

Mark 1 (Part 1): 1-20 - John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness

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It's really amazing how the Gospels all together... When you take them all together - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - they come together to create a greater, more complete, picture of what happened during the ministry of Jesus, and so forth - His death, burial, resurrection. Different gospel writers tend to give a little bit of a different emphasis.

John is all about giving us the Words of Christ. He records for us a lot of long prayers. And we learn a lot about prayer and how Jesus prayed in the Gospel of John.

Mark, however, is much more succinct. He's much, more quick. He gives us the reader's digest version of things. Doesn't give a lot of detail a lot of the time. But he focuses on Jesus, as a worker. He talks, not about the words necessarily, although certainly those are in here. But he talks more about the deeds of Jesus - the things that He does. And that's kind of an interesting, significant characteristic of this book.

Mark was not one of the 12 disciples. However, he was very much involved in the early church. He was a very young man, actually. A boy during the life and ministry of Jesus. His mother opened up her home to the church in Jerusalem. The early church in Jerusalem met in their home. I don't know if they had a particularly big home. Her name was Mary.

Mark, then as he grew, he was also known as, John Mark. He accompanied the apostle Paul and Barnabas on the first part of their initial missionary outreach. You'll remember that John Mark is the one who kind of freaked out about halfway through and caught a ship home. And he became the source of actually, a disagreement later on between Paul and Barnabas as to whether or not they should take him on their second missionary journey.

And Barnabas, who was Mark's uncle, of course. Encouraging man. His name even meant, son of encouragement. Uncle Barney wanted to take John Mark along on trip number two. And Paul felt that it was just a problem. He felt like it was a liability. And they came to a place where they could not agree. And

actually went their separate ways on the second journey. Paul took Silas and headed out, and Barnabas took John Mark and they headed out.

But John Mark later became very important to the Apostle Paul in his ministry. And later on, John Mark actually became an assistant, of some sort, to the Apostle Peter, which is very interesting. And according to church tradition, the gospel that we're getting into here, named after Mark, is actually more the memories and the eyewitness testimony of Peter, than it is John. Since John was such a young boy at the time that these events took place. Interesting, isn't it? That's our short introduction of the Book of Mark.

Let's get into it. Chapter one, verse 1. I love how he begins it. He simply says, "*The beginning of the gospel* (and you'll remember that means good news. He says *The beginning of the good news* about) *Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*" (ESV)

And you know these 16 chapters that Mark writes and the other chapters that the other Gospel writers give us, this is really the only good news - lasting, eternal, good, news - that you and I have in the world in which we live. Because you take away Jesus, take away His birth, take away His teaching, take away His death, burial, and resurrection, what do you have left? Well, you basically end up with, eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

And it becomes a very kind of short term, short sighted, live for today, naturalistic sort of a mentality of life. I live for life. I try to be happy. That's the world. Isn't that the word you hear all the time in the world? I just want to be happy. Just live to be. Just got to make yourself happy. You got to be. If you don't make yourself happy, then nobody else will. And I'm just trying to be happy. And you just get sick of all this happiness.

I mean, everybody's trying to get happy. They're trying to find meaning to life and there is none. And what do they do? They take drugs, they get drunk, they go party. They be a thrill seeker. I want to make a lot of money. I want to have power. I want to... I'm trying to fill the void. Right? Some sort of an understanding of purpose and meaning to my life. But it isn't there. Without Jesus, it just isn't there.

And some people ask sometimes, gee, I don't know what people do without Jesus. Well, they don't do very well without Him, frankly. And if you can't find enough excitement, and thrill, and pleasure, and happiness then people usually decide just to end their lives. Because that's all there is. That's all they got. That's what they live for.

The good news of Jesus Christ, is way more than just, hey! Good news, Jesus is here! This is our reason for living. This is the reason we get up in the morning. This is what carries us on and moves us forward. This is our hope.

Verse 2, *"As it is written (Mark writes,) in Isaiah the prophet,*

'Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, ³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"

And Mark is referring here to a prophecy written 700 years before the birth of Christ, given by Isaiah. Let me show it to you in context. It goes like this in that chapter of 40,

Isaiah 40:1-3 (ESV)

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

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It's a wonderful biblical passage - Messianic prophecy. We say that because it means a prophecy relating to the Messiah. But this is one of many Old Testament prophecies that actually has a dual fulfillment, in that, this prophecy relates to the first coming of Jesus and also to the second coming of Christ. And that is frankly the case with many Old Testament prophecies. And if you don't figure that out, you get really confused by many of the elements or aspects of biblical prophecy.

