

# Talk 2 - Why Doesn't God Just Instantly Change me?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Gluttons for punishment, you're still here. Actually, that was a great commercial for what we're about to talk about, just this idea of process and thinking through taking our time.

This question for this time, and I'll tell you up front, I do plan to create at least a few minutes after this session before we break to do some Q&A; and there will be some mics.

So if it could be anything from the last session you want to ask about or push back on or explore more or from this session, just know that's coming in case it helps you to know ahead of time.

But what I want to do in this session is I do want to ask this question, why doesn't God just instantly change us? And part of what's interesting is, you know, because I teach and write and some of that, I think sometimes maybe it's a setting like this where, you know, or someone reads a book.

The idea is they will ask me something, sometimes in a letter form, sometimes in front, and I think sometimes they'll ask me something because they know they won't see me again.

[ 1 : 12 ] Right? And you might be willing to ask certain things or do these kind of things. And they're questions we all really have, but can feel very vulnerable.

And I think, for example, of dealing with a question from someone who wrote and just said that they had been dealing with a pretty serious eating disorder for years.

And it had been very painful, caused all kinds of challenges for them, not just physiological challenges in their body, but their ability to work, to socialize, to feel known and to feel loved.

Kind of all the struggles that came with it. And in this note, it was very clear the person she just desperately wanted to be over with it, to be done with it, which makes so much sense.

Well, you may not, that may not be your story or someone that you love, but maybe it's something different. Maybe it's pornography for some who are Christians and think, why is this such an issue?

[ 2 : 16 ] I want to be done with this. It feels like it's a power and it's a struggle. Maybe someone else here or others, it's actually a similar thing, but it's self-absorption.

Even when you got here today, you've talked with people and the whole time you've thought, I'm thinking about myself and how I'm appearing. And it's just this suffocating self-absorption.

And you want to be free from it. You don't want to be so self-absorbed. Maybe it's some of you who, yeah, maybe you have three children at home and you realize, wow, I'm an angry person.

Right? I didn't know I was so angry. Children will do that to you. I discovered that about myself.

Like, whatever it is, like right below the surface, what is going on? I find that with college students, all of a sudden, they're in a dormitory and they have rage right below the surface.

Maybe for some of you, it's sloth, it's laziness. And you think, tomorrow, I will not spend endless hours on YouTube.

[ 3 : 22 ] I will do the things that need to, and then it comes and you find it happens. You think, ah. I don't know what your particular story, what your particular struggle is.

But it raises a legitimate question, a couple questions. Does God like when we hurt ourselves or other people? Listen, I'm a professor.

I expect some responses from people. You know, come on. I know, like, Presbyterianism travels. It's still, like, in a Presbyterian environment, like, no talking. You're allowed.

I'm a college. Anyways, does God like it when we hurt ourselves and others? That's good. So far, so good. But if he doesn't like it, if he doesn't think it's a good thing when we hurt ourselves and others, then why doesn't he just stop it?

Right? If he doesn't want us greedy and lustful, if he doesn't think that that's a good thing, why doesn't he just instantly change us?

[ 4 : 28 ] And the fact that he doesn't instantly change us, I think, tends to make us wonder, maybe God doesn't care. Or, and I think this is probably more common among us, I don't think God knows how hard this is.

Does God have any idea just how hard the struggle is for me? So what I want to do in our time together is I want to think about this in three categories.

I want to go through this in three ways. I want to talk about, and they're building off of what we've already talked about in the last session, I want to talk about the idea of process. I want to talk about the idea of time and then efficiency.

Process, time, and efficiency. Let's start by thinking about process. So what I told you I teach at a liberal arts college, a university in the States, and one of my best friends is an artist.

One of my other best friends is a historian, so it sounds like a joke. Like an artist, a historian, and a theologian walk into a pub. You know, except it's true. But anyways, the artist, so his name is Jeffrey Morton.

[ 5 : 38 ] Students call him Morty. And he was originally from the Philadelphia area. It kind of, northeast kind of thing. And when he moved to the south to start teaching at our university, he went there and he decided as he looked around, he was going to make the subject of his art kudzu.

Have you ever heard of kudzu? Probably not here. So kudzu, if you don't know what it is, it actually is this invasive, it's a plant from Japan that they brought to, particularly to the south.

