

God's Word and Being the Church

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I'm going to be in selected scriptures this morning, not in a single passage.

I want to do something a little different from our norm together as we look at a number of different places in the Bible for what I'm going to deal with this morning.

It'd be very direct this morning. It's more, maybe I might get to preach in in just a little while. Oh, there's more teaching, more sharing with you about some foundational things that build on the theme of Genesis chapter 3.

Coming off of Genesis 3 and sin, I want to make sure that as we begin to move through more of Genesis, we're locked in on certain concepts, themes from scripture that help us to think biblically about sin and what God is doing about it through Jesus Christ and through his word for our lives.

So the title of my message is God's word and being the church. What does it look like and mean for you and I to be the church? Now, some of the folks that are more regular attenders on Wednesday night will recognize some of this as I jump in and out of it.

[1 : 1 2] I've borrowed from different places and added some stuff to tweak this for us just in the way of a good reminder. Now, in a recent article, Pastor Steve Lawson, somebody that we respect and turn to, a wonderful pastor, wonderful preacher, a very, very good friend with John MacArthur and the guys who run in those circles.

Steve Lawson was quoting Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones on Jones's view of preaching in the local church. Now, like Lawson is today for us, Lloyd-Jones himself was a great preacher and theologian in his day and time.

In a series of lectures that Lloyd-Jones gave at Westminster Seminary, he asked this question, What is preaching?

What is preaching? His answer is intriguing. I love it. It is theology on fire. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire.

And I love that. What guy called to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would not want to preach it with fire in his bones.

[2 : 3 4] And that's what a sermon is to a preacher who loves God's word, loves God's people, can't wait to get in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday to feed you on the truth of the Lord and see you grow up in conformity to Jesus.

That's my whole life. And any preacher who births these things through the week, who works on these sermons through the week, it's like being in labor pains. It's fire in your bones. You can't wait to get here.

I told Suzanne that I had the weirdest dream last night. Now I'm going to share this. It's going to be on record. Doggone it. But it's so weird. It is so weird. I dreamed, and I'm going to make a long story short, I went to bed thinking about my sermon.

I try to do that just about every Saturday night. And so I dreamed that I was in this situation where these guys, I was going out to my car.

It was that night. And I saw in just a little bit away this group of guys. And when they made eye contact to me, a couple of them started running at me. So I knew this is not good.

[3 : 34] So I tried to get to my car to get in, lock the doors, crank it up, drive off. I don't want to hurt anybody. And so unfortunately, this great big guy, they got there, and this great big guy kind of towered over me.

And so I reached to where I had this gun. All right. Don't freak out about that. And I let him know that that's not a good idea. Let me get in my car and get out of here and nobody gets hurt.

Well, long story short, it went on and I'm, you know how dreams are. It's so weird. I'm like trying to extricate myself from, they won't let me. And so I had to, but I tried to do it in a way where he wasn't hurt.

Now I know they're going to freak out. The pastor's shooting people. I told you it was weird. So I tried to do it in a way where I was away from his heart and down he goes and he's there.

And this is the thought that came, this was Saturday night. This is the thought that came to my mind. I don't have time for this. He's not fine now, but he's going to be fine. He's not going to die. I got a sermon to preach tomorrow.

[4 : 35] I got to get home and finish getting ready so I can get this thing birthed on Sunday. So I went home. I know. It's, that's crazy, isn't it?

It's fire in your bones. You got to birth the sermon. You got to get there on Sunday and you got to get this baby out. And that's what I want to do. I know it's like, Jeff, do you really want to tell us?

You don't want to know what's going on in my head half the time. All right. And by the way, in the dream, he's fine. He turned out just fine. He lived. It's all, it's all good.

All right. Now let me get you back and talk about what we're, what we're dealing with today in the way of preaching, being theology, coming through a man who is on fire for the Lord.

It's not an animation that draws attention to self. It's an animation or whatever, a passion for the word of God and for the truth of God. You know, Dr. MacArthur, faithful as he's been and as gifted as he is, he stands behind the pulpit and he's a talking head.

[5 : 41] The most animation you'll get from Dr. MacArthur is what I'm doing now with my hands. That's, that's about it. And I told, told some people, I tried to do that when I first got out of seminary from out there.

I tried to be like Dr. MacArthur and stand there and preach and I just almost busted gaskets everywhere. So after three weeks of that, I said, no, I got to move. I got to get around. I got to get spit on people.

That's just the way I am. So let's talk about theology. Look, this is not complicated. Theology, theology is a word combining two Greek terms, theos, which means God and logia or logos, which can be translated word, speech, discourse.

So combined, they mean what we can say about God or as Steve Lawson defines it, theology is the careful study of statements about God, what we can say and know about God.

Now, here's the issue. Where we go to study trustworthy statements about God is confined to Holy Scripture. Did you hear me? All right.

[6 : 46] It's not the Catholic Bible. It's not the Book of Mormon added to the Bible. There are all kinds of ways that cults and other religions add to if they even use the Bible.

We believe that the 66 books of the Protestant Bible are the place that we go to get the definitive, trustworthy statements we need about God.

It's confined to Holy Scripture. That's important. Why is it important? Because we believe the Bible itself is authored by God. We believe that God's special revelation to us about himself is contained in the 66 books of the Protestant Bible.

So, as I say that, a biblical theology is a believer's knowledge of God and his ways derived from a careful study of Scripture.

Scripture. Unbelievers do not have a biblical theology that they follow. They can read the Bible. They can understand certain things about maybe even believe Jesus was real.

[7 : 59] But apart from the Holy Spirit living in a person, you will never come to an understanding of spiritual things. You have to have the Holy Spirit in you to help you understand and interpret the spiritual nature of what God is revealing to us about himself.

You can't see him. You can see the evidence of him, but you can't see him. So, Jesus living in us is about the Holy Spirit giving us understanding into the truth of Scripture that we might be conformed to Jesus Christ and live in the ways of God as his people.

And theology is very important in that. So, first of all, theology then concerns the local church's study of God and his ways. That's what we're doing in a sense right now.