But John is, or, Mark rather, is bringing out the point that Isaiah prophesied of "one who would come and prepare the way." And we're told who that is in the next verse. In verse four when Mark tells us, that man was John the Baptist.

And he says. *"⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."* Take note of that phrase right there: *"a baptism of repentance."* We'll come back to that.

"5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Now this is a huge move of God. And you know why we know is a huge move of God? Because people were gathering for one purpose and one purpose only: to confess their sins.

That's it's really tough to build a crowd of people who just get together to confess their sins. It's not hard to get people together to cheer a football team on - like the Vikings who are unbeaten. The only NFL team that's unbeaten. I just wanted to throw that in there. It's easy to put 60,000 people in a stadium. Isn't it? And get them together and cheers.

You try getting a bunch of people together to talk about their sin. That's hard enough. And then repent of it. We don't like to talk about our sin. We avoid it like the plague. Right? And we've got very adept here in the United States of America at ignoring it, or recategorizing it, or just deciding it's normal. That's normal. Well, in a naturalistic, fleshly sort of a way it is normal. Sin is completely normal. But that doesn't mean it's good.

In the world, normal equals good. But what is normal? What is part of the flesh, what is sin, is stuff that we don't particularly like to look at or talk about. And we call it a disease or whatever. We just try to get it out of our head.

You get a crowd of people and the crowd is obviously big. Mark tells us here, in verse 5 *"all the country of Judea and Jerusalem..."* That's a lot of people. Were coming to the Jordan River to confess their sin. This is a move of God. Right? This is a miracle. And you know that this is just a work of the Lord.

And to repent, to repent. What exactly is that? When we say the word repent, that's another kind of dirty word in the world. We get these mental pictures of some homeless, whacked out, crazy person walking around the streets in a big city, wearing a sandwich sign, that says, repent for the end is near! And everybody kind of rolls their eyes when they walk by this crazy guy. And put a nickel in his cup and say, well, God bless you.

But the word repent is incredibly important in the context of Scripture. And in the context of what was going on at this time in Israel's history. Repent means to have a change of mind. And by inference to change your actions or to have a course correction, if you will, based on your change of mind. And this was huge. This was so huge that people were repenting in large numbers. Not just because it was a move of God, but because of what this move of God was going to do.

Remember, John's ministry was to prepare the way. How does repentance prepare the way for the Messiah to come and for them to be able to hear Him? Well, it's interesting. We actually have to go to another gospel account to answer that question. But there's this wonderful passage in the gospel according to Luke, that answers the question: How repentance figured into this preparation of people's hearts to receive Christ. Let me show you. From Luke 7:29, following, it says, (and)

Luke 7:29-30 (NIV84)

All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

All the people, even the tax collectors, (And when they say) even the tax collectors, (that's the way of saying even the scum of the earth. Right? Because that's the way the Jews saw them) when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, (Why?) because they had been baptized by John. (Then, look at the converse) But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, (Why?) because they had not been baptized by John.

That is an incredibly, valuable, biblical insight into the power of repentance and what it can do in our lives. It opens our hearts to hear God. Literally, to hear His voice and to respond in an appropriate and positive manner. Otherwise, when there's a hardness of heart that refuses to repent, the Word of God just bounces off us. And we're, Yeah, right, whatever.

But isn't that interesting? The people who received Jesus and understood Him and said, Yeah, that's right. That preparation had been repentance. Confessing their sin, turning away, having a change of mind that precipitated a course correction. That's just really important stuff to know.

Look at verse 6. Mark goes on and says, "*Now John was clothed (in) camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.*"

I've always kind of loved this verse to find out just exactly what he wore and what he ate. Because I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have that information. I'm happy that he put a little honey on his locusts. Ugh. They were considered a clean bug. Clean from the law stand.

I mean you could eat locusts and be okay with God. I'm not sure it'd be okay with your digestive tract, but it was okay with God. But I suppose you put a little honey on it, you can just eat just about anything. Or something like that.

It's interesting too, that he says, it says, he *"ate locusts and wild honey."* Do you know I'd never really noticed that before. And I had to look it up. You can Google anything today. You know that, don't you? So I looked it up. Wild honey is honey that comes from wild bees. Which is really interesting because I've never seen a tame bee in my life. I'm not really sure what that's all about.