And it was a brilliant idea because what you'd plant it on sides of roads and stuff, and it would quickly spread, and it would keep from erosion. The problem was it was invasive, and there was nothing to stop it there, except goats, and we don't have enough of them.

And so it would cover everything, and it became a massive problem. And so my friend decides kudzu's going to be his subject, which is weird. So I don't know what you think about artists, but I'm like, come on, how hard is that?

Right? And I don't know what an artist does, but here's what he does. So he lives on Signal Mountain, and when he has time, he will go out into the woods all by himself, and it will be waist deep in the middle of the forest in kudzu, because kudzu will literally cover everything.

[ 6 : 53 ] It will cover trees. And he'll go out there for hours with a sketch pad and just sketch what he sees, trying not to think about the things slithering at his feet. Right? Which makes me think maybe artists are tough.

I don't know. And then what he'll do is he will go back to his studio, and over the coming days, weeks, and often months, he will slowly work from his drawings, his sketches, to getting a big canvas, and then he'll draw from there.

And then, and he's particularly known for his work with colors. He's very good at creating colors. And then what he will do is he will paint. And then this seems, again, because I'm not an artist, I just kind of thought what you do as an artist is you look at something, you paint it, and it's either pretty or it's ugly.

Right? But apparently that's not what the good ones do. So he took me through. What he does is then he will paint, and then later he'll come back, and he'll scrape, in his case.

He will scrape the canvas. And then he'll do another layer. And this process will go on for a long time. And eventually, and he actually keeps track of how long and the hours it takes, but eventually, when he's finished, the artworks of various sizes, I've seen them in airports.

[ 8 : 10 ] I've seen them in businesses. I've seen them in museums, in people's homes. Right? And what's fascinating about Morty's work is, in a sense, I think if you look at it, you can't see all the layers.

But I'm pretty convinced you can feel them. You can feel them. And what's interesting to me about Morty is if you ask him, like if you're a prospective student, and say, hey, what do you want your students to learn?

He will immediately say one word. He will say, process. I want my students to learn process. Because as students, like most of us, what we want are results.

We want finished products. But he says what he wants them to learn is that process is at least as important as finished products. Right? He's trying to mentor them in the wonder and joy that are to be discovered in this craft of producing and artwork.

And in some way, by doing that, he's trying to help them learn to hear the echo of the creator. Right? This promise and development, a delight in development.

[ 9 : 20 ] But if you're like me, process is really hard. Right? We love instant, you know, download speeds. Some of you are old enough.

Do you guys remember AOL? Some of you remember AOL? My dad's 88, and someone's making money on him because he still has an AOL account. I don't know how. I don't know who he's sending money to. But somehow he has an AOL account.

But those of you who do remember, like in the early 90s, it was so exciting. You'd go online to like check email or to like look at the internet. But you'd get an email and you're like, remember that? It was so exciting. If you don't know what I'm talking about, it literally made noise. It was all the, you know, all the adrenaline, all the, you know, things are firing, dopamine rush. It was all there before we had phones in our pockets.

So it was great. It was so wonderful. And you'd go online. But imagine if someone came to your office or your home and took a 1992 AOL router and brought it to your home and took all your stuff out and put it in.

[ 10 : 28 ] How do you think that would go? My wife and I have lived in the South for 25 years and there's a lot of guns there. It would not go well. Like people would die.

Like it's, it's so, you know, think about the speed, right? We all want things done, right? Think about how excited you were when you got a phone, a new phone, and you're like, this is so great.

And three years later, you're like, this is so slow. Well, the expectations are always increasing. We want things faster and faster.

And so it's very difficult for us because we're being shaped in that kind of environment where all of a sudden you're like, why do I still yell at the kids in a way I wish I did?

Why is that? Why do I feel so trapped in self-absorption and it never seems to end? Why do my endless disordered desires of greed and lust, why is sin not just a past issue for believers?

[ 11 : 30 ] Why is it still a present struggle? And again, the question is, if God extends his grace to our broken lives, why does it feel like he just forgives us but then stops?

Like, think about it. I'll ask the question you might feel in your gut but feel ashamed to ask. Why does it feel like God forgives us, but then it's like, now do better?

