

# A Unique Birth

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Date: 08 December 2019

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, you turn with me to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 1. We began a series in Matthew's, the Gospel of Matthew, last week, leading up to the end of the year, and then we'll follow it on, obviously, through into the new year.

And last week we read the genealogy of Jesus, and today we're just doing the next section, which is the birth of Jesus Christ, which is obviously appropriate to us also, as we think of the incarnation at this time of year.

So it's from verse 18 to 25 on page 807 of your pew Bibles, if you're following in the Bible. Now, the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way, when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together.

She was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit, and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel. It's taken from the reading that Ewan read earlier in Isaiah.

They shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus.

Okay, so I reckon that a lot of people will know about that story, and will know that passage of Scripture. But I hope as we look into the Scripture today, we will recognize its ongoing relevance and significance and truth and power as God speaks to us in His Word.

Now, just over 30 years ago, in September 189, I married Katrina, and in January 1991, our firstborn Scott was born.

[ 2 : 3 6 ] And that's the story. Now, it's quite minimalist. I haven't given you a lot of details there. There's so much more I could tell you about everything that happened and led up to that momentous and wonderful event and of our life and our journey and of our children and everything else that went with it around that particular events.

You know, I've given you no idea, no idea really of all the people that were involved in our lives at that time or the emotions that we felt, or sometimes our fears and our experiences through that.

And in many ways, this passage is very similar in the sense that it's very minimalist. It's very economic. It doesn't say a lot of things.

It's almost telling us on a need to know basis. We need to know the facts of Jesus' birth, but it really doesn't give us much detail in any way.

But yet, it's hugely significant. And I think it's important sometimes for us just to slow down and reflect on the humanity of this story and of what actually was happening and what did happen because the truth of Jesus Christ and the reality of Jesus Christ demands from us, interestingly, more than a minimalist economic response.

[ 4 : 04 ] Even though the accounts that we are given don't go into great detail. Our response to Jesus is Jesus looks for us to go into much more detail.

So today we're introduced again into the person of Jesus Christ. And you may be sitting here today having read this or heard this and said, well, so what?

So what? It doesn't really reflect any significance in my life, or you may say as a Christian, I know these things and I'm confronted with these things every week, but so what?

Being confronted with the person of Jesus. Well, I am hoping and praying for myself consistently and for you that continually as we open Scripture, that Scripture elicits in us a different response than so what?

Or I know this. Or it doesn't make much difference to me because as we begin to see, continually begin to see Jesus for who He is and for who He's revealed to be, then it ought to and has done and maybe is doing and we hope will do in your life make a great difference to us.

[ 5 : 19 ] Because I think if this passage says anything else to us, or if it says anything to us beyond the mere facts, it reminds us that when Jesus comes into your life, your life is turned upside down.

When Jesus comes into your life, your life is turned upside down. And that we sit back and we think about that when we think of Joseph and Mary. Now we're not going to really speak about Mary today, not because Mary's not really important, far from it.

She's usually important. But the Matthew account of the birth of Jesus really focuses on Joseph. The Luke account focuses much more on Mary and is actually much more detailed.

But this account in Matthew is really looking at the story of the birth of Jesus from the viewpoint of Joseph, Mary's partner at this point.

And I just want you to imagine for a moment what it must have been like for Joseph whose whole life's direction was critically changed at this point in his life.

[ 6 : 27 ] We skim over these truths because we know them so well and we think there's ongoing other things that are more significant and more important. But just consider the life of Joseph for a moment and think about him at this point in his life.

You know, as a young man, a carpenter, someone who was working, he wasn't... he didn't have much money. He was from... they were poor, the families that they were from.

And he's got his lovely partner. He's this beautiful girl who he's longing to marry. Mary is this lovely person that she has. And as he works in wood every day, he's making plans.

He's thinking about the home they're going to have, the future they're going to have, the family potentially that they're going to have. And while it might be a struggle, there'll be difficulties that will happen in their lives because they're poor. He's just probably dayd... in many ways daydreaming through much of his day, longing for and looking forward to the day that he's married to Mary.

And then Mary comes round one day, ashen white, and his whole life collapses because Mary says, I'm pregnant.

[ 7 : 41 ] I'm pregnant. And the immediate response for him would have been far more dramatic than is mentioned in Scripture.

You know, you're pregnant, the scandal, the confusion, the brokenness immediately of his dreams, the sense of betrayal. Who was it?