We're going to do some more of that as we turn to the Scripture. Our theological understanding of God comes from Scripture. That's what we're saying.

God's self-authored book about himself and his ways. The Bible reveals God to us most completely in God's Son, in a person, Jesus Christ, who is the living Word, the expression of the Word of God.

[9 : 14] Jesus said, I am the truth, the way, and the life. And then finally, the entire Bible centers on the person and work of Jesus, revealing him as sin conqueror, Savior, and Lord over all creation.

This is all related to how we understand theologically who God is and what God says about us. So, as a local body of believers, that is, us, we, as Grace Church Williamsburg, we are concerned to connect sound doctrine with sanctified living.

What does that mean? Holiness. We are concerned with sound doctrine because sound doctrine gives us the foundation to live a holy life. Now, let me give you a few more.

I told you it was going to be kind of a heavy teaching time just to start here. I'm going to throw all this stuff at you. Let me do this with theology. Theology matters because, first, as God's people, we can speak the truth in love because we know, believe, and love God's truth.

Knowing, believing, and loving God's truth puts us in the position to then speak the truth and love to one another. And this is how we grow in the Lord is through the truth of the Lord.

[10 : 37] Apart from the Bible, we will not grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and the knowledge of the Lord. Then, also, theology matters because we are people who care about holy living.

We care about being like Jesus. We put a premium on holiness in our lives. We care about that.

We care about being involved in each other's lives where we grow to be more like Jesus because we want to live holy before the Lord. That pleases the Lord.

And then, theology matters because it helps us know how to navigate life God's way to God's glory, to our personal good, and to the good of others.

Theology matters. There are churches, there are other faiths that want to really diss on theology and doctrine because they say it divides people.

[11 : 41] Well, it does. That is true. But people who care about holiness, people who care about living lives that please the Lord, they care about the reality of Jesus teaching us His word that we might be conformed to Him and live to His glory on this earth right now.

We care about that. So we understand that sometimes things will be taught and sometimes the way that we handle Scripture and put things out there to people is offensive to them.

The Scripture is, we don't want to be offensive, but the Scripture can be offensive because it tells people the truth about who they are before a holy God and calls them to holiness.

So folks, we can't be afraid to preach sin because sin, preaching sin is good theology. Now we hasten to the cross to show what God's done to deal with our sin.

That's good theology. But we don't leave any of it out, do we? Paul's going to tell us later in the message that we need to be concerned about preaching the whole counsel of God. Everything that is spiritually profitable, Paul's going to tell us that toward the end of the message today.

[12 : 54] So this is what we're dealing with in the way of why theology matters. So now, thinking about theology and trying, this is my goal as a pastor, I want to help us take theology and bring it right down into the very core of how you think and live.

To not leave it up here as something that we just do when we're at church. We talk about doctrine, the teachings of the Bible or theology, the understanding God and His ways, studying God.

No. It's not just for seminaries or colleges. We want to take the truth of the Lord, theology, we want to bring it down and make it part of who you are, what you are, so that you see that theology is what you live out of.

Everybody on the planet is a theologian. Everybody. Even the ones who say they don't believe in God. Well, that's a theology. Right? So everybody's a theologian.

Everybody's got a take on God and His ways. Even if it's I don't believe in Him. He doesn't exist or whatever. So this is what I'd like to do. I'm going to cast a scenario for us that is very real life.

[14 : 04] Now when I say very real life, I mean two things. First of all, what I'm about to share with you in the way of a scenario actually happened to Suzanne and I. It wasn't here since the eight and a half years we've been in Virginia.

This was in a prior time of ministry and not even in this state. And I've disguised it a little bit, okay? So I'm not breaking any confidences here or anything.

This actually happened to Suzanne and I. It's also real life in the sense that it's the kind of stuff that we face as human beings. If you're not going to face it or if you haven't faced it, other people have and will because it's life.

So let me share this scenario. I think it's going to help us connect and apply doctrine or theology with how we live our lives and with how we minister God's truth to each other.

Now these are rhetorical questions when I get to the question part so you can just think about, yeah, okay, just think about it. Don't answer out loud unless I ask you to answer out loud, all right?

[15 : 05] We're going to revisit a troubled couple named John and Sarah. Now keep in mind that what I'm sharing with you actually happened to Suzanne and I. All right? We're revisiting this couple.

John and Sarah are young Christians and like all married couples, they will eventually experience seasons in their life when they're going to be troubled.

Well, here's one right now on their plate. They're in a season of struggle against self and sin in their marriage. Here's what happened. John and Sarah are your friends.

All right? Let's just, whether you're single, whether you're married, whatever, John and Sarah are your friends. In fact, the reason that John and Sarah are part of Grace Church is because of you.

You invited them to come to church. They liked the church. They liked what we're doing. And so they've been coming to Grace Church now for a while. They're young in their marriage.

[16:06] They've been married about three years. Now because they love and trust you and because you introduced them to this ministry where they're growing in the Lord, they call you up and they ask if they can come over because they need to talk with someone that they feel like they can trust with what they have to share.

So they show up at your house. It's obvious that Sarah has been crying. You guys all come in. You sit down in the living room. John sits down and he's staring at the floor.

Sarah is shifting awkwardly and you notice that she's wiping a constant flow of tears from her cheeks. It's the kind of crying that you sit and you try to do it in a way that is stoic.

It's kind of a stoic cry. She's trying to get herself collected but she can't stop the tears and so she's just wiping the tears off her cheeks as she sits there. John's sitting there and he's staring at the floor.

Finally, Sarah gathers enough courage and she tells you that she's just found out that John has been flirting with a woman online. It's been going on for about three months and while they've never yet met in person, they had plans to and they have been involved emotionally with each other all this time and they have said some very inappropriate, explicit, and intimate things to each other.

[17:37] Obviously, Sarah is crushed. She doesn't know what to do. Three years in and they've got this to deal with. She's even mentioned to John that maybe they need to get a divorce.

After all, it's obvious that John is no longer caring about me. I'm not doing it for him so look what he's done. He's turned out here to this other person and I'm not enough wife for him, you know, all that.

