

John 5 (Part 1) 1–18 • The Heart of Legalism

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John Chapter 5, we're going to look at the first 18 verses of the chapter and it goes like this.

“¹After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. ³In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. ⁴One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁵When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” ⁶The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” ⁷Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” ⁸And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. ⁹So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” ¹⁰But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” ¹¹They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” ¹²Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. ¹³Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” ¹⁴The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. ¹⁵And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁶But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” ¹⁷This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” (ESV)

Stop there if you would, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we approach this and our study of the scripture, we begin, Lord, by thanking you for it and preserving it for us these many years. And we ask, Father God, that you would increase our understanding. We ask that you would open our hearts and minister truth and wisdom to them.

We pray, Lord God, that we would be open and receptive to your voice and all you desire to say to us today for we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our savior, amen. Amen.

Well, once again, we see as this chapter opens Jesus making his way to Jerusalem for one of the feasts, we're not told which one.

But while there, it says that Jesus made his way by a pool that was called Bethesda. John described it as near the Sheep gate, which makes sense because the Sheep Gate was one of the entrances that was closest to where the temple was actually located. And so the pool was just outside the sheep gate entrance and John describes it as having five large colonnades which are essentially columns which support a roof of some kind.

As a side note, this area of Jerusalem has been excavated and guess what they found? A pool, right by the sheep gate! And it showed that there had been five huge columns that held up a roof of some kind and exactly the way John described it. So there you go.

So we're told here that gathered near that pool was a multitude, that's a lot of people, it doesn't say how many but a multitude. And he says that they were blind, lame, paralyzed, and so on. Now I'm going to stop there because if you're reading or if you were reading along with me from a different translation of the Bible. You might be kind of wondering why I didn't read the very end of verse 3 and all of verse 4, and some of you who have an ESV might be wondering why your Bible goes from verse 3 to verse 5 and seems to skip verse 4. Well, the new King James, if you have one of those, actually includes this section. Let me put it up on the screen for you so you can see it together. I'll read all of verse 3 and then 4.

John 5:3-4 (NKJV)

In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

“In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water (that part is added). For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.”

That's how it reads in the new King James. But the reason I didn't read those sections is because they aren't in the ESV. And the reason they aren't in the ESV is because they don't appear in the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts of John's text.

Bible scholars pretty much agreed that this was a later edition. It was not part of John's original writing, but it was put there to simply give an explanation as to why these people were gathered around this pool, all these crippled people and with all these other issues were gathered around this pool. And I believe personally, the reason that John left it out didn't include it in the text is because it was a local superstitious belief and nothing more.

Quite honestly, when you stop and think about it, it would be an act of cruelty on God's part to create a pool and have an angel come down and stir the waters with healing properties. And then tell everybody, go, knowing full well that they are crippled, blind and paralyzed. Does that sound like something God would do to you? I don't think so. So, somebody else put in the explanation just so we would kind of know what's going on.

Anyway, verse 5 goes on and tells us that “*One man was there who'd been an invalid for thirty-eight years.*” That's a long time, and we don't know how long he'd been at coming to the pool of Bethesda and so forth, but we just know he had been an invalid for 38 years.

“When Jesus saw him (verse 6) lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?”

Interesting question, is it not? Might seem to you like an unnecessary question. I mean, good grief, why is he here? We all know. We all know what the local tradition believes. This is why people come to the pool of Bethesda.

So why would Jesus ask the man, “*Do you want to be healed?*” Why would He begin to ask that sort of a question? Well, it wasn't because He didn't know the answer. We've seen from some other passages in the Bible that there are times when Jesus speaks to people in such a way as to get them to recognize their area of need and to kind of deal with it. We've seen that in other situations as well. He wants us to express our needs because there's something beneficial about that. When we come to Him and it's good to just kind of reiterate out of our mouth, this is why I'm coming.

Have you ever wondered why the Bible says the word to confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord? There's something that's just beneficial about confessing about Jesus, confessing my need for Jesus and so forth.

On another note here John said that there were a multitude of people gathered around the pool of Bethesda, a multitude of people. I bring that up because the text tells us that Jesus only spoke to and healed one of them, just one. So there were obviously a lot of other people that just didn't get healed for whatever reason. And we don't know the answer to that necessarily. In fact, even thinking about it leaves us with probably more questions than answers. But it's important to note nonetheless, God has a purpose. God has a plan and sometimes we just don't get it.

But verse 7 goes on and it says, *“The sick man answered Jesus saying, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going (in or while I'm going) another steps down before me.”* And again, this is why I personally believe that this was superstition. I cannot imagine God turning healing into a competition.