Who was involved? How could you possibly? And then she speaks of stories of angels and God involved. And his confusion must have been even deeper and...

Well, you know, I've heard some stories, but that's the most amazing story that I've heard for trying to explain away my... My fiancé's pregnancy here and the great confusion and difficulty that he faced.

And we need to realize that it's very easy for us to transport 21st century thinking of relationships and everything into the first century, but things were very, very different, particularly in the Jewish religion and the Jewish faith and Judaism of the day.

[ 8 : 49 ] If it was made public that she was pregnant before she was married, the law of God made clear in Deuteronomy that she and the one by whom she became pregnant would be stoned to death.

And that's why it speaks about Joseph's response following that as a sensitive and gentleman wanting to divorce her quietly for fear of that public reprisal.

It seemed such a dreadful, bad, miserable situation. We overlook that, don't we, when we read that passage? Yes, yes, yes, but it was Jesus that was born. Yes, it was Jesus, but his life was turned upside down as was Mary's by what seemed to be a dreadful situation that they came into.

And then as he sleeps, fitful sleep, potentially God speaks to him through an angel and tells him, this is, don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid to go ahead with your plans. This is the long expected Messiah and I have a name for Him. You're to call Him Jesus because He will save His people from their sins.

[ 10 : 00 ] And so we find God speaking into His situation and Jesus Christ coming into His life and Joseph's world was changed forever. Let's not pretend that Joseph's life from this point on would have been great.

Whoop, he's the father of the Messiah. Things must have been great. There have been many tough times ahead if He had been given a message from an angel of God to assure him that what had been spoken to Mary was true.

We can almost guarantee that all the people around about weren't given that. There would have been a lot of nudging and winking at Mary and Joseph as Mary became more pregnant.

And even who knows if they spoke of the situation, I doubt much they did. But there would have been many difficult and problematic times ahead for them as He trusted and obeyed and we're told that He does that.

He does exactly what the Lord commands Him in the dream and He follows that through. His life was turned upside down. And I think Jesus in our lives elicits the same response.

[ 11 : 07 ] Here we're Christians for 30 years and 50 years or five months or whoever we might be. Jesus in our lives isn't a casual happenstance and isn't a sidebar.

As we truly understand who Jesus is, then He will continue to turn our lives upside down. There will be that ongoing reality. Why is that?

Because God is with us. That's a huge reality and a huge truth. Emmanuel God with us, we become as Christians part of His family.

We have opened in our lives a closed door, a door that sin closes and that our own reticence and rebellion against God has kept firmly closed.

That in Christ when we come to faith in Christ, when He comes into our lives, it's like a spiritual Pandora's box is opened into our lives and we know divine intimacy. We've never known that before, that turns our lives upside down.

[ 12 : 06 ] It turns our decision making processes upside down. We have the indwelling of His Spirit. We have forgiveness and we have life. And therefore His work in us is to turn, continually turn our lives upside down because that's what He does.

It's not that we look at our lives and we think, we look at the calendars and we go back and, well, 27 years ago I made a decision to follow Jesus. I'm a Christian and that's it.

But there's this continual reality of knowing and being in the presence of and being in relationship with Jesus Christ that He's turning our lives upside down. He's changing our hearts desires, our choices, our priorities, our attitudes.

And He's always setting us a war with our own deep seated and sinful desire for autonomy. I've said it often here in the last few months, the deepest, the biggest, the most challenging prayer that we ever make is not my will but yours be done.

That's always the hardest prayer that we ever make because we spend our lives really battling with doing our own will and doing what we want. And He's saying to us, as He did in Gethsemane in that passage that we looked at a few weeks ago and sung about, these are the most...

[ 13 : 18 ] That prayer is the most explosive and the most life-changing prayer that we will ever make. It's very simple, isn't it? But it is very profound and life-changing. So Jesus, I think we find and see from this account that Jesus, when He comes into our lives, turns our lives upside down.

You see in the second place, we'll look at four things that He does here. Second place is He speaks, some of this will kind of dovetail in together from previous ones.

He speaks into your life. And we see that in this account very clearly. He speaks to Joseph. Joseph was confused, circumstances had changed forever.

This wasn't the plan he had for his life. This wasn't one that he was looking for. And God comes in and speaks to Him through an angel and says, do not fear to take Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit, confirming what Mary had said herself separately to Him.

And so the angel is sent to comfort and to explain. You know, God could have chosen to leave Him with Mary's explanation.