Out of embarrassment and anger, Sarah gets up and she retreats into the kitchen where you hear her just crying her eyes out.

She's just sobbing. So Sarah's in the kitchen sobbing out of embarrassment and anger and hurt. John's left sitting in the living room with you and maybe your spouse.

He's still staring at the floor and he hasn't said a word. What do you do? Ultimately, this scenario provides you with an opportunity to honor and glorify God by loving your friends well.

[18:55] Now the question is how will you do that? You're the one on the spot. I joked with the Wednesday night crowd months ago when I shared some of this.

I tweaked it. You can tell I changed it up a bit. I asked the Sunday night crowd what would you do? And I'm looking at him and I say no you cannot get up and run in the living room and call Pastor Greg or Pastor Jack.

No you could do that. That would be fine. That would be perfectly fine. Now in our situation I was the pastor. So I can't call anybody. I gotta deal with this.

Right off the bat. They just walk in. We have no idea what's going on. They just want to come see us. And they sit down and this is what happened. This is how they looked. This is just what happened.

Now what do you do? Do you since they're sitting in front of you do you have anything to offer this couple? Can the Lord use you to encourage them in what is true?

[19 : 56] Here's another question for you. Does your theology have anything to offer John and Sarah in these moments? Because whatever you say to them next or do with them next you're going to say and do out of your theology whether you realize it or not.

Though they've come to you here's something they are part of our church family. so I'm going to put this up here. What does it look like for us for us to be the church for John and Sarah in this season of life and need as a congregation?

how does our theology as a church our doctrine our family life and their need all come together in this time of their weakness?

holiness how's our church going to put its arms around these people? How's our church going to put our arms around you as you help these people? How does that even work?

This is where theology begins to really matter doesn't it? See when I stand up here and I preach Sunday to Sunday to Sunday what I'm concerned with is first of all honoring Christ Lord am I preaching in a way that's honoring Jesus?

[21 : 27] Am I preaching your message to your people? That's my first order of business but pastorally I'm always concerned am I helping you connect the reality of life with what I'm preaching to you?

Am I helping you connect those dots? So you better understand the magnificence of what I'm preaching being factored into your life as you live to the glory of God am I preaching to you a big God and does it elevate you and bring you up up to the standard or am I dumbing it down and bringing it down to where the bar is too low no I'm going to keep the bar way up here the fact that you and I struggle with the fact that the bar is way up here doesn't mean that we pull the bar down this is holiness this is why we say we put a premium on holiness and we all realize we can't do that apart from grace we can't do that apart from God in his favor and mercy living in our lives well that's exactly how we should feel I can't do this without the Lord that's what we're concerned about is we bring theology down to where it meets the rubber of the road as it were that's what we're trying to do how does our theology our doctrine our family life and their need all come together now

I want you to be certain of something as we play this scenario out be certain of this counter reality here it is the counter reality that you're dealing with and that John and Sarah are dealing with very real first of all John and Sarah want answers and relief do they not that's that makes sense doesn't it is it wrong for them to want to have answers and relief no not necessarily now we can get all caught up in that in a way when we're hurting that we start listening to the wrong sources we get tempted by Satan in our flesh we seek more of a solution than we seek the Savior now that becomes a problem and we have to help people sort that out that's part of what we want to do but look at this next one in terms of the counter reality the world has answers and relief for John and Sarah don't they absolutely you better believe the world has a theology they want to insert into this situation and it's not a biblical one the world's answers are attractive compelling and immediately practical believe it that's the truth and the world stands eagerly ready to fill any void any lack stemming from the church's apathy or the church's unpreparedness or unfaithfulness to address these matters in the grace and wisdom of

Jesus Christ we don't want that we don't want any of that to be part of their life we don't want to have to send them outside of the church family to get answers for what they're facing in their life and we shouldn't have to because we believe in a sufficient scripture and in a sufficient Lord and Savior don't we and so we need to be prepared in house to help to help to help to help to help to deal with sin who better to go to to deal with sin than Christ Jesus who died on the cross to release us from the penalty and power of sin that's who they need isn't it now John and Sarah are Christians but they're caught in a web right now of lies they don't know how to get themselves out of they're in your living room staring at the floor and hasn't said a word through this whole thing ought to tell you a lot about where John is the fact that

Sarah is in the kitchen apart from John sobbing her eyes out she has no answers she's so hurt she can't even see straight how are you going to diffuse that what are you going to say to them what are you going to us that yes it's a mess and yes there is an endless there is this kind of stuff there is an endless list of these kinds of issues we all face throughout our lives you say well Jeff I've never faced that I've never had to deal with anybody that faced that well what have you faced then in your marriage what have you seen other people face what are you dealing with the world or your own flesh just fill in the blank but here's the thing the issues the issues are not the issue it doesn't matter if this is your issue or not or if you face this the issues are not the issue what's the issue

[26 : 33] Jeff here's what you need to ask yourself you need to ask yourself how am I being the church for others in my church family who are fellow sinners saints and strugglers in navigating the issues of life how am I being the church when I say that I mean how am I being God's people how am I one of those people and then ask yourself this these all these questions are similar how am I being an active and faithful part of the efforts of my church family they make and prepare themselves for serving others and pointing them to Jesus how am I being an active and faithful part of those efforts do I even know what those efforts are how am I supporting that and then finally what investment am I making in the process of helping others fight sin and become more like

Jesus Christ in their daily life what does that look like for my life friends God's word when we say God's word we're talking about sound doctrine God's word is the critical indispensable element in all forms of Christian discipleship and that's what we're talking about when we talk about bringing theology into life they're not just nebulous concepts it's not just stuff seminary students study theology is how we know God and his ways it's what we can say about God as we carefully study the scriptures and get to know our Lord and our King and our Savior it is absolutely indispensable in Christian discipleship Christian discipleship is all about how we follow Jesus together you're a disciple which means you're a learner you're a follower of

