

With a Restored Follower

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[0 : 00] John's Gospel, chapter 21, from verse 15 through to 25. That's on page 907 in the Church Bibles, which are available on the table at the back of the sanctuary, both downstairs and upstairs.

Print it on the screen, and it's also in your bulletin as well. So John 21 at verse 15. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.

[1 : 08] Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

This he said to show by what kind of death he wants to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, Follow me.

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, Lord, is it that, Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? Jesus said to him, If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?

You follow me. So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?

[2 : 27] This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. Now, there are many other things that Jesus did.

Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen. May God bless to us reading of his own precious and most holy word. We are continuing to look at encounters with Jesus, and we're looking again at this encounter between Jesus and Peter at the very end of John's gospel. Peter has just had breakfast with Jesus on the beach.

Peter was a spectacular failure. We looked at that last week. Peter had said, before Jesus' crucifixion, if you go to die, I will go to die with you.

And when it came time to test that, Peter denied even knowing Jesus three separate times. And here, the spectacular failure of Jesus Christ, pardon me, Peter, is encountered by Jesus Christ.

[3 : 37] And Peter is encountered because Peter experienced a moment where he was treacherous, and he was a coward, and he was a liar. And Peter carried a wound so deep. So if you've ever found yourself in a place where you think, I didn't know I was capable of that, crossing a line, it creates a wound in you that is so deep, only the Messiah himself can heal it.

And when they had breakfast on the beach, Jesus Christ, the surgeon, healed Peter and restored him. And he did that by way of walking through repentance. Peter experienced real repentance. And so last week, we were asking, have you ever experienced real repentance? And real repentance is staring at the mirror of your sin that Jesus is holding up and looking at the truth of your wounded heart, your sinful heart, and saying, who can understand how deep the sin goes?

The pride problem I have really goes. And then from that, experiencing the godly sorrow that Peter did. It says, Peter says it was grieved. And by that, it means, you know you've had real godly sorrow and real repentance when you say, I'm not so concerned about what my sin cost me.

I'm concerned about, I want to acknowledge what my sin cost him, cost Jesus. And that's godly sorrow. That's real repentance. And when Peter experiences that, he is restored. He's forgiven.

[4 : 54] He was already forgiven. And that means today, if you come as a person who knows yourself as a failure, who knows yourself as a person who has crossed a line in your life, if you are willing to look in the mirror at all and say, my heart is desperately wicked, who can understand it?

The absolute best place to be, no matter if you're a Christian or not this morning, is to come and sit at the feet of Jesus at the charcoal fire. That's the best place to be, to sit at Jesus' feet.

And the question I want to ask today as we look at this passage and extend it a bit one more time, we'll look today down to verse 23. We'll have to leave the very end of John's gospel for later.

The question I want to ask is what happens when a follower of Jesus experiences a spectacular failure, but then they're forgiven like Jesus loves to do. And they're restored.

That's the word, restored. And what we see in this passage, and this is what we never could get to last week, is that then you're commissioned. So what we learn here is that when you are restored, when you are forgiven, you're also commissioned or recommissioned.

[6 : 01] In other words, verse 19, when Peter experiences forgiveness, Jesus says, follow me. be my disciple. You're restored, you're recommissioned.

What does it mean? So let's think about that. What does it mean? What does it mean? And today is less of a day that's maybe pulling on the heartstrings and more of a day that's asking the question, if I'm a Christian and I really have received forgiveness after forgiveness, what does it mean to follow him?

So that's the question. What does it mean to follow him? And then I just want to conclude secondly with one danger from this passage, one warning that this passage gives us about a barrier that we all might face to following Jesus.

So first, what does it mean to follow him? Here, Jesus is not just saying to Peter in this passage, your sin is covered, you're forgiven.

And he is saying that, grace upon grace. He's turning then and saying, because you have been graced, you've been clothed, you are now being sent, you're being commissioned, you're being sent to go and do something, to go and follow me all the way.

[7 : 07] In other words, your failures, even as a disciple, look, if you've been following Jesus for a long time, but you've been in a pattern of running from him and of saying, I didn't know I would be capable of that, even as a Christian, that sin does not disqualify you from living for him, following him, becoming again a renewed disciple, and that's what's going on here.