[ 14 : 35 ] He could have done that. But we see here, and we also see in the passage that we read, that God speaks in very many different ways in a sense into Joseph's situation.

He speaks through the genealogy. We spoke about the genealogy last week. That would have in time spoken into Joseph's life as he thought about who Jesus was and the line that he came from.

He speaks directly through his word. And he also speaks through dreams and through an angel. And ultimately through Jesus' own birth and young life.

God spoke into Joseph's life as well as his life being turned upside down, and we see that moving forward in the journey to Egypt and all these things, even in his early life.

And of course, Joseph obeyed what God said, and that brought huge consequences into his life. And our God still speaks.

[ 15 : 40 ] When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we recognize that. And it's one of the biggest realities of being Christian for us, is that God, when we wondered, you know, how on earth do any people believe in Jesus, God never speaks.

We find as Christians that God speaks into our lives. He speaks into our fears. Do not fear Joseph. And he speaks into our fears. He knows us. And he knows what we need to hear.

He knows what's important for us to hear. When he speaks into our lives as Christians, as individuals, he brings words of hope, of comfort, of challenge, of rebuke even, because our God is a personal God that we enter into a personal relationship with through Jesus Christ.

He's a relational God. You know, if there's one way we could describe God, we could describe Him as a communicating God, isn't it? We could say that's who He is.

He speaks the world into being in Genesis 1 verse, you know, it starts with the Word of God. It starts with Him communicating and speaking.

[ 16 : 48 ] He speaks in the Word of God, the Bible that we have completed for us, His message. So it has weight, and it has authority and significance as He unfolds His laws of love, unfolds the spiritual problem and difficulty and battle and struggles that have led to Jesus Christ in salvation.

It speaks of His redemptive story, His rescue, which we sung about in Psalm 130. And Jesus Himself, as it were, is the divine amplifier.

You know, if we wonder about God speaking, we find it most clearly in the person of Jesus. That is God speaking powerfully. And the question is, are we listening to Him, particularly in our lives as Christians?

Because He speaks to us. He speaks to us through Jesus, through His Word. He speaks to us in worship when we come together like this. He speaks to us in our circumstances, as He did with Joseph.

He speaks to us when other Christians give us advice and comfort and strength and pray for us. He speaks to us in our conscience. He speaks, the Holy Spirit speaks through all of these means to our lives.

[ 17 : 59 ] I even believe He speaks in dreams and will send angels. And I think it happens very often, but I'm not going to discount that because it's in Scripture here.

He certainly can do that. And if they need a rose, He would. But He's given us a completed Word, which really speaks all we need to know. There's a dreadful darkness.

Come on, you notice that? Clouds are black. It's very looming. I hope you're listening. He speaks through all of these things.

Maybe you are just sneaking off to sleep, and He's made it dark so that you're forced to listen again. Never, but anything that He does speak to us, maybe in these unconventional ways, will never contradict what He's already revealed in His Word, which is His final Word to us.

You know, it's economical, isn't it? It's a need to know basis. It doesn't tell us all things. Much of what we need to know comes through that relationship with Him, through the wisdom of that relationship, of learning from Him, of relationship with the Holy Spirit.

[ 19 : 03 ] And so our walk of faith, therefore, as Christians, is to be characterised by communication with the divine being, with the living God, with Jesus Christ, listening, trusting, and from that obeying.

It's a dirty word today, but it's an important word. We find that Joseph, with a little knowledge he had, was quick to obey and follow what he was told, and sin is what makes us truth-deaf, tone-deaf to the voice of God in our lives, God-deaf.

And it's a developing art. It's something that... It doesn't come naturally. It's not easy for us to listen to the voice of God. We often rebel against that.

It does take time and intentionality. So think back to this week, this last week that you've had. As a Christian, think back to this last week.

Have you had an open Bible? Have we allowed the Spirit to be leading us? Are we listening for Him in all of these circumstances in His Word? Are we obeying when He does reveal His truth, even when that is difficult, taking God to His Word, because when we do, it turns our world upside down.

[ 20 : 24 ] That's the challenging reality, because His Word is generally nothing like the Word of the voices around us in society, and sometimes the well-up within our own sometimes selfish hearts as well.

And that is a huge challenge for us. And yet, we recognize His grace and His forgiveness and His love. So He speaks into your life when He turns it upside down.

But I also... I think He... I believe He triggers questions in our life. That's the third thing I want to say. He triggers questions. And I hope that's the case. Now, we're not told here, and I hope you don't think I'm interpreting into the situation something that's not there.