Jesus so as we disciple each other we're helping each other follow Jesus more faithfully that's the church's responsibility it doesn't rest simply with Greg and I or the pastors of a church we have a tremendous responsibility to oversee that that's being done among the congregation but the question that we need to ask ourselves is what is my involvement in that process of discipleship of helping others in my church family learn to follow Christ more faithfully how am I invested in that what does that look like for me for my wife for my husband for my family in what ways are we supporting those endeavors we rely on and we apply sound doctrine to personal situations doctrine matters it's critical now last week

I spoke to you about some characteristics of how we follow Jesus as he followed God that was last week now this week I'm bringing this together and I'm getting down right in the trenches with you of the practicality of that follow ship another word for follow ship is discipleship being Jesus is disciple today what I want to build on is that theme and what I'm going to help us do I'm going to put it up here we're going to connect following Jesus with three vital ways of ministering God's word and God's ways in our church family now this has been the case from the inception of Grace Church this is something new that we're adding this is what we've been doing I'm just trying to bring it to the fore here for us in greater clarity so these are three ways we can support God's word help us understand how theology and doing life together bring us together you hear that we want to understand how theology and doing life together bring us together as a church family

I hear guys all the time write these books they do these podcasts and they just use words words words words to talk about what makes a church a church and what brings a church together and what unifies a church and they have all kinds of ideas sometimes you'll hear some and they'll be like okay that sounds scriptural other times it just sounds like they're bringing all the stuff of the world in and trying to get us to be better marketers or something no it really is contained in the Bible what brings us together as God's people is a common love for Jesus and each other we love Jesus and we do that together we love the truth and we follow Jesus in the truth together and we look for ways as God describes them to us as we come to know him we look for ways to help each other encourage build each other up edify each other as we speak that truth in love to one another all for the goal that you and

[32 : 02] I will be conformed to Jesus grow up in him so we have more godly marriages we have more godly dads godly men godly wives godly women we are we are a force of godliness committed to each other and helping each other grow up in the Lord you have a tremendous purpose in Jesus Christ in this church family tremendous you may say to me Jeff I don't even know what my spiritual gift is or spiritual gifts are we'll help you with that but you don't have to know that to be involved in the way I'm challenging us right now you don't have to know that you come to know that as you are involved in this process of discipleship together that's what we're dealing with so the following three ministries of the word of

God flow from this passage here it is Matthew 28 18 through 20 and Jesus came up to and spoke to his disciples saying all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit teaching them to keep all that I commanded you and behold I am with you always even to the end of age where do we go to find what we need to teach in the way of all that Jesus commanded the disciples scripture the Bible that's where we go it's the only place it's been recorded it's not in the book of Mormon it's here for us in holy scripture that's where we turn now the first way of ministering

God's word understanding God and his ways the first way that I want to point out to you is this one it's the public ministry of God's word the public ministry of God's word the emphasis here as I'm going to show it to you is on the saints collectively the public ministry of the word is aimed at us as we gather as a corporate body a collection of God's people gathered for the purpose of sitting under the word so what I'm doing now is the public ministry of the word anytime we gather for preaching and teaching we're in a public venue for that that's what we want to talk about all right what is it that's the first question out of the gate for this one I'm not going to put all this up there because it will take too much time I'm just going to move through it what is it second timothy for one and two I will put the references up there for you second timothy for one and two let's turn there now make sure you're in second timothy not first timothy so these are two letters that paul wrote to the person timothy who was a young man pastoring in the church in ephesus and paul was mentoring him and so timothy is this young pastor he's trying to get off the ground and there's a lot he needs to learn and a lot he needs to face in a really tough ministry so paul writes these letters to him and in chapter four of his second letter paul says this i solemnly charge you timothy in the presence of god and of christ jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom preach the word be ready in season and out of season reprove rebuke exhort with great patience and teaching with great patience and teaching or patience and instruction so the question on the table for us in this passage is what is it this public ministry of the word what is it it's preaching preaching and instruction is what it is now notice the next question i'm going to deal with what is the preacher's part what is the preacher's part according to this passage well you'll notice in the text that the first word that we have is preach the word be ready in season and out of season reprove in season and out of season probably is just a way to say be ready all the time be thoroughly prepared as god's servant to minister the word of god to god's people any occasion that god's people are coming together be ready to minister the word to them all right now in what way god do you want us as pastors and preachers to preach the word well you need to have a reproofing element to your preaching to reprove what does that mean here it is to correct and expose as wrong you offer correction and you expose in that correction the wrong that is being done the sin it means to bring to conviction so you're speaking to the person in a way in this preaching element we're speaking out of god's word in a way where god's people are being helped to see the wrong of sin in their lives that what they're saying thinking or doing is against holiness it's not helping you conform to christ it's working against it that's a convicting element now would you be surprised for

me to tell you that there are many many many pastors out there who don't want to do that and avoid doing it and can you imagine why they do that why why would you think they do it you think they do it because they're cognizant of the fact that god calls them to do this and they're just ignoring it no most of them don't do it because they realize it's how you shrink a church not grow it people coming to sit under preaching that is convicting if they're not putting a premium on holiness they don't want to be in a church like that they want to go somewhere else do you know how I know this because I've been doing this for 30 years and I've heard everything under the sun I've heard people say we're not going to your church because you're boring as a preacher I've heard them tell me that they're going to a different church because I'm not funny enough and they can go to a church down the road where they visited and the guy made them laugh so hard until their sides hurt yeah I've heard that been told that

I've actually had people tell me I don't like the way you wear your hair well don't worry about that too much longer if that's a problem for you because it's falling out faster than it's growing in so pretty soon it'll just be shiny people will say all kinds of things rebuking is the second element rebuking you see that there in the text reprove and rebuke now these two words are very very similar they almost sound the same in the Greek rebuking means to warn forcefully another word that's used often to warn is admonish to warn forcefully it's to show as blameworthy boy now how do you like that for preaching I'm supposed to show you where you're blameworthy wow that's my job not because you pay me to do that but because God's called me to do that whether you pay me or not kind of thing that's what I'm called to do here's what Dr.