Verse 8, *“Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed and walk.”* And then verse 9 says, *“And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and (he) walked.”* And then John adds at the end of verse 9, a very important note, *“Now that day was the Sabbath.”*

And we have a couple of things to deal with here in verses 8 and 9. I want to begin by making a point here. Did you notice that Jesus told the man to do what he was hereto for, physically incapable of doing? He literally walked up to an invalid and He said, get up, take up your bed and walk. This man hadn't done that for 38 years. That's a long time and yet Jesus spoke to him.

Now you'll notice that the man doesn't say, “I can't” or roll his eyes or something like that. And even the suggestion that he was to do something that he hadn't done in 38 years, what does it say? It says he at once it says he was healed. And he got up, took his bed and he walked. In other words, he took Jesus at his word.

For those of you that have been following the study through John, are you seeing a pattern here of people taking him at his word?

Remember the Samaritans in the last chapter? They heard Jesus preach and talk and it says they took him at His word. They believed. Remember the last study we went through? The official who came to Jesus from Capernaum, and he said

his son was very sick and he wanted Jesus to come to his home and touch his son and heal him. And Jesus said, "Go, your son is going to be fine." He took him at His word and went. And sure enough, that's what happened.

Here again, we have a situation where this crippled man at the pool of Bethesda took Jesus at his word and did something that he hadn't done in 38 years. He got up and he walked. And faith can move mountains and that's what we're reminded about.

But now, we have to deal with that final statement that John made at the end of verse 9 and that is that all this took place on the Sabbath. And so we have to deal with the Sabbath and we have to remember and kind of ask ourselves, "What was the big deal? Who cares that Jesus healed somebody on the Sabbath?" I mean, big whoop.

Well, it was a big deal to them. First of all, you remember that God had told the people of Israel to rest on the Sabbath. In fact, that's what the Sabbath was all about. They were to rest one day out of seven, and it was to be the seventh day of the week.

But an interesting thing about what God said concerning the Sabbath, He never really gave Him any details. He just said rest on the Sabbath and do no regular work and that was pretty much it. So, the Jews decided to come up with their own interpretation of what He meant by do no work.

What exactly does that mean? And they spent a long time in fact, probably about from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, up until the time of Christ. They added rules upon rules.

In fact, they had 39 sections of rules that they divided into four different categories and it involved everything concerning life. I mean, everything from food preparation to how you dressed and what you dressed put on and how you did this, and how you did. And it was incredible by the time Jesus came along.

Now as it related to healing, the laws that came about concerning the Sabbath basically said that if someone's life was in danger, you could assist them. But if you looked at somebody who'd been hurt, then it didn't look like there was a life-threatening thing. They had to wait until after the Sabbath was over and then you could attend to their wounds or issues or whatever the case might be. Well, as you can imagine, these things begin to just become ridiculous.

And to give you a little example of how ridiculous it all became. It was determined by the religious leaders that a person was not allowed on the Sabbath to throw an object up in the air and catch it again because that would be causing their hand to work. However, the Jews had some debate as to whether or not a person could throw something in the air and catch it with the other hand.

Oh, and here's an interesting one. You would be allowed on the Sabbath to carry rainwater in a bucket as long as the rain was caught directly from the sky. However, if the rain fell first on your roof and then drained down into a bucket, it was unlawful to carry that bucket on the Sabbath. I know I'm thinking the same thing you are. I'm looking, and you guys have these expressions, like.

And all that to say that the Jews had devised a long and often nonsensical list of rules related to the simple command that God gave them to rest one day a week. And it obviously went way beyond what God had originally intended as far as what the Sabbath was to be.

I was talking with Scott Forwood before the first service. And he and I were kind of discussing the Sabbath because he's been witnessing a guy, a neighbor who's kind of caught up in Sabbath keeping and that sort of thing. And one of the popular questions that comes to us, and I've gotten it many times, is when did the Sabbath change from Saturday to Sunday?

I get that question a lot, and the answer to that question is never. The Sabbath has always been the seventh day, that's what God said. You took one day, and that day was to be the seventh, and they were to rest. It has never been Sunday. It's always been Saturday. And so the next question that we get is, then why don't Christians by a large keep the Sabbath?

We get that a lot. Maybe you've gotten that question before and the answer to that question is, we do keep the Sabbath. We keep it by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. We cease from our labors to be saved by our own good works and we rest instead in what Jesus did on the cross. This is what the writer of the book of Hebrews explained. Let me put this on the screen.

Hebrews 4: 9-10; 3a (ESV)

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. For we who have believed enter that rest...