I am, but I'm doing it on, I hope, a biblical basis, because Joseph's questions aren't recorded here. I'm sure he had many questions.

Even the answer of the angel, you know, do not fear, you know, don't be afraid to go ahead. He must have had questions about what he was going to do with Mary and the whole situation, although it's not recorded, it's minimalist.

[ 21 : 35 ] But if we go to the Luke account and the same event happening with Mary, then she has got questions. And these questions are verbalized and they're recorded for us.

And as we read the story, we should also have questions. If you have read this story today and you don't have any questions, then I think you should probably be challenged a little bit by that, because a story like this should bring up for us lots of different questions.

And maybe you've asked some of them today. Maybe if they're factual questions, you know, well, why does it speak about Joseph divorcing Mary? He wasn't even married to Mary at this point.

Why does the Bible contradict himself in this way? Now that's because marriage and the whole circumstance was different in the Middle East. And when you were betrothed to a woman for a year before the marriage, it was much more significant than a UK engagement, as we would have it today.

It needed a certificate of divorce to be broken, and it was a hugely significant and important time. So you would maybe ask that question.

[ 22 : 47 ] Or why? Why was Jesus, maybe you're asking why? Factually, why then was Jesus not called Emmanuel? Why is He called Jesus and not Emmanuel? Because we're told here that the prophecy from the Old Testament, and they shall call His name Emmanuel.

He's not called Emmanuel. But it's also told to us that He shall have a name. The angel says, and His name shall be Jesus.

He will save His people from his sins. And in the Old Testament tradition, we recognize and find out that sometimes names are given because it describes their work, or it describes more about them.

It describes their nature rather than their given name, the name that they was called. Now we see that from Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6, because after the passage that you have read, there's a little bit more about this promised Son from to us as a child is born.

We often read it at this time of year. The Son is given and the government shall be going to show this. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Now we don't call Jesus these names.

[ 23 : 49 ] He didn't go into the carpenter shop and say, well, I wonder, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, will you make something for me? That wasn't the name He was given. Jesus was what He was called. But these names described, and here He is described as Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father.

This is no sidebar individual. So maybe a factual question or maybe a theological question, Virgin Birth.

Really? A Virgin Birth? Can you really expect me to believe that? Is that not just a conglomeration of other kind of myth stories from around that time that God would be born of a virgin?

Why do we need a virgin birth? So weird, it's so out of the ordinary. I think it's only weird to us if we disbelieve that God who by the Word of His power created the universe, and if we discount all the miracles of the Bible, or if we think God is just a little bit better than us, but surely not good enough to create life in the womb uniquely and miraculously, He's infinite and omnipotent.

But why? Why does there need to be a virgin birth? Does it really matter if that's true or not? Yes, it does.

[ 25 : 12 ] It matters because the Bible tells us it matters, the Bible records it, but it's also matter because it matters because it reminds us who He is. He's truly human, but He's also truly divine.

He's the Son of... He comes from the genetic DNA code of Mary, but He's also God who comes, God the Son who comes, and that matters because of who He is.

He's unique, absolutely unique, and it breaks... It also breaks the reality of inheriting a sinful nature from our fallen humanity. Maybe Jesus is spotless and innocent from God, but connected intimately with humanity through the umbilical cord of Mary, and the virgin birth testifies to that.

So you may have feel it. And I'm presuming you might have questions. I'm... That's one of the problems of preaching, isn't it? I'm presuming on the question. You may have completely different questions, but that my prerogative is to ask the questions you may not be asking or may be asking today.

Maybe you have biblical questions about the Old Testament prophecy that you and I read about this... You will be a child, the virgin will be a child and give birth to a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

[ 26 : 31 ] Well, who was Isaiah speaking about and who was it fulfilled with in the original context because we usually find that there's a close fulfillment in Isaiah's time.

In fact, the prophecy is timed. It's given within a certain time that it will be fulfilled. And then there's a fuller prophecy in the person of Jesus in many of these prophecies.

Well, there's lots of different questions. We don't have time to go into that because it's an idea that there's no real answers to definitive answers. But it may well have been that Isaiah was speaking to King Ahaz who was afraid of all the surrounding nations that were going to swallow up the people of God, and they were tempted to get into a union with these nations and follow their gods and forget who the living God was that God was with them.

And it could be that it speaks about King Ahaz's son, Hezekiah, who was a good and godly king who was evidence that God was still with his people and would redeem them if only they would listen to him.