[40 : 13] MacArthur says as we combine these two ideas together that are very very similar here's what he says just listen reprove the first one shows the sinfulness of sin so as I reprove in my preaching I'm showing you why this is sin rebuke shows the sinfulness of the sinner so as I rebuke you in my preaching I'm rebuking you as someone doing sin first I show you this is sin the next thing I show you is that you're a sinner in doing this sin you are blameworthy in doing it what I'm trying to tell you in that as I rebuke you in that preaching is this is personal this is between you and the Lord and this is affecting your brothers and sisters and everybody around you so while it's personal it moves out of your life and affects everybody affects everybody else's life around you whether you know it or not doesn't mean that it's not doing it this is why I tell people there's no such thing as secret sin in the sense that it doesn't affect other people you may be doing it in secret but it's working on your heart and as it works on your heart it's going to work on the people who are exposed to your heart amen think about that think about that you may do that sin in the darkness and nobody else may know about it but it affects everybody around you that you connect with because your heart affects the way you speak what you do what you prioritize secret sin in your heart is a very dangerous thing notice then that he says this in my preaching I'm to preach the word

I'm not to preach Jeff's word I'm not to preach this guy's word or this gal's word I'm to preach God's word I'm to be ready all the time I'm to reprove rebuke and notice this one exhort well you would imagine that I don't want my preaching to always be about reproving and rebuking I want to move to the element where I'm encouraging you as God's saint as a forgiven sinner to turn to the Lord and allow the Lord to heal you and encourage you so exhorting is this let me let me narrow it exhorting is to encourage you in spiritual change the operative word there is change my preaching is to encourage you to change to not go out of here the same to not go out of here if there's sin in your life and keep living in sin but to repent and so that brings me to the second element of this encouragement I want to encourage you to repent and replace repent means to do a 180 and turn away from the sin but don't just leave it there now replace the sin with the truth with

God's goodness with obedience repent and replace that's theology at work in your life notice how he ends this with great patience and instruction or with great patience and teaching in other words I'm never to get discouraged by the lack of response by the lack of affirmations by the lack of appreciation I can't allow anything to derail me I've got to do this weekend and week out in my life with great not just patience but with great it means all all encompassing great patience and teaching and so I had a guy very very wise many years ago when I was studying for the pastorate out in California say as you minister the gospel as you preach and teach as you face situations as as the ebb and flow of family life in the church begins to smack you upside the head just keep teaching just keep teaching and so for eight and a half years of being here that's what

I've done as Greg and I have faced scenario after scenario all kinds of stuff some of these folks in here know some of that as we face that Greg and I have locked arms fallen on our knees prayed got up the next day and said let's just keep teaching we have said that to each other just keep teaching in other words just keep holding the truth before God's people because sooner or later who the people who are God's people they're going to rally why because the spirit lives in them and the spirit's going to help their spirit resonate with the truth and it's going to draw them like moth to flame people are starving to death for this folks and many of them don't even know it there are Christians out there who are starving to death we were those people at one time in our lives I'm not saying that in a haughty way we were those people my wife and I when we finally got under this kind of ministry and teaching and emphasis we were we began to realize how starved we were for sound doctrine good theology and what we were missing it's sad isn't it so we pray that God will bring people to our church family to sit under the word of God they it's not because I'm all that it's because God's word is all that and we're endeavoring as hard as we know how to bring the word of God to bear let me give you a couple more before I move on second Timothy 2 15 here's another aspect of the preacher's responsibility second Timothy 2 15 now you may never have seen this applied this way should be Paul says be diligent to present yourself Timothy approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed now notice this part accurately handling the word of truth it is my responsibility to cut the Bible straight to cut it straight to make it patterned in the way that God has written it I am not at liberty to say whatever I want to say about God's word that is not right and so I endeavor to get up here and use the word of God in a way where you can follow how I'm unpacking it this is expository preaching you're with me expository preaching is not a fad it's the way to preach expository preaching has the idea simply of exposing so I come to a text I come to a passage or a verse in scripture and I want to expose I want to open that passage to you and so I endeavor to do that step by step we unpack it we take parts of it out and we set it up and we stack it up and we help you step back because we don't want to get so lost in the details we step back and we look at and say oh oh wow that's what the Lord is saying there and it's not because I'm some expert or guru or anything like that we're just trying to handle the word what does it say here handling the word of truth accurately we put a premium on taking God's word seriously we have a high view of the word of God so I elucidate on these things I don't try to wax eloquent I don't try to wow you with flowery speech we just try to deal with the word now that's that's the preacher's part boy I could give you several more don't have time that's the preacher's part now look what is your part did I put second Timothy okay now what is your part oh boy there's lots of verses on this too you rarely hear sermons about y'all's part everybody's real good at remembering the passages say oh the preacher's not supposed to lord it over that's true oh the preacher he's that's right but what about the congregation to the to the public ministry do you have a responsibility

to the public ministry of the word the answer is yes absolutely you do what is your part in the preaching ministry let's go to James chapter 1 James 1 right after the book of Hebrews you'll come to the book of James and we'll begin in verse 21 we're answering the question what is the congregation's part in this public ministry of preaching and teaching that the pastors and teachers of the church do verse 21 therefore laying aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness in gentleness receive the word implanted or the implanted word which is able to save your souls but become doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves now you back up I just don't have time to take this all apart but it's not hard just look at it what he says laying aside filthiness and all that remains of wickedness in gentleness receive the word implanted in other words be teachable you've got to be dealing with your sin in a way where you can come in here and hear the word you've got to you've got to come in here being willing to put aside confess repent of sin ask God to cleanse your heart and open your mind to the truth of his word you need to be willing to do that and you need to be receptive by being humble and teachable humble and teachable humble and teachable somebody asked Greg and I one time because they were worried about when we do these elders interviews you know that sounds so intimidating oh the elders are coming over to interview me for a membership I know that sounds so bad we're just friends we're just sitting down and we're listening and we're talking there's no theological exam we're not going to try to trip you up we're not those kind of guys we just want to come fellowship with you hear your testimony and put our arms around you and love you and if you're not saved and we hear that we want to say hey you know you need to get saved much shock to you I thought I was saved well yeah we're not hearing that that's loving no we want to come and help people ask us what do you guys listen for what are you looking for well I'll tell you in two words what we're looking for are you teachable and are you humble those are the two things right at the top are you teachable and are you humble are you receptive to the word are you going to become part of our church and be teachable are you going to be under the authority of the pastors as we teach the word of God to you are you going to be humble about that is there some issue in your life that we need to be concerned about that's going to get in the way of those two things you see it's just not we don't make it a big hairy thing although we are very serious about it because we need to be you would agree with that wouldn't you all right so receive the word implanted be a doer of the word not merely a hearer look folks once you hear it once you come in here and hear it it's on you you're going to be held responsible for what you hear are you taking it out and trying to live it you said Jeff I don't know I don't even know if I know how to do it well come talk to us come talk to Greg and I we'd be happy to sit down and talk to you about what that looks like that's discipleship ask one of the members of our church who's a little further down the road in the maturity that they show in Christ they'll tell you they'll be happy to put their arm around you and walk with you how do I know that because I've seen it happen already it's happening in our church family we don't have to program that we just preach it and teach it and tell you now go at it I don't have to create a special program up here that we advertise that says a coin in the a ministry here are all the ways that we