Hebrews chapter 4. *“So then (he says), there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. For we who have believed enter that rest...”*

There you go. We keep the Sabbath by faith, by putting our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. He worked. We rest in his work. He is our Sabbath rest.

Now having said that, there's nothing wrong with taking a day off. And if you can navigate two in your week, good on you. I mean, I believe that God actually factored into the physiology of our human bodies, the need for a day of rest. And if you kind of tend to ignore that and you don't usually take a day of rest, I would encourage you to start taking it seriously. God's word related to that, it's a good idea to take a day of rest.

So anyway, but all the stuff that the Jews heaped on to the simple command from God to rest on the Sabbath is what we call legalism.

But let me tell you something about legalism. Legalism is far more than just a strict adherence to rules. It is that, but it is more. And what we're going to see in the following verses is the heart of legalism, the essence of legalism, the character, if you will, of legalism. So, let's read on, we're at verse 10, but keep in mind now, Jesus has healed this man and sent him on his way, carrying his bed roll.

Verse 10 says, *“So the Jews said to the man who had been healed...”* And I assume they didn't know at this point that he had been healed. They said, *“It is the Sabbath. It's not lawful for you to take up your bed.”*¹¹ *But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, “Take up your bed and walk.”*

Now pay attention to verse 12, here's where the heart of legalism is seen, *“They asked him, who is the man who said to you? Take up your bed and walk.”*

Stop there for a minute because that's it right there. Did you catch it? Yes, that is the heart of legalism. The Jewish religious leaders see this man walking on the Sabbath carrying his bed roll. And they say to him, “Hey, it's the Sabbath and we call that work. And it's not lawful to work on the Sabbath.” And the man simply says, “Well, the man who healed me, that is the one who told me to take up my bed roll and walk.”

And instead of saying to this man, you got healed. What was your issue? What was your infirmity? 38 years, are you kidding? And you got healed? We got to

go find this guy. He might be somebody special. And by the way, it's wonderful that you got healed. We're just really glad to hear that.

As you notice, none of that happens. No. What comes out of their mouth? Who told you? To take up your bed and walk. Who told you that? In other words, who told you to break the rules? They didn't want to know who Jesus was. They wanted to know who told him to break the rules. And that is the essence right there of the character in the heart of legalism.

Legalism cares more about keeping the rules than it cares about people. Okay. And that is one way you will always recognize legalism. The religious leaders, they didn't ask about how he'd been healed or how long he'd been sick or whatever other issues were. They simply wanted to know who told him it was okay to break the rules.

And later on in our study of John, we'll get to it in a few chapters, we are going to hear about the religious leaders speaking about Jesus as it relates to the Sabbath. And I want to show you what they say, we'll put it on the screen.

John 9:16a (ESV)

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

It's from John chapter 9 where it says, "*Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.'*" And I want you to really see that because what it says is, "keeping the rules was their number one barometer for determining the identity of God's chosen Messiah." That was the number one.

There was nothing, it wasn't about what He said. It wasn't about the miracles that He did, they didn't care about that. All they cared about is, in their mind, this man broke the rules and that disqualified him from being Messiah. So there you go.

But that's the way legalism operates. It's all about rule keeping. It's not about people. It's not even really about God and it's not about getting to know God. It's about understanding the rules.

And can I tell you something about people who get caught up in legalism? It probably doesn't surprise you at all to hear me say those people never grow in their faith. They never grow. They never grow in a personal relationship with

Jesus Christ because it's not about a personal relationship. It's about knowing the rules and keeping the rules. And that's it.

All right, verse 13, it goes on, *“Now the man that says who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn...”* John tells us because there was a crowd in that place and Jesus was very sensitive about stirring up the crowd.

And it says, ¹⁴*“Afterward (however) Jesus found (the man) him in the temple (which is good)...”* He should have been in the temple because he should have been there giving thanks to God and offering a sacrifice for the healing and showing himself to the priests related to his healing. *“...and (so Jesus) said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”*

Okay? We have to address what Jesus just said here because this is a challenging statement. I mean, and it's probably not hard to guess that many of you're wondering what He means by that. What did Jesus mean when He said to the man stop sinning or something worse may happen to you?

I mean, is Jesus saying that the man's condition was because of some specific sin from his past? Well, maybe, maybe. I mean, it kind of sounds that way.

So what are we to conclude? Well, some people read this verse and they just instantly conclude that all physical infirmities, problems, sicknesses, whatever, are always the result of some action of sin on our part. And what we need to do is we need to repent, confess that sin comes to God and we'll be healed. And if you go to him and you don't get healed, well, it's because you didn't really truly confess or you didn't really truly repent. Or you've got some other sin in your closet somewhere buried in the back that you're maybe not even aware of and you just didn't have enough faith. And that is the conclusion many Christians come to.