Like, why doesn't God just instantly change our vices into virtues? Isn't that kind of an interesting question? Like, does he just stop with forgiveness?

Forgiveness is great, but then you still have to live. Don't misunderstand. Forgiveness is essential to the gospel, but it's not the fullness of the gospel. We believe in a cross, but we also believe in a resurrection.

Christ died that our sins would be forgiven, and he lives that we might live, not just in the future, but now. So what happens?

[ 12 : 37 ] Is it that he stops? And Christians often deal with a lot of guilt and shame because we see where our lives are at, and we see where we'd like to be and how far short we fall.

And we know God doesn't enjoy our sin, so think about it. Like, you would never articulate it this way, but when I ask this next thing, I want, what does it feel like in your gut when we say this?

Is it kind of like every day, you're like, it's always interesting to me, this comes in the middle of lamentations, but we say, God, your mercies are new every morning.

Praise God. And you're like, this is a new day. It's good. And by 8.15, right, when you're shoved into that bus and the person's right in your face and you're thinking those thoughts, is God like, I'll see you tomorrow.

We'll try again. You know what I mean? Like, is God just perpetually disappointed with us because every day we're like, yay, I always think about a retired, a friend of mine who's a retired theologian who his entire life has dealt with depression.

[ 13 : 48 ] And he would tell me, Kelly, every morning I wake up as an atheist. And by about nine, I become a theist. And on a good day, by noon, I'm a Christian. Which resonates a lot.

But recently, a friend, we were talking about this, and she said, that's interesting. My experience is the opposite. Every day I wake up as a Christian. By about noon, I'm a theist.

And by night, I'm not even sure I'm a Christian. You know, I'm an atheist. I'm just a nothing. And I don't, you know, like, how, what's happening? Because the reality is, our lives are quite complex, but we're very, we feel very ashamed about the complexities of our doubts and our struggles.

So how do we, so is God just perpetually like, our children are now adults, but when, young adults, but when, when they were little, right?

You've seen this. Jonathan is our oldest. And so when Jonathan was learning to walk, you did this, or you've seen this kind of thing done. This was done to you, right? Jonathan, he was, he was a little, you know, sweet tubby kid, right?

[14:49] And he learned to walk. And so we'd stand him up right next to a couch and get his arm out and he'd lean on that couch, right? And you'd walk like eight, nine feet away from him and say, come on, Jonathan, you come to me, you got this, right?

And he's kind of looking at you and kind of nervous and, you know, with the little, and you're cheering him on and you're giving him courage, right? And what does he do? He removes his hand and he starts, and then how does it go?

He hits the ground. And you know how I respond. I walk over to him and I'm like, Jonathan, you're an idiot! I don't understand, Jonathan. What was unclear about my commandment?

I told you to walk. Was there any ambiguity in my directions to you? Some of you, I can tell you, are like, did you really say that to him? Maybe, no, I didn't.

You know I didn't say that to my child. But that's exactly how we think of our Heavenly Father. We think that when we fall, when we fall short, when we sin, it's as if our Heavenly Father's like, what are you doing?

[16:00] Was I unclear with my commandments? Was there anything? But you know what I did. I walk over to Jonathan. I pick him up. I hold him. I'm like, oh, buddy. And depending on what it was, like he, and I remember, you know, as you know from the last time, not like I did a bunch of leadership with little kids, so I didn't have a ton of experience.

So when our first child started to learn to walk, and one time like he fell in the bathroom, hit his head, and cut it open, I'm like, honey, we're not going anywhere. Everyone will think that like, you know, we're abusing our child. And by your second child, you're like, hey, look, guys.

You know, but learning to walk hurts, right? You fall, you get hit. And so I'd pick up Jonathan, you'd kiss whatever hurt. You're like, oh, I'm sorry, buddy. But encouragement is to give courage.

It's to give courage to say, oh. And the fact that I comforted him and loved on him and said, oh, I understand. Did that mean I was indifferent to him learning to walk? Then we're like, oh, you know what?

I love you. You don't have to walk. That's not the point. I'm there. But then we would eventually set him down and say, come on, buddy. I'm with you.

[17:05] I see you. I love you. And in this, I'm with you. Right? It's the Shad, Shad, Rad, Meshach, White. I'm tired. I'm on.