[52:15] can encourage you guys to do fellowship together we just we just preach the word to you and like this and we say now get after each other go go go find ways to get involved in each other's lives and encourage each other to be more like Jesus go walk with the John and Sarah say Jeff I'm not a counselor yes you are you're a counselor if you're a Christian you're a counselor because you're going to have something to say to people as they interact with you as a Christian that's counseling it may not be very sophisticated okay that's fine but you're doing it and that's something let me take you to one other this might be a little bit surprising it's first Thessalonians five my other points are quick so don't worry you guys are so good about letting me just preach my little heart out up here first Thessalonians five don't go to second Thessalonians go to first and we'll be in verse 12 Paul then says to the Thessalonians but we ask of you brothers that you know those that you appreciate those a certain translation says that you esteem those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you that you regard them esteem them very highly in love because of their work live in peace with one another say oh boy Jeff I know this is awkward here I am the preacher telling you that you need to esteem me very highly in love or I'll rebuke you no he's saying you need to know your pastors that's on you I can't tell you how many times it's come back to me and sometimes guilty where people have said the pastor doesn't care he doesn't get to know me I've been in the church for this long and he's not making no no no well here's the passage that tells you you have a responsibility get to know your pastors get to know us we'll come over and eat barbecue with you it's all good we love doing that we'll go hang out with you we'll have coffee I just want you to see here's a passage where it says you know you need to know those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you you see that's what we do we lead you we warn you we rebuke you we reprove you we encourage you and that you regard those men very highly in love you esteem them very highly in love why because they're great guys because they're handsome guys because bless their hearts they just need this kind of thing inept as they are no what does it say because of their work because of their work live in peace with one another what's he saying listen highly esteem your pastors as they highly esteem God's word being ministered to and among you when you see men working hard to esteem the word of God esteem those men you need to realize they're not a dime a dozen now I know this is awkward because I'm up here being that guy but nevertheless you know I told you even when it's awkward for me I got to preach it this is a calling of the church this is how you support the public preaching teaching ministry of the church because you support the men who do it you have a high esteem for them in love one of the ways that translates is you believe the best about your pastors you don't

let people run your pastors down and pick them apart you don't allow that that's not esteeming them highly in love you have a spirit that says I'm going to love these men and I'm going to believe the best about these men and if I ever have anything come at me that sounds off I'm going to let that person know hey look whoa whoa whoa and then if you have any doubts come to your pastors come to Greg come to myself ask us ask look us right in the eye and ask us hey this was said about you is this true did this happen folks I've had people sitting in this room do that with Greg and I and we were glad to tell them the truth it was tough but we were glad to do that now let me ask you a couple questions before we move to the next one how does being under this kind of preaching help John and Sarah think about that what is it going to be like for John and Sarah to be part of this church and come every Sunday and hear preaching like this preaching that highly esteems God's word and exalts God's word has a high view of God's word working to cut it straight to be skillful and accurate and applicable where we're reprovng and rebuking and encouraging and admonishing and we're encouraging God's people to be God's what's it going to be like for John and Sarah to come week after week and hear that kind of preaching that's going to help them you think they're going to be counseled from the pulpit in holy living okay how does being under this kind of preaching help you help others you ever think about that that what you're hearing today could help others not just you that this is God pouring into you so that you can pour into others you see all right let me give you the second one real quick these are just things for you to think about oh I forgot to put those up the personal ministry of the word so we have the public ministry now we have the personal ministry of the word the emphasis here is yourself you as an individual Christian now what are we talking about here because I want to be really careful we'll go to Acts chapter 20 with me if you will and we'll look at verses 18 and 19 to start with Paul in this context has called the Ephesian elders so these are the pastors and teachers the leaders at the church in Ephesus where Timothy is pastor and Paul has called those men together to meet him in a certain place because he fears that he'll never see them again and he wants to impart final greetings to them and instruction to them so he's meeting with these pastors from the church in Ephesus and he's giving them this instruction and he comes to verse 18 and when these men had come to Paul he said to them you yourselves know that from the first day I set foot in Asia how I was with you the whole time serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews now I want you to zero in if you would to begin with on this term I was with you this phrase you yourselves know that from the very first day I set foot in Asia I was with you the whole time what is what is he talking about Paul is saying I shared your life with Christ I shared my life with Christ with others so this is you taking a cue from the Apostle Paul I need to be about sharing the life of Jesus in me with others here the context is these elders these fellow believers and pastors that Paul's