So here's the metaphor that Jesus gives. He says to Peter, okay, you're restored. Now go three times, feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my sheep.

That metaphor, of course, for Peter means that he's being called here and said, hey, you're still an apostle, you're still a disciple, you're also going to be a minister, a pastor, you're going to have to preach.

So if you open, if you flip over to the book of Acts, you can read all about Peter's ministry and how amazingly at times he fulfilled that command, go and feed my sheep, tend my lambs. But, what I want to say today is that this is actually the ark of every believer.

So when you read the whole of John's gospel, you realize that Jesus is saying this to all of us. So if you come today as a Christian, the ark, the story of every believer is you've had to stand in the mirror and Jesus say, stare right into the heart of your sin and receive grace and restoration and forgiveness and now go and feed my sheep, go and tend my lambs.

[8 : 30] So if you're a follower of Jesus today, this is not just for Peter. The command, feed my lambs, tend my sheep, follow me, is for every single one of us. And so let's ask a little more, okay, what does that mean for us as people in 2025 to actually do something like that?

Let me give you three things it means. First, Jesus says to Peter three times, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me more than these?

Is the first question he asks him. And we learned that back in John 18 and before that, Peter had said, Lord, I love you and I love you more than all these guys and I will follow you all the way to the very end even if it costs me my life.

And when the time came, he failed so spectacularly. So today, resting on his pride in the past, following Jesus out of competition, following Jesus to get something, to get a sense of I'm better than other people.

That was his life before. But after he failed and then the resurrection happens, he comes back again and he receives the same question, do you love me more than these? And now what he says is, I love you.

[9 : 42] Lord, you know that I love you. And because he has experienced such grief over his sin, he can truly come in this moment and say, I love you out of a place of weakness.

Now here, friends, everybody today, what is the first way after you've been forgiven and restored that Jesus says, follow me? How do you do it? Verse 19, how do you follow him?

And the first thing is to see this. You follow him by turning around and loving him. And so I just want to simply ask today, follower of Jesus Christ, do you love Jesus?

Can you say today when Jesus asks, in the midst of your weakness, in the midst of the fact that he has died for you, he has risen for you, can you say today, yes, Lord, you know I love you.

And what does that mean? That means not a perfect love at all, but in some sense having affection for Christ, in some sense having a heart of affection that he draws you in over and over again.

[10 : 46] But if you think as well about the rest of John's gospel, in John 15, John, what did Jesus say? He said, if you love me, if you love me, how do you love him? You will keep my commandments.

You'll listen to my teachings. And so we learn, the first way to follow Jesus is just to ask the question, am I growing in my love for him? And if I love him, am I looking at his teachings and seeking to obey them?

Now let me take that further. Secondly, the second way to follow Jesus. It's right here in the passage. When he says, do you love me? Then he turns and says three times, feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my sheep.

And notice the pronoun there, feed my sheep, tend my lambs, Jesus says. Sometimes, I know that this happens to everybody that's a member or attends a local church pretty regularly, but sometimes, especially when you're a minister, pastor, people will say to you something like, how's your church doing?

You know, and then you say, you never know what to say. You know, I don't know. I think it's okay. Other people probably don't. I'm not sure. I'm thankful for what God's doing around here. But what's the question?

[11 : 59] How is your church doing? You could ask that as a member. How's things at your church? And if you're being cheeky, you want to say, well, hold on a second. It's not my church. So Jesus here says, feed my sheep, tend my lambs.

And so he's saying to Peter, get out. In other words, what is he talking about? He's saying, get out and love the church. Love the church, my sheep, my lambs. That's who he's talking about.

Now look, if we were to put it all together, what does it mean to follow Jesus, to respond to grace, to be a disciple? It means first, to turn around and say, not in order to get into his kingdom, but because I already am, I want to grow in love with you, Jesus, and love for you.

Love God, and then he says, love the church. Sounds like a good vision statement. Love God, love the church, and then love the place that you've been sent, love the city.

This is the sum total of what it means to follow Jesus. Love God, grow in love for Jesus, and love the church is what he ultimately tells Peter here. He's been restored, and he says, love me, and tend the people, tend the sheep that you've been given.