But this remark about what he wore. This is particularly interesting that he wore this garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. Because you see, if you know your Old Testament, you know that is a nod toward another biblical character. And that's Elijah. Elijah wore much the same sort of a get up. Which was interesting that John chose to wear those kinds of clothes.

But more interesting than that, is something that we don't learn from the gospel according to Mark. We have to go again back to Luke's gospel. And we find out that when John's father was visited by an angel foretelling that they would have a son who would go and precede the Messiah. That angel told Zechariah, that your son will go forth in the power and so forth of Elijah. (Luke 1:17)

The spirit and power of Elijah, which is kind of interesting. You think about... If you know anything about the ministry of Elijah, you know that he was a very anointed prophet of God who did incredible miracles. You know what's interesting about John? He never performed one miracle. Unless you call getting a big group of people out to a river to repent, a miracle. Which I suppose probably is up there.

But in the sense of a supernatural sort of a healing or something, John never did that. But yet, the Bible tells us he still came forth in the spirit and power of Elijah. And this comment about his clothing was meant to connect the dots for you and I.

Verse 7 says. *"And he preached, saying, 'After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.'"* And this was a statement that you and I might not relate to as people living in the west and what it might've meant. But to the Jew, this was a particularly interesting statement that elevated Jesus and humbled John.

Because, you see, the teachers in Judaism used to say, that a teacher could ask pretty much anything of his student, except to help him off with his shoes. That

was considered to be beneath any student. And therefore, to ask someone to loose your sandals was like, no you don't ever do that.

John comes along now and begins to speak of the greatness of the one who will come after him. And he says, I'm not worthy to take off His shoes. The teachers tell us that, you're better than ever helping anybody off with their shoes. Well, I'm not worthy of helping this guy off with His shoes. Which is meant, of course, to speak to us of the greatness of Christ.

But he further goes on to contrast his ministry with the one who is coming by saying in verse 8, *"I have baptized you with water, but (and that's an important word there) he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* If that word but is meant to contrast these two forms of baptism.

John is basically saying, Listen, I'm dunking you in water. Remember that the word baptize means to immerse. I'm immersing you in water. All you're going to... You're going to get wet and that'll go away after a while. And all I'm doing is really a preparatory work for you to meet Him.

But let me tell you something about the one who's coming after me. He's going to immerse you in God. He's going to immerse you in the Holy Spirit of the living God. I immerse you in water. That's all. And all I can do is help prepare the way so that you will recognize and receive Him.

But it is He who comes after you who is going to make the big difference in your life. Because you see, He's going to bring God into your life in a way that is absolutely astounding. He will immerse you in God. And you guys know that's what we need. Right?

I got to tell you something. I get the shakes when I talk to somebody who says that they know they're a Christian because they were baptized in water. And that gives me the shakes because I know that baptism doesn't save you. And baptism can't change you. You can get baptized all day long. Every time there's a water baptism, you can raise your hand and say, I want to get dunked. And you can do it every single time and it's still not going to change your life.

All it... What's going to change your life, it's the Spirit of God. It's having God in your life, having His Spirit living within you, being baptized in Him, being filled with Him, knowing Him, living in Him, being empowered by Him. That's what's going to...

See baptism can't change your heart. We all have hearts that are filled with sin, and corruption, and rebellion. And you can get dunked every day and that's not going to change the condition of your heart. But the Spirit of God will change the condition of your heart. It will change who you are, and how you act, and how you speak. He will do that. He's amazing.

And you can see what John is contrasting here to his audience. And he's probably has all these adoring followers and all these crowds. And he's like, guys, guys, guys, I'm only immersing you in water. Oh, but please be aware of the one who comes after me. He will immerse you in God. And that will change your lives. You will never be the same again, after you are immersed in Him. That's a huge contrast.

Mark goes on in verse 9 to say, *"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." "*

Well, once again, we have an economy of words here given to us by Mark. He doesn't tell us about the conversation between Jesus and John that took place when Jesus came down into the water. And the whole baptism thing of Jesus is a little bit of an enigma for us. Because we've learned earlier in these verses that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance from sin.

Okay, I got that. We take those little tidbits and we go, all right, got it. And then you read this thing that says, and Jesus came to be baptized. You're like, okay, hold the phone here just a minute. Why did Jesus come to be... Was there some sort of a sin in His life from which He needed to repent?

No, it's very clear from the Word of God, that Jesus was without sin. And yet here He is submitting to the waters of a baptism that's all about repentance and all about sin.