I'm a little. What? Shadrach, Meshach. This sounds wrong. Did I just say it wrong? Am I saying it wrong? I have to look at my wife. OK. Yeah, but the idea is like, God doesn't say no fire for you, but I will be in the fire with you.

And sometimes that's what it looks like. So we have to think through this, you know. And but I use that illustration because it does expose sometimes how we actually think of our Heavenly Father. We actually can think very poorly of him. Right? It's as if it's as if, you know, we use all the right words, all these omni words. God is omniscient.

He knows everything. He's omnipotent. He has all the power. So if I ask, does God know everything? We say yes. But in practice, we often hide stuff from God. Like you may you may be here and you may be really angry with God.

[18:08] But you don't want to tell him. And it's sometimes it makes me think of teenagers who get in trouble. And sometimes they did something and they don't want their parents to know, not just because they don't want to get in trouble, but actually because they love their parent.

And they don't want to hurt their parents. So they keep the information from it. And I think we do that from God. Sometimes we're like, if you really knew how angry I was with you, God, if you knew the kind of questions and doubts I have, if you knew the kind of like, why did you let that happen? Why did this happen? Like if you knew God and we treat God like he can't take it, which is a fascinating psychological thing going on there. Even though we know the right answers, we're constantly trying to protect.

So let me help you under, you can kind of think through how you think of God. Do you think of our God as a temperamental father? And here's one of the test cases. When you think of the Christian life, is the Christian life in your imagination just heavy and burdensome?

Is a Christian life just heavy and burdensome rather than hopeful and promising? Is a Christian life just to be endured? Or could it be enjoyed?

[ 19 : 22 ] Is that possible? And key to navigating this is what we talked about in the last session, this idea that God actually designed us to be finite in space and time.

And part of that means he designed us and made us able to grow. One of the things that we must do theologically is connect creation with recreation.

One of the problems we have is we talk about, oh yeah, God loves creation, but then sin, and then we talk about recreation or even sanctification, and it becomes very, quote unquote, spiritual, disembodied. But actually, just so you know, the God who made you, including all this, loves you, and the you he loves is this, just so you know.

This is who you and I are. And by the way, I don't want to get too sidetracked here, but I get to leave, so it's okay. One of the reasons there's so much confusion in our culture today about our bodies not mattering and some of the debates on sexuality and stuff is because Christians historically have acted like our bodies don't matter.

And it's just your internal disembodied soul that matters, and if we create that and then you de-Christianize it, that's where we're at. Your body is irrelevant.

[ 20 : 42 ] You can do with it whatever you want. But actually, from a Christian perspective, God actually likes, he likes tall, he likes short, he likes thin, he likes thick. He likes our bodies. God doesn't hate you. He hates the sin that's distorting you.

And the reason God is committed to working in us is not because he hates you. That's because he loves you and hates how sin is deforming us and deforming our relationships with him and others and even the earth.

So we need to connect creation and recreation, and this brings us to the question, and so part of how we have to think of this is God actually values process.

The spirit that worked in creation in Genesis 1-2 who hovers over the Tohu Lebow, over the chaotic waters to bring order in Genesis 1, that spirit who hovers over it is the same spirit who hovers over Mary with the coming of the incarnate Son is the same spirit who hovers over and in your life to bring order out of the chaos.

So let's talk about time. Let's talk about time. It's not just young artists that we tend to think about what we want as finished products. All of us tend to want finished products, and we think God wants finished products.

[ 21 : 58 ] So here's a good theological question. How fast can God do something? You got this, right? Exactly. He can do it that fast, right?

So how fast can God make the world? Now, as you may know, I would say in the last 100 years, Christians, 150 years, Christians have developed a very weak doctrine of creation.

I'm not going to explain all that. But a lot of Christians are like, what do you mean? We've been debating about creation for 150 years. No, no, no. What we've been debating about is how long ago did God create things, and how did he do it?

And while there's some importance to that, those aren't the most important questions, and when we made them the most important questions, that's why things like our bodies lost sight. But anyway, so here's why I'm telling you this.

As you may know, well, especially here, well, today I'm going to give you bonus information. This is for free. I'm going to tell you the exact day the world was made. Ready?