[13 : 06] And this is for everybody. Third, lastly here, to love him, let me now bring this into summary. Okay, if I could summarize this in one image, and it's right here, I think, coming out of the text.

To follow Jesus, to be a disciple of Jesus, is to give him, then, your heart. So it's not to give him your heart in order to get his heart. It's not to give him your heart in order to get God's love for you. It's because you have God's love, then you say, now I want to grow daily in giving my heart away to you, Jesus. John Calvin, during the Reformation, the great reformer of Geneva, he would write a lot of letters to people, and we have some of those letters, and at the bottom of his letters, he would always, often, stamp or seal and wax an image, and this image has become pretty famous.

some universities use it, or seminaries use it as their image, but it is, you might have seen it, it's two hands like this holding a heart, and sometimes when he would put underneath the seal, he would write, my heart I give to you, Lord, promptly and sincerely.

And so it was really, the motto of his life is, because you have given me your heart, Christ, I give you back my heart, and that's what it means to follow Jesus. It's a great image to take away today. [14:31] In other words, the final hymn we're going to sing in a few minutes is, I will go where thou leadest me, I will give you my heart today. Now, what do we learn? What do we learn here?

As a follower of Jesus, we learn that he is calling us not to be directed by our own desires, but directed by his mission for us, to give our hearts away, and that's exactly what's going on in verses 18 and 19.

If you look down in verse 18 and 19, he gives this parable, Jesus does, to Peter, and he says, truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you would dress yourself, you would walk wherever you wanted to walk, but when you're old, you're going to stretch out your hands, somebody else is going to dress you, somebody else is going to carry you where you do not want to go.

And John adds this little parenthetical comment, that was a prophecy, a parable, about the death that Peter was going to ultimately go and die. What's going on here? This parable, this parable, he's saying, when you're early in your discipleship, Peter, when you're following me after this, things are going to be smooth, they're going to be okay.

Read Acts, the early chapters of the book of Acts, but when you grow older, somebody's going to take you where you do not want to go. And you can even notice in this, in verse 18, he says, somebody's going to force you to stretch out your hands.

[15:51] So we learn by tradition, second century Tertullian, Clement of Rome, these early second century disciples, that Peter, around 80, 70, was crucified.

And Jesus here is referencing that. When you grow old, this is going to be 35 years later from this moment, somebody's going to stretch out your hands for you. And you're going to go to a place that you do not want to go.

And that's what it means for you to be called. Now, the last two looks at John 21, let's bring it all together and connect this. We have noticed, if you've been with us, we've noticed that there have been some deep connections between multiple passages in the Gospels.

The beginning of John 21, the disciples were out fishing. They were not doing the ministry God called them to do. They were sitting on their hands. And that had happened in Luke 5 as well, when Peter and these disciples were first called.

In Luke 5, they were out fishing and Jesus said, you haven't caught any fish, go cast your net on the other side. John 21, you haven't caught any fish, cast your net on the other side.

[16:58] That's the scene here. Or last week, we saw that. In John 18, when Peter denied Jesus three times, where was it? If you were here with us, you remember, around a charcoal fire.

John 21, Jesus restores Peter around a charcoal fire. John 21, 15 to 25 today. When Jesus wants to express to Peter what it's really like to be a disciple, what it's really like to follow him all the way, he says to him, I bid thee go and die.

I bid thee go and die for me. Back in Mark chapter 8, the first time Jesus ever said anything like this, Jesus said to the disciples, to Peter, I have a cross to bear and you can't go where I'm going.

And Peter said, what do you mean? And Jesus said, I have to bear the cross, I have to go and die for you. And Peter said, oh Peter, he said, no Lord, you can't die, we won't let that happen.

And Jesus said, get behind me Satan. You know, foolish Peter, always running his mouth and there he was again. And then Jesus turns and he says something so important that's right here in John 21.

[18:06] He said, you too must take up your cross and follow me. Mark 8, John 21, what is Jesus saying? When he turns to Peter and says, one day you are going to go and die, he's connecting it to the same claim Jesus has been making the whole of his ministry in the gospels.