Because these nations that almost overwhelmed Israel and Judah, they were great and powerful nations but they all fell.

[ 27 : 48 ] But God was faithful and God was with them. But the ultimate fulfillment is in the person of Jesus because Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives us that fulfillment.

Matthew takes the word for virgin and its literal meaning to apply to Mary. And interestingly, Matthew, remember, if you weren't here you wouldn't remember, but last week we said that Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew was written originally to a Jewish audience who knew that they would have known the Old Testament.

And it's interesting if you see verse 22 it says, And all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Now he says that 12 times in this Gospel, and all this, exactly the same formula, all this was taken place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Because he knew the people knew the Old Testament and he knew that Jesus wasn't just someone who had happened to come along, he was a fulfillment of prophecy. And that's the story that we are given.

And we recognize and see that there's a reason for this Old Testament prophecy. So you may have biblical questions, you may not. But you also may have personal questions. You may have come today with many personal questions, many doubts, many fears.

[ 29 : 00 ] You know, your own life, your own life of faith. You're not a believer and you've come with many questions. But as a believer maybe it's baffling circumstances.

If things that fill you with great fear, whether it's health or circumstances or relationships, and you have no answers, and you say, Well God's turned my life upside down, but I didn't expect it to be like this.

I expected it to be much easier. It's good to have questions. And if you're not a believer here, it's good that you have questions. I would expect you to have questions.

I'm very happy that all of us should have questions in our lives, especially about God, because God is different from us. And if we're sitting just casually taking and everything, but letting it swirl over our brains and our heads and our minds and our lives, then we have to ask ourselves whether we understand and know who this God is.

Because it's what we do with our questions that's always important. It's how we learn, isn't it? Our children learn. They ask lots of questions. I'm glad when children ask questions because they're learning.

[ 30 : 08 ] Sometimes it might seem that they're questioning truth, but they're just really learning. They're wanting to know and they're wanting to hear your answers. And we take our questions and we ask one another about them.

We ask God about them. We develop faith and trust in our relationship with them, especially when my way seems much easier and better than God's, and we have lots of questions.

Take them to Him and be accountable to one another so that we can learn from each other's experiences about God. Grow and learn and trust and pray these roots where we're sending our roots to the living water and the questions we take to Him also.

And the last thing I want to say about this passage which reflects Jesus coming into our lives is that He's the one who rescues our lives.

Such a beautiful and simple description of His name. She will bear a son. You will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from His sins.

[ 31 : 15 ] Jesus is the same name in the Old Testament Hebrew word named Joshua. Joshua just means God saves or God rescues. It's what we sung about in Psalm 130.

This was the great longing that they had for a God who would come and save them. They didn't know what it would look like. God redeems. God saves His people from their sins.



And really that's great for us, isn't it? Because that's the picture of Jesus Christ. That's the, you know, if you were asked a million different questions about who Jesus is and what He's like and how important, this is the key reality for it, is it's the central theme of the gospel.

Not just for us. For the whole of humanity, it's that Jesus is the one who saves His people and all of the world are His people from their sins. It's the need for redemption. That's the important truth of the gospel for all of us in our lives.

And it's the theme of so much of life. It's the theme of so much of life even without God, isn't it? Going back, finding significance, putting wrong things right, having meaning and purpose, rescuing a seemingly meaningless life to give it purpose and direction and not just be abstract and purposeless for the few short years we're here.

[ 32 : 35 ] It might express itself in saving society politically, environmentally, relationally, socially. There's lots of different ways in which this world just shadows out this truth of needing redemption and needing rescue and needing purpose and significance, finding worth and meaning in our often short and broken lives.

And that is the great truth in reality of the gospel message for us. That Jesus is the one who tells us that and reminds us that we are people who need rescued.

We need a rescuer. We need a Savior. We try and find in ourselves and in a million different ways. But Jesus points to Himself as the answer.

The ultimate answer to all these questions is towards God. Is that we need a Savior towards God, we need a redeemed and rescued towards God again, who's the author of our life, from our rebellion and from our sin that separates us from His love and from His life.

That's what we need rescued from, the sin that separates us and introduces the misery of death into our existence and eternal separation from Him. Jesus Christ makes the angel on His behalf, but Jesus confirms it in a million different ways in His life.

[ 34 : 00 ] He claims to be the only one who can do this for all of humanity, for anyone you meet, for the most irreligious or the most religious or the person you think least likely to.

