the gospel to just like, remember, like what we talked about last week, that God loves me, that Jesus died for me. I was a sinner. Jesus died for me. He rose again, and I have new life. Right. So just, I am made new in Jesus, and I just need to do, uh, yeah, what he's, he's already bought. So just the simple act of remembering. Yeah. So I love what James did last week.

[24:35] He asked the church, can we do something every day that will remind us that God loves us? So it was a story of when we, he, like it was a friend or something, he sees a deer and there's a lot of deers in his area. He would just tell himself every time he saw a deer, God loves me. And it's just a simple act of reminding your heart, Hey, God loves me. Um, and letting that voice be the loudest in your life. I'm just going to actually ask one more person. Um, Florence, let's go. I'm avoiding my eye contact.

So the first thing that I've shared is faith, actually believing all of that is true. If you don't believe that you can't unlock the next step, right. And then once you do believe that allowing the two things that they shared to, um, to remind you of that. Uh, so one, uh, they shared about fellowship, seeing other people in community, acting it out and really feeling the presence of God and seeing how that can change. And also obviously participating in it. And then Alton shared from scripture. So knowing who actually Jesus is, because without that head input, you actually, you know, you don't know who he is. So I think all three was Yeah, that's, that's so good. Actually, just all of you guys that you shared, just elements of what I'm about to share is actually scattered in there. Um, so yeah, how, how do we remind ourselves? How does this become a head knowledge, something that we intellectually understand? God loves me to something that begins to transform our hearts. And if we go into scripture and we see that we don't even have to go to scripture. You just have to look in your own life. One of the moments that you really spiritually grow and his love becomes a more of a

reality in your life. Just look back at the moments in your life. When has God become more real to you? And it's usually when you're in a situation where things are difficult, you're in a season of challenges, you're going through a trial, you're going through tribulations. And that is when you can no longer hold onto the things, these worldly things that you hold onto for peace. And you look to him and you reach out to him and he becomes more real to you in that. So it's actually, sadly, it's a hard pill to swallow.

But if you look at scripture, it's usually when we're going through difficult things that we start to really, this thing that God loves me, this becomes more of a reality in our hearts. So that's sad, but it's true. And so what are some practical things that we can do when we are going through trials, when we're going through tribulations, what are some practical things that we can do to make this more of a reality in our hearts? And we just discussed a few ideas and I'd love to just share a few. I think if it truly is that in trials and when we're stretched, when we can no longer rely on things that we have relied on previously to give us peace, if those are the things, those are the moments we receive and know God more real, then there are things that it's not really about praying for trials and saying, Lord, well, you can, I guess that's a dangerous prayer, but you can say, Lord, give me trials so that I can come closer to you. I don't know how many of you guys have ever done that in your life. I've done that once and it did not end very well. So I did not, I went to the military. So I, yeah, I, but it's, it's actually, there are things that we can do every day to invite the Lord into our lives, right? It's, it doesn't have to be, give me a trial.

Cause sometimes life just happens to you and you find yourself in a trial, but what are some everyday things that we can do to keep ourselves, like just push ourselves a little bit out of our comfort zone and to be in a place where we can rely on him. And I think there's a spectrum of people. We're all on different journeys on our journey of faith. And for some of us, I think this will be applicable for those who have just kind of fallen asleep at the wheel. We've come to church for a long time. We intellectually understand who he is. Our faith might not be ours. It might be our parents. And we just come here and we fall asleep at the wheel and we don't know what it looks like to obey him anymore because we're just comfortable. So there are some active things that we can do.

[28:31] And one practical step we can do is what I like to call default to yes. So I think a common characteristic for people who just stay in the church and just is comfortable is sometimes we just say, Lord, give me a sign. I'll give you a practical example. Lord, give me a sign to love that person. Lord, give me a sign to do this. Lord, give me, give me the courage to do this.