But I believe it's a prideful one. I believe it's prideful even to look at this particular verse and say, “Well, absolutely Jesus is saying that it was some area of sin.” It may very well have been but we're not really sure. And the other thing is this conclusion that people come to that all physical infirmity is related to an act of sin which gets debunked in a few chapters. Let me show you on the screen once again, we go back to John chapter 9.

John 9:1-3 (ESV)

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus

answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

It says, *“As he passed by, he saw a blind a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (And) Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents...”* But went on to explain that this man was going to be used mightily by God to display the works of the Lord.

But what you need to see in that passage that I believe is very clear is that Jesus is saying that you cannot always claim that sin is the cause of some physical infirmity. In fact, if somebody's going through a situation like that I wouldn't bring it up to be honest with you.

I mean, when we begin to think along those lines, we enter into the error of Job's friends. Do you guys remember the book of Job from the Old Testament? God told us all at the beginning of the Book of Job that Job was a righteous man. So we know that going into the book and then all these terrible things are allowed to happen in Job's life. And his friends come to commiserate with him and supposedly bring some kind of sympathy.

But what did they do? They sit down with Job. They realize his suffering was horrible. They couldn't even speak for days. And then finally, when they opened their mouths, what did they say? Job, it's clear you messed up, you sinned. Confess it, get right with God and he'll heal you. And Job came back and said, it is not because of sin in my life, and Job was right. (Job 4 to 23)

And you'll remember at the end of the Book of Job, Job's friends received a pretty sound rebuke from the Lord because of their arrogance to simply say, I know what's going on here (Job 42:7-17), when they had no idea.

And we have seen many many Christians enter into that same error, learning seemingly nothing from the Book of Job. We just don't know you guys. So let's not comment. Let's just pray for people who are going through a hard time and who are struggling in their physical body. Let's pray for them. Let's pray for a work of grace and just love on them.

Last few verses 15 and following, it says, *“The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.”*¹⁶ *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.*¹⁷ But

Jesus answered (that particular claim and he said), *“My father is working until now and I am working.”* I love this statement.

Where the Jews really messed up related to the Sabbath was revealed by a statement that Jesus said elsewhere and that is that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. And what that means is the Sabbath was made to serve man. Man was not made to serve the Sabbath but that's what the Jews had entered into. They began to literally serve the Sabbath. And Jesus said that you've missed the whole point of it. It was never meant to be a burden. It was meant to be a blessing. Right.

But the point of what Jesus is saying here is that the reason God created the Sabbath was for man, it wasn't for Him. God doesn't need to rest. He doesn't get tired, and He's been working from the very beginning. He continues to work, and Jesus says, I have that same right and I continue to work even in the midst of such things.

But more importantly is this comment that John makes in verse 18. If you look with me there, this is the last verse that we're looking at in the text it says, *“This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because not only was He breaking the Sabbath (and that means breaking their particular interpretation of the Sabbath) but He was even calling God his own father.”* Make note of that. Circle it in your Bible. Underline it. Highlight it. *“He was calling God his own father, making himself equal with God.”*

Now, this is a very important verse for you to see in your Bible. Don't miss the fact that Jesus referred to God as my father. He didn't say, “Our father.” He didn't say, “Your father” in this instance. He said, “My father.” And when those who heard Him say that they didn't miss the meaning behind it. What did they believe that meant when Jesus said, “My father is always working and I too work.”

What did they get from that? Well, John tells us right here what they got from that. It was a claim of deity. Jesus was claiming to be God in human flesh that's what it says at the end of verse 18, *“ But he was even calling God his own Father making himself equal with God.”* Right?

Now, here's what's interesting about that the Jews understood what that meant. The implication of Jesus calling himself the Son of God, the unique Son of God was, He was declaring himself to be equal with God.

See that doesn't compute in our modern brains. We have somehow rationalized the idea that you can be the Son of God and not be equal to God, which is absolutely ridiculous, but the Jews understood what it meant. They knew that it meant equality. And that's exactly what Jesus was saying. He was declaring equality with the Father and they knew it.

But we've factored it out of our thinking today. And Christians will even say, "Well, I'm a child of God so how am I different from Him?" Yes, you're a child of God by adoption. Okay, by adoption. In fact as Gentiles, we were grafted into a root that we didn't even belong/connected to by nature.

But by God's grace, He grafted us according to what Paul wrote in the book of Romans. So yes, we are children of God by adoption, grafted in contrary to nature. Jesus is the unique Son of God. Right. You're a child by adoption. He was begotten of the Father and therein lies the difference, right?