pouring into I was with you so this is about serving others from the spiritual resources of your own walk with Jesus you are going to be able to share with others out of your own spiritual resources in your own walk with the Lord people are blessed people are benefited by your growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus are they they they will be they should be as you grow in the Lord you turn to invest in others in that same way so this is how Greg and I understand it and this is how we pray and encourage each other as Greg and I follow the Lord and encourage each other in our following of the Lord as we receive from the Lord this great love and washing over us of forgiveness for sin we then turn and the people who begin to benefit from the time we've spent with the Lord and been blessed by the Lord are you we turn from that blessing to bless you in that blessing that's what you do you turn from your walk with the Lord to meet and greet the people in your life and offer them the blessing that God blesses you with as he grows you convicts you changes you teaches you sharpens you as he conforms you to Jesus you let that spill out of you onto the people around you when you have a congregation like that brother and sister you have something powerful power people want to come to this place because they want to be around people like that that's what Paul's talking about here in other words friends you place yourself under the authority of God's word personally you invest yourself in how God is changing you as his disciple his follower now listen to this as God then sifts your soul what remains is used to bless others as God sifts your soul as he sifts the chaff from the wheat as it were then you turn to offer what's what's remaining what God has sifted you turn to offer that in investment and blessing to others I tell Suzanne

I've told her many times hon as I worship the Lord and as I follow the Lord and as God deals with your husband and and and works in my life the first person as I turn thank you Lord Jesus and I turn from that experience the first person in line is you I want you to receive the first fruits of the blessings of what God is doing in my life and heart as I worship him as he convicts me and sometimes that looks like this as I do that yes Lord absolutely and I go and I find Suzanne said you know what the other day when I said this that was rude that was unkind I was being impatient with you I was just thinking about me and getting something done please forgive me hon I didn't mean I I don't want to do that please see where'd that come from my worship my accountability before the Lord that's genuineness isn't it that's what we want to bring to each other it's you're not faking your Christianity you're not putting it on for church you're bringing it in it's different isn't it that's what we're talking about here Paul says I was with you in other words Paul's telling him you got to see me for who I am warts and all I was with you man from day one you know how many I spent weeks and weeks and weeks with you guys with you in your lives you in my life so you get to know your pastors you see their warts and you learn to love them through the warts as they love you through yours and there's a genuineness about that that helps us fight sin

Greg and I are not about putting on airs we don't have to worry about tripping up and maybe you'll see us at our at a weak moment we're we're we're fine with you seeing us at a weak moment we don't want to sin but we're we're men we're just not going to get into the trap of trying to impress you and keep you thinking that we're something we're not we're trying to follow the Lord just like you are so this involves notice what Paul says now notice what Paul says if you go back up into the text in verse 19 he says I was with you the whole time my I was pouring my life into you serving the Lord as I was doing this with you it was about serving the Lord that's how I serve Christ I pour into you because that's how I serve the Lord I serve the Lord with what humility tears trials humility tears trials because not everybody appreciates this I have lots of people who don't appreciate this about me Paul says notice that this involves humility selflessness it involves tears which we would say sacrifice it involves trials suffering it involves selflessness sacrifice and suffering that's what ministry is then I'll give you another one first Timothy four now remember we're talking about the personal aspect of the ministry of God's word this is how

[65 : 56] God's word is ministering to you this is how you're growing in Christ the personal ministry of the word is first Timothy chapter four first Timothy chapter four and we'll begin in verse eight I think no six he says to Timothy now we're back to Paul giving Timothy that this young pastor instruction he says look Timothy all these things I've been telling you now for four chapters in pointing out these kinds of things to the brothers and the sisters you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus why because you're being nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following oh Jeff Jackson you better not be a hypocrite you better not get up there and preach to these people what you're not yourself trying to live and do and wrestle with in your own life so this has got to be I tell people all the time when I have the opportunity I preach a better message than I live why because I'm like you I'm fighting sin and sin is deceitful nevertheless here's what he tells him you you brother point these things out even as you're nourished on the words of the faith and sound doctrine notice in verse seven but Timothy refuse godless myths fit only for old women on the other hand what does he do Timothy train yourself for the purpose of godliness now look this is for all of us are you doing that are you training yourself for godliness or are you apathetic about the truth the word are you not disciplined in spiritual things verse eight he deals with this next for bodily training is only of little profit but godliness is profitable for all things because godliness holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come so what's he telling him are you exercising spiritually because it's far far far more beneficial to you than physical exercise it benefits your life now and it benefits your life for eternity you can exercise this body all you want and you should we all should be concerned about being healthy people and offering a good testimony to people in the way we care for the the house of the holy spirit but you're going to lose this one right this one's this one's going to die and go to dust you're going to get a new one so it's a lot more important that you spend time exercising godliness in your life spiritual exercise okay you got that one right that's that's not a hard one and then notice what he says in verses 15 and 16 of chapter four take pains with these things see spiritual growth it hurts it's hard take pains with these things be absorbed in them timothy why so that your progress your progress will be evident all is it is your spiritual maturity evident to the people in your life have you ever had people closest to you talk about how they see you growing in the lord see not that you do it for that reason pay close attention verse 16 pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching persevere in these things for as you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you wow no pressure right this is about how people see Jesus in your life so what's he saying apply the truth in your own heart and life before applying to the hearts and lives of others live the truth so how does this work of God in you help John and Sarah

how does this kind of work in you help our congregation how does it help our community see you you live as a faithful steward of the truth and change that god is developing in you you're not you're not living vicariously in your spiritual life through somebody else you're growing you're spending the time you're in personal worship you're in prayer you're taking pains with these things you're absorbed in these things because holiness is important to you and as you do that it brings you to the third way that you can support and serve god's word in our church family here it is and i'll be done the private ministry of god's word so you have the public ministry the personal ministry the private ministry of god's word this has to do with sinners sufferers what are we talking about well in the first one we're nurturing the saints in the general way in the second one you're nurturing yourself before the lord as you worship the lord and take his word into your heart and in the third way it starts to go out now to other people in this private ministry of god's word what are we talking about where we're here let's go back to acts 20 see if i can put this up here there it is acts 20 20 you know how i did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable when he says anything he's talking about anything from the scriptures how do we know that look what he says next teaching you publicly and from house to house zero in on that i didn't shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable spiritually profitable and teaching you both publicly there's the public ministry of the word now notice this and from house to house then drop down to verse 27 i did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of god i didn't just preach my hobby horses when paul says house to house we ask the question well what is that all right house to house is a way of paul saying this is one-on-one counsel this is one-on-one teaching and instruction in what he says the whole purpose of god in all that is spiritually profitable we we end up in this one-to-one situation where we're ministering the truth to each other whether it's over coffee or sitting in our house together we're talking through the matters of of spiritual growth and following jesus and being a church family dealing with sin you see in our culture we're encouraged to be these private people my business is my business it's none of your business people have left the church saying that to us you're too much in my business even though we try to teach and show them it is on me if i don't be in your business when it concerns your your your life your the way that doctrine is impacting your life the way you're living your life before the lord before the community before the people it matters why wouldn't the pastor be concerned about that everywhere you go you take jesus and put jesus before people why wouldn't i be concerned about that well what does this involve what what does this kind of of one-on-one counseling teaching instructing sharing the whole purpose of god what