He says, you know, He's the only one that can make this claim of Himself to save you from your sins. You know, when He healed that man that came through the roof, He said, you know, what's it either to say rise up and walk or son, your sins are forgiven you.

He's a madman, if you could say that. You see, both of these things, but particularly your sins are forgiven you can say that, but God alone, nobody else can say that.

And that's what Gethsemane and Golgotha speaks about, is He paid the price. So He could be the one who makes that stamp and that seal in their lives. It's true, but when His love came in town with Jesus Christ, and He comes with that great love and that great commitment to be able to forgive us from our sins and give us that identity and purpose and redemption and rescue that we need.

Wild claims, aren't they? Wild claims. Beautifully wild. There's no one that could come near that in your life. You'll never hear a message like that anywhere else in this world.

[ 35 : 20 ] Nobody can make that claim. And so I guess if you're walking by, if you don't believe that, then can I simply ask today, if you're not a believer, it's great, it's really great that you're here.

We love the fact that you're here. It's great. We don't take that for granted at all. But can I ask you just to question what it is you struggle with?

Question whether you feel that the idea of accountability to God is something that you find very difficult. The idea of needing someone outside yourself as a Savior, or maybe you don't feel you need to be rescued.

The whole idea of attributing your sin or your imperfections and your imminent death sooner or later to having a spiritual dimension.

Can I ask you just to consider these questions and what Jesus says about it? Or maybe it's something that you're here and you're desperate to be rescued. You're desperate for forgiveness and for a new start.

[ 36 : 25 ] And you just don't know how. Well, can I ask you, there's no salvation in the church or in relationships with people, however important and significant they are.

Can I ask you just to consider Jesus Christ and his claims, recognizing we come, we all struggle and we all have battles and we all have difficulties.

What he has made for us as Christians is the greatest change we could ever dream of in our lives and we implore you to consider him for who he is. If you're struggling as a Christian, and who of us aren't to a greater or lesser degree, can I ask you to go back to basics with Jesus and remember the bigger story?

Take your questions again to him, cry out to him. Remember what he says, I am with you. I'm with you till the end of the age, not just in his intellectual knowledge of who he is.

He says, I've given you my spirit. I'm with you in your conscience, in your heart. I'm with you because your sin was with me on the cross and I've done with it, I've paid the price for it.

[ 37 : 30 ] So I will never leave you. He says, I'll never forsake you. In your death bed, I will not forsake you. I will take you through these things. I'll take you through and you will always know me and you will always be with me.

And so in our struggles, can we say we will obey him when his will just seems so contrary to what we were? Remember back to Joseph, remember to the beginning again, and his life being turned upside down, but when the angel spoke to him, you know, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded.

And can that be the simple walk of life that we have, that we do simply what he asked us? Not because we're compliant and thoughtless and willing to be dictated to, but because he's good.

But he's good and because he's God, and he's worth obeying at that level. And if you're walking by faith, maybe not struggling today as a Christian, and I just encourage you to stay close to him, to give thanks for the many, many things that we have, but to continue to expect your life to be turned upside down.

Don't become complacent and thankfulness. Don't think we've got to that stage where, you know, being a Christian is easy and we just go from week to week and we don't change that much.

[ 39 : 00 ] And yeah, I became a believer a long time ago and it's just what I am. Expect him to turn your life upside down every day, your heart, your emotions, your will, your desires, your longings.

Let him keep, the older we get in a sense, the more we should feel him turning our lives upside down. That's a great thing because we know the dark, we know our heart, the darkness of our heart more and we are more aware of the beauty of his light.

And so there should be a deeper revelation going on in our hearts the older we are. Know that and know that he loves you enough, much more than you'll ever imagine and enough to keep you going and keep you through and transform you into his likeness.

Let's pray. Father God, we ask and pray that you would help us to understand who you are. Forgive us when we just shrink you down to a really small size and make you one that we can ignore and run from and reject and rebel from.

And yet the Psalms so often speak to us of the psalmist who is crying and wrestling and angry and frustrated but he takes them to the Lord and his heart is softened and changed and moved.

[ 40 : 22 ] So may we see what we experience and may we know the beauty of our lives being turned upside down. Sometimes with the fear that goes with that but we know that there's no peace like the peace of a graveyard.

And so may we not seek peace at all costs but may we seek truth and may we seek his peace which is different from the peace of a graveyard and is a piece of revolution and of radical transformation.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.