He said to followers of Jesus over and over again, what does it mean to follow him? It is, I bid thee go and die. Take up your cross and follow me. That is the heart of discipleship.

It's the heart of what it means to follow. Love Jesus, tend my sheep, love the church, and I bid thee go and die. Now what type of death is this? As we finish this first point, what type of death are we talking about?

This is a death that every Christian is called to. And is it the physical martyrdom that Peter experiences? No, not at all. We of course know that most Christians are not called to become martyrs.

Some are, some aren't. But what type of death is it? There's a commentator on Mark's gospel that's fairly well known, a guy named James Edwards. And this is what he writes about the idea that Jesus says.

[19 : 15] What does it mean to be a follower when he says, take up your cross? What exactly does Jesus mean by that? This is what James Edwards writes. He says, Jesus chose an image of extreme repugnance to describe discipleship.

The cross was the instrument of cruelty, pain, dehumanization, and shame. The cross symbolized the hated Roman oppression and was reserved for the lowest social classes.

It was the most visible and omnipresent aspect of Rome's terror apparatus. He notes that in 71 BC, the Roman general Crassus defeated the famous slave Spartacus.

You probably know something of that story. And what did he do? Crassus, the Roman general, crucified Spartacus and 6,000 people down the stretch of one long road. And that was really the beginning of the cross as Rome's terror apparatus.

One century later in 71, approximately 80, Nero, the emperor of Rome, will crucify Peter along a road in the city of Rome. And James Edwards comments and he says, this is the image.

[20 : 23] Boy, this is the image that Jesus chose to say, go and be my disciple like that. Take up a cross. This repugnant, hideous image in the first century.

You know, a Jewish person in the first century would have known how ugly this was, how horrific this was. And ultimately, at the heart of it, it's got a death. That's what he's talking about, a death. What kind of death is this?

He says, Peter, to truly follow me, I bid thee go and die. Christian friend here, disciple, if you are a follower of Jesus, he's saying, I bid thee go and die. What kind of a death is it?

And just one little line back in Mark 8 tells us ultimately what it was all about. And back in Mark 8, he says, if you really want to follow me, if you want to save your life, you must lose it for my sake.

What kind of death is it that you have to die to be a follower of Jesus? Jesus. It's not physical necessarily. It's not the death of a martyr necessarily. No. What has to die? What has to die is a part of you.

[21 : 23] That's what has to die. That's what Jesus is talking about. To be a follower of Jesus that's growing, that's growing in love for God, love for the church. He's saying, ultimately, that looks like this killing a part of you, killing a part of yourself, a daily dying that has to take place where you are, one part of you is looking at another part of you and saying, this old part of me has to die.

It has to be mortified. It has to be killed. And it sounds really philosophical, but it's simply something like this. Paul says, this type of death is the death of the love of self.

And Jesus is saying, true discipleship is to give your heart away every day into the hand of Jesus and say, I recognize today that something of me has to die if I'm going to follow you.

And what has to die is the love of self expressed in selfish relationship, selfish ambition, selfish desire for wealth, selfish greed, selfish care, selfish comfort.

And he's saying here, Peter, you've got to be willing to become fully a follower by losing that part of yourself that wants to live for self, that wants to love self all the way to the day of your death.

[22 : 40] This is a call to daily dying. This is a classic Puritan expression. Wake up every day and say, Lord, to live is Christ, to die is gain.

I, how does Paul put it? I have been crucified with Christ. It is not me who lives today, but me in him. So I give you my heart into your hands.

Show me all the ways today that I need to die to self in order to live for you. It's very painful. It's not easy. It is very difficult for us and it is the call that we're given.

Not in order to be a part of God's people, but because we are. The call to dying to self every day. Now, let me finish secondly and briefly with this. There is one warning here that is a barrier to this type of discipleship in the passage.

The danger is always, this is what happened with Peter over and over again, is that without that commitment to daily dying to self, you will drift back to your old life. You will drift back to the old desires.

[23 : 44] You will drift back to your old self. And Peter found himself in that place over and over again in his life and that's an experience that any Christian in the room can describe, right? Verse 20 and 21, boy, Peter, he's just been restored.