is spiritually what what does that involve well look at just look at this look at these verses those are just a few verses that answer the question what does this one-on-one ministry of the word involve now i don't have time to go through each one of these in terms of talking about them like i have but let me just read them and then we'll move on and close okay galatians 6 i think when you see these it'll become immediately evident to you why these are part of a one-on-one kind of ministry that we share with each other as we sit down knee to knee and talk about the matters of life in christ jesus brothers even if anyone is caught in any transgression that means if anyone finds themselves tripped up and ensnared by sin not caught by you this doesn't mean that somebody was physically seen or aha aha it's not that caught means you you have been ensnared trapped or trapped by sin in your life if anyone is caught up in sin that way what does it say we're to do you who are spiritual see that now we're talking about the people who have are cultivating a spiritual life with the lord you who are walking close to the lord and growing in the lord what are you supposed to do restore that person in a spirit of gentleness each of you looking to yourself so that you too will not be tempted now notice verse two bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of christ what's the law of christ love for if anyone thinks he's something when he's nothing he deceives himself so he's saying don't get so uppity don't look down your nose at people who are wrestling with sin in our congregation oh well i'm glad that's not me what were they thinking no that's not the attitude at all restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness paying close attention to your own life lest you be tempted in the same area and get caught up in sin in it all right first thessalonians 5 14 you'll get a little bit of new testament exercise here first thessalonians 5 14 and we urge you brothers admonish the unruly encourage the faint-hearted help the weak be patient with everyone there you go when we sit down with people we need to figure out are they being unruly are they being faint-hearted are they being weak because we do three different things with those three different categories of people we don't admonish the faint-hearted we admonish the unruly what does all that mean well we'll talk about that another time but be patient with everyone compare that with first corinthians 10 13 no temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man but god is faithful that's the that is the center focus of this verse god is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able what with the temptation will provide the way of escape also why so that you will be able to endure it endure what temptation he's not encouraging you to stay in sin he's saying look when you're tempted you're being tempted in a way that's common to being human but god is faithful and the way out is looking to god we need to encourage each other with this kind of stuff now we're back to second timothy three second timothy chapter three verse 16 listen to this all scripture is god breathed and profitable

spirit this is the spiritual profitability that paul is talking about to the ephesian elders in acts 20 all scripture is god breathed and spiritually profitable for what teaching for reproof for correction for training and righteousness so that the man of god the woman of god may be equipped having been thoroughly equipped for every good work and then finally ephesians 4 15 we've hit all around this verse we're finally there ephesians 4 15 but speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head that is christ speaking the truth in love speaking the truth in love you say yes jeff that's the pastor's job no that's your job too we are to speak the truth in love to each other it's hard to do that when we don't know the truth and when we're not allowing the lord to minister his love in our own heart so we've come full circle look how does all of this help john and sarah as it is applied in the life of our church family as the normal way for us to honor jesus and show love to one another how does this help john and sarah how does the private ministry of the word help them our shared goal as a congregation is to support and undergird the truth the truth of god being ministered from the pulpit other teaching ministries of our church we do this by receiving and ministering that same truth to one another so our discipleship hear me now i'm almost done our discipleship our spiritual investment in one another is applied as we speak god's truth in love in the lives of those striving to grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord jesus christ in these ways we are all serving our church family and using our spiritual gifts and resources to be a blessing to one another in being conformed to jesus christ you see you don't have to know your spiritual gift for this to be a reality you don't have to be assigned a duty in the church we don't have to create new ministries so that you can get involved this is the way that we're all needing to be involved at the core level of who we are as a church supporting the public ministry of the word ministering in the personal area your growth in the word and then in the private area of the word where we're sitting down in confidential situations and we're ministering the truth and listening to one another's burdens and bearing those burdens together that's what we're called to do as a church family that's who we are this is the way that a church grows under god's word so we end where we started and jesus came up and spoke to his disciples saying now notice my emphases here all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth go therefore and make disciples that's for all of us make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit notice teaching them to keep what all that i commanded you and behold i am with you always even to the end of the age so our emphasis in discipleship is speaking jesus's truth in love to grow in the grace and knowledge of him and to become more like him that's who we are and why we are i hope this makes sense and encourages your heart brothers and sisters you are ministers each one of you are counselors and

ministers of god's truth the question is are you making an investment in each other in that truth let's pray together father thank you for these uh moments that we've had to share together in the word where we've looked at a number of passages that have challenged our hearts to think carefully about the role of the word of god in our life as a church as a church family as we all come here from from different happenings through the week different things on our minds and all kinds of stuff that's gone on we want to ready ourselves to sit under the word of the lord and receive that word and plant it into our souls that we might become more like jesus in every way to please him in all respects that's that's our prayer for each of us and then that we would be loving toward one another and we would be willing to minister that truth to each other feeling the conviction of sin as we study the word and read the word and meditate on it and then and then bringing a word of encouragement and hope to each other that we'll wrestle together thank you for jesus thank you for his truth and his love and thank you for these souls my brothers and sisters who sit under your word week to week may you bless us god as we seek to bring others into this wonderful mix and treasure of knowing you knowing the word of god in jesus name we pray amen