Give me a sign. But what if we can be a people who's not waiting for signs, but we can default to action and say, Jesus, I know that you did this for me. I'm not going to wait for a sign. I'm just going to do it because that's what you said to me. This is your truth. You told me to go out and love. You told me to go out and make disciples of all nations. So I will do it. I won't wait for a sign. I'm going to go. And in that process, you will be not very comfortable and it will be uncomfortable. And it's going to challenge you to the core, right? And it's in that journey that Jesus' truth becomes more real to you because you're experiencing it. You're walking the walk that he walked, right? So I said walked a lot there, but yeah, but essentially you get the idea, right? So it's continuously saying, defaulting to yes. And now coming back to Florence's point, what their group shared is, how do I even know what the Lord wants me to do? How do I default? Yes. You got to read this book. You got to read the scripture, right? If you don't know his heart, if you don't know what he wants, how are you going to default? Yes. Like, what are you following at the end of the day?

Right? So we have to know scripture. Scripture is where it begins. So another practical step, read scripture, read scripture, know who he is. What is his heart? What does he want you to do? And when you find yourself in a situation where you're like, Oh, what should I do here? You have something that to guide you. So a practical step, if you fall asleep at the wheel, get to scripture, read it, know his heart, understand what he wants to do for you, understand like what he desires for his people and let that begin to shape your thoughts and your actions. So that's number one. Number two, I think this is something in this city, especially because everyone's so busy, hustle bustle.

[30:19] So we forget to slow down to just be, we forget to just allow ourselves to be vulnerable with where we're at and just be honest with our feelings. And you guys all know the saying that the first step to healing is acknowledging where you're at. And I think one practical thing we can do to connect Jesus's truth into our lives is we have to allow him into the areas of our life that we've shut him off of. And sometimes that begins with just saying, Lord, this sucks. I, this really sucks.

And you know, in scripture, you read David, you go through the Psalms and David's always like saying, Lord, this sucks. And he's complaining, he's complaining. But then he says, yeah, Lord, you're so good. And then your Lord, you're so faithful. And sometimes we feel that pressure when we come to the presence of God that we have to do these things as well. Like, Oh, this sucks. Yeah, Lord. And that, but that's not true to you. Right? Because in that moment, it just sucks. And the Lord just wants to minister to that version of you. So maybe one practical step as a church we can do is when you're in the presence of God, you don't need to pretend to be anything. You just come as you are. And only then can the Lord start to heal your heart. And, you know, this is just something that I would love to encourage, just not just in the church. We have a lot of activities in church, a lot of fun things. It's a really joyful place. We're all having fun, but can we also be a church where we get together and we just sit down with one person and say, Hey, how are you doing? Listen to them and allow them to just hurt. It's not just about having fun here, guys. We're here to walk with one another. Can we be a people where we can sit with one other and just say, this sucks and cry together and weep together. Can we do that for one another?

And we can invite Jesus into that space and he will begin to heal our hearts. It's not about trying to heal one another. It's just acknowledging this is where I'm at. This is difficult. And just walking with one another through that. So that's number two. Let's just be vulnerable guys. Let's not just to the Lord, but to the people around you, people sitting right and left, just be vulnerable, just share and let the Lord minister to your hearts. Now, the next thing, the last thing I want to share is, okay, great. So I just share, I'm just vulnerable. Okay. That's good. Like we cried together, but we don't just stop there. Right? It's not just about sharing our emotions and okay, that's it. What's the next step. We can't just stay in those emotions forever. Something has to come out of it. Jesus says here, John says here, sorry, that this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith, right? We're not just going to mull in our negative emotions. God has already overcome that situation. So how do we make that a reality in our lives? That fact that he has overcome the world.

Sometimes, I don't know about you guys, but God's truth in my life has become more and more real only in retrospect. When I look back and I can see his faithfulness, maybe in that moment, when I was going through that season of my life, I'm like, Lord, where are you? Like your truth, everything I'm reading about you is just not true in my life right now. Maybe you're in a season like that, but it's only sometimes in retrospect, we look back and we can see, and we can connect the dots and we realize, Oh, actually Jesus, you were there, but it's, it's not easy, right? It's, it's not easy to go back into places of our past, which has a hold on us, which has a grip on us.