He's just been forgiven. And in verse 20 and 21, it says that as Jesus and Peter are walking down the beach together, Peter turns around and he sees John, the disciple, following them.

They're walking down the beach. John is following them. And as soon as Jesus says to Peter, you have to go and die for me, Peter's response is, what about him?

John, is he going to have to? He says, Lord, what about this man, John? He's the other leader of the apostles. Is he going to have to do it too? And Jesus can only say, do not worry about him.

Why are you asking about John? I have put you where I want to put you and I've given you the life that you're going to have. Go and die to yourself and follow me. a great barrier to growth as a disciple.

[24 : 57] I had three, I cut it back to one. You'll be thankful. A great barrier to growth as a disciple is the alluring power of comparison and envy, of looking at other people's lives as a Christian and saying, Lord, why didn't you give me that life?

Why didn't you give me that gift? Why didn't you call me to that part of your little kingdom, of your enormous kingdom, a little part of your enormous kingdom? Why didn't you give me that, Lord?

Comparison and envy, as it's commonly said, is a thief of all joy.

It will steal your joy away and it will actually turn, what does comparison and envy do? It turns us back into self when Jesus has said, give me your heart every day, daily dying.

Comparison and envy are one of the many issues we struggle with that turns our minds and our hearts back to self-interest instead of self-forgetfulness because it constantly keeps us in our own heads and says, why not?

Why not me? Why don't I have this? Lord, why didn't you give me this? And we're being told here, we're being shown here by Peter that you can be standing in the presence of Jesus Christ restored, forgiven, recommissioned, saying, Peter, you're going to go do great things for the kingdom of God and immediately sidelined by comparison and envy and struggling with the, ultimately, what is this?

[26 : 18] This is the allure of comfort and saying, that sounds great, Lord, I want to be forgiven but I don't want to count the cost of discipleship. I don't, I want to live a comfortable life.

Why does John get to not die for you? Why do I have to? He wants to be comfortable. You see, the allure of comfort drives him to the allure, the struggle of comparison and envy.

Envy, what is love? What is true love? Love is when you look out at other people, when Jesus says, feed my sheep, tend my lambs, when you look out at other people and say, I'm happy with your happiness.

That's real love. I am excited for the good things going on in your life. Envy in comparison is a nasty thing and what does it do? It says, I'm sad when you're happy and I'm happy when you're sad.

And Jesus is saying, Peter's showing, watch out because it will take you out of the path of growing and following Jesus. And what's the only antidote?

[27 : 20] Daily dying. Lord, I give you my heart today. Kill that part of myself that needs to die that is envious and comparing and struggling with wanting comfort far more than giving myself away for you.

That's the part of us that ultimately has to die. Let me bring it home to me, to a pastor, to a minister. This can happen to anybody. Here's an example. Can the local pastor, can the local minister look at what God might be doing down the street bringing a small revival or a big revival to the church, to the Baptist church down the road and say, I'm happy for what God is doing down there.

I'm excited for that. I want, if we lose people to that, if people go there because of all God's doing, I want to see the kingdom grow. See, the allure of envy would say, institutionalism.

It's this place or nothing. It's the allure that can capture all of us. Maybe social media today, maybe you need to, as we pray in a moment, need to ask, is social media robbing me of discipleship by putting me in the path of comparison and envy and self-interest, turning me back in on what is my life like compared to everybody else all the time and taking away the possibility of daily dying?

God has put you, let me close with this, God has put you exactly where you are. God had given Peter exactly what he wanted for Peter and that was a hard providence, martyrdom, and he's calling us today to say, do not let comparison and envy take away the path of calling, the focus on it that God has ultimately given you.

[28 : 59] Charles Dickens, in his book, A Tale of Two Cities, there's a character named Sidney Carton and if you've read it, you'll know about Sidney.

Sidney was a man who had a life of regret. He was an older man. He really hated himself, a lot of self-loathing. He was deeply cynical and it's because he was, as a young man, told by everybody how brilliant he was and how much he was going to do with his life and how great he was going to be and he had just lived a really mediocre life.