Why would Jesus wade into a river that is all about being baptized to repent from your sin. I think if you and I, could properly have a picture in our mind's eye, we'd have a little better understanding of why Jesus did this. And I've seen it in some movies. And boy, I'd love it if they had polaroids back then. But you have to just come up with it in your own imagination.

When Jesus came into the waters, there's people all around Him. There's people I... In my mind eye, I've got... I've seen John baptizing, but I see his disciples

baptizing people down... I mean, there's so many people coming, John can't do them all. There's people being baptized up and down the river. And there's people lining the banks of the river. Some waiting for their turn to go in. Some standing, probably shivering on the bank because they've just come out. But they're all there.

And John is speaking to them. And he's talking to them about, repent, the kingdom of God is near! And there's all these... And there's this crowd; and there's people talking' and there's voices and stuff. And then Jesus is suddenly there. And He walks down into the river. And He's with these people who are there to repent of their sin. In other words, Jesus is surrounded by sinners.

And that's the picture that he really wants, I think, to convey to us, you see. Because if Jesus baptism that day wasn't about repentance, we have to ask, what was it about? It was about identification.

Jesus came in the midst of sin of the Jordan River filled with sinful people and said to them, I am among you. And I am here to represent you. And I'm here to identify with you. Not identified in sin, but identified in what He came to do with their sin which was to bear it on the cross.

Because in just 3 years from this water baptism, Jesus, would hang on a cross for the sins of all of these people and many more. And yours and mine included. And He would die bearing our sin, representing us before the Father. He represented us in judgment you guys He was our representative He identified to the Father with our sin.

The Bible says, He literally became sin.(2 Corinthians 5:21) That's a strong identification. He became sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God. Right?

He identified all through His life. He identified in the waters of baptism, even though He had no sin. And He identified hanging on the cross, being judged for our sin, even though there was none that He had to be judged for. It was this process of identification, I am here to represent you. I am here to go before you. I'm here to be one of you. One of you. Jesus came, as you know, fully God and fully man. And He identified with us in every way.

When He came up out of the water, we get this beautiful picture of the entire, the three persons of the Godhead. It's very beautiful. We see the Son of God coming up out of the water. We see the Spirit of God descending on Him in the form of a dove. And we hear the voice of God the Father, giving His loving

approval of the Son, saying, *"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."*

And then in verse 12, we're told that, *"The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan."*

We tend to kind of miss that point. That it was a 40 day long temptation period. Because we read in some of the other gospel accounts of these three temptations, particularly, that Satan leveled against Jesus. And we figure that... I mean, in our mind we just put it like, okay, Jesus went out to camp for 40 days. And in the very end He had a one rough night, where Satan came and got under His skin a little bit with some temptations. No, 40 days of temptation. We learned about three particular temptations. But there was 40 continuous days.

Do you know what it's like to have something happen in your life for 40 days. I mean, something bad. I'm struggling after 40 minutes of something bad happening in my life. And I'm saying, how long, O Lord? Right? I can't imagine 40 days of an ongoing, onslaught of temptation by the enemy. But that's what Jesus dealt with.

What's He doing here? This is more identification. This is more Jesus identifying with sinful men. Because one of the biggest challenges that we human beings deal with in a given day, or any time of our life, is the work of the enemy. The work of satanic temptation that comes into our lives to derail us or to destroy our lives. And it's an ever present reality. And Jesus came to drink of the entire cup of the condition of man, to experience what it was to be a human being living on the earth. To know the things that you and I deal with.

We look at the temptations He endured, the ones that we know about. When we read in some of the other gospel accounts, we think, gee, I can't really relate to that. I've never once been tempted to turn stones into bread. I mean, I can't remember a time. That's just not something the enemy is going to throw at me. Never been tempted to jump off the pinnacle of some high building and just have God float me to the ground. Nor has He ever offered to make me king of the world.

You read those temptations, you go, okay, He understands my temptations? No. Listen, those were some particular temptations that are brought out to you in the Scripture. But there's 40 days that it's going on to the point where He experienced, I believe, everything that you and I, have or could ever be tempted with.

Let me show you a passage in Hebrews 4:15, that says,

Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

For we do not have a high priest (and it's talking about Jesus there) *who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are* (Notice that,) *in every respect...* " Every temptation, every weakness, every issue was hit upon Him, yet He did not sin.

And that's a beautiful reason why Jesus came. He came to feel what we feel, to experience what we experience in a given, particular day.