[ 22 : 59 ] I can tell you. October, you think I'm lying. Ready? October 22nd, 4004 B.C. That is, I don't actually think that's a date.

You might think that. I don't know. But there was, some of you know, Archbishop James Usher. He actually worked it out, and he thought, October 22nd, 4004 B.C., that's when the world was created. Don't worry, I'm not going down this road.

I can see panic in some of your faces. It's fine. So you have some Christians hold something like that, and then you have other Christians who say, well, the world is 4 or 6 trillion years old.

Whatever. Are those the same?

They're not the same. For my purposes, though, here's what's beautiful. It doesn't matter to me in this sense. Wherever you're at on this continuum as a Christian, wherever you're at, you know what every Christian has to admit?

The God who could have done it like that doesn't. He takes days. You can fight about whatever those days mean. Some people are like, what do you, I know, but if it's 6 24-hour days, I don't care if it's 6 24-hour days, if God could have done it like that and instead take 6 24-hour days, that tells you from the very beginning, before there's any sin in the world, God has always enjoyed taking his time.

[ 24 : 17 ] He's an artist. When you read Genesis, it's very beautifully done, right? Some of you know this, right? You have these parallels going on, and you have God. Well, God will create a space. He'll create, like, the sky, the sea.

He creates these spaces, and then the parallels is he'll come, and he'll create that which fills the space, the birds and the fish. And after each stage of it, God's like, oh, I love it.

Oh, I really like that. That is what? Okay, come on, people. It's what? Good. It's good.

It's very good. Yeah. So it's good, right? If you read Genesis 1, forget all the debates. There are two things, no matter where people are at on these debates, every person should get from Genesis 1, and that is God made everything, and it's all good.

Good. Good. Good. And then when he gets to the pinnacle of his creation, when he gets to humanity, God says, human. Is that what he does? No.

[ 25 : 20 ] I don't even know what this text means. I'm just going to tell you what the text means, or I'm going to tell you the text, and you can do it. But what the Bible actually says is God takes from the dust to the ground. Whew.

Whatever that is, that's called process. We're earthlings from the earth. And when God makes humans, he's like, oh, that's very good.

That's very good. You see, God is clearly connecting, interconnecting, building, shaping, forming. Good. Good. Good. And I need us to realize that God is never panicked by process, and it's important for us to realize the idea of process doesn't begin with sin.

Our creator God has always been comfortable with and seems to enjoy process, which is difficult in a culture where the thing that we value is finished.

I can say this because I have enough time to make sure you don't misunderstand. There is a very real sense that you could say God doesn't, please hang with me, God doesn't create a perfect world.

[ 26 : 38 ] Biblically. Because biblically, the idea of perfect means full or complete. What God creates, biblically, is a good world. And that good world is going in a trajectory and will be full and complete.

That was the idea. This is why, by the way, in Hebrews, Hebrews says that Jesus became perfect. That can't mean that Jesus sinned for a while, but now he's, it's not that. He became perfect in the sense of the fullness of being human.

Right? So creation, God made it good, but it was going somewhere. It was always part of his process. He doesn't panic. And think about this in your life. He who began a good work in you.

What's he going to do? He's going to see it to completion. Tabitha and I, I mentioned earlier, we lived in Orlando for three years, and my son and daughter-in-law lived down there.

And so sometimes we'll go down there, and there's this skyscraper, it's like 12 stories high, and it's still there. And it's been there, and it basically, it's a skyscraper 12 stories high, but it doesn't even have any of the windows.

[ 27 : 51 ] Millions and millions of dollars were built, used to build it, but it was never completed. And locals have told me, it now has a name, it's called the Eyesore on I-4. It's a highway right by it, right?

And it's been there since like, incomplete since like 2008, with the crash. Is that what God does in our lives, where God's like, Kelly, I love you, I'm saving you, and then a few years in, God's like, whoa, you are way too expensive.

Right? I did not know all the junk in your life. But think about it, think about when you've asked for forgiveness in your life, especially over ongoing challenges in your life, right?

Whether it's greed or something, and you ask God, and you kind of get this feeling like, God's like, ah, you know, I got a little bit more grace, but I'm running out.

Right? And all of a sudden we try, and that's what, here's a sign of it in your life. Do you clean yourself up before you pray, or do you pray when you're not clean? You get what I mean? Like, do you make sure you have a quiet time for a while before you actually pray?