[33:25] And just to be honest with it, but I'd love to just share a practical example here. Um, Jesus became more real to me and particularly season of my life where I didn't feel him, but it was only a year later. So to be really specific, for those of you who know me, I was in the Korean military for two years, um, about a year ago. And a lot of people asked me like, what was the most difficult part of that journey for you? Like, what was, what was the hardest thing that you had to do there? And for me, it wasn't really about the abuse or the things that I had to do waking up really early. Like it was none of that. It was actually one specific moment or a season where I felt the Lord had abandoned me. I was reading about God. The only thing I had, you don't have any phones, you don't have any friends. It's just you in there and scripture.

And the God that I was reading of in scripture was so inconsistent with what I was experiencing in my life at that time. Cause I felt so alone and I thought that God had abandoned me. So there was one, there was this one particular moment. The most difficult moment was when in the military, you don't have personal space. The only space you can have just kind of like alone time is in the toilet cubicle. So I woke up at 3am. I know it's kind of funny, but I woke up at 3am cause I couldn't sleep cause I was, I had caved into this lie that Jesus had left me and I went to the toilet cubicle and you can't scream and shout and wail and weep because all your commanding officers are just outside. So I was just silently screaming inside cause I was so frustrated and I felt like this was it. And I'd give, I was, I was ready to give up. And that specific memory has had such a hold on me because I couldn't really connect with Jesus for a long time because of that. And only a year later, actually a few months back, I was in counseling and my counselor asked me like, you know, he asked the same question. What was the most difficult moment? I shared it with him. And then he asked me this question, a very strange question. He asked me, where was Jesus in that moment? I'm like, look, dude, did you not hear a word I just said? Like, I like the whole point of the story is I was in that,

I was broken down because I felt that he had abandoned me and you're asking me, where was he in that moment? He wasn't there. That's the point. And he, he just kept asking me, Jay, where was Jesus in that moment? And he started praying for me. He said, Jay, just close your eyes, take a moment, open your heart and ask Jesus where he was. So I did. And I relived the experience in my head and all those emotions, the frustration, it all came, it came back. And I asked Jesus, where are you?

And I saw myself zooming out of the situation. I saw myself in a toy cubicle. I was like so much despair. I was ready to give up. And as I zoomed out, I saw Jesus in the cubicle next to me and he was just leaning on the wall and he was breaking down with me and he was crying with me. And that for me was a moment where God's faithfulness, his truth became more real to me. When I took the courage or my counselor helped me find the courage to look back in a moment of my life where the enemy was, had just covered in lies and he redeemed it. What the enemy meant for evil, he turned it for good.

And that became a truth in my life. So sometimes in our journey of faith, when we want to really connect what we know in our head to our hearts, we have to look back to the moments where we feel like Jesus had left us. And only in there can we see that Jesus's truth is a real reality in our lives.

[36 : 59] I covered a lot of things today, but maybe you're going through a season right now where you feel like God is not with you anymore.

Or maybe you have walked through seasons in your life where you feel like God wasn't there. So I'm going to ask the same question to you. I'm going to invite everyone. I know this might feel a little bit uncomfortable, but it's so important. I really feel, I really believe this is so important. Just take two to three minutes, close your eyes and invite Jesus to that area of your life where you've shut him out of for a very long time now and ask him, Jesus, Jesus, where are you in this? Make yourself real to me.

John 16:33. I said these things to you that in me, you may have peace in the world. You will have tribulation, but take heart. I've overcome the world. Let's pray.

God, you are sovereign. And we might be walking through a season right now where we don't feel you.

And our situations tell us that you are not with us. And the enemy is trying to tell us, and is mocking us, where is your God? We know, we know the truth.

[38 : 31] You're with us even right now. Give us the faith to believe, Lord. I believe of my unbelief. Help us believe. And it is our faith. That is the victory that has overcome the world.

So grow our faith, Lord. We want to be a people who's transformed, not because we feel obligated to or because we're scared to, we're scared of your punishment. Can we be a people that is transformed because we understand how much we are loved by you and how much you sacrifice for us?

So, Lord, I pray that you continue to bridge that gap, the greatest distance in the world. We know that we are fighting our battles right now. Help us step out in faith for us who have fallen asleep at the wheel.

Thank you.