But secondly, He also came to model for us the way, the means of standing up under temptation. And again, we don't read this in Mark's Gospel account, but we go elsewhere and we find out that - Jesus met the onslaught of the enemy with the Word of God and faith. Right? Every time, the Word of God and faith. He took up the sword of the Spirit, He took up the shield of faith to stand against the work of the enemy. (Ephesians 6:17)

And by the way, this was the work of the enemy. We talk... We Christians, we say some pretty arrogant things sometimes. We'll say... I'll hear Christians say, boy, Satan's really after me.

I've been tempted a lot in my life. I seriously doubt I've ever been tempted directly by Satan. I mean, I think he's got bigger fish to fry than pastor Paul, from Calvary Chapel Ontario. I mean, I think he just sends his little minions my way and they're plenty bad. Right? And that's enough to throw me into a loop.

But, you know what I'm saying? Jesus, dealt with Satan himself in these temptations for these 40 days in the wilderness. And this is what's beautiful about why He did this.

The third thing is that He came through with victory, which now can become our victory. In other words, He was victorious over temptation and now He can become our source for victory over the enemy.

I want to really encourage you. You got to be careful sometimes, when you talk too much about how to get free from temptation or how to have victory over

sin. And sometimes you'll see somebody write a devotion about it. Or, they'll put some points and say, okay, now here's some 5 ways that you can stand against temptation in your life.

People love to do these things. Facebook's full of them and stuff like that. And we... And that's not to say that they're wrong. I'm not criticizing those things necessarily. But we got to be careful whenever we boil it down to like 5 steps. 5 steps to be free from temptation, and sin, or whatever.

We have to remember something, it's not a method that we look to in order to be victorious over sin. It's a person. It's a person we look to. It's Jesus you guys. It's not a method. It's Jesus. He is the victor, therefore, He is our source. Right. He's the one who gives us victory.

In other words, I enter into His victory. Here's Jesus standing with His victory (Pastor Paul simulates walking into the circle of Jesus victory) and He... And I'm like walking up to Him and going, I want to stand right in that bubble. Right? I want to walk in that victory all my life. I don't perfectly. Nor do you. But I want to because He's the one. The source is a person. Not a five step, or 12 step, or 20 step, sort of a thing.

Alright, let's keep going. Verse 14, *"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'"* Jesus spoke repentance as well. Telling people they needed to ready their hearts.

You'll notice He also said, *"The time is fulfilled,..."*. Fulfilled for what? The coming of Messiah. You guys got to know that for the last 30 years, Israel has been literally buzzing about Messiah! All the things that happened at Jesus birth, the people coming from other lands, saying, where's the king of the Jews? We saw His star.

And the Bible tells us that all Jerusalem was stirred because of these people. And then, Herod, goes through his whacked out sort of a thing where - he's not going to have anybody usurp his throne. So, he goes out and slaughters the babies in Bethlehem and around the area. And you know, this stuff has been going on for years.

And now here's John the Baptist, saying, hey, get ready. He's coming. I'm not even worthy to untie His shoes, but He's coming. He's here. I am only baptizing you in water. He's going to baptize you in the Spirit. And He's saying... And people are just absolutely a-buzz with this whole idea that Messiah is coming

because they've read the Scriptures. They know the prophecies. Messiah, Messiah, He's coming!

Jesus comes, what does He say? He goes, well, guess what guys? Time's here. Time is now. Repent and believe the good news. Kingdom of God is here. In other words, Jesus is proclaiming Himself Messiah. This is what's so crazy about the religious leaders who kept coming to Him and going, tell us, who are you? He says, I've been telling you. You haven't been listening. This is Jesus very clearly declaring, hey, the time is now - it's fulfilled.

And verse 16 says, *"Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 And immediately they left their nets and they followed him."*

Now this is interesting because this is actually the second time. Mark skips over the first time that Jesus met with these men. They have actually, already followed Him for a short time. But they went back to their father. And now that He's begun His Galilean ministry, He comes to these men now for the second time.

They're out working. This is Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. And they're working on their nets. Because that's the way they fished - commercial fishermen. Casting out a big net, dragging it along the sea, and pulling it into the boat, and so forth. And they're out working on the nets.

And He goes, hey, follow Me. Follow Me. And it says, they dropped everything and immediately... And there's that word that Mark likes to use. He uses it like 40 times. *"Immediately."* This is a very immediate Gospel. It says, *"...they left their nets and they followed him."* No hesitation. They just followed Jesus.