[ 28 : 58 ] Or can you just pray? No. Think about how often the Bible describes it. It's out of the abundance, out of the riches of His grace. It's never, it's never a scarcity model for God.

It's out of His abundance, out of His riches. It may be hard for us to remember, but God is not panicked by process. Let's talk about efficiency. Here's a different kind of question.

Is God efficient? Is God efficient? I just, as we were singing earlier, I was looking around, this is an amazing building.

Right? I don't, no idea when it was built, but this is incredible. Now, when churches go to build, one of the debates, I actually think it's a legitimate debate, it's like, well, if we're going to build, how much should we spend?

And you look at this, it's extravagant. Look at all the wood. What a waste. What if we just had the ceilings this high?

[ 30 : 02 ] I don't know what it is here, but in the States, you often can legally have ceilings that are just like eight foot high. You might be able to legally do that. How do you think this would feel with eight foot ceilings?

It would feel oppressive. So you have to ask, like, wait a minute, why, why the extravagance? How do we think about this?

Right? Why all these non-essential extras? Is this just a form of self-indulgence? Which makes me think, is God indulgent with us? I looked up the term indulgent in this context.

It means having or indicating a tendency to be overly generous or lenient with someone. I'm not interested in defending the word indulgent, implying it to God.

I think that could be problematic. But it is one of these fascinating things, right? So I want to get into this idea of efficiency by talking about architecture, because one of the things that's happened in the last hundred years is scholars of architecture, historians of architecture, have now studied this because in the mid-20th century, there was a massive movement that said, and it made sense at the time, you know what we're going to do?

[ 31 : 12 ] We're going to build things with the primary goal being efficiency. And by the way, the things that were being built with the primary goal of being efficiency tended to be housing for materially poor people.

And the idea was, let's just build them as inexpensively as possible. And when we lived in London for three years, we lived near this facility, and it always made me think of this, where it was just these thick, thick gray concrete walls.

And windows are small, because windows are inefficient, right? They're going to let out heat or cool, right? So windows are small, thick, and I remember always thinking, like, maybe they originally meant to cover it with wood or panels or something, but it never did.

I don't know if that was there. And the hallways, it's kind of narrow and dark. It's all, like, beige, same color, not well lit, very efficient. How do you think it feels sometimes to live in these environments?

And people will say, it's almost like this lead blanket laying over them. Because we yearn for beauty, for goodness.

[ 32 : 24 ] Given my wife's work with the materially poor, one of the things she's talking to me about is if you have an area with high crime, and you will start to plant beautiful flowers in some of the central areas, right, and you start to beautify in just some of those ways, you can actually follow crime rates sometimes will go down.

We long for beauty, and we can feel its lack, because beauty tends to point to care and process and time. We sense where's the life, where's the beauty, where's the loving process?

And this was very hard for me as a born and raised American to come to terms with, but do you know that God's highest value is not efficiency?

It's not efficiency, especially not in any simplistic or simple or mechanistic sense. God's more interested in beauty than the speed of getting things done. He's more concerned to lift our gaze, to provoke a song, to spark our imaginations, than just to get the checklist off.

Like, think about it. When God created, how wasteful of him. He could have made everything just white and gray. You're like, oh, that's crazy.

[ 33 : 42 ] Is it? I don't know your houses, so you can't be offended if I come too close to home here. But how many walls in your house are white? I like white, but one of the reasons we all paint our rooms white is because it's the same color everywhere and the same bucket of paint can fix

anything and everywhere.

Why doesn't God just make it? Why the extravagance of a peacock's feathers? It's extra... Why the careful complexity of the human voice?

The delicacy of an orchid? Right? The strange mystery of human intimacy. Yeah, you could come up with theories for all these, but fundamentally, the reason why is because love, beauty, wonder, and worship are God's main goals, not just getting things done.

And process has always been part of what he does. Exodus takes time. Exodus is not instantaneous. It's a process.

There's a... Works in the area of sociology and some other things, but a Christian scholar named Gary Selby sometimes will take groups of students from America to East Africa because of some work, and part of what they have to do when they first get there is they just go out in small groups and just observe, and then they're supposed to report at the end of the day things that they observed and make, you know, think through this.