He had never done anything great and as he got older, it made him deeply upset and angry, really self-loathing, hated the world, hated himself but at the end of the novel, one of his friends, Charles, was arrested falsely and imprisoned and Charles was sentenced to death by guillotine and Sidney, coming to himself and getting out of his self-interest and self-loathing, getting out of his own head. He realized that throughout the book, Dickens hints at this several times, but Sidney and Charles, they looked alike. People confused them for brothers quite often and so Sidney turned and he went into the prison, snuck in and took the place of Charles in the prison and let Charles, helped Charles escape and then Sidney went to death by guillotine for Charles and Dickens puts these words in Sidney's mouth at the end of the book.

He says that going to die in the place of another, this is what he writes, Sidney says, it is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done. It is a far, far better rest that I go to today than I have ever known.

[30 : 44] And what is he saying? He's at, look, here's what he's saying. What makes life great? What makes life great is not, is when you look up and say, I have given myself away for a purpose far bigger than me and not been crushed by self-loathing and self-interest.

I've become self-forgetful. That is what makes life great. That is what brings joy ultimately in life and that is exactly what Jesus is calling us to. Don't let comparison and envy take away self-forgetfulness. Daily dying is the only prescription.

I give the last word here to Peter's story today. If you were to read now the rest of the New Testament and follow Peter's narrative arc, Peter went out and was self-forgetful and he followed Jesus and he lived throughout much of the book of Acts in a way that was amazing and important and many people came to faith because of his ministry.

But about 15 years after this, flip to the book of Galatians and we find out that when Paul went to visit Peter at Antioch, he said Peter was actively and openly denying the gospel and he was refusing to eat with Gentiles and he said that Peter used to eat with Gentiles and call them brothers and sisters but now he's not.

Why? Because other people came to Antioch and said, no, no, no. If you want to be a Christian, you've got to follow Jesus and be circumcised. You've got to follow Jesus and obey all the works of the Mosaic law and Peter, afraid of what other people thought about him, went around saying, yeah, yeah, that's it.

[32 : 25] If you want to be a Christian, it's more than Jesus. Boy, oh Peter, a failure constantly throughout his life. Paul even uses the language that attends to being anti-Christ, anti-gospel in Peter's ministry in that moment.

And that means that Christian discipleship and following Jesus is not a 45 degree angle of virtue enhancement. It is a constant struggle and up and down.

And Peter's narrative arc, you flip over to 1 and 2 Peter, these beautiful letters that we have from him 10 years after Peter denying the gospel to the Galatians, in Antioch, noted in the book of Galatians.

And this is what he says. I think, let me finish with this. I think Peter was thinking of himself and his story here when he writes these words. He says, Jesus Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

By his wounds, you have been healed. For you, here it is, for you are like sheep without a shepherd. You are like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd.

[33 : 35] How many times did Peter have to say, but now I've returned to the shepherd? Jesus keeps bringing us back. That's the arc of following him throughout life. You do not have to be good enough.

You do not have to be a good enough disciple to be worthy of Jesus calling you a disciple. The message here is not, if you follow me and if you adequately take up your cross consistently, then I will give you the power of my cross.

The message here is, I have given you the power of my cross. So keep coming back. Keep coming and be restored and be set back on your path. A question for you.

As we pray, do you today, everyone in this room, do you today need to be restored and recommissioned this morning? Do you today, as we pray, join me in prayer in just a moment and say to the Lord, Jesus, I am captured by legalism.

I'm captured by seeking approval. I'm captured by comparison. I'm captured by envy. I'm captured by wanting comfort far more than daily dying. I'm not living for you.

[34 : 46] I'm not following you. And be restored. Let us pray. Father, we are captured and so we recognize that. We are struggling with following you all the way.

And so today, we confess before you our need of approval, our need of comfort, our struggle with comparison and envy that is taking away our self-forgetfulness and our ability to just live for you and to love you and love people and love the city and love the place where you've put us.

And we just want to recognize our struggle. And so, in the light of that, Lord, restore us, deliver us from that, set us back on our path, help us to hear the words that we don't give you our hearts today so that we might be accepted.

We give you our hearts today simply to respond to the fact that we have been accepted by you.

Take our hearts today. We give you our hearts this very week.

We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.