Have you ever wondered what you might have done had you been in that situation? Because these men were fishermen by trade. They'd probably been on a boat since they were old enough to be on a boat. They'd learned the trade of being a fisherman, and this is what I do. This is how I feed my family. We know that Peter was married. This is the way I take care of my family. And along comes this guy, and He goes, yeah, you, follow Me. I mean, that's a big deal and it's a challenge to your faith.

Have you ever thought how you would do, given that same challenge? Drop everything and follow Me. I've thought about it several times. And I can relate a little bit. Because I've told many of you over the years that all I ever wanted to

do since from the time I was about nine years old was to be a radio disc jockey. And so I... That was my goal. And when I turned 16 years old, I got my first job in a radio station. And by the time Sue and I got married, I was... I guess I was in my second radio station at the time. And went on and got to live my dream. I loved it. I loved being on the radio. I just, I adored it.

And by the time the Lord got a hold of our hearts, I'd actually moved up into management, which started making a little better money. Because radio disc jockeys make peanuts. If you ever see one on the street, throw him a dollar.

But one day, after God had remade our lives in Him, my pastor showed up at the radio station just after my board shift. And he said, we want to bring you on staff at the church, as a youth pastor. And that was to me, that was my calling. It was the calling of the Lord, saying, drop everything. Because He was asking me to leave radio. Which was really my only love from a career standpoint. And it was one of the most difficult things I had ever faced. And believe me, I hesitated for a long time. I mean, really had to work through that.

And that makes me wonder, about these guys who just immediately got up and said, yeah, we're here. We're going following Jesus. Because you know what? It's a big deal to follow Jesus, even if he doesn't ask you to make a career change. Because He's going to invade your life in one way or another. And He's going to ask you to follow Him.

And in large part, He's going to ask you to drop things and follow Him. That's what repentance is largely all about when those things have to do with sinful behaviors. And Jesus comes along and He says, hey, follow Me. And we have to go, ah... It's like yay or nay you guys. And you can't play both sides of the... Well, you can try.

Believe me, I've seen it happen where people try to walk the fence - try to follow the call. But try to live the old life at the same time. It's the definition of miserable. But, ultimately, you got to make a decision. Are you going to follow Jesus? And it's a big deal. And Jesus made it a big deal. I mean, from the standpoint...

It's interesting. Jesus - talking to Him, you wonder why anybody ever followed the guy. Because He was constantly trying to talk them out of it. He'd say, hey, count the cost. And when you follow Me, if you put your hand to the plow, you better not look back again. It's like, wow, that's a challenge. Following Jesus is a big deal.

And it happened with John and James, too. Look at verse 19. It says, *"And going a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. (Doing the same thing as Peter and Andrew.) 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him."* And there you go. And He says, I'm going to make you *"fishers of men."*

We sometimes... I remember as a kid singing this song about Jesus making us all *"fishers of men."* What's interesting about that is that, do you notice who He said... To whom He said, I'm going to make you *"fishers of men"* - to fishermen. And that's an interesting statement. Which makes me wonder would he have said that same thing to a banker? I'm going to make you *"fishers of men."* Because it doesn't... We try to apply it as this general call to evangelism, right? That applies to everybody. And we sang it as little kids marching around our Sunday school room.

But think about it, if Jesus walked up to a carpenter, I mean, nails in hand, building a structure. And He came along and said, follow Me, I'm going to make you a builder in the kingdom of God. Or if He said... found a banker doing his stuff, whatever bankers do. And He said to him, follow Me, I'm going to make you a giver of eternal treasures that can never be stolen or, whatever. And you know what I'm saying.

Because the point is that we all have abilities and we all have talents. And when we meet Jesus, and He says to us, follow Me. He's basically saying, take everything I've given you and follow Me. Take the things that you are. If you're a mother, come and follow Me in the kingdom of God. A father, a teacher? I'm going to make you a teacher in the kingdom. I'm going to make you a father to many. I'm going to make you a mother to many, from the standpoint of just loving and caring and ministering.

And we tend to think: There's my life and then there's the ministry. And Jesus said, you guys are fishermen. Fine. Let's go fish. We're just going to fish for different things. Right? You're a builder, let's go build different things. Right? You're a banker, let's go invest in different things. And let's hand out treasures that are very, very different from what this world considers treasure.

You see, whatever you do, whatever you are, when you receive that call from the Lord, take it all and give it to Him. Right? And let Him say to you, I will make you what you are in the world. I will bring that into the kingdom. And you will become that in the kingdom of God. But in a completely different way, that has an eternal scope and value. So very cool. New goals for old powers.