Let me see your hands. How many of you have children? Put your hands up. Every single one of you with hands up, begot your children. And under the law, even the law of our land, the law considers those people equal to you. They are human beings in the same right and with all the same rights that you have that's what begotten means to come from and to be equal to.

When the Bible tells us that Jesus is the only begotten of the Father. Right. It is telling us that He's equal to the Father. It's telling us that He is the essence of the Father. As the writer of the book of Hebrews says, "He is the exact representation of his nature, of the nature of God, the exact representation." And that is exactly what the Jews heard Him say and that's why they picked up rocks. And this wasn't the only time. Let me show you a passage on the screen from John chapter 10.

John 10:30-33 (ESV)

"I and the Father are one." The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

Jesus makes this statement, this is going to rile him up, "*I and the father are one.*" The Jews what did they do? How did they pick up stones?

I had a Jehovah's Witness tell me one time I quoted this verse to him and I said, "Why did they pick up stones?"

“Well, they were wrong, all He meant was that I and the Father are one in purpose.”

I'm like, “Well, it doesn't say that, does it? See, you had to come up with that interpretation to match your preconceived ideas.”

He says, *“I and the father are one.”* (So) *the Jews picked up stones again to stone him.* (And) Jesus answered them, *“I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me? (And) the Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”*

Did the Jews get it wrong? Nope. They heard exactly what He wanted them to hear. They just refused to believe it. That was the point. They refused to believe it.

Did Jesus declare himself God? Oh, you bet He did. You bet He did. All over the place. But you know it's easy when you get into a conversation with a JW (Jehovah's Witness) or somebody you know who denies the deity of Christ. And I've seen many Christians come forward after a conversation like that and they need to be reassured.

They're like, “Boy, I had a conversation with a Jehovah's Witness the other day and I came away kind of going, wow, I don't know what's up and down. And so tell me again.”

Well just go back to the gospels. Just go back to the gospels. Look at all the claims Jesus made that could not be made by a human being apart from God. Like saying things like, whoever keeps my word has eternal life. Can you say that? I sure can't. I can say whoever keeps his word right, all the things, all the claims, I and the Father are One.

The early apostles believed and knew and understood what Jesus was saying. He was declaring himself to be God. The Jews who hated His guts knew what He was saying. They knew He was claiming to be God in human flesh. They knew it and that's why they picked up rocks. So don't let people whack you out on that one. Don't let people confuse you on this issue of, “Well, He's the son of God, but he's not equal to God.” If He's the Son of God, He has to be equal to God because a Son is equal to the Father. Your son is equal to you and the Son of God is equal also to the Father.

You say to me, “Well, Pastor Paul, explain to me how you can have two different persons who are equal and they're both called God.”

“I don't know. I don't have a clue. Don't ask me. I'm not that smart.”

The only reason I can say that is because neither are you. We don't know. I cannot explain the nature of God to you. And you know what? I'm happy about that fact. Because if I could explain the nature of God that would mean my intellect was equal to the nature of God. And my intellect is nowhere near up to par with the nature of God and neither is yours.

And so don't be surprised if we come to those passages that speak of the nature of God and we end up scratching our heads, walking away going, “I don't get that.” You see the whole premise of Jehovah's Witnesses and other groups is that God must be understood by the human intellect. That's what their arguments are based on.

I've had a Jehovah's Witness stand on my door with a little boy next to him saying, “This is my son. I'm his father. We are not the same.”

I said, “Yeah, and you're not God.”

You see a human sort of a deal. It only goes so far. You can't compare humans with God. Don't even try, it's going to break down. We can compare things up to a point and then it just goes away into infinity and beyond (for those of you who know Toy Story).

All right, let's stand together. We're going to close in prayer. If you need prayer for something going on in your life that we can pray with you about, come out up front after we're done and we'd be happy to pray with you.

So let's close. Jesus, we love you so much. We love you. We love Your Word. We love the truth of Your Word. We love how Your Word impacts our lives and challenges and encourages us and builds up our faith. And Lord, we go from this place built up and we pray in Jesus' name, that as we go, that you would allow the light that you have lit inside of us to shine forth in this dark world to encourage the people of this world and to lead them to the light of who you are so that they might be saved.

We thank you, Father, for this incredible Christmas season when we get to celebrate the greatest gift we've ever received, the gift of salvation through the birth of the Messiah. So we ask you, Lord God, to bless that time as well and be

with us as we go through our week. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on you. For we ask it in Jesus' precious and holy name and all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.