[ 35 : 13 ] And he tells the story how he had this group on the first day and this group went out and they observed these three or four guys, three or four men doing this one project, and he said, as the students started to report, you could tell there was almost like a self-righteousness, like this moral claim to it, and he's saying, they were doing, three or four of them were doing the task that could have easily been done by one or at most two, right?

And this strong moral claim as they're reporting, and so Selby let them talk, but then just said, you know, and just started to talk to them about it. He said, you know, in this area in East Africa, efficiency is a value, it's just not the highest one.

In this community, other values like friendship, community, some of these are actually higher values than efficiency.

Now, if you're, I'm an American, you're like, what? And I'm not here to romanticize one culture and beat up another.

Every culture has strengths, weaknesses, sins, and like, you get that. But it is one of those things where if you're in a Western country, the reality is we have taken efficiency and productivity and completely baptized them.

[ 36 : 32 ] But biblically love community and growth of character, you know, think about love, community, growth of character are often, not always, but almost always at odds with efficiency. How much do you enjoy being with someone who's always thinking about the next thing to get done?

Do you feel relaxed with them? Do you feel like you could share your struggles in your heart? Do you feel calm? Let me just make sure we're all on the same page.

Do you know what the most inefficient thing you can probably do is? Have a baby. Right? Or get a puppy.

But, right? When you have a baby, it's crazy, isn't it? We have this Sunday school class at our church and I teach the Sunday school and a couple years ago, you know, there was this young couple that had been married.

They were very athletic, very fit, and she was very pregnant. And during prayer time, they said, one of them raised their hand and said, listen, will you pray for us because the baby's due in like two weeks and we're supposed to go to the mission field in like five or six.

[ 37 : 45 ] This isn't like Sweden or something. I don't know. And because it's the South, everyone's like, oh, yeah. But internally, they're like, you guys are idiots. Right?

But they're not going to say that. They're like, oh, yeah, yeah. But they just, you can understand, they're athletic, they're fit, they're kind of like, we're doing everything we're doing, and then baby, put the baby in the backpack, still do everything we're doing.

Any of you in this room who've had babies or dealt with babies, is that how it works? You're like, no, that's not how it works, right? You know what's crazy? Tabitha, who's here, I remember people with Jonathan, they'd ask, you know, how's Jonathan, you know, when he's a baby, and she'd say like, oh, he's good, but he's like super needy.

And people would panic because if they don't know her humor, they'd be like, oh, he's a baby. Yes, actually, it's very, like the baby is needy. As a college professor, I see people, young people, you know, dating, falling in love.

The problem is when they start to fall in love, they discover that person has opinions. They don't, they don't like everything, and at first, you're like infatuated, sort of like, whatever, and then it's not whatever, right?

[ 38 : 54 ] So the reality is love is often very inefficient. But the almighty creator has always been comfortable prioritizing love and growth over efficiency and check marks.

So let me conclude, and then we'll do a little Q&A.; Don't lose heart. I don't, I don't know your stories, I don't know what you came into this meeting with, but if you're like me, it's easy to look at your life, to look at the world, to look at complexities that you're dealing with, and just to grow discouraged.

Some of, some of us, whether it's your ongoing troublesome attitudes or addictions or various actions, you want them to just end. And maybe you're like me, I've known some alcoholics who God just went and it was over.

But most Christians I know who deal with that, it's an ongoing hard thing. ordinarily, God changes our lives by persistently picking us up when we fall and slowly but consistently drawing us into the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit.

And what God does is as He draws us to Himself, He draws us to each other. We are not meant to do this alone. That love for Him and love for others connects us to one another.

[ 40 : 27 ] It turns our callousness into a softening compassion, our hatred into love and our fears into hope. So don't lose heart. He who began a good work in you will see it to completion.

The triune God has always been comfortable taking His time. Let me pray and we'll do a little bit of Q&A.; Father, thank You for this time. Thank You for the fact that You work in and through these times for our good.

and Your glory. I really don't know everyone here. I don't know some of the internal voices that are going. The voices of condemnation and shame, of doubt, of fear, fear of being known and exposed. Would You by Your Spirit heal? Would You give the liberty of being known and